

Women In University Management: The Nigerian Experience

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ABSTRACT

This study examined women in university management in Nigeria. It was a descriptive research of the survey type. The population of the study comprised all the public universities in southwest Nigeria, out of which three were selected through the stratified random sampling technique. Three hundred respondents who were in management positions were purposively sampled for this study. A questionnaire tagged Women in University Management Questionnaire (WUMQ) was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, t-test analysis and Pearson products for research questions and hypotheses raised for the study. Results showed that the level of women participating in university management in Nigerian University was dismally low; most of the high management positions were occupied by men. Results of the study further revealed that many women in the university system were being deprived of high management positions because they do not have the same opportunities for advancement as their male counterparts and also, the undue strictness of many women jeopardizes their chances of attaining high management positions in Nigerian universities. Based on these findings, it was recommended that the parochial belief of some people 'that women do not have what it takes to manage a university simply because they are women' should be discarded. Women should also put a check on their undue strictness in the workplace and also, conducive working environments that will promote women's advancement should be promoted in Nigerian Universities.

Keywords: Women; University; Management; Advancement; National Development; Gender

INTRODUCTION

Universities all over the world serve as the highest centres of learning where males and females, who have the capacity to study, acquire degrees. The graduates are specialists in different skills which are designed to meet the demands in the society. Thus, great efforts are made by governments and education stakeholders to effectively administer the system in order to provide the high level of manpower required in industries and other sectors of the economy (Yonlonfoun, 2004).

In the same vein, Arikewuyo (2009) postulates that universities all over the world are recognized as centres of excellence where knowledge is not only acquired, but also disseminated to those who require it. According to him, they are formal institutions set up by society to be centers of learning, rich in ideas and ideals. In its strict sense, Benjamin (2001) is of the opinion that universities are ivory towers where instruction is given and received without harassment and undue influence from the outside world. Thus, the universal idea of the university is a community of scholars free to pursue knowledge without undue interference from any quarters (Banjo, 2001).

Therefore, the important role that universities play in society cannot be ignored. The universities, both public and private, are expected to make optimum contributions to national development by intensifying and diversifying their programmes on the development of high level manpower within the context of the needs of the nation (Bakhabulindi and Sekabembe, 2009).

However, as crucial as the role of university education to national development is concerned, it was late in coming in Nigeria.

It was not until 1948 that the University of Ibadan was established in the country. Others were established in the 1960s and 1970s, respectively, and the number is still growing. By now, there are 23 federal, 33 state, and 33 private universities (totaling 89) with more than one million students enrolled (NUC memo 2009).

With this development, it is then obvious that more hands will be required at the management level of these universities. University management can be looked at from two dimensions - the external and internal. At the external level, this is the control by the Federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC), a body charged with the coordination of university management in the country (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009). Ibukun (1997) further posited that the main objectives of the NUC are to ensure the orderly management of university education in Nigeria, to maintain its high standard, and to ensure its adequate funding. On the other hand, the internal management of each university is represented by a simple organogram. The first is the visitor who is usually the head of State or the head of government that established it (the President in case of Federal universities and the governors in case of State universities).

The visitor usually comes to grace the convocation ceremonies where he uses the occasion to address the academic communities on matters of the moment (Adegbite, 2007). The second is the Chancellor, who is the titular head of the university who, by law in relation to the university, takes precedence before all members of the university, and when present, he presides at all meetings of the convocation held for conferring degrees (Ekundayo and Ajayi, 2009).

Besides, at the apex of the management structure within each university is the Governing Council, headed by the Chairman (Pro-Chancellor) which is charged with the administrative functions in the areas of goal setting, policy formulation, self development, general discipline, budget approval, and liaison activities with the government. In addition to this, there is the senate, headed by the Vice-Chancellor, and the Registrar as the secretary. The senate regulates the academic activities of the university following the general guidelines provided by the National Universities Commission (Arogundade and Olorunsola, 2007).

