

Gender Disparity in Leadership among Information Professionals in Some Selected Polytechnic in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated gender disparity in leadership among information professional in some selected polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study comprise librarians in polytechnic libraries of the four polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria. Three (3) objectives guided this study. Purposive sampling techniques was Used for the study. The instrument of data collection was questionnaire. Abraham Maslow theory of need was adapted for this study. The study finding revealed that the level of gender disparity among information professional for management positions is high. Some of the reasons for gender disparity in leadership among information professional are: ability to get over challenges, ability to take dynamic position in the face of problem and emotion towards decision-making, etc. The study recommended that National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should make policy that will bridge the gap for gender inequality among polytechnic leadership position, Female information Professional should demonstrate that they can take dynamic position in the face of challenges in leadership.

Key words: Disparity, Gender, Information, Leadership, Librarian, Professional.

Introduction

As a mark of status, privilege and expectations about behavior, gender is integral to leadership. Ayman and Korabik (2010) posited that there are many factors that shape leadership both as a concept and as a role within an organization: “gender-role socialization; gender-role

beliefs, attitudes, and expectations; gender stereotypes; gender-based status differentials; group gender composition; and the gendered nature of tasks. Gender disparity have shown that male and female do not occupy leadership positions in equal numbers “female have less access to leadership, especially to roles that confer high levels of power and authority. Organizational research identifies three key reasons that make it more challenging for female than male to enter leadership ranks. Females’ greater domestic and caretaking responsibilities negatively impact their employment outside the home; work-life balancing also limits and/or slows females’ career advancement (Kark & Eagly, 2010).

More so, gender is still not well represented in management positions in polytechnic administration. Gender disparity in polytechnic leadership and decision-making in polytechnic system have drawn monumental interest from scholars across the globe (Olin and Lillet, 2015; Johnson, 2017; Ogunrombi et al., 2002; Heilman, 2012). In spite of the fact that the 2006 Nigerian population census figure revealed that female constituted 49% of the total population, there has been a gross gender gap between male and female, notably in management position in higher institutions. Education is an equalizer, Knowledge is power, wealth, civilization and key resource of any society. It is one of the pivotal instruments through which one can attain leadership positions in the modern era has long been acknowledged by female who dare all odds to acquire the knowledge needed to be of significance in their endeavours in the society. A studied by Tank (2016) revealed that most female in all professions, not just in information professional, find it difficult to balance career and family, which hinders their personal career growth or leads to broken relationships, leading to stress and health issues. Female need to understand the harmony in ourselves as an individual, harmony in the family, in society, and with Nature/existence to live our lives according to our Natural Acceptance.

Librarianship is still one of the professions in which gender segregation is pronounced in the attainment of management positions (Johnson, 2017). Despite the feminization of librarianship profession or information Profession, female are still not well represented in management positions in polytechnic administration globally the number of female occupying management positions as polytechnic librarians in Nigerian polytechnic is still awfully low and never reflects proportionally the number of female information professional in Nigerian polytechnic. An attempts at investigating the factors responsible for the differences merely focused on some gender characteristics personal to females’ (Adesunkanmi, 2010). Worldwide gender disparity has

indicated that female are not evenly represented in management positions in public institutions as their male counterparts (EIGE, 2018). Obviously underrepresented in leadership roles in polytechnics as a clear gender inequality is noted at management level within higher education in spite of some bold attempts to enhance the proportion of female in the leadership positions for these roles (Shepherd, 2017; O'Brien, 1983).

Consequently, much has not been done to investigate gender in management positions among information professional, and the factors responsible for gender disparity among information professional in assuming management positions in African, notably Nigerian Polytechnic. Most of the research in this direction are limited to advance world, notably America, Europe and China (Burice and Mckeen, 1992; Smith and Monaghan, 2013; Groeneveld et al., 2019). The geographical limitation in study of this nature has restricted the unravelling of the experiences of gender in information professional in Nigeria which has sharp cultural, demographic and educational differences with advanced economies. It then becomes pertinent to know the level of gender disparity among information professional and reason about gender disparity in leadership. These are the questions this study is set to answer. The study is limited to the position of Polytechnic Librarians in Edo State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Studies

The objectives of the study are to:

1. find out the percentage difference between male and female librarians in leadership positions across the libraries;
2. find out aspects of gender disparity among librarians in the libraries;
3. ascertain the factors influencing gender disparity among information professional for management positions.

