

Women Discrimination and Career Progression in Selected Organization in Abeokuta Metropolis

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Abstract: *Career progression of every individual is critical to their personal development and growth in any organization. The study investigated the relationship between women discrimination and career progression among female employees in the private sector of Abeokuta. The research examined how career outcomes, domestic responsibilities, and role conflict influenced women's advancement opportunities. A survey research design was adopted, and primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The population consisted of female employees in selected private organizations, and 500 respondents were selected using quota and simple random sampling techniques to ensure adequate representation across districts. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Chi-Square test of independence with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings revealed that career outcomes had a significant effect on career progression ($\chi^2 = 20.400, p < 0.05$), indicating that performance, promotion opportunities, and job satisfaction influenced advancement. Domestic responsibilities significantly affected career progression ($\chi^2 = 17.000, p < 0.05$), showing that family obligations limited career mobility for some women. Role conflict also significantly influenced career progression ($\chi^2 = 21.400, p < 0.05$). The study concluded that organizational, personal, and socio-cultural factors shaped women's career advancement. It recommended the promotion of gender-inclusive workplace policies, flexible working arrangements, and improved access to training and development opportunities to support women's career growth.*

Keywords: Women discrimination, career progression, career outcomes, domestic responsibilities, role conflict, women employees.

INTRODUCTION

Career development and gender have long attracted significant attention in organizational and social studies. A career can be described as the progression of job roles, responsibilities, and accomplishments an individual accumulates throughout their working life, such as upward mobility, managerial appointments, salary advancement, and professional acknowledgment. Gender, in contrast, refers to the socially defined roles, expectations, behaviors, and norms that societies assign to males and females. Although career advancement is expected to depend primarily on merit, skills, and performance, gender frequently shapes individuals' access to opportunities, patterns of promotion, and overall experiences within the workplace.

In spite of considerable international initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality, notable differences in workplace access and career advancement between men and women still persist. Empirical studies show that gender-based discrimination continues across global labor markets, restricting women's opportunities for leadership positions, fair compensation, and professional growth (Masood & Erdoğdu, 2024; Jabeen et al., 2024). On a global scale, women remain underrepresented in top managerial and executive roles compared to men, largely due to structural, institutional, and socio-cultural constraints that hinder their career progression. Career trajectories for men and women also vary in important ways. Women are more prone to experience interruptions in their employment history, and such breaks often slow their professional advancement (Fapojuwo, 2015). Moreover, the underlying reasons for these interruptions typically differ by gender. Women are more likely to pause their careers for family-related responsibilities, whereas men more commonly step away from work due to job-related challenges, such as difficulty securing suitable employment. Notably, interruptions associated with family responsibilities tend to have a less adverse effect on long-term career advancement than employment gaps resulting from issues like temporary unemployment.

Studies at the global level highlight that even in fields traditionally associated with high levels of education and skill, such as scientific research, women are less likely than men to attain senior positions. Bibliometric analyses show that women's representation in advanced stages of scientific careers is lower and that men tend to achieve more senior roles and greater productivity metrics across many countries (Boekhout, van der Weijden, & Waltman, 2021). These global trends reflect systemic inequalities that transcend national boundaries and are observed in many sectors of the economy.

In Europe and North America, research has shown that gender disparities in wages and promotions persist despite progress in anti-discrimination policies. Meta-analyses of gender wage gaps in European emerging markets reveal that women generally earn less than men, and although gaps may reduce over time, discrimination still influences career outcomes (Iwasaki & Satogami, 2023). Meanwhile, studies in organizational contexts show that women continue to face institutional

barriers like the “glass ceiling,” which limits promotion to senior executive positions even where formal legal protections against discrimination exist (Masood & Erdoğan, 2024).

In the Middle East and Asia, gender imbalances are often shaped by strong socio-cultural norms and persistent stereotypes about women’s roles in society. Research on academic careers in the Middle East and North Africa has documented gender disparities in representation, research productivity, and the speed at which women advance into senior authorship and leadership positions (El-Ouahi & Lariviere, 2022). Similarly, in parts of East Asia, analyses reveal that gender imbalance in career progression and citation practices in academia remains significant, with women less likely to reach senior roles compared to their male counterparts (Nakajima et al., 2023). These regional patterns illustrate how cultural norms can reinforce workplace discrimination and affect career outcomes.

