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Chika Josephine A. Ifedili

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Self-Perception of Female Educational Administrators in Nigeria: Reflections on a Sociological Study

By Chika Josephine A. Ifedili (Ph. D.)ⁱ

Abstract

This study investigated the self-perception of female educational administrators in public post-primary schools in Edo State, Nigeria. It examined the appointment of public post-primary educational administrators, determined by qualifications to the position and considered factors such as the future career aspirations of female administrators, resistance of men to women advancing to the field, and stereotypes or discrimination. The researcher constructed the instrument used in this study, titled Personnel Management Inventory (PMI). It was validated using expert opinion approach. Major findings indicated that:

1. Women were highly discriminated against in appointment and promotion, and
2. Women were required to stay longer in service before they were appointed to the position of educational administrators.

This study showed that there is gender discrimination and all policy makers, government and all concerned individuals who want the country to develop, therefore should discourage it.

Key Words: Female Administrators, Self-Perception, Nigeria

Initial Reflections on Nigerian Women's Inequality: Impetus for the Study

Nigerian women have been denied access to education and a meaningful place in contributing to national development. It is a well-known fact among Nigerians that Nigerian women have been stalled by the culture, which makes them vulnerable when they come forward to join the workforce. Job opportunities for Nigerian women are on the increase but equal opportunities and remuneration at par with men are still remote. Many years ago, women could not aspire to leadership roles because they were restricted to family roles. However, Nigerian women, in spite of their culturally disadvantaged position and deprivation, often create ways to avoid exploitation. For example women made an issue of their exclusion in the state executive council by instituting legal action against the governor of Enugu state (Agbaegbu, 2000). This led to the appointment of one woman as a commissioner. Some of these womenfolk who have had the opportunity to travel to some developed countries, and some, who had the opportunity of having educated parents, have been emancipated through education and social interaction with their fellow womenfolk all over the world (Sowunmi, 2000). These women have become free from social, political and legal restrictions that limited what they could do.

Little achievement has been recorded with regard to the involvement of women in decision-making processes of mainstream development programmes in Nigeria. For example, the 30% benchmark recommended by the international instruments and regulations, for

women in decision making by the year 2000 of which Nigeria is a signatory, has not been in practical terms, translated into more women in decision-making bodies (Ismail, 2002). It is very easy for government delegates to append their signatures to attractive resolutions but it requires unrelenting efforts of interested pressure groups to ensure that governments do not contract out of such internal obligations.

There are three major obstacles to women's ability to achieve career development that I outline in this introduction. First, there is a climate of male dominance. It is common for Nigerian men, when asked if they would vote for a woman as president of the country to reply that women have no business running for the post of president; rather, women should remain home to take care of the family (Adebowale, 2001). Second many Nigerian women are reluctant to aspire because they are not as fully decolonized as men, and are restricted access to education, including management education (Awe, 1990). Third, there is a camp of women who are "traditionalists" who create more problems for fellow women who attempt to advance in their careers (Akande, 1996). Those who resent the advancement of women believe that culture has made women subordinate to men and so this situation should remain.

Men believe that women have high turnover within managerial ranks, go on maternity leave and complain of sexual harassment at the work place (Schwartz, 1992). There is a continuing trend of male domination in political and other positions. In Nigeria, at present, there is only one female deputy governor. This Deputy Governor of Lagos State has continued to complain of marginalization in allocation of duties and responsibilities. The Nigerian feminists see this as a classical case of male domination of power in Nigeria (Saduwa, 2000). According to the Deputy Governor:

They (the men) want to put me down and walk all over me and I have not allowed them. They want a woman to be always subservient to them. If I were not assertive, I don't think I would get to where I am today (ibid).

There is another case of the only female Speaker of House of Assembly in Benue State, who was forced to resign because she was fighting corruption. According to her:

It takes the mind, the courage to relinquish one's position. The circumstances surrounding the resignation became very serious that one decided to do so (Icheen, 2002).

Given this environment for Nigerian women, credit should be given to Sarah Jubrils, Ita Giwas, Kharat Gwadabes, Kofo Bucknor Akereles and Margareth Icheen among many others who dared challenge men and even beat them in elections.

Some women, because of lack of education, are not exposed enough to the struggle by women for equal opportunities. These women criticize their fellow womenfolk who want to achieve and this singular act has been detrimental to the progress of the womenfolk. For example, Winful (2001), as the Guest Speaker at the Seminar/Luncheon for women and

professionals, supported this opinion by saying: “All obnoxious laws like banning female circumcision/genital mutilation, maltreatment of widows etc. are being carried out against women by women”.