The Vice-Chancellor, who is the chief executive of the university, has the ultimate management authority or power and he/she is therefore answerable for the default of the organization concerned, no matter by whom such default is committed.

The exclusive management responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor include the strength of the teaching staff in terms of quality and quantity and a curriculum of sufficient academic content suitably related to the community's manpower and other development needs. Again, discipline (taken in a broad sense) within the university community is part of the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor; also is the general welfare of the community staff, students, workers and temporary visitors (Olorunsola and Arogundade, 2007).

These managements responsibilities are carried out not alone by the Vice-Chancellor, but with collaboration with other principal officers such as Registrar, Bursar, Librarian, Students Affair Officer, Examination Officer, Admission Officer, deans of faculties, directors of units, heads of departments, and so on. Of all these principal officers, it appears very rare to find many women occupying these management positions. Does it then mean that there are no women who are qualified for these management positions or women do not have what it takes to occupy these positions? Or, of the few women who have occupied these management positions in times past, was their work performance not commensurate with that of their male counterparts? Or could it be said that women are perhaps shying away from campus politics, which makes them invisible? Or is gender actually playing a role in university management?

Gender in the words of Ajaja (2004) is basically the socially defined sex roles, attitudes, and values which communities and societies ascribe as appropriate for one sex or the other. Also gender is seen as the way in which roles, attitudes, values, and relationships between men and women are constructed by societies. Gender seeks to answer the question, "How does society construct opportunities and life chances for men and women? (Thisday Newspaper, Wednesday, Oct. 11, 2006)

Globally, data on women in management or leadership positions, or women behind the scenes who may have advisory positions with no titles, are few, in any case. However, available statistics paint a picture of women's minimal representation in management positions - university management inclusive (Oyelaja, 1992).

In the Nigerian society, most people still seem reluctant to accept women leaders, despite the fact that there are qualified women for top management positions. It appears a lot of people are of the opinion that women are harder and tougher than their male counterparts in the course of performing their duties. It appears there is no room at all for women in management positions, especially in the university system. The policy-making bodies in the university system seem to still overwhelmingly be men. Does it then mean that there are no women who can occupy these management positions and perform excellently well like their male counterparts? It is therefore against the foregoing that the study seeks to investigate women in university management.

For instance, in Nigeria only three women have ever held the position of university Vice-Chancellor - Prof. (Mrs.) Alele-Williams, who was a former Vice-Chancellor of University of Benin, Prof. (Mrs.) Jadesola Akande (now late former Vice-Chancellor of Lagos State University), and recently, Prof. (Mrs.) A. Obayan, (Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University Ota, a privately owned university). Except one or two universities in Nigeria where we have female registrars, it seems as if it has always been a men's affair when it comes to occupancy of management positions in many Nigerian universities (Owuamanan, 2009). Even positions, like heads of units and departments, appear to be dominated by men.

Also, over the years, the historical accounts of the evolution of human civilizations since the beginning of time are replete with the overwhelming achievement of men who invented, discovered, and introduced into the society structures and materials that are still of immense benefit to mankind today (Yonlonfun, 2003).

According to Yonlonfun, men's contributions include the establishment of religious organizations, invention of electricity and the computer, means of transportation communication, and so on. In all of these, it appears very rare to find women who have performed similar feats, either in the past or present; yet human intelligence is the same in both sexes and there are as many women as men in the world. Why then is it that women appear to hardly be found among outstanding people of distinction and excellence at the various levels of management in different parts of the world - university inclusive? Does it mean that women do not have what it takes to occupy management positions in Nigerian universities? Or are there no women ripe enough for these positions? Or is the factor of patriarchy, as a system of male domination, still at play? Or are women simply being discriminated against, for in many parts of the world there seems to be discrimination against women in all facets of life. Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004) affirmed this by stating that gender discrimination abounds in many occupations and in most parts of the world. According to them, there seems to be a natural gender role distinction all over the world which has created a gap in opportunities between men and women. This identified gap has constituted what is generally regarded as gender inequality. Among gender advocates, gender gap is that wide separation, the unfilled space between the male and female in various endeavors, which include education and management of a university.