In African contexts, institutional and structural challenges further compound gender inequality in career progression. Research in sub-Saharan Africa shows that women’s experiences of career advancement are shaped not only by organizational norms but also by broader socio-economic forces such as patriarchy and limited institutional support structures (Health Research Policy and Systems Research Article, 2021). Additionally, empirical studies on women leaders in countries such as South Africa emphasize the ongoing effects of gendered organizational cultures on women’s ability to progress to leadership levels (Frontiers in Sociology Article, 2025).

Taken together, findings from these studies suggest that despite variations across regions, a consistent trend is evident: gender discrimination continues to hinder women’s advancement in their careers worldwide. This disadvantage manifests in multiple ways, including limited access to mentorship opportunities, enduring pay inequalities, and deeply rooted societal expectations about gender roles. As a result, women’s movement into higher professional positions is still influenced by structural inequalities and ingrained biases within organizations and societies. These realities highlight the importance of sustained scholarly inquiry into how gender discrimination operates in different environments. A deeper understanding of these dynamics is essential for shaping effective policies and organizational strategies that can foster fair and inclusive career advancement opportunities for women.

However, the issue of gender inequality has been on for more than decades all over the world, but in most developed countries the tides has changed in which the role of women has been redefined for the better. The idea of gender inequality could be seen as what gave birth to the term “housewives” taking care of the children because most men do not see the reason why they should be competing with their wives at the end of the month, as a result they were relegated to the back seat as if they are of no importance.

Statement of the Problem

Women in management across various professions continue to experience structural and cultural barriers that hinder their career progression. Studies show that organizational systems such as

recruitment, promotion, and performance evaluation processes often operate in ways that disadvantage women (Stamarski & Son-Hing, 2015). Institutional discrimination, including limited access to mentoring, networking opportunities, and training programs, further restricts women's advancement (Ketchiwou & Dzansi, 2023). Because many organizations were historically structured around male norms, women's dual responsibilities at work and home are frequently interpreted as reduced commitment, contributing to their underrepresentation at senior levels (Aluko et al., 2016).

Gender also influences career-related attitudes, behaviors, and developmental experiences. Socialization processes shape men's and women's career choices from an early stage, as family, schools, peers, and media reinforce gender expectations. Within organizations, women are more likely to be hired into staff roles with limited promotion pathways and less access to line management experience, which is often necessary for senior leadership positions. They may also be overlooked for high-visibility assignments and strategic relocation opportunities, reducing their exposure to career-enhancing experiences (Masood & Erdoğdu, 2024). Such patterns reinforce the "glass ceiling" effect that limits women's upward mobility (Imtiaz, Shaikh, & Ain, 2018).

Gender differences are also evident in occupational health outcomes, workplace stress, and work attitudes. Professional women often report higher levels of stress and are more likely to experience sexual harassment, which negatively affects job satisfaction, psychological well-being, and organizational commitment (Boekhout, van der Weijden, & Waltman, 2021). Although research suggests that men and women may report similar levels of job satisfaction and involvement, women sometimes exhibit lower organizational commitment due to perceived advancement barriers (Williams et al., 2017). Persistent discrimination and exclusion from informal networks also reduce access to powerful organizational members and favorable performance feedback, further influencing career outcomes.

Beyond organizational dynamics, broader societal and cultural factors continue to shape women's career progression. Educational disparities, particularly in developing regions, limit women's access to professional opportunities (Aluko 2002). Cultural and religious norms may discourage female leadership and reinforce traditional gender roles that prioritize domestic responsibilities over career advancement. The multiple roles women perform as professionals, mothers, and wives often create role conflict, which can affect career continuity and progression. Together, these structural, organizational, and societal influences interact to sustain gender inequality in career advancement and leadership representation.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the relationship between women discrimination and career progression.
- ii. To examine the extent to which women equality is influenced by culture and tradition of different societies.
- iii. To establish the extent to which limited training and development opportunities affect career progression

Research Questions

- i. What are the possible effects of career outcomes on career progression?
- ii. To what extent do cultural norms and value affect career progression?
- iii. To what extent do limited training and development opportunities affect career progression?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁ –career outcomes have no significant effect on career progression.

H₀₂ – Cultural norms and values do not significantly affect career progression.