In response to that, some participants at the Seminar stated that a woman would not intentionally maltreat another woman, but the point is that cultural/ traditional values must be fulfilled. These cultural values and lack of education are the problems of many women. The cultural attitude stems from the fact that women’s education is viewed as a waste of time and money since the girls would marry and leave the family (Ifedili, 1997). Women in Nigeria have generally assigned the role of maintaining the home front. Goliber (1997) described the status of women in Africa thus:

African women have had major responsibilities in Agricultural production. Nonetheless, their primary roles are those of wife and mother. Women often have limited rights and are expected to be subordinate to males in household and personal decision makingand have limited opportunities outside the family”.

Highly traditional men and women in Nigeria believe that the education of women would bring marital disharmony. This is because it is assumed that education would make women proud, arrogant, independent and disobedient to their husbands. Most Nigerian parents are illiterate and are not in a position to guide their children properly. Also, the standard of living of many families has lead many parents to give up their daughters in marriages at a very tender age and the dowry has been used to educate the boys (Ifedili, 1997).

The resistance of men to women’s advancement is ultimately uneconomical, unsociable, apolitical and non-progressive. The antiquated attitude of many men including those with sound education, has affected the ability and opportunity of promising female workers who want to achieve but whose efforts are often thwarted by those in authority. The problem of gender discrimination in the appointments to positions should not only be addressed, but also stated policies should be actualised. In Nigeria, it is general knowledge among many women that qualified and able-bodied female workers, who are often neglected by those in authority, are often overwhelmed to a state of submission, defeat and despair. The society at the end of it all is the loser. Human ideals crumble.

Whenever a less capable worker is appointed because of gender and being in the majority, whether in the educational organization or not, the general tendency is that the neglected capable worker becomes frustrated and the much needed cooperation cannot be guaranteed. The work suffers, making it impossible for the desired goal of the organization to be achieved. This study was inspired by these entrenched attitudes. In spite of the inroads that some women have made in all areas across society that have been traditionally male, the society remains male dominated. The problem for this study emerged from these conditions.

Statement of the Problem

The following research questions were raised to direct the study:

1. Are qualified women appointed to higher-level positions in a proportion similar to that of men and at a similar frequency?
2. Do female employees possess the same academic qualification as their male counterparts before they are appointed to the positions?
3. Do female employees possess the same years of experience as their male counterparts before they are appointed to the position?
4. Are female employees' career aspirations as clear as men's?

Hypothesis

Based on the research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

- HO₁ There will be no significant difference in the appointment of administrators based on gender.
- HO₂ There will be no significant difference in the academic qualifications of male and female administrators before they were appointed.
- HO₃ There will be no significant difference in the years of experience of male and female administrators before they were appointed.
- HO There will be no significant difference in the perception of male and female administrators with regard to female administrators' career aspirations.

Significance of the Study

As Nigeria strives to achieve growth and development in the economy, it is imperative that all who are capable of making positive impact in this developmental struggle are included, irrespective of gender. Douglas McGregor's theory X which stated that some people are not ambitious; have little desire for responsibility; prefer to be directed; have little creativity in solving organizational problems; motivation appears only on the physiological and safety levels (Hersey et al, 1972), do not apply to qualified, able-bodied female employees in Nigeria today. Professionalism, integrity and non-partisan managers are what the country needs today.

The results of the study may enable those in authority, to help advance their promising employees, female and male alike, for the greater good of the country. In particular, female employees who have experienced defeat and despair will be encouraged. They will use the opportunity as the motive to forge ahead and make useful contributions. They also may urge female employees to develop higher career aspirations. Male employees who have been molded by their culture and who would view it as an insult for a woman to lead them may become more enlightened and open-minded about women's issues. Perhaps more young girls will be encouraged to take risks and dive into those areas, which were formerly reserved for men. Ultimately, this study may make some contribution to the problem of discrimination against women that is purely based on sex and not inexperience or educational incompetence or ineffectiveness.

Methodology

The research design used was the causal comparative model. The design consists of the collection of two sets of data from a group of subjects to determine the subsequent relationships between those sets of data. The treatment is affected by selection rather than by manipulation.

The population consisted of all 315 post-primary school administrators in Edo State in Nigeria, as of January 31st, 2001. Sixty (19.05%) were female while 255 (80.95%) were male (see table 1). Also, there were 4179 teachers in post primary schools in Edo State as of January 31st, 2001. One thousand, eight hundred and eighteen (43.5%) teachers were female while 2361 (56.5%) were male.

**NUMBER OF PRINCIPALS IN EDO STATE AS OF JANUARY,
31ST, 2001**

SEX	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
MALES	255	80.95%
FEMALES	60	19.05%
TOTAL	315	100%

TABLE 1

A stratified random sample of 63 (20%) of the school administrators was used for the study. A stratified random sample was used so as to reduce the variability of the sample and also to control the internal invariability. Out of the 63 educational administrators in the sample, 51 (80.95%) were males while 12 (19.05%) were females.