Balogun (2010) further buttressed this position that Nigerian higher education faces an imbalance in the representation of females, both as academic staff and as students. According to him, only 12.4% of the academic staff consists of women. He therefore suggested that since women account for 51% of the population of Nigeria, there should be a more aggressive policy to rectify the imbalance in their representation as staff and as students in higher education. Women appear to be grossly under-represented, especially in managerial positions. Adegun (2009) corroborated this view in his work on women academics and health, that many women lack advancement into leadership positions; and according to him, women are rare or scarce in upper levels of academics and they suffer biases in recruiting, selection and promotion efforts, they receive fewer professional development opportunities (e.g. mentoring and networking), and they face negative bias in evaluation by both students and colleagues. However, Awosusi (2009) advocated the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment as a tool for curbing all of these perceived biases against women.

Also, in the words of UNESCO (1995), effectiveness in job performance is based on mental ability and competence, which makes up the individual's ability and personality, rather than gender traits. This, therefore, implies that both men and women alike should be given equal opportunities to attain their full potential.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It appears that women's share of management positions remains unacceptably low in many Nigerian universities. Considering women's increasing level of qualification and work performance, one would have expected that they would have moved more quickly up the career ladder. However, this has not been the case. Women involvement in university management seems to be one of the most resistant areas for gender equality. It looks as if university environment appears to be dictated by patriarchal values and beliefs, thus the abilities of females are undervalued. Consequently, the need arises to examine these assumptions and thus proffer corrective measures.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to solve the problems of this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the level of women's involvement or participation in university management in Nigeria?
2. What are the factors militating against women's involvement or participation in university management?
3. What are the ways of curbing the perceived problems militating against women's participation or involvement in university management?

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Based on the problems of the study, the following research hypotheses were raised:

1. There is no significant difference between the job performance of male and female managers in Nigerian universities.
2. There is no significant relationship between gender and participation or involvement in university management.

METHODS

Descriptive research design of the survey type was employed for the study. The study population consisted of all executive members of the administrative set-up at the Nigerian universities, such as the vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, registrars, bursars, librarians, deans of faculties, directors of units, heads of departments, and faculty officers.

Of this population, a study sample of three universities was selected from southwest Nigeria through the stratified random sampling technique. Thereafter, the purposive random sampling technique was used to select 300 academic and administrative staff in management positions in Nigerian universities as the respondents of the study. That is, 100 respondents were purposively selected from each of the three universities sampled for this study, therefore a total of 300 respondents. However, out of 300 copies of the instrument administered to the respondents, a total of 272 (90%) were promptly filled out, returned and found useable for data analysis. The instruments used to collect data for the study were a self-constructed questionnaire tagged "Women in University Management Questionnaire" (WUMQ). The questionnaire had two parts - A and B. Part A consisted of demographic data of the respondents, such as age, sex, qualification, position, name of institutions, working experience, highest educational qualification, and so on. Part B of the questionnaire was used to measure variables of interest. Section A contained information on the level of women's participation/involvement in university management; Section B required information on the factors militating against women's participation in university management; and Section C requested information on the way out of these perceived problems. Section D, on the other hand, elicited information on whether there is any difference between job performance of male and female managers in Nigerian universities. Section E requested information on whether there is any relationship between gender and university management. Face and content validation of the instrument was done through vetting by the researchers' colleagues and experts in tests and measurement from a Nigerian university. Their comments and suggestions were used to correct items in the instrument before they were administered to the respondents. A re-test method was used to test the reliability of the instrument. This was done by conducting a trial test on 50 management staff at Nigerian universities who were not included in this study. The administration of the instruments was carried out on the

respondents on two occasions at two-week intervals. The scores obtained from two sets of responses from the two separate administrations were correlated using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. A reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained, which was considered high enough for reliability.

