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**Gender and Career Progression in the Public Sector: An Empirical Appraisal on
the Osun State Civil Service, Nigeria**

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Abstract

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Keywords: Gender, Civil Service, Career Progression, Gender equality,

1. Introduction

The changing demand of the economy in modern time demands the versatility and continue skills development of the employee. Similarly, skills development of the employee has been linked with development in organization, such that employee experiences in his career can affect the efficacy and efficiency of the organization which also determined the extent of his

satisfaction in the job. Indeed, empirical investigations have shown that such optimism is accompanied by job effectiveness (Avey, Nimnicht & Pigeon, 2010), increased job attendance (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986), a greater willingness to remain with an organization and pro-social actions from employees (Okurame, 2012). As such, lack of career advancement opportunities in careers has been identified as one of the reasons why professionals become dissatisfied with their jobs and leave companies (Crawford, 2002; Olusola et. al, 2012). Career progression therefore focuses on the personal and organizational success of professionals.

Contending issues in gender and career progression of women stems from the assumption that women, compare to their men counterpart, may not be rising in their career as expected. The natural tendencies of religion and cultural attitudes specifically in patriarchal societies may affect the way people perceive women's abilities and how they should perform. Fagenson-eland and Parker (1998) further avers that, since men are stereotypically assumed to be more competent relative to women, they (men) are mostly considered for senior level positions. Among other barriers to women career progression, scholars (Kront, 2006; Tlaiss and Hauser, 2010) were of the view that women lose out on access to formal training opportunities and access to firm sponsored training and development schemes, partly because of the high labour turnover rates of women, which amounts to indirect cost for employers. According to Ilagan-Bian (2004), women faced many challenges in moving up in their career such as non-supportive bosses or colleagues, sexual discrimination and male chauvinism.

Moreover, Obasanjo (1989) in Lagasi and Buba (2016) brings to fore the role of the women by virtue of their physiology, give and nurture life, make women peculiar in national development which could affect the overall development of the country. Since gender according to Lagasi and Buba (2016) is a socially defined sex role, attitude and values which communities and societies describe as appropriate, there is therefore, possible effect of these defined roles on public offices to be held by women in the civil service. However, inspite of the important role of women to nurture life capable of being productive in human endeavours and national development, women marginalization in public life has continued to gain scholarly attention. The study seeks to explore women career progression in the Osun state civil service.

2. Statement of Problem

While constitutional provisions usually declare equality between men and women and forbid any discrimination on the basis of sex on the ground of recruitment and promotion of

government employees, different barriers like social, cultural, and educational paves the way of women from rising in their career. Consequently, top management activity has been seen as the prerogative of men.

Research with regard to career progression of women is not new in literature. Chow (1999); Oakley (2000); Tai, Sim, and Waekler (2005); Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) did a study on impediment to women career advancement. By and large, findings from these studies revealed several barriers to women career progression which includes explanation related to behavioural, cultural, glass ceiling perspective, negative stereotypical assumptions, low levels of aspiration, among others. Giving this submission, the proportion of men to women in top management position could be anticipated. Conducting a research to ascertain the percentage of men to women in the Nigerian civil service, Goldstar (2005) found that 76% of civil servants are men, and 24% are women with women holding less than 14% of the total management level positions in the Nigerian public sector. In Lagos state, Nigeria's private sector involvement of women as directors and top management were 13.87% and 13.84% respectively in 2005, while 8.14% and 13.11% were recorded for women directors and top managers respectively in 2006, representing a slight decline of their involvement in the succeeding year (Goldstar, 2006). Thus, despite awareness among women about their contribution to the socio-economic development of their countries like their male counterparts, they (women) are still faced with challenges of career progression in public life. The study therefore undertook an empirical assessment of women career progression in Osun state civil service. The objectives of the study were to:

- i. identify the policies and practices that impede women's career progression in the Osun state civil.
- ii. ascertain the challenges of career development faced by women in career progression in Osun state civil service.

3. Perspectives on Gender issue

The subject matter of gender is vital to social analysis not only because it revealed how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed (Esplen and Jolly, 2006), there is increased awareness on how such subordination can be ended. In fact, the concept became axiomatic and distinct from sex in the 1950s and 1960s by British and American psychiatrists working with intersex and transsexual patients (Moi, 2005; Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004). It was contended that gender is relational and refers not simply to women or men but to

the relationship between them. The American Psychological Association (2011) offer a comprehensive definition of gender as the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex which is compatible with cultural expectations referred to as gender-normative, behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity. Several other terminologies such as gender equality, gender discrimination, gender violence etc. have emerged to further buttress the place of gender in social analysis. While gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights, gender discrimination is defined as the giving of an unfair advantage (or disadvantage) to the members of the particular group in comparison to the members of other group. Gender discrimination is common to women because they are often seen with certain stereotypes and this leads to discrimination (Kattara, 2005).