The questionnaire used in this study was constructed by the researcher and titled Personnel Organizational Inventory (POI). The questionnaire had two parts: The first part was demographic, and the second part contained 15 questions relating to career aspirations, family responsibility, promotion, hiring, recognition and respect by male administrators and male employees, and the level of confidence and trust by the supervising bodies.

Questions 1-5 were related to female/male employment, 6-10 dealt with the academic qualification and years of experience of the administrators before they were appointed the post, and 11-15 dealt with the female administrators' career aspirations. The researcher also interviewed the participants. The interview did not last more than 10 minutes. The researcher sought the opinion of the administrators on their job satisfaction and the idea of having more female administrators.

For validity of the instrument, the researcher gave the questionnaire to three experts in the field. Based on their advice, some items were restructured, while irrelevant areas were eliminated. In some cases, items were added.

To establish the level of reliability, the questionnaire was administered to fifty respondents personally by the researcher. These respondents were excluded from the main study before selection of those who participated in the study. The Split-Half method was used.

The correlation coefficient was corrected by the use of Spearman-Brown formula. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was 0.70 and the final Spearman Brown formula yielded 0.82. This shows that the instrument was not only valid but also reliable. A z-test was statistical method used to test the null hypotheses.

The four-point scale was arranged, allowing for the scoring to be: 0-1.09 strongly disagreed, 1.10-2.09 disagreed, 2.10-3.09 agreed, and 3.10-4 strongly agreed.

Results

The data drawn from the questionnaires was used to test the null hypothesis that states: “There will be no significant difference in the appointment of administrators based on gender”

SUMMARY TABLE FOR THE TEST OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATORS BASED ON GENDER.

STATISTICS	MALE	FEMALE	Z VALUE	TABLE VALUE
NUMBER	51	12		
MEAN	3.23	3.75	-9.47	1.96
SD	0.22	0.15		

TABLE 2

The calculated z-value -9.47 at 0.05-confidence level was more than the table value 1.96. This led to rejection of the null hypothesis that there will be no significant difference in the appointment of administrators based on gender.

From the interviews and the questionnaire analysis, further findings emerged. All female administrators stated that women were being marginalized in appointment to positions. Seventy percent of the female administrators associated it with the general stereotypes about women, while 30% of the female administrators associated it with men’s resistance to women progress. However, 90% of male respondents stated that fewer women were appointed because administration could be stressful and demanded lots of time and energy, which the women might not be able to cope with, since all the female administrators were married and had families to take care of, which were there primary responsibilities as housewives. This however is at variance with the female administrators’ responses concerning the family ties and their jobs. The remaining male administrators (10%) responded that males were employed more than the female, but would like to see more female administrators because those employed had proved capable and also innovative.

The second null hypothesis, “There will be no significant difference in the academic qualification of male and female administrators before they were appointed” was analyzed from the data drawn from the questionnaires.

SUMMARY TABLE FOR THE TEST OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE APPOINTMENT OF MALE AND FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS BASED ON ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION.

STATISTICS	MALE	FEMALE	Z-VALUE	TABLE VALUE
NUMBER	51	12		
MEAN	2.05	3.01	-14.10	1.96
SD	0.26	0.19		

TABLE 3

The calculated z-value was -14.10 at 0.05 level of confidence while the table value was 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis cannot be retained. There is a significant difference in academic qualifications of male and female administrators before they were appointed. Although most of the female administrators had their Masters and Doctorate degrees before being appointed, their male counterparts had only a first-degree before being appointed. Both male and female administrators agreed that there was a difference between the academic qualifications of male administrators and female administrators before they were appointed to the post of administrators. See table 4 below.

SUMMARY OF ADMINISTRATORS' DEGREES BEFORE APPOINTMENT

DEGREES	PhD, Ed.D	M.ED, MA, MBA	B.ED, BA, BSC, PGDE	TOTAL
MALE	NIL	03	48	51
FEMALE	2	10		12
TOTAL	2	13	48	63

TABLE 4

From the table analysis above, it is so obvious that there is discrimination against female educational administrators. It also supports the assertion of a male journalist, Nwigwe, that for a woman to earn recognition in any field, she must be ready to make twice the efforts of men.

The third null hypothesis that states "There will be no significant difference in the years of experience of male and female administrators before they were appointed" was tested with the data collected from the questionnaire.

TEST OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATORS BASED ON YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

STATISTICS	MALE	FEMALE	Z-VALUE	TABLE VALUE
NUMBER	51	12		
MEAN	2.02	3.6	-25.54	1.96
SD	.21	.18		

TABLE 5

The z-value -25.54 at 0.05-confidence level was more than the table value 1.96. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. There was a difference in the years of experience of the administrators before they were appointed. From the data, the male administrators disagreed that there was any difference in the years of experience before being appointed to the post. The female administrators, however, strongly believed that there was a difference in the years of experience before being appointed to the post. This, the female administrators attributed to the gender discrimination by the authority and the fear that the female administrators were generally rigid in their administrative practices. The researcher asked if there were any research findings, but it was found to be based on mere assumption. Fifteen percent of the female administrators stated that family responsibilities might have resulted in the appointment of few female administrators.