The instruments were personally administered by the researchers and research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count percentages, t-test statistics, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. All the hypotheses generated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Question 1: What is the level of women's participation in university management?

Table 1: Level of Women's Participation in University Management

Participation Level	Frequency	Percentage
Low (0 – 49.95)	168	61.76
Moderate (49.96 – 62.17)	71	26.10
High (62.18 – 100)	33	12.13
Total	272	100%

Table 1 shows that out of 272 respondents, 168 (representing 61.76%) indicated that the level of women's participation in management positions in Nigerian universities was low. Also, 71 respondents, which accounted for 26.10% of the total, perceived the women's level of involvement in university management as moderate, while 33 persons (12.13%) perceived their participation to be high.

Question 2: What are the factors militating against women's participation in university management?

In answering this question, data on the constraints against women's participation in university management were collected from the respondents through a questionnaire. The data were collected, analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Problems Militating Against Women's Participation in University Management

S/N	Constraints	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Women suffer biases in recruiting, selection and promotion effort.	272	148	54.41	124	45.59
2.	Many women do not believe in themselves; that is, intellectual inferiority among women.	272	110	40.44	162	59.56
3.	Women do not have what it takes, in terms of basic qualifications, to occupy management positions in the university.	272	69	25.37	203	74.63
4.	Women do not have the same opportunities for advancement like their male counterparts.	272	186	68.38	86	31.62
5.	The university environment is hostile to women's advancement.	272	18	6.62	254	93.38
6.	Most women in positions of authority are too tough/hard to relate to.	272	197	72.43	75	27.57
7.	Exclusion from informal networks within the university system, discrimination, and prejudice.	272	156	57.35	116	42.65

As indicated in Table 2, 148 (54.41%) of the respondents agreed that women suffer biases in recruiting, selection, and promotion efforts in the university system, but 124 (45.59%) respondents disagreed. It can also be seen from the table that 110 (40.44%) of the respondents agreed that many women do not believe in themselves; that is, many women have intellectual inferiority, while 162 (59.56%) reacted to the contrary. In the same vein, 186

(68.38%) of the respondents agreed that women do not have the same opportunities for advancement like their male counterparts, and 86 (31.62%) of the respondents disagreed. However, 197 (72.43%) of the respondents affirmed that most women in positions of authority are too tough/hard to relate to, but 75 (27.57%) of the respondents kicked against this stand. Moreover, 156 (57.35%) of the respondents are of the opinion that exclusion from informal networks within the university system, discrimination, and prejudice are among many factors militating against women’s participation in university management, but 116 (42.65%) of the respondents disagreed.

Question 3: What are the suggested ways of curbing the perceived problems militating against women participation in university management?

In answering these questions, data on the way of curbing the perceived problems facing women’s participation in university management in Nigerian universities were collected from the respondents through a questionnaire. The data were collected and analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings are presented in Table 3

Table 3: Suggested Ways of Curbing the Identified Problems Militating Against Women’s Participation in University Management

S/N	Solutions	N	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	All forms of discrimination against women should be deliberately done away with as much as possible.	272	272	100	0	0
2.	Conducive working environments and equal opportunities should be created and provided for both men and women working in the university system.	272	251	92.28	21	7.72
3.	Women should be sensitized and encouraged into believing in themselves.	272	241	88.61	31	11.39
4.	Women should do away with unnecessary or undue strictness when they are in high management positions.	272	215	79.04	57	20.96
5.	Conducive gender-friendly environments for women’s advancement should be created and promoted in the university system.	272	238	87.5	34	12.5

As indicated in Table 3, all 272 (100%) respondents agreed with the notion that all forms of discrimination against women should be consciously done away with. Two hundred and fifty-one (92.28%) of the respondents equally agreed with the fact that conducive working environments and equal opportunities should be created and provided for both men and women working in the university system. Also, 241 (88.61%) of the respondents agreed with the suggestion that women should be sensitized into believing in themselves. As for women doing away with undue hardness, 215 (79.04%) of the respondents agreed. Promotion of conducive environments for women’s advancement in the university system was also advocated by the majority, with 238 (87.5%) of the respondents agreeing with this view, while 34 (12.5%) disagreed.

