

## Gender Management and Behavioural Outcomes of Women at Work

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### ABSTRACT

*Working women have contributed immensely to the global economy and this research believes that these contributions should be enhanced for the human world to continue to progress in the right direction. This empirical work highlighted the issues bothering on the management of gender diversity and how they relate to the behavioural outcomes of women at work. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this research to allow for a proper triangulation of methodologies. The findings revealed, amongst others, a direct relationship between the Behavioural outcomes of women at work and Gender Management and recommends personalized hibernation amongst other recommendations.*

**Keywords:** Gender, Behavioural Outcomes, work- family life, Management, Nigeria.

### INTRODUCTION:

Gender is one issue that has been featuring very prominently in contemporary discourse and tends to constitute a major challenge to corporate organizations. Ball (2008) related the increasing female labour force participation to the impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). In line with this position, Anugwom (2009) opined that SAP may have brought about declining real wages, declining government social provisions and withdrawal or cut back on subsidies. As a result of these conditions, challenges of survival amongst families may have increased forcing many women to seek employment. In Nigeria the percentage of female workers to the total work force increased from 32.6 percent in 1980 to about 45.4 percent in 2017 (World Bank Indicators, 2017). The expected trend is that the figures will likely rise, especially when looking at the trend of female enrollment in schools as well as the number of women taking up paid corporate employment and pursuing their careers.

As more women are entering the workforce now more than ever before there is the compelling need to address the challenges of managing women at work. In the literature regarding gender composition effects, Wharton and Baron (1991) found that men's job satisfaction was lower when they belonged to groups that were composed of both men and women than when they belonged to groups that were predominantly male or predominantly female. These authors also found that women's job satisfaction was lower when they were in predominantly female groups than when they were in predominantly male groups or in groups that were equally composed of both men and women. Tsui, et al. (1992) opined that being different in gender had a more negative effect on organizational attachment for men than for women. Although many studies have suggested gender differences in attitudes, increasing research indicates that these differences may also be explained by situational variables. Ely (1995) argued that gender differences may be primarily caused by differences in power within organizations. That is, gender composition may only affect men and women if within a particular organization; it represents less power and fewer rewards and opportunities. In other words, as greater proportions of women get to the upper job levels of an organization, women may seem to have greater work opportunities, such as higher salary, higher promotion rates, and greater responsibility. However, it has been argued that there is no significant difference in job productivity between men and that there has not been any consistent female – male difference in problem-solving ability, analytical skill, motivation, sociability or learning ability (Weiss, et al., 2003) Suffice it to say at this point that the dimensions of gender diversity being discussed in this work are female and

male gender only. Which in the context being discussed are the societal meaning assigned to persons who are naturally and biologically of the human female and male species respectively and who play their respective traditional roles in the context of their cultural backgrounds. This work intends to bring to the fore how the physiological and psychological differences in women and men could be managed to the extent that employees, especially female employees, put forth desirable behavioural outcomes at work and are 'not at all' bothered about issues of gender.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

### **Theoretical Underpinning:**

This work drew largely from two theories in order to make meaning of the dimensions and measures of the variables being considered as well as the nature of the link between them.

One baseline theory on which this work was hinged is the Social Role theory (Eagly, 1987). The Social Role theory assumes that women and men behave differently in social situations and take different roles, due to the expectations that society puts upon them. Hoobler, et al. (2009) observed that women are typically looked at from a non-work, caregiving vantage point. In other words, many societies generally give the home management roles to women. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) believe that work and family domains are incompatible and in conflict. Hence, there was the need to elucidate the conflict employees' face as persons performing both family and work roles. Studies show a bi-directional relationship between work and family. Whether it is the case that there is work interference with family (WIF) or family interference with Work (FIW) there is some level of discomfort on the individual which must be addressed. This work was interested in these interferences and their proper management.