4. Career and Career Progression

Perhaps due to the changing nature of economics and technology, researchers have provided a series of definitions focusing on the main characteristics of the term 'career'. According to the National Career Development Association (Cited in Chen 2006), career is the totality of work and leisure in which a person is involved in his or her whole life. Gysbers & More (1981) have suggested that career encompasses various roles, circumstances and places that one encounters in a lifetime. Bertold (2011) define career as an occupation or a profession that usually involves special training or formal education, and is considered to be a person's life work. In this case, career is seen as a sequence of related jobs usually pursued within a single industry or sector, for example a career in law or a career in the building trade. Combining career and progression together, it can be said that career development is a life-long process of fostering and cultivating the shape of the individual's working life so as to make the best use of the inherent talents, skills, knowledge and interest for that person (Peel, 1992). In the view of Arthur et al. (2005), career progression is defined as an outcome of a person's career experiences and the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person's work experiences over time. Similarly, Breland et al., (2007) defined career progression as the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or personal and professional achievements one has gathered from their working experience. Indeed, the primary goal of career progression is to meet the current and future needs of the individuals work and the organization thereby enables the individual to be knowledgeable about market trends, understand skills and knowledge needed in the career, and

also makes an organization attractive to potential recruits and encourages employee commitment, motivation and job performance as they see possible progress in their work (Torrington et al, 2005).

5. Civil Service

The civil service is used as synonym of services embracing all those who work in the public sector. Though the concept has been used interchangeably with public service, they are technically exclusive. Public service as a term is broader in scope than civil service as it includes not only those who work in the regular government ministries and departments but also statutory cooperation, boards and the armed forces. Adamolekun (1983) sees the civil service as the body of permanent officials appointed to assist the political executive in formulating and implementing governmental policies. The civil service comprises all servants of the state, other than those holding political appointments, who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is paid out of money voted by the legislature (Adebayo, 1986).

6. Research Methodology

The study made use of primary data through administration of questionnaire. A total of 145 female respondents from Osun State civil service were strategically drawn as the study population. The reason for the selection of Osun State is based on the proximity and accessibility to the study area. Three out of the 12 ministries in the State was selected for the study. The questionnaire was administered on purposively selected 60 respondents in Ministries of Women Affairs, 50 in Education and 35 respondents in Ministries of Health. The selection of these samples was based on their adequate knowledge of, contribution to, and experience acquired in specific career areas. Data was analysed using frequency distribution.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Department	Frequency	Percent
Education	35	24.1
Women Affairs	60	41.4
Health	50	34.5
Total	145	100.0
Number of Working Years		
Below 3 years	13	8.10
4-6 years	20	13.8
7-10 years	50	34.5
11 - 14 years	45	31.0
Above 19 years	17	11.7
Total	145	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	18	12.4
Married	98	67.6
Divorced	18	12.4
Widow	11	7.6
Total	145	100.0
Educational Qualification		
Secondary	18	12.4
Diploma	44	30.3
Bachelor Degree	66	45.5
Master's Degree	15	10.3
Ph.D.	2	1.4
Total	145	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

7. Analysis of Quantitative Data

Table 2: The Policies and Practices that impede Women's Career Progression in Osun State Civil Service

VARIABLES	S A		A		U		D		S D	
	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%
Human resource management policies embraced female employees	16	12.0	8	6.0	4	3.0	20	15.0	85	63.7

Human resource management policies in Osun state civil service promote a balanced employee life	16	12.0	93	69.9	4	3.0	16	12.0	4	3.0
Civil service policies do not allow use of inappropriate language on female employees	15	11.3	68	51.1	10	7.5	34	25.6	6	4.5
Civil service policies encourage women mentorship at Osun state civil service	24	18.1	9	6.8	9	6.8	22	16.5	69	51.9
Performance appraisals are fair to women employees	22	16.6	73	54.9	4	3.0	29	21.8	5	3.8
There is pay equality among male and female employees at Osun state civil service	30	22.6	70	52.6	8	6.0	19	14.3	6	4.5
The human resource management policies and practices at the Osun state civil service affect female employees career progression to a large extent	16	12.1	73	54.9	6	4.5	25	18.8	13	9.8
There are policies put in place for adequate duration for maternity leave for the women	72	54.1	38	28.6	3	2.3	9	6.8	11	8.3