H₀₃ – Roles conflict/Roles set performed by gender do not affect their chances of progression.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender is seen as the state of being male or female (typically used with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones.) gender is the range of characteristics pertaining to, and differentiating between, masculinity and femininity, depending on the context, those characteristics may include biological sex i.e. the state of being male or female, or intersex variation).

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse people. Unlike sex, which refers to biological characteristics, gender is learned through socialization processes, varies across cultures, and evolves over time. It shapes access to power, resources, and opportunities within social, economic, and political systems, thereby influencing equality and health outcomes. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), gender norms and relations significantly affect people's health risks, health-seeking behavior, and overall well-being.

Similarly, UN Women (2022) emphasizes that gender determines the distribution of power and resources in society and is a key factor in understanding inequality. The organization explains that gender roles are socially assigned and maintained through institutions such as family, education, religion, politics, and the economy. These socially constructed expectations often influence career choices, leadership opportunities, and participation in decision-making processes.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2020) further notes that gender is relational and intersects with other social categories such as age, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status. These intersections can intensify discrimination and marginalization, particularly for women and gender-diverse individuals. Understanding gender as a social construct is therefore essential in addressing structural inequalities and promoting inclusive development. However, sex describes the biological differences between men and women, which are universal and determined at birth.

Gender Issues

Men and women are often assigned different job roles due to societal stereotypes and unequal occupational opportunities in the labor market. Even when women possess the same aptitude and capabilities as men, they frequently earn less, particularly in managerial and administrative positions. Wage discrimination and limited chances for promotion are prominent factors that negatively affect female employees' creativity, innovation, and overall career progression (Brown et al., 2002). Despite their abilities, women worldwide are less likely than men to be promoted to high-paying, senior roles, and this disparity contributes to job dissatisfaction and reduced career growth opportunities.

Pregnancy adds another layer of discrimination in the workplace. Brown et al. (2002) note that pregnant women often face challenges due to workplace environments and the attitudes of male colleagues, with their capacity and effectiveness being unfairly questioned.

Employment of Women and Legal Implication

According to Akintunde and Otegbade (2025) the provisions governing the employment of women under the decree are to be found mainly in Section 54 -58. They provide regulation and protection of women in respect of: Maternity, Underground work and Night work, these will further be expressed thus:

Maternity Protection (Sec. 54)

Maternity protection refers to laws, policies, and workplace practices designed to safeguard the health, employment, income security, and dignity of women during pregnancy, childbirth, and the postnatal period. It ensures that women are not disadvantaged in employment because of their reproductive role. The global framework for maternity protection is strongly guided by the standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO), particularly the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183), which sets minimum standards for maternity leave, cash benefits, medical care, health protection, employment security, and non-discrimination.

A woman who has been employed in any industrial, commercial or agricultural undertaking for 6months should, on the strength of medical certificate, be granted maternity leave of 6weeks before and 6weeks after her confinement. During this period, she is entitled to not less than 50% of her wages.

After the maternity leave, a nursing mother should also be allowed half an hour twice a day for the purpose of nursing her baby. An expectant mother, who is absent on the maternity leave, is given security of employment by the decree by providing that the employer cannot give her notice of dismissal at such a time that the notice could expire during such period. Sec.53 (4) dismissal during this period will be wrongful and illegal. Thus in *Okungbowa Vs Consultant Nigerian Project Ltd*, the dismissal of women whilst on maternity leave was said to be wrongful. Whether the woman is married or not is immaterial in this case.

Night Work (Sec.55)

Women, by virtue of Section 54, are prohibited from performing night work except:

- i. As a Nurse
- ii. Management staff
- iii. In respect of occasional and unforeseen emergencies/training
- iv. Covered by collective agreement
- v. In respect of training

Underground work (Sec.56)

Sec. 56 also prohibits women from working underground in any mine except:

- i. Employed in managerial capacities
- ii. In health or welfare services
- iii. In the course of studies or non-manual occupation.

Sec. 57

Provides sanctions for breach of the provisions in Sections 54-56, it must be noted that the provisions of Sections 53-55 apply to all women whether or not they are “workers” as defined by the decree.