This work also heavily drew from the theory of relative deprivation which argues that individuals will feel aggrieved when wants go unfulfilled and entitlements appear violated (Merton, 1938). Individuals will use comparisons with other individuals and groups to determine what is desirable and deserved. According to the theory, individuals may experience very low associate outcome levels and not necessarily feel deprived or may experience very high outcome levels and yet feel acute deprivation. Individuals may even experience increase in their outcome level and still feel deprived if these improvement fail to match their expectation (Cho, 2007). This theory may be of importance when trying to understand the effects of organizational rewards on satisfaction and behaviour especially when gender diversity issues are pronounced. The allocation of rewards to organizations members is one of the most powerful forces affecting their behaviour (Crosby, 1984). Rewards in organizations are used to attract, retain and satisfy work related needs of employees as well as to motivate performance, indicate status and serve as resources for accomplishment of tasks (Martin, 1981). The impact of these rewards on behaviour of the diverse individuals and groups in organizations depends not on their absolute value but rather on their perceived value relations to what the recipient believe they deserve.

### **Gender Management:**

Gender matters have been gaining prominence to the extent that one would think that at this point history, workplaces will be devoid of issues of gender management. However, gender still appears to be improperly managed in workplaces in spite of all the advocacies and gender affirmative action efforts by both women and men groups. The following section seeks to highlight certain salient issues of gender management which firms will need to address.

### **Work-Life Issues:**

There appears to be an increasing number of cases of both female and male employees who report feelings of conflict between their home responsibilities and their work life (Halrynjo, 2009). The reasons may not be too far from the observation that rapid economic development in the past few decades has generated a lot of educational and employment opportunities in Nigeria of which young professional women could take advantage of (Adekola, 2010). Again, it has been observed that men are increasingly sharing responsibilities for child care (Halrynjo, 2009). Work-family conflict can be defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible or incongruous in some respect, whereby participation in one role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other (Olorunfemi, 2009). Amstad, et.al., (2011) believe that the conflict between work and family is important for organizations and individuals because it is linked to negative consequences such as increased occupational burnout and job stress as well as decreased health, organizational commitment and job performance. The extent to which this causes conflict is determined by the closeness of fit between the two spheres. Momoh (2008) found that a

majority of successful women professionals have to fit domestic responsibilities around their work, and they are expected to conform to a male career model. Given the common perceptions of appropriate roles for women and men, the demands for combining parenthood and marriage with career becomes an immense challenge for many employees. Studies indicate that female employees, particularly those who are married and with children, are more likely to experience work-family conflict than their male colleagues (Grandey, et.al, 2005). Conversely, Byron (2005) in a meta-analysis on work-family conflict concluded that both men and women seem to have quite similar levels of work interference with family and family interference with work.

Research has consistently demonstrated that work-family interface is prevalent and may be an important source of stress with a negative impact on employees' well-being and family relationships (Adekola, 2010). Different types of work-family conflict have been suggested in literature: time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based (Michel, et.al, 2010). These three forms of conflicts are each related to different types of interferences. Time-based conflict may be a situation in which the time spent on activities within one role makes it difficult to participate in another role. This form of conflict is positively related to the number of working hours, the amount and frequency of overtime, and the presence and irregularity of shift work (Akintayo,2010). Strain-based conflict may occur when strain symptoms, such as tension, anxiety, and fatigue, experienced within one role intrude into the other role and affect one's performance in that role. In the case of work-family conflict, the two roles are incompatible in the sense that the strain and stress generated by one makes it difficult to comply with the demands of another (Fako, 2010). Behaviour-based conflict, may be a situation in which specific patterns of in-role behaviours are incompatible with expectations regarding behaviours within the other role (Olanrewaju and Yetunde, 2011). Morrison (2007) is of the opinion that behaviour-based conflict may be more serious among women. This may be because the managerial stereotype emphasizes aggressiveness, self-confidence, emotional stability, and objectivity. This may be in sharp contrast to the image and behavioural expectations of a wife in the family, who is supposed to be care-giving, sympathetic and emotional. Hall and Chandler (2005) posit that if there is a psychological identification with ones work role, especially if that role is successful, then the person will become more ego-involved in that particular role and exhibit higher levels of motivation. This, in turn, may increase time commitment to that role. While work involvement could be an outcome of career salience, objective characteristics in the workplace such as work conditions and job demands may also have significant impacts upon the amount of involvement put in one's work. Heilman and Okimoto (2008) observed that individuals with children regardless of gender were rated lower in job commitments, achievement and dependability than individuals without children. The rise of dual-career couples is making it increasingly challenging for married employees to find time to fulfill commitments to home, spouse, children, parents, and friends. A lot of single – parent households and employees with dependent relations have even more significant challenges in balancing work and family responsibilities. Balancing work and life demands now surpasses job security as an employee priority (Armour, 2002). People still see women as less desirable as supervisors (Heilman and Okimoto, 2008). Working mothers who have children of pre-school age are more likely to prefer part-time work; flexible work schedules and telecommunicating in order to accommodate their family responsibilities. Women tend to prefer jobs that encourage work life balance which has the effect of limiting their options for career advancement and tend to have higher level of absenteeism and turnover than men (Hom, et.al. 2008).