Source: Field Survey, 2018

As presented in table 2 above, 12.0% of respondents strongly agreed that human resource management policies embraced female employees, 6.0% of the respondents agreed that the human resource management policies embraced female employees, 3.0% of the respondents were undecided about it, while 15.0% and 63.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that human resource management policies embraced female employees. As regards human resource management policies in Osun state civil service to promote a

balanced employee life, 12.0% of the respondents strongly agreed that human resource management policies at the Osun state civil service promote a balanced employee life, 69.9% of the respondents agreed that human resource management policies at the Osun state civil service promote a balanced employee life, 3.0% of the respondents were undecided to it, 12.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed that human resource management policies at the Osun state civil service promote a balanced employee life, and 3.0% of the respondents disagreed that human resource management policies at the Osun state civil service promote a balanced employee life.

Concerning whether the civil service policies allow the use of inappropriate language on female employees, 11.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that civil service policies do not allow use of inappropriate language on female employees, 51.1% of the respondents agreed, 7.5% of the respondents were undecided, 25.6% and 4.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that civil service policies do not allow use of inappropriate language on female employees. More so, 18.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that the civil service policies encourage women mentorship at Osun State civil service, 6.8% of the respondents agreed to it, 6.8% of the respondents were undecided, while 16.5% and 51.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that the civil service policies encourage women mentorship at Osun State civil service.

Meanwhile, 16.6 of the respondents strongly agreed that the performance appraisals are fair to women employee 54.9% of the respondents agreed to it, 3.0% of the respondents were undecided, while 21.8% and 6.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that the performance appraisals are fair to women employees. As regards whether the human resource management policies and practices at the Osun State civil service affect female employees career progression, 12.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that the human resource management policies and practices at the Osun state civil service affect female employees career progression to a large extent, 54.9% of the respondents agreed to it to a large extent, 4.5% of the respondents were undecided, while 18.8% and 9.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that the human resource management policies and practices at the Osun state civil service affect female employees career progression to a large extent. Lastly, 54.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that there are policies put in place for adequate duration for maternity leave for the women, 28.6% of the respondents agreed to it, 2.3% of the respondents were undecided, while 6.8% and 8.3% of the respondents strongly

disagreed and disagreed respectively that there are policies put in place for adequate duration for maternity leave for the women.

Table 3: Challenges of Career Development Faced by Women in Career Progression in Osun State Civil Service

VARIABLES	S A		A		U		D		S D	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Family responsibilities affect female employees in their work-place	87	65.4	39	29.3	1	0.8	3	2.3	3	2.3
Women are often sexually harassed in their place of work	62	46.6	55	41.4	8	6.0	5	3.8	3	2.3
Health issues also affect women's career in the work-place	73	54.9	46	34.6	8	6.0	4	3.0	2	1.5
Female employees are faced with lack of self-confidence in their work-place	25	18.8	77	57.9	6	4.5	15	11.3	10	7.5
Gender inequality also affects women in their career development	14	10.5	83	62.4	4	3.0	22	16.5	10	7.5
Limited access to professional training affects women's career development	27	20.3	73	54.9	3	2.3	24	18.0	6	4.5
Lack of leadership charisma often affect women's career development in the civil service	16	12.1	86	64.7	4	3.0	17	12.8	10	7.5
Women's level of capability towards their job is sometimes low	25	18.8	80	60.2	5	3.8	18	13.5	5	3.8
Lack of equality in training lowers women's performance in the civil service	19	14.3	88	66.2	4	3.0	16	12.0	6	4.5
Cultural perception of women being bosses affects their career development	38	28.6	70	52.6	2	1.5	15	11.3	8	6.0

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 3 above revealed that 64.4% of the respondents strongly agreed to the variable that family responsibilities affect female employees in their work-place, 29.3% of the respondents agreed that family responsibilities affect female employees in their work-place, 0.8% of the respondents were undecided, 2.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed, and 2.3% of the respondents also disagreed to the fact that family responsibilities affect female employees in their work-place. Also, 46.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that women are often sexually harassed in their work place, 41.4% of the respondents agreed that women are often sexually harassed in their work place, 6.0% of the respondents were undecided, while 3.8% and 2.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that women are often sexually harassed in their work place. In the same vein, 54.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that health issues affect women's career in the work-place, 34.6% of the respondents agreed to it, 6.0% of the respondents were undecided, while 3.0% and 1.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that health issues affect women's career in the work-place.