Review of Related Literature

Leadership cannot be adequately studied and understood without accounting for gender, within leadership research that explores the role of gender, there are three distinct perspectives: intrapsychic, social structural, and interpersonal. The intra psychic approach focuses on how the internal gender-role characteristics of the leader, including gender identity, attitudes and values acquired through gender socialization, as well as gendered traits such as “instrumentality/masculinity/agency and expressivity/femininity/communion” influence the

leader's "style, behavior, and outcomes" Ayman & Korabik, (2010). In Africa in the time past, level of gender disparity shown that female were considered culturally inferior to male, they were not seen as having the required intelligence needed to occupy leadership positions (Olujide, 2010). Today, this stereotype has crippled the aspiration and progress of female in management positions in librarianship resulting from the stereotype, the status and responsibility of female was a matter of argument and concern in all professions starting from the 1960s and the information profession was no exception (Jones & Goulding 1999).

Library literature emerging from Africa in the past 20 years have very little research exclusively associated with the development of level of gender disparity in leadership of librarians. The proportion of female in management positions in librarianship in Nigerian polytechnics is minimal and is on the verge of depletion. A number of factors account for this. Adesunkanmi (2010) posited that in academic, female are at disadvantaged position in putting papers together for promotion as opposed to their male counterparts, they publish less. As such, they are less frequently promoted to senior ranks in librarianship. Also, gender sorting by co-authors explains why male information professional are more productive in terms of research output than female information professional. Neumark and McLennan (1995) explained "gender sorting by coauthor" in terms of female and male tending to collaborate with co-authors of the same sex. Also, the interruption of the careers of female by childbearing affects their form reaching management positions, most of which are determined by promotion and appointment (Adesunkanmi, 2010). The slow promotion rate of female academic never comes from discrimination in promotion process but by domestic responsibilities and the masculine nature of the collegial processes in polytechnic leadership (Neumann, 2002; Nwezeh, 2009).

Abraham Maslow Theory of Need

Abraham Maslow theory of need (1908-1970) was adapted in this study, Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory can be applied to the individual's life span. In the early years of life of a female information Professional is concerned about fulfillment of basic needs. But when a female takes up a job and experience independence, which is marked by crave for autonomy, she feels that she should be consulted and works to achieve recognition in her profession as a leader. Employees' first want is physical and job security later a suitable working environment,

appreciation, job stability recognition, growth and autonomy. Thus making a full cycle of need beginning with physiological needs to her self – actualization needs as a librarian in an institution.

A study by Tank (2016) revealed that most female in all professions, not just in librarianship, find it difficult to balance career and family, which hinders their personal career growth or leads to broken relationships, leading to stress and health issues. Female need to understand the harmony in ourselves as an individual, harmony in the family, in society, and with Nature/existence to live our lives according to our Natural Acceptance. Worldwide, the level of gender disparity among information professional revealed that female are not yet evenly represented in management positions in public institutions as their male counterparts (EIGE, 2018). They are obviously underrepresented in leadership roles in polytechnics as a clear gender inequality is noted at management level within higher education, in spite of some bold attempts to enhance the proportion of female in the leadership positions for these roles (Shepherd, 2017; O'Brien, 1983). Effective leadership and growing diversity are central issues in the management of every profession, including librarianship (Epps, 2008). Managers as leaders dictate the tunes and ensure that efforts are channeled toward result. Managers have to be equipped with the required education and management skills and qualities. Generally, most of the management positions in Nigeria today, being it politics, academic, large corporations and homes, are dominated by men (Okafor and Akokuwebe, 2015; Heilman, 2012). This is so in librarianship (Phillip et al., 2016; Adesunkanmi, 2010; Morrison, 1987). Though some female are now better organised than ever, seeking empowerment and equal rights with their male counterparts, their conditions are yet to be decolonised as the greater proportion of them are still riddled with inferiority complex that is reinforced by a patriarchal system which confers on female librarians the status of second class librarians (Fayankinnu, (2003).

A study on gender and leadership style by Martin's (2015) an exploratory assessment of male and female directors' preference for either transformational or transactional leadership style associated with female, transformational leadership emphasizes relationships, shared values and vision; a transformational leader recognizes and respects the individual needs of their employees who, in turn, trust and follow their lead. Transactional leadership is linked to male and focuses on clearly stated expectations, assignments, evaluations, and rewards for task completion. Although she reported no significant difference in gender use of transformational and transactional leadership, she found significant differences when it comes to how often male and female

employed specific aspects of transformational leadership. Female directors relied on idealized attributes, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration to a greater extent than male did (Martin, 2015).