Additional findings of the study showed that 91% of the male administrators asserted that male administrators were more reliable in terms of staying longer hours and meeting other challenges of the job. Thirty-seven percent of the male administrators stated that females should not be appointed administrators where there were males with at least the minimum requirement for the post. Eighty-five percent of the female administrators agreed that family demand did not affect their jobs and many female workers stay as long as twelve years before being appointed to the post. All the female administrators in the sample stated that some of the female teachers in their various schools had complained that although they were qualified to hold the post of administrator, they were still waiting for the opportunity. They have been in the service for over ten years, with good qualifications and never found wanting in the performance of their duties.

SUMMARY TABLE FOR THE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OF ADMINISTRATORS BEFORE BEING APPOINTED TO THE POST

YRS. OF EXPERIENCE	MALE	FEMALE
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0-5	2	
6-10	36	
11-15	13	5
16-20		7
21+		
TOTAL	51	12

Table 6

The fourth null hypothesis “There will be no significant difference in the perception of male and female administrators with regard to female administrators’ career aspiration” was tested from the data collected from the questionnaire.

SUMMARY TABLE FOR THE TEST OF SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN THE PERCEPTION OF MALE AND FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS WITH REGARD TO FEMALE ADMINISTRATORS’ CAREER ASPIRATIONS

STATISTICS	MALE	FEMALE	Z-VALUE	TABLE VALUE
NUMBER	51	12		
MEAN	3.54	3.65	-1.67	1.96
SD	0.23	0.19		

Table 7

The calculated z-value -1.67 at 0.05-confidence level is less than the table value of 1.96. Therefore, the null hypothesis is upheld. Both genders responded that women have high career aspirations as men. However, male administrators in the study agreed that government efforts to utilize qualified women as educational administrators have motivated many female administrators. The female administrators also responded that they would make the best use of the opportunity that the democratic government has given them and make useful contributions towards the development of Nigeria. Both male and female administrators have high career aspirations.

Recommendations

Based on the research results, the following recommendations are made:

1. Special quotas should be given to women in appointments and promotions to positions of educational administrators so as to provide equal opportunity for women. Thirty percent which is the international benchmark is recommended.
2. There should be transparency when conducting the interviews to allow women to compete freely with men in all facets of employment without bias.
3. Women should have confidence in themselves and their qualifications, by making useful contributions wherever they are. Interacting with Nigerian Female Journalists Association and Nigerian Female Broadcasters can do this. Also, more Non-

Governmental Agencies should be formed. These female organizations owe their duties to promotion of female professionals. The bodies should fight for equal right with men. The bodies should create appropriate forum for discussing and analysing gender related problems.

4. Seminars, conferences and workshops should be organized for both genders to enlighten them on how to work together for the betterment of Nigeria.
5. All women, through the women's forum should fight against discrimination by crying out collectively and familiarizing people of discrimination against women in the system.
6. Government should try to change policies that discriminate against women and formulate policies that would be fair to both genders through policy dialogue.
7. Government should set up an Equal Opportunity Commission to monitor the representative of women in decision-making positions.
8. Studies should be carried out to determine if the performance of students in schools headed by female administrators is better than that of the male administrators.
9. Studies should be carried out to determine whether teachers perform better under male administrators than under female administrators. The criteria for the evaluation should be in terms of output of work, application of professional and technical knowledge, drive, determination, acceptance of responsibility, relationship with colleagues, relationship with the public etc.

Conclusions

From the findings of the research study, a number of observations can be made. It is apparent that females are treated differently than males in both appointment and promotion to certain positions. Female administrators had more qualifications than their male counterparts before they were appointed to positions. Female administrators also stayed longer in service before being appointed as compared to their male counterparts. Female administrators have also indicated a desire for career growth. They have become more enlightened than in the past when many women were reluctant to aspire. Many female teachers who have appropriate qualifications and positive attitudes toward work are seeking to be recognized and appointed. It will be a credit to those in management to help these ones achieve their ambitions. Qualified and able-bodied women, who make themselves available for national services should not be seen as enemies, rather, they should be encouraged and seen as partners in progress. Organizations should try to motivate and challenge both genders to perform better. The male administrators who asserted that female workers would find it difficult to face the challenges of work and so should not be appointed, should know that strength is neither a thing of sex or physical appearance but a thing of the mind. Nigerians should learn to live beyond gender bigotry.

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ⁱ Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City theifedilis@yahoo.com P.O Box 10073, Ugbowo,
Benin City, Edo State Nigeria