TESTING THE HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the job performance of male and female managers in Nigerian universities.

Table 4: T-Test of Differences in Job Performance of Male and Female Managers in Nigerian Universities

Variables	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-table
Male	172	64.70	4.28	270	1.67	1.960
Female	100	63.98	2.81			

P > 0. 05

Table 4 shows that the mean scores for male and female managers' job performance were 64.70 and 63.98, respectively. The t-calculated was 1.67, while the corresponding table value was 1.960. Since the t-calculated is less than the table value, the null hypothesis was therefore accepted. Hence, there is no significant difference between the job performance of male and female managers.

Hypotheses 2: There is no significant relationship between genders in university management.

Table 5: Test of Relationship between Genders in University Management

Variables	N	r-cal	r-table
Gender	272	0.199	0.195
University Management	272		

P < 0.05

Table 5 shows a positive, but low, relationship between gender and university management. The result obtained from the analysis shows that the value of r-calculated (0.199) is greater than r-table (0.195). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This then means that there is a significant relationship between gender and university management.

DISCUSSION

From the analysis of data, it was revealed that the level of women's participation in university management is dismally low. This is to say that women are poorly represented in management positions in Nigerian universities. This finding was in line with the works of Oyelaja (1992) and Nwamuanam (2008) which indicated that only very few women have attained top management positions in Nigerian universities. They further affirmed that women are poorly represented in the ranks of power, policy, and decision-making.

The findings further exhibited that many factors or problems were actually militating against women's attainment of management positions in Nigerian universities, among which are women not having the same opportunities for advancement as their male counterparts, women suffering biases in recruiting, selection and promotion efforts, and women being unnecessarily difficult and tough in their relationships with their subordinates.

This finding was equally in consonance with the findings of Adeyemi and Akpotu (2004), Yonlonfoun (2004), and Adegun (2009) that in all facets of life, women are rare or scarce in upper levels of management, many, at times, due to open discrimination against them.

The findings from the study further showed that in order to curb some of the impediments against women's participation in management positions in Nigerian universities, all forms of discrimination against women should be done away with. Also, conducive environments that would sensitize women's advancement should be created and promoted in the university system. This finding corroborated with Awosusi (2009) which emphasized promotion of gender equality and women empowerment, especially in the university system.

That is not all; the finding also showed that there was no significant difference between the job performance of male and female managers. This finding is in line with UNESCO (1985) which emphasized that mental ability and competence, rather than gender traits, is a main tool for achieving effective job performance. This finding may also be as a result of both male and female managers that must depend on their educational qualifications and skills for the achievement of high performance rather than their physical strengths or their sex.

The finding also showed that there was a significant relationship between gender and university management. That is to say then that gender factor has a bearing on university management. This finding was in favour of the finding of Yonlonfoun (2004) that university environment is dictated by patriarchal values and beliefs and women in management positions in many Nigerian universities, in relation to their male counterparts, are generally perceived through lenses tainted by their sexuality.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of this study, it can therefore be concluded that women are very rare or scarce in management positions in Nigerian universities, despite the fact that they have what it takes in terms of educational qualifications, knowledge, and skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- The low attainment of women's involvement/participation in university management calls for special affirmative actions that would reduce this ill.
- Encourage participation and eventually bring about gender balance in university management.
- Incentives should be given to university female staff so as to boost and promote the attainment of their full potential.
- The parochial belief of many people - that women cannot be effective managers - should be discarded.
- Both male and female university staff should be given equal job opportunities by their employers so that both sexes can attain their full potential.

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