Theoretical Review

The Standpoint Feminist Theory emerged from the adaptation of Marxist standpoint theory to gender, highlighting how social positions shape consciousness and knowledge. While Marx and early Marxist theorists such as Lukács and Gramsci largely ignored women in their analyses of class and labor, feminist scholars in the 1970s began to apply these ideas to women’s oppression within patriarchal societies. Dorothy Smith, in *The Everyday World as Problematic*, emphasized how women’s experiences have been marginalized by authoritative male discourse and conceptualized this marginalization as part of the “relations of ruling,” which structures power, organization, and regulation beyond conventional concepts of authority (Smith, 1974, 1981, 1987). She advocated for a sociology that allows women to articulate knowledge from their everyday lived experiences, paralleling Marx’s notion of knowledge emerging from the laboring class.

Nancy Hartsock extended this approach by applying a historical materialist lens to understand women’s position in capitalist patriarchy. She argued that while men primarily produce goods, women produce both goods and human beings, situating their life activity within both home and market labor. This dual role provides women with a unique and intensified material perspective, giving them a deeper understanding of social relations and the mechanisms of male domination (Hartsock, 1985). According to Hartsock, women’s standpoint is therefore “privileged” in that it enables a critical analysis of phallographic institutions, revealing the distortions and harms inherent in male-centered social structures.

Standpoint Feminist Theory emphasizes that the oppressed group’s perspective is not automatically available but is achieved through struggle and engagement with power. Women’s

experiences under patriarchy provide a specific and historically situated vantage point from which to critique male supremacy and capitalist structures, much like the proletarian standpoint in Marxist theory. This feminist standpoint is both analytical and emancipatory, offering insights that challenge established hierarchies and envision socially transformative alternatives to oppressive structures (Smith, 1987; Hartsock, 1985).

Stratification theory

The concept of stratification refers to the idea that the society is divided into patterned structure of unequal groups and also implies that this structure tends to persist. Essentially, any discussion of inequality in society would involve references being made to stratification theory. The basic premise of this theory is that certain patterns of inequality are inherent in every society based on differential access to wealth, power and status (Lenski, 1966). The theory of stratification is found in the work of Max Weber (1864 – 1920).

Weber emphasized in his essay ‘class status and party’ (Gerth and Mills, 1948) that inequality in society might not be based on economic relations at all, but on prestige or on political power, mobilized through a party. Thus Weber did not see every unequal social structure as a class society. Caste, for example, was based on status difference grounded on religious ritual.

Empirical Review

Gender, Family Structure, and Careers Progression

Merits (2016) found that family structure influences individuals’ careers, and gender differences are observed. Family structure characteristics include parental status, marital status (married, single); marital type (single-earner marriage, dual-earner marriage); and combinations of these characteristics. Parents report greater work-family conflict than do non-parents, and parenting can take time and energy away from some work pursuits. Being married also entails additional responsibilities and makes career decision making more complicated, since one person’s career decision influences his or her partner as well (Welling & Bell, 2015). For example, one person’s decision to accept a promotion requiring relocation may mean uprooting a stay-at-home spouse from his or her community or lead to job loss for a working spouse. Finally, individuals in dual-earner marriages report higher stress than those in single-earner marriages, as well as unique stressors such as deciding whose career is most important and juggling both household and work-related responsibilities.

Aluko (2014) found that the influence of parental status, marital status, and marital type on individuals’ careers varies somewhat between men and women. For women, the timing of parenthood influences the career paths chosen, as well as the extent to which career interruptions are experienced. Parenthood has less effect on men’s career experiences. Furthermore, Puttin (2015) asserted that although men are much more involved in parenthood today than ever before, women are still primarily responsible for dependent care. This can put women at a disadvantage when competing with men for higher-level jobs, since they may have less time to invest in work

or believe that they will not be able to successfully balance work and family obligations. Furthermore, significant dependent-care responsibilities can make it difficult for some women to maintain their career momentum. In fact, career-oriented women tend to have fewer children and are less likely to want children. More-over, women in nontraditional occupations are less likely to have children than women in traditionally female occupations. No such differences are found among men (Doink, 2015).