Globally, librarianship, nursing and teaching are the conventional female occupations in which female preponderate but are underrepresented in management positions (Bladek, 2019). In academic environment, librarianship is the only feminized department. The fast increase in the number of female librarians indicates the emergence of a female stereotype in addition to the sexist restraining factors (Mars, 2018). The feminization which constrains female to restricted professional advancement and non-administrative positions hampers occupation mobility and status of librarians thereby formed a mediocre picture for the profession (Rubin, 2016; Mars, 2018). In the world over, female are less favoured in the assumption of management positions. Mars (2018) espoused that though library workplace in America is dominated by female, the leadership roles have greater proportion of male. Also, the tardy retirement of career librarians obstructs female in the profession, and assumption of leadership positions in academic libraries favours male (Thomas et al., 2019). The same situation obtained in some African countries. Adjah and Van Der Walt (2017) conducted a study on career progression of female librarians in public institution libraries in Ghana and found that female librarians could not meet the requirements for promotion in their respective institutions which led to dawdling progress in their careers. In Nigeria, successful librarians require masculine-based leadership qualities which include assertion, self-assurance and aspiration. However, treasured leadership characteristics these days include some feminine-centred traits such as empathy, cooperation and openness.

Some researchers in contemporary era are geared towards finding if female librarians have a better opportunity of creating a good standard for management position in Polytechnics (Nwezeh, 2009; Bruckmuller & Branscombe, 2011). Olin and Lillet (2015) Posited that in spite of the huge gains in representation at the management level, there is still high level of gender disparity in capacity for management position between the proportion of female in library profession and female at management positions in librarianship. Ogunrombi et al. (2002) observed that the contributions in term of capacity of female librarians to library advancement in Nigeria from 1960 to 2000 were not fully appreciated as very few female librarians were included and cited in Nigerian biographical works. Parikh (2016) gives many examples of the female librarians' contribution from abroad and in India: scenario. She stated that "there will be more contribution

from females' librarians towards Knowledge Centers if female in India are given the necessary support to develop the capacity to contribute to India's knowledge. But at the same time, female and male librarians are important to contribute to librarianship. A library that caters to male and female can provide better service with staff whose key positions will be divided between the genders. Male and female represent different elements; they see things from different perspectives. If they work together in a separate library, each contributes their best; the result is broader, richer, and more diverse than if only male or female were involved.

Considerably the large number of gender disparity in capacity for management Position in librarianship is better understood by considering the three hypotheses by Burice and Mckeen (1992), as seen in Olujide (2010), which x-rayed female in management position. Hypothesis one reveals that female are different from male and the difference is seen as a deficiency inherent in them when juxtaposed against the male organisation norms. As such, the attitude, behaviours and socialisation of females' incapacitate them in the masculine corporate environment. The second hypothesis claims that professional female are obstructed by bias and stereotypes which male have for female. Stereotypical restraints against female in struggling to attain educational leadership roles to the top are obvious, because the educational leadership system in Nigeria is male-centric as witnessed in the current educational structures and practices (Okafor et al., 2011). The third hypothesis lays claim on structural and system discrimination in organisational policies and practices that reflect on how female are treated which hamper their achievements.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study was 32 librarians at the polytechnic libraries of the four polytechnics in Edo State, Nigeria. Purposive sampling techniques were used for the study. The four polytechnics were purposively chosen because they were in the same area covered by the study while census sampling technique was used to capture all the librarians in the Polytechnic. Baxter (2004) posited that when the population is small and manageable, the entire population can be used for the study. The instrument of data collection was questionnaire. A total of 32 copies of the questionnaire administered while 32 copies were returned, representing 100% response rate. Research questions 1 and 3 used 4-point Likert scale were analysed using inferential statistical while research question 2 used

frequency count and percentage. The criterion mean for the study was set at 2.50 indicating that any mean above 2.50 was considered high and the mean below 2.50 was considered low.