More so, 18.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that female employees are faced with lack of self-confidence in their work-place, 57.9% of the respondents to it, 4.5% of the respondents were undecided, while 11.3% and 7.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that female employees are faced with lack of self-confidence in their work-place. On whether gender inequality affect women in their career progression, 10.5% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 62.4% of the respondents agreed to it, 3.0% of the respondents were undecided, while 16.5% and 7.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that gender inequality affects women in their career development. Meanwhile, 20.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that limited access to professional training affects women's career development, 54.9% of the respondents agreed to it, 2.3% of the respondents were undecided while 18.0% and 4.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that limited access to professional training affects women's career development.

Concerning leadership charisma, 12.1% of the respondents strongly agreed that lack of leadership charisma often affect women's career development in the civil service, 64.7% of the respondents agreed to it, 3.0% of the respondents were undecided, while 12.8% and 7.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that lack of leadership charisma often affect women's career development in the civil service. Similarly, 18.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that women's level of capability towards their job is sometimes low, 60.2% of

the respondents agreed that women's level of capability towards their job is sometimes low, 3.8% of the respondents were undecided while 13.5% and 3.8% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively to this assertion. In the same vein, 14.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that lack of equity in training lowers women's performance in the civil service, 66.2% of the respondents agreed that lack of equity in training lower women's performance in the civil service, 3.0% of the respondents were undecided while 12.0% and 4.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that lack of equity in training lower women's performance in the civil service. Lastly 28.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that cultural perception of women being bosses affects their career progression, 52.6% of the respondents agreed to it, 1.5% of the respondents were undecided, while 11.3% and 6.0% of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that cultural perception of women being bosses affects their career development.

8. Discussion of findings

The objectives stated earlier were analysed and tested with data collected from the field through questionnaires administered on key respondents. The first objective was confirmed by respondents' responses gathered from both the quantitative data. The results showed that there has been no improvement on the policies and practices of Osun State civil service to advance women in their career. Result from the respondents show that human resource management policies does not embrace female employees, and civil service policies does not encourage women mentorship in Osun state civil service. Result revealed that there are no policies put in place for adequate duration for maternity leave for the women. Result from other scholars reviewed also maintained some related opinion stated. For instance, Akinboye (2004) revealed that men have traditionally held positions of power, personnel policies and work structures tend to reflect the life experience of men and are often in conflict with the life experience of women. Similarly, Goldstar (2005) was of the opinion that gender-based policies including work/life policies, which are often seen as directed exclusively at women, are often underutilized and that unless underlying organizational processes are addressed and organizational practices are embraced by all members, barriers to women's advancement will remain. Based on these findings, the policies and practices of Osun State civil service impede women's career progressions.

The result from the quantitative data also revealed several challenges faced by women in their career progression in Osun State Civil Service. It was revealed that family responsibilities affect women their work-place. Result from the study show that women are faced with lack of self-confidence in their work place, while further findings also found that limited access to professional training affect women in their career development. The study further revealed that women are faced with sexual harassment which is seen as a major barrier to women career advancement in Osun state civil service. The study further revealed that lack of leadership charisma often affects women's career development in the civil service (see table 4.2). These views are related to the opinion shared by scholars reviewed in the literature. Specifically, Fagenson-Eland and Parkerer (1998) observes that gender is particularly prominent in the professions today, where women are concentrated in those occupations which are relatively low in the professional hierarchy. The reasons for disadvantages for women in comparison to men according to him can be described in terms of structural or systematic sexism. All structures are designed to either exclude women or discriminate against them. In the same vein, Olusola, et.al (2012) opines that sexual harassment stands out as the key contemporary site of gender struggles over gender norms, sexuality, power and gender equality, as well as legal and organizational norms. Based on this findings, it can be deduced that the women are faced with several challenges militating against their career progression. The implication of this is that there is lack of leadership charisma among the women.

9. Conclusion

Despite the quest for gender equality in Osun State civil service, sexual harassment, lack of self-confidence and limited access to professional training have negative consequences on career progression of women in their work place. Consequently, more should be done to make the civil service a better employer to its female employees, develop positive attitudes toward women and become the employer to be emulated by other private corporations. As a first step toward achieving gender equality and promoting the career progression of women, public and private organizations can encourage the hiring, retention, and advancement of women by adopting work/life policies such as daycare centers for new mothers, work adjustments hours for new mothers to mention a few. Affordable, good-quality and consistent childcare houses should be established in work places to assist women with their children.

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