According to Puttin (2015), marital status and marital type have different effects on men's and women's careers. Marriage is associated with greater career success for men, whereas a comparable "marriage bonus" does not exist for women. In fact, for women, remaining single is associated with greater educational attainment and greater pursuit of nontraditional occupations. Being single is not associated with educational attainment or occupational choice for men. The typical family arrangement among male and female executives is also striking; executive men are more likely to be married to a stay-at-home spouses and have children, whereas executive women are more likely to be single and without children. In terms of marital type, women in dual-earner marriages are much more likely to be "trailing spouses," following their husbands in job-related geographic moves. This can have negative career effects, as trailing spouses tend to report that they move into new jobs that offer less salary, benefits, and advancement opportunities than their previous jobs. In addition, the works of Fuadi and Bamba (2016) established that dual-earner parenting can place greater stress and strain on women than on men. For instance, dual-earner mothers report greater perceived time pressure than dual-earner fathers. Men and women in dual-earner marriages also handle work-family conflicts differently, with women being more likely than men to restructure their work to accommodate family demands. Given these differences in how family structure relates to career outcomes for men and women, it is not surprising that women engage in more future role planning than men with respect to how they might integrate and balance work and family roles.

Career Outcomes and Career Progression

A substantial body of literature exists on the role of gender in understanding career outcomes such as pay, promotions, and career satisfaction as it affects career progression. As a group, women earn less money than men (Hundi, 2013; Jima, 2015; Zaccala, 2014). This gender gap in earning persists even after considering a wide range of factors that might explain the disparity, such as sex segregation by industry (i.e., men tend to work in higher-paying industries than women); variation in educational experiences; differences in the type and quality of job experiences; unequal family power between the genders (i.e., women tend to contribute less to the family's income than men, which typically means less decision-making influence within the family); differences in family structure (e.g., married women are more likely to be married to a working spouse than vice versa); and self-selection (e.g., women may be more likely to withdraw from relocation offers or promotions). Knorr (2014) posits that the discrepancy in earnings is often attributed to the presence of a "glass ceiling" for women, which prevents them from attaining high-level, high-paying positions within organizations. Gender differences in earnings exist, but there is conflicting evidence as to whether or not there are gender differences in promotion rates. Some research

(Hundi, 2013; Jima, 2015; Zaccala, 2014) suggests that women managers are promoted more swiftly than men, whereas other studies find no difference or faster promotion rates for men.

Notwithstanding these discrepant findings, men and women appear to take different paths to achieving career success. Men tend to progress within their careers in a traditional, hierarchical manner, whereby they have few gaps in employment and move into positions of increasing authority and status. In contrast, women are more likely to follow a sequential career path, whereby they experience a series of promotions, followed by career interruptions or a reduction in workforce participation, followed by a resumption of their careers. Furthermore, although there are probably more similarities than differences in terms of what predicts career success for men and women, some distinctions exist. Engaging in more training and development, working longer hours, minimizing employment gaps, remaining employed at the same organization, having greater home and family commitments, and displaying independence are more highly related to career success for men than for women. In contrast, obtaining a higher level of education, displaying more masculine personality characteristics, and having fewer home and family commitments appear more important to career success for women.

Marinakou (2014) found that hotels in Greece may benefit from the managerial abilities of women and use their capabilities and skills in facing the challenges characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. Views of the participants were analyzed on three main topics such as leadership style and the management adopt, factors that lead to successful management in the hospitality industry and the glass ceiling issues in the hotel management. The female participants stressed the barriers they face and the factors contribute to the glass ceiling where several researchers found in different geographical locations (Karunarathna, 2015; Brownell, 1993).

Progression for Women: Promoting Equity

Analysis of the 2009 workforce data at the university found that gender parity at the level of lecturer and senior lecturer did not translate to gender parity at more senior levels. Women represented only 19.1% of academic staff at associate professor and professor levels, compared with 48.8% of nonacademic professional staff at the highest levels.

A comprehensive university-wide externally conducted review identified the systemic and structural barriers that may influence the promotion of women to senior academic positions. Attention was paid to aspects of such positions that would make them undesirable for women or seemingly unattainable (Morley 2014). A seminal Australian study (Blackmore and Sachs 2007) identified dual problems of perception and structure that “work together in unpromising ways for women.” Others have noted that a minority representation increases the challenge of being authentic in personal style and decision-making (Morley 2013). The university review and consultation with female academics led to a range of recommendations to address the barriers, including developing a women-only career development program, facilitated by women and focused on leadership and career progression, designed to facilitate women’s transition from being leading academics to academic leaders. Other critical issues identified were a general lack of