### **Role Perceptions and Expectations:**

In traditional African culture in general and Nigerian culture in particular, home and family responsibilities have been placed on women. Women are not expected to be involved in occupations that will take them outside their matrimonial homes rather they were expected to manage the family and "be submissive to their husbands" (Ehigie and Idemudia, 2000). The caregiving roles given to women is regarded as being incongruent with leadership role (Lewis,2001). This traditional stance views women who are highly focused on their career as less likely to marry and less likely to have children and when they do, they are likely to have fewer children (Friedman and Greenhaus,2000) There is also the perception that child-bearing and rearing responsibilities make women less committed to their careers (Mattis,2002)

The trend of more women taking up formal paid employment and the closely knit cultural background of the Nigerian environment brings along unique family challenges to the work place. Nwachukwu (2000) observed that a typical working wife has a relatively higher rate of absenteeism. For example, she is absent when she is sick, when the husband is sick, when a child is sick and even when parents or in-laws are sick. This is besides the fact that the Nigerian Labour Law has very liberal privileges with regard to the employment of women. Sections 54, 55, 56, 57 and 58 of the Nigerian Labour Act 2004 appear to attest to this. A woman in her non-

pregnant state is just as productive as, if not more productive than, any other employee in the organization (Black and Holden, 1998). With regard to Section (54) of the Nigerian Labour Act 2004, it should be noted that pregnancy is a “health condition” that does not last forever. Thus, managers should not for fear of such a temporary natural health condition, reduce the number of women employed nor avoid employing women in their firms but should rather sympathize and empathize with them for the period. It is perhaps by the reason of this sympathy/empathy stance that organizations are increasingly being liberal and granting working men paternity leave so that they could care for their wives that are due to or have just put to bed.

### **The Glass Ceiling:**

Despite their increasing possession of education and skill women’s labour force participation in Nigeria, may be fraught with some obstacles (Anugwom, 2009). Although various reasons have been offered to explain why women are not consistently advancing to the same professional levels as men, the “glass ceiling” phenomenon is the reason most commonly used to explain this. The term “glass ceiling” is used to describe the barriers to women’s upward mobility as well as the institutional, patriarchal and largely unseen barriers that keep women from obtaining upper management positions within many companies (Hymowitz and Schellhardt, 1986; Cotter et. al, 2001). Women have made giant strides in gaining entrance to firms and cracking the glass ceiling but are still largely stuck in middle management (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). As the term suggests, the “glass ceiling” allows women to see top positions but blocks their advancement to those positions. Hoobler, et.al. (2009) view the persistence of the glass ceiling as due to the bosses’ perceptions of their subordinates’ family and work intersections. The researchers believe that bosses erroneously perceive women workers to have more family –work conflict than men and this mistaken belief makes supervisors to take a negative stance on women employees’ suitability for promotion which has had negative implications for women’s organizational advancement.

### **Discrimination and Reverse Discrimination:**

While discrimination suggests favouring those who have an advantage over the less advantageous, the trend of reverse discrimination appears to be doing the exact opposite. Reverse discrimination is a situation where those who have a lesser advantage are given greater preference and privileges as compared to those who are perceived as the advantaged lot (Pincus, 2003). It is a controversial specific form of discrimination against members of a dominant or majority group, or in favour of members of a minority or historically disadvantaged group. Reverse discrimination may have emerged in an attempt to end discrimination of various types. As the result of all the preferential treatment that was given to advantaged groups in the past, various movements by way of affirmative actions began to push for the equality of gender, ethnic groups, religions and those with disabilities. It soon became a kind of pattern to treat those from marginalized groups with greater privileges (Crosby, et.al, 2006). Instead of attaining equality, the process reversed completely. The issue of reverse discrimination is being put forward by many men who believe that the marking of an International Women's Day since the early 1900s and its adoption in 1975 by the ‘World’ through the United Nations is discriminatory and argue that women have been given more than enough opportunity and even believe that it is indeed the men who are being marginalized. Firms have to take cognizance of and effectively manage all types of actual or perceived discriminations in the workplace.

### **Horizontal Hostility:**

It may seem commonsensical to assume that one of the top goals of the women’s movement was to fight for equality with men. However, it may be noticed that some women may be more competitive with other women than with men, especially when limited job positions are the goal. These women may seek to advance themselves by undermining female coworkers through the use of rumors and sabotage. In some cases women may be their own haters and worst enemies. It has been observed that women would not support other women and when one woman tries to stand out from a group; other women are the first to notice this particular woman (Hardiman and Jackson, 1980). Women often report that females are difficult to work with and tend to be pettier about things than men (Stone, 2007). This Competitiveness among women can be explained by a phenomenon called horizontal hostility.

Horizontal hostility may be more generalized to cover situations where members of the same oppressed, powerless and marginalized group fight against each other instead of the differential forces that are oppressing them (Kennedy, 1970). Members of these marginalized groups take out their anger, fear, lowered self-esteem, frustration, and mistrust on those closest to them, those as vulnerable as they are, and those who have equal or

less power or status than they do. Scholars have suggested that horizontal hostility occurs because oppressed, powerless and marginalized persons often are unable to fight those that are oppressing them because these persons are competing for scarce resources such as power, positions, tenure or authority (Chesler, 2001). One of the major impacts that horizontal hostility has upon oppressed, marginalized group members is that it divides them and prevents such members from working together to build alliances needed to fight oppression (Blasingame, 1995). They may have feelings of jealousy, fear and a lack of power and may engage in such behaviours as name-calling, sabotage, and the use of belittling remarks towards one another (White, et al, 2006). It can be difficult to do any job when coworkers are engaging in horizontal hostility as affected groups in the organization may be unable to support one another and therefore, unable to work together towards achieving both their personal goals and the goals of the organization.

**Incivility:**

Studies have demonstrated that prejudices persist in covert forms within society in general and within organizations in particular (Brief, et.al, 2000). Campbell and Deacon, 2006 have observed that one can mask discrimination, even without realizing it. Incivility in the workplace has been seen as low-intensity conduct that lacks a clear intent to harm but nevertheless violates social norms and injures targeted employees (Cortina, et. al, 2004). Suffice it to say that there is increasing scholarship on subtle, nonphysical manifestations of interpersonal mistreatment in the workplace, including general incivility. Incivility in the workplace disrupts employee relationships and derails cooperation, rending the social fabric of the workgroup and possibly, in an attempt to dampen the increased stressfulness of work. Employees targeted with uncivil behaviour may also be victims of alcohol and drug abuse (Lim and Cortina, 2004). Personnel targeted with pervasive incivility ultimately lose commitment to their organizations and exit at higher rates (Pearson and Porath, 2004). Even employees who merely observe un-civil treatment toward colleagues show lower job satisfaction and commitment and greater job burnout and turnover intentions; such observer effects emerge even while controlling for negative affectivity, so they cannot be attributed to a negative dispositional stance making observers more attuned to negative stimuli in their environments (Miner-Rubino and Cortina, 2006).

**Behavioural Outcomes:**

Violence, aggression and deviant behaviours are likely to have serious implications for organizations which they cannot afford to ignore. These behaviours may significantly violate organizational norms and may threaten the well-being of the organization and / or its members. Organizational norms in this context may be organizations policies and unspoken rules that are widely shared in the work environment that prohibit or encourage certain behaviours at work. Deviant workplace behaviours can be serious and can wreck havoc on an organization. It is important that the root causes of all behaviours are tackled. The presumption is that satisfied employees are more productive than dissatisfied ones and evidence show that employees who are more satisfied will be more likely to exhibit desirable behaviours.. As noted by LePine, et. al, 2002, it is when employees engage in such organizational citizenship behaviour will they do more than their usual job duties such as helping colleagues, volunteer for extra work, avoiding unnecessary conflicts and respect rules and regulations.

In spite of any one best intention, discrimination especially those relating to issues such as those relating to gender can lead to serious consequences for employers. It may not matter whether a barrier is real or perceived, people act on barriers as if they are real. Perceived discrimination is an individual's perception that she or he is treated differently or unfairly because of her or his group membership (Fiske, et. al, 2010).). Furthermore, when individuals feel they are mistreated because of any of their known identity they often feel alienated and angry, which can result in negative work-related behaviours. If an employee does not get listened to, such a person may choose to reduce contributions to the organization, leave it or remain but be a cog in the wheel of the organization's progress. There is a cost when talents and contributions are not utilized. If more women are leaving the organization it may be imperative that managers are not sensitive to women's needs. Another extraction may show that people leave because they cannot get promoted. Thus, having an organizational culture that encourages employee involvement and creates a sense of ownership and responsibility should be important for management

McGinn's (2010) has noted that consequences for perceived discrimination may include reduced citizenship behaviours, negative conflicts, mental and emotional stress. All of the aforementioned consequences are likely to be counterproductive to the organization. Many Nigerian organizations have policies that reflect the protection of certain classes of employees (including women and minority groups) from discrimination or harassment based on social category membership. These organizations appear to formulate policies which are in

compliance with the Provisions of the Labour Act (2004), Federal Character Principle, Public Service Rules (2008) as well as the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended in 2011. However, The McGinn's (2010) study explicitly suggests that until evaluation and promotion practices are blind and believed to be blind by the candidates, it will be difficult for organizations to motivate and retain high performance women and minorities.

The financial implications of employee behaviours in reaction of physical or psychological discomfort of improper or poor management of gender could be enormous. Adverse individual and collective consequences of workplace incivility for example have financial implications for employers, who must absorb the costs of employee distraction and discontentment, job accidents, substance abuse, sick leave, work team conflict, productivity decline, and turnover (Cortina, 2008). The cost of Absenteeism is one huge one to employers. It is will be more difficult for an organization to operate smoothly and attain its objectives if employees fail to report for duty at their workplaces or that some employees are physically present but psychologically absent. The work flow is disrupted, important decisions may be delayed, quality and perhaps quantity of output may likely reduce or a complete shutdown of facility may be needed in some cases, thus, affecting directly the organizations level of productivity. Again, if for any reason there is a voluntary or involuntary permanent withdrawal of employees from an organization, the organization is likely to be worse off for it. This higher turnover rate increases recruiting, selecting and training costs. Apart from these costs, disruption of the smooth running of the organization will surely reflect on its performance, especially when the turnover involves strategic persons Barling et. al,( 2001) have theorized that experiences of abusive behaviours at work lead to negative mood, cognitive distraction, fear, and perceived injustice. These cognitive and affective reactions, in turn, adversely influence targets' occupational, psychological, and physical health. Some scholars have proposed that these negative consequences extend beyond the targeted employee to affect bystanders, workgroups, and whole organizations (Miner-Rubino and Cortina, 2004). Employees targeted with uncivil behaviours experience greater job stress and dissatisfaction, lower creativity, cognitive distraction, and psychological distress as well as turnover intentions (Sharma and Singh,2016). An employee may describe his organization as nice place to train but would not want to work there. When workers are highly trained in an organization and leave, they most often go to a competitor. In essence, the training is done for a competitor. Such turnover is a direct attack on the organizations strategic objectives