Data analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Difference between male and female librarians in leadership positions across the libraries

| Libraries | Male | Female | Total | % |
|---|------------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi Edo State | 7 | 1 | 8 | 44.4 |
| National Institute of Construction Technology and Management, Uromi Edo State. | 2 | 1 | 3 | 16.7 |
| Edo State Polytechnic Usen, Edo State | 5 | 0 | 5 | 27.8 |
| Kings Polytechnic, Ubiajah Edo State. | 2 | 0 | 2 | 11.1 |
| Total | 16(88.9%) | 2(11.1%) | 18 | 100% |

Table 1: shows that 88.9% for male and 11.1% for female this implies that male are dominating leadership position in librarianship across libraries in polytechnic in Edo State Nigeria.

Table 2: Find out aspects of gender disparity among librarians in the libraries

| Aspects of gender disparity among librarians | VHL | HL | LL | VLL | Mean |
|--|-----|----|----|-----|-------------|
| Unequal salary payment | 9 | 7 | 10 | 6 | 2.59 |
| Access to promotion for a particular position | 6 | 12 | 5 | 9 | 2.84 |
| Gender bias at the work place | 15 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 3.19 |
| Opportunity to leadership position in an organization | 12 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 2.97 |
| Gender stereotype | 14 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 3.09 |
| Advancement for decision making in an organisation | 13 | 10 | 7 | 2 | 3.06 |
| Average mean | | | | | 2.96 |
| Criterion mean | | | | | 2.50 |

Table 2: shows that with an average mean of 2.96 which is greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that the level of gender disparity among information professional for management positions is high.

Table 3: factors influencing gender disparity among information professional for management positions

| Factors influencing gender disparity | A | | D | | Total | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|----|-------|-------|
| | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % |
| Preparation for management positions | 17 | 53. | 15 | 47 | 32 | 100.0 |
| Attitude for management position | 13 | 41 | 19 | 59 | 32 | 100.0 |
| cultural support for becoming leaders | 21 | 66 | 11 | 34 | 32 | 100.0 |
| Academic preparation for management position | 23 | 72 | 09 | 28 | 32 | 100.0 |
| Ability to get over challenges | 14 | 44 | 18 | 56 | 32 | 100.0 |
| Ability to take dynamic position in the face of problem | 07 | 22 | 25 | 78 | 32 | 100.0 |
| Support from women librarians for becoming leaders | 14 | 44 | 18 | 56 | 32 | 100.0 |
| Emotion towards decision-making | 26 | 81 | 06 | 19 | 32 | 100.0 |

Table 3: shows reason for gender disparity in leadership positions in library. The respondents agreed Preparation for management positions (32/53%), Academic preparation for management position (32/72%), cultural support for becoming leaders (32/66%), Emotion towards decision-making (32/81.5%). This implies that, Preparation for management positions, cultural support for becoming leaders, academic preparation for management position and Emotion towards decision-making are some of the reason about gender disparity in leadership position in the library.

Discussion of findings

The study findings are discussed in line with the objectives of the study.

The study clearly reveals that the level of gender disparity among information professional for management positions is high. While a study by Adesunkanmi (2010) agreed that in Africa in

the time past, female were considered culturally inferior to male. Also Olujide (2010) in similar way agreed that female were not seen as having the required intelligence needed to occupy leadership positions.

The result of the findings showed that the reason for gender disparity in leadership among information professional are: ability to get over challenges, ability to take dynamic position in the face of problem, Support from female librarians for becoming leaders and emotion towards decision-making. The finding agreed with the findings of Tank (2016) that most female in all professions, not just in librarianship, find it difficult to balance career and family, which hinders their personal career growth or leads to broken relationships, leading to stress and health issues.

The result disagreed with Ogunrombi et al. (2002) finds that observed the contributions and capacity of female librarians to library advancement in Nigeria from 1960 to 2000 were not fully appreciated as very few female librarians were included and cited in Nigerian biographical works.

Conclusion

This study investigated gender disparity in leadership among information professional in some selected polytechnic in Edo state, Nigeria. The study found that the level of gender disparity among information professional for management positions is high. Some of the reason about gender disparity in leadership among information professional are emotion towards decision-making, ability to take dynamic position in the face of problem and cultural support for becoming leaders. The level of gender disparity in capability of information professional for management is low.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations are made

1. National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should make policy that will bridge the gap of gender disparity among polytechnic leadership position.
2. Female information Professional should demonstrate that they can take dynamic position in the face of challenges in leadership.
3. Capacity in term of Professional image building, Commitments issues, Research publication and Educational success in leadership of female information professional should be increase.

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