understanding and negative perceptions among the female participants about the academic promotion process, a perceived lack of female role models and mentors, and associated difficulties with balancing multiple roles within the workplace and competing demands. The university has now been running the career progression program for women who are or were at Level C since 2010. The explicit aim of the program is to support women's advancement from senior lecturer to associate professor. At this career transition point, a key requirement of the university's promotion criteria is that applicants demonstrate their leadership in the domains of teaching, research, engagement, and/or clinical service. Therefore, leadership recognition and development was a core element in the program design. Furthermore, leadership was positioned as a process and differentiated from a title or level of authority. We are mindful of research that highlights the dearth of women leaders in higher education as an outcome of a corporatized academy presenting a cruel paradox (Blackmore 2014; Lipton 2017). Therefore, rather than adopting a pejorative model, the program in question encourages a broad range of evidence to support strength-based leadership.

The program focuses on enabling women to provide evidence of their leadership in a broad, flexible narrative grounded in their experience and addressing promotional criteria. The pedagogy focused on accentuating strengths to enhance personal leadership rather than any underlying assumption that the women were not leaders and needed to be shaped to fit an institutional model. In sum, the program was not about changing the women to be promotable, but focused on highlighting their capabilities and developing a narrative to align with and broaden the university criteria.

The content and structure of the program were tailored to address individual development needs while capitalizing on the power of the group structure and dynamics. Since its inception, the program was developed and has been facilitated by a female academic, and from 2012, the course has been facilitated in partnership with a specialized organizational leadership trainer (also female).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a survey research design to empirically examine the variables under investigation. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to collect data from a relatively large number of respondents, ensured a good response rate, and allowed for the assessment of attitudes and perceptions. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary research instrument. Specifically, a descriptive cross-sectional survey approach was employed, involving the collection of data from a selected group of respondents to represent the broader population. The cross-sectional method was suitable because studying the entire population was impracticable due to its size; therefore, a representative sample was drawn.

Population and Sampling Frame

The population of the study comprised women working across selected private sector organizations in Abeokuta metropolis, including hotels, construction firms, schools, and other business establishments. The population was considered indefinite in size. Abeokuta metropolis was divided into four districts: Abeokuta South-East, Abeokuta South-West, Abeokuta North-East, and Abeokuta North-West. These districts constituted the sampling frame for the study.

Sample Size

A total of 500 respondents were selected as the sample size for the study. This figure was determined through judgmental estimation to ensure adequate representation of women across the identified districts and sectors.

Sampling Technique

The study employed both quota sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Quotas were allocated to each of the four districts to ensure proportional representation. Given the indefinite nature of the population, 100 respondents were selected from Abeokuta South-West, Abeokuta North-East, and Abeokuta North-West, while 200 respondents were selected from Abeokuta South-East. In applying quota sampling, the population was first divided into mutually exclusive segments similar to stratified sampling. Thereafter, judgment was used to select participants from each segment according to the specified proportion to ensure proper representation of female employees across various private sector industries. Within each district, simple random sampling was subsequently used to select the required number of respondents.

Method of Data Collection

The study utilized primary data. Data were collected through a self-developed questionnaire designed to measure the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable using clearly defined constructs. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions to facilitate ease of response and analysis. Two field assistants assisted in the distribution of the questionnaires in selected areas where respondents were concentrated. Since immediate retrieval of completed questionnaires was not practically possible, a schedule was prepared to record the expected date of collection from each respondent.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a self-developed questionnaire. The instrument was structured into two main sections. The first section captured respondents' demographic information, such as age and educational qualification. The second section focused on issues directly related to the research objectives. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Section B of the questionnaire was further divided into two sub-sections: the first addressed opportunities for career progression, while the second examined ways of overcoming barriers to career advancement.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tools, including frequencies and percentages, were used to present respondents' demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, religion, and specialization. To test the stated hypotheses and examine the relationships between variables, the Chi-Square (χ^2) test of independence was employed. The Chi-Square test was appropriate because it determined whether a statistically significant association existed between categorical variables, such as gender discrimination and career progression.

The Chi-Square formula is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum (O - E)^2 / E$$

Where:

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

The decision rule is that if the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis will be rejected, indicating a significant relationship between the variables. All results will be generated and presented using SPSS tables.

Discussion and findings

Five hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to a number of female employees in a cross section of private firms ranging from hotels, construction firms, schