



ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIER AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF FEMALE ACADEMIC STAFF IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Female participation in formal sector is increasingly growing in both male and female oriented organizations around the world. However, the degree at which female are represented in the higher level of their career is discouraging, especially in Nigerian universities. Using thematic analysis via NVivo 10 software in analyzing interviews conducted on female academic staff. This study has therefore, explore and found that administrative factor; such as excessive workload and lack of political will were barriers to the career advancement of female academic staff in the Nigerian universities.

Keywords: Career Advancement, Workload, Political Will, Female Academic Staff, Nigerian Universities.

INTRODUCTION

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2015) reported that females are not only less represented at a higher position in male dominated occupation but even in the female oriented occupation such as education institution. This argument is practical and eminent in Nigeria, considering the limited number of female vice-chancellors amounting to less than 10, few principal officers in the country universities (Olabisi, 2014; Yusuff, 2014). This degree of female workforce under-representation and their slower speed to the higher positions of management has attracted attention of researchers and practitioners around the world on how to address the issues. This is because women under-representation show that there is female detrimental inequalities in positions in the higher institutions, and thus, limiting the opportunity for females as manpower to contribute their portion to the current and future development in higher education institutions (Rowley, 2013; Olabisi, 2014).

Nevertheless, Nigerian constitution, section 17 (3) (a) of 1999 have it that the State(s) authorities shall direct its policy in achieving that; "All citizens of whatsoever group have equal opportunity of securing a suitable job without discrimination". This provision was further reiterated in section 17 (3) (e) as; "there should be an equal pay for equal work without discrimination on account of sex or any other ground whatsoever." Similarly, the National Gender Policy (NGP) pledged the reservation of 35% of positions to women across all organizations in Nigeria (Olabisi, 2014). Despite, the constitutional provisions and NGP agreement on gender consideration in positions in the workplace in Nigeria, female academic

staffs' in higher institutions still face some barricades to career advancement in terms of unequal opportunities, poor salary and promotion just to mention a few (International Organization Migration, 2014; Olabasi, 2014; Yusuff, 2014). In addition, the problem of female under-representation has also led to wastage of talents and skills, social injustice in the system, process, structure and practice (Ejumudo, 2013; Rowley, 2013). Hence, it will be important to appreciate the factors that hinder career advancement of female academic staff so that the university would employ mechanism of managing it. Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the potential barriers to the career advancement of female academic staff in the Nigerian universities.

METHOD

This study employed qualitative approach via interview technique in data collection. Similarly, purposive sampling technique was used in the selection of seven respondents whom are female academic staff working in seven different universities in Nigeria. This sampling method was adopted due to the fact that, the researcher is familiar with the study environment and knows the appropriate people to generate information from them. These respondents' had in one or another received career advancement either through promotion, salary increase or positive change in status. Data were analysed with NVivo 10 through thematic analysis of the responses of interviewees regarding the administrative barrier hindering the career advancement of female academic staff.

RESULTS

Based on the themes that emerged from the analysis. The themes generated were categorized into other sub-themes. These sub-themes that were generated are discussed in relations to the respondents' original narrations. The narrations as earlier stated are reported in the original words of the interviewees. Thus, this serves as an avenue to achieve the stated objective through the subjective and the in-depth opinion of the interviewees as the details are presented below. Based on the model, the generated themes from the interviews that serve as administrative barrier to female career advancement in the Nigerian universities are workload and lack of political will.

ADMINISTRATIVE BARRIER

Administrative barrier is a theme that emerged after regrouping of different themes related to politico-administrative factors affecting female academic staff career advancement in the Nigerian universities. Amid the themes that occurred and form the administrative barriers are workload and lack of political will. The political will affect the university authority will to plan and implement policies that are directed to a balance university with both male and females impartially distributed. Also, excessive workload has appeared as an administrative factor deterring the career advancement of female academic staff in the Nigerian universities from the opinion of the respondents. The figure 1 below shows that there are 3 interviewees; 3, 6 and 7 that underscored on the effects of lack of political will on the career advancement of female academic staff and 1 interviewee has emphasized on the factor of excess workload hindering the career advancement of female academic staff.

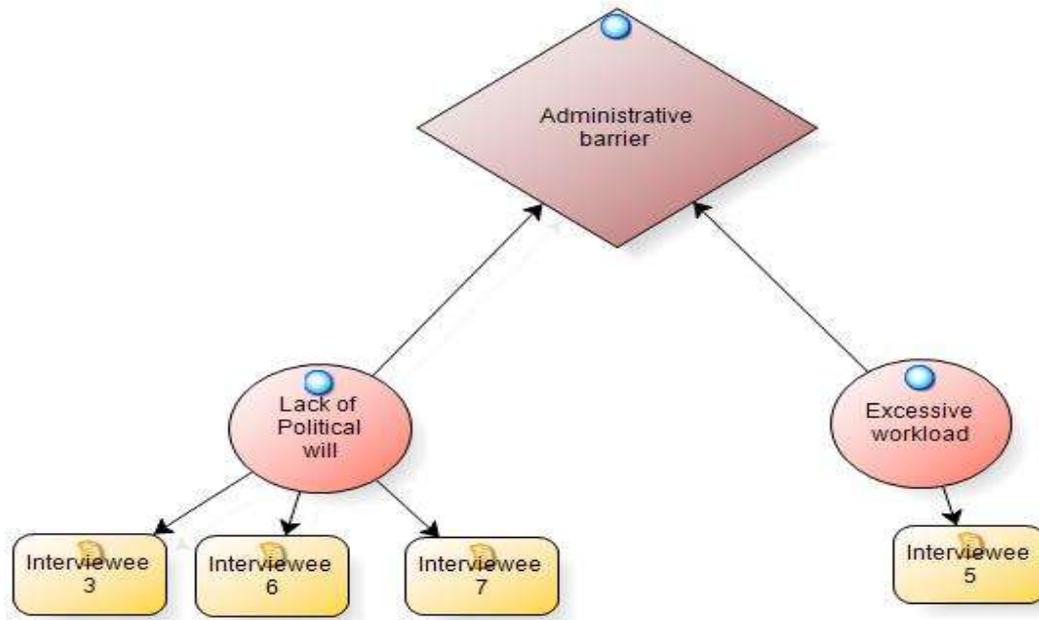


Fig. 1: Qualitative model of administrative barrier of career advancement of female academic staff

Excessive Workload

One of the informants revealed that, excess workload such as teaching many courses and managing other administrative responsibilities affects career advancement for female academic staff due to high demand of job and house chores they have at home. This assertion is categorically depicted by the 5th interviewee.

Too much work here (university) and I go back home still meet domestic work waiting for me. So if the university can reduce the workload for the female staff let it be that way. If the university can minimize the workload for female staff I think that can help. In fact, female academic staff need special consideration because of their dual role (Interviewee 5).

Due to traditional nature of Nigerian society, domestic chore is borne by the female folks of the family, even if they have formal work that they do in their offices. Hence, this condition affects the performance and the resulted effect of advancement of female academic staff due to higher burden of work of the female worker by doing her formal office work and the domestic home chores within intervals.

Lack of Political will

The study also found that lack of political will affect administrative system and hinders female career advancement in the Nigerian university as lamented by some informants. This lack of political will is from those in authority with the responsibility of formulation and implementation of policies regarding the career and the career advancement of female lecturers to occupy a strategic position in the universities. Okafor and Akpkuwebe (2015) opined that policy makers lack the political will to enforce the affirmative provision, and politics has overshadowed the system both at national and the university level.

Following this trend of argument, an informant revealed that the political system in the Nigerian university is as thus;

I don't think that any of those policies have taken deep root in Nigeria. The affirmative action (AA) is not even working, and appointments are still made based on tokenism. I would say right from local level, women occupy positions as women leaders of a group. Political leaders have really bastardized the AA because up to now when they talk about AA. And if you look at permanent secretaries around key ministries, how many would you see. It would take a political will, you know for us to get anything AA. Some other countries are talking of 50/50 but we are begging for 35 (Interviewee 3).

The statement above concurred with the judgments of Omar and Ogenyi (2004) that there are various problems affecting the females and their capability to grow higher in their career due to poor linkages, unsupportive services and unfriendly policies and unfavourable regulatory Nigerian environment. Therefore, due to the widespread negligence of government to female's plight that is why an informant below explores that;

... The government is not putting much attention to the plight of women due to a political issue in the country. You only hear about the government being adding the number of seats that women would acquire in politics, but if you talk about the academic field I don't think the government is giving much attention to women in academic positions (Interviewee 6).

Another informant sees manoeuvre of politics as a factor affecting female academic staff career advancement to a principal management positions in the university. The game of politics in university environment has affected career advancement female academic staff because it gave unnecessary merits to those that are politically connected to individuals and groups at the detriment of those that are less privileged (female member) due to their less representation at the top and less connection in the system. The matter of the patronage system in gaining position and opportunities for higher positions affects the career advancement of female academic staff in Nigeria.

In my own view, if you talk about the position in office like being the HOD, Dean or the VCs or any other position in the office in the academic it has to do with the political issue governing our system in Nigeria. Mostly, when someone is agitating to be HOD or a VC in the university, there has to be some connections or some political issues related to that. It is mostly political (Interviewee 7).

Similarly, another informant lamented that even the academic staff union that claim to represent the interest of members of academic staff has not been paying much attention to the career advancement of female academic staff. "ASUU have not paid attention to gender issues in academic but we have our own for women in academia; 'fora for women in academic' which has been supporting women academic a lot" (Interviewee 3).

Therefore, looking at information obtained from informants show that poor administrative system through political patronage and manipulation has kept female academic behind in career advancement in the Nigerian universities because of the prevailing university system that maintain a continuous and unbalance career advancement policy making and implementation mechanism.

DISCUSSION

According to the interview conducted, the female academic staff career advancement in the Nigerian university has been affected by various kinds of administrative hurdles such as excess workload and lack of political will by the university authorities. These factors form the administrative barrier to career advancement as has been derived from the interviews. Excess workload affects the mental and physical state of a teacher and has negative consequences for the teacher, students and school system. This condition has been ascertained in this study interview (Qureshi, Iftikhar, Abbas, Hassan, Khan, & Zaman, 2013). The female academic staff in the Nigerian universities were particularly concern with the level of excess workload in teaching as discouraging and consequently affect their space of time to do things; such as research that promote their career prospects. Coventry, Maslin-Prothero and Smith (2015) establish that work overload affects employee's ability to achieve continuing professional advancement. Supportively, Kyndt, Raes, Dochy and Janssens (2012) reported that perceived work overload is positively related dissatisfaction of job and consequently disorganized staff career. However, Saeidi, Pasand and Laki (2014) and Trivellas, Reklitis and Platis (2013) revealed that the excess workload has negative impact on career advancement. Similarly, excessive workload was found to cause fatigue and burnout, and even affect the mental and physical state of a staff (Naylor, 2001). Therefore, the issue of academic staff excessive workload has been a barricade to the career development of those female academic staff, and for the overall university system as a whole.

Another administrative barrier to career advancement of female academic staff in Nigeria according to the interviews is the lack of political will of decision makers to the plight of female academic staff in the university in terms of policy making and implementation. It is further stressed that political system, both at the national and university level do not take into consideration the condition of female staff career advancement. Parallel to this finding, Morgan and Buice (2013) lamented that women career was marginalized due to lack of political will from male academic staff who are at the helm of affairs and which consequently led to the contingent effects of elite ques. The authors further argued that unequal representation, lack of trust in government policies that promote supports women's leadership to meet up with men remain an administrative challenge. These findings support that lack of implementing female-friendly policies such affirmative action is emanating from a lack of political will and the situation is in conflict with democratic values and egalitarian society. In a related opinion, an interviewee has opined that even the national government lack adequate political will, least to talk of influencing her agencies. The government and its agencies are controlled by male folk, so also policies of the organizations of the country are geared towards male centric.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explore and found that excessive workload and lack of political will among management staff of Nigerian universities has affected the level of career advancement of female academic staff in Nigerian universities. Thus, in order to have smooth career advancement of female academic staff, management of universities must remove all those factors of administrative barrier in the policy making and implementation. This is because administrative barrier barricades the potential of female academic staff to rise to higher level of their career in particular and it has challenge the advantage of diverse composition of universities with male and female at the top. Thus, for a meaningful quest for career advancement of female academic staff, all barriers must be removed and replaced with career advancement factors. Hence, this study is pertinent as it had identified the administrative barrier in the Nigerian universities, thus, problem identified is a good roadmap for problem solving. The study further recommended for a study on how career advancement can be ginger among female academic staff just like their male counterparts.

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