## **METHODOLOGY:**

The population of the study comprised of female employees of corporate private firms in Port Harcourt, a cosmopolitan city in the South –South Geo-political zone of Nigeria. Using the Krejcie and Morgan Model (1970) the sample size of 380 employees were selected at random. Both the objectivist and subjectivist approaches were adopted for this study. Hence the questionnaire method and in-depth interview method were used to obtain the primary data from the respondents. The Predictor and Criterion variables were measured with a five point Likert- type scale specifically developed for this study. The instrument had varying degree of acceptability with 5 representing the highest degree of acceptability and 1 representing the least degree of acceptability. The survey instrument was subjected to a reliability test and considered those items with cronbach Alpha coefficients above 0.7 as reliable. A non parametric correlation was used for the purpose of data analysis. The predictor variable was measured by the extent to which employees worry about issues pertaining to their gender roles. The measures of the criterion variable included employee productivity, which was looked at in terms of the timely and accurate delivery of output; Innovativeness, which was looked at in terms of the employees' ability to be creative; conscientiousness, which was looked at in terms of the employees ability and willingness to do one's duties thoroughly ;Finally, the rate of absenteeism which was looked at in terms of the physical and psych logical presence of an employee at the workplace.

## **RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION:**

The results of the inferential tests indicate an inverse correlation between gender management and rate of absenteeism (-0.828,  $P < 0.01$ ) and a direct correlation between the predictor variable and employee productivity (0.779,  $P < 0.05$ ), Innovativeness (0.876,  $P < 0.01$ ) and conscientiousness (0.619,  $P < 0.05$ ), respectively. Thus, the findings of this work revealed that the better the management of the gender roles of the employees, the lower the rate of absenteeism and vice versa; the better the management of the gender roles of the employees, the higher the productivity level, the better the level of innovativeness behaviours exhibited and the more conscientious the employees are likely to be. Women are often stereotyped and categorized based on certain

perceptions. For instance, looking at the ideological norm of the "ideal worker", many organizations view the ideal worker as one who is committed to their work above all else and that the ideal workers are those that demonstrate extra-role behaviours, which are seen as positive attributes. Alternatively, those who are perceived as having to divide their time and their commitments are seen not as dedicated to the organization (King, 2008). As mentioned elsewhere in this work women are often perceived as being more committed to their family than to their work. This manager's perception of a subordinate's commitment to the organization is positively associated with the individual's promotability (Hoobler, et al., 2009). If an employee does not feel valued or perceives that she is considered slow because of her gender or has learned that she cannot ascend her career ladder as quickly as desired, her performance may likely drop and tend to exhibit dysfunctional behavioural outcomes. Major and O'Brien (2005) believe that stigma threatens a person's social identity and may affect the behaviour of those who are stigmatized. The tendency is that those who are stereotyped often start to act in ways that their stigmatizers expect of them. This does not only change their behaviours but also shapes their emotions and beliefs (Major and O'Brien, 2005).

### **CONCLUSION/IMPLICATION FOR RESEARCH AND PRACTICE:**

One basic assumption of this work is that the behavioural outcomes of women at work will have serious implications for firms in terms of their general corporate performance. From the findings of this work, poor management of gender will lead to high rates of absenteeism, lower level of productivity, stifled innovativeness as well as reduced levels of conscientiousness. All of the aforementioned behavioural outcomes are obviously negative for firms.

This work is neither a gender Affirmative action campaign nor a call for policies to be biased towards a particular gender but well intended to bring to the fore the need to properly manage the gender roles of employees. From the results and findings of this work, it is concluded that the better the management of gender roles of employees, the more favourable their behavioural outcomes.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

In addition to the recommendation that all the issues of gender management highlighted in this work should be critically looked at and efforts made to ensure positive behavioural outcomes, the following are also recommended.

#### **Personalized Hibernation:**

Management should encourage personalized hibernation periods for career growth for individual employees. This is aimed at reducing the discomfort and stress employees may feel when their growth rate is not at par with those of their colleagues. The personalized hibernation period is a specific period set by the individual during her/his work life to attend to personal matters such as taking care of young children while still working but planning to stage a come-back. The idea is that the pressure and tension within the individual may be reduced if the employee's mindset is tuned to thinking of gaining promotion or other performance based organizational favours after the hibernation period.

#### **Self Management Coaching:**

Management should expose employees to self management coaching programmes to the extent that the employees' gender roles elsewhere do not affect the gender roles at the workplace and vice versa. Such deliberate programmes should be embarked on to allow employees play their gender roles to the extent that there is a perfect match between the roles. This will likely reduce the effects of role interferences, role conflicts and role overload.

#### **Empathy:**

Corporate policies should be empathetic to the extent that employees do not feel any discomfort by reason of their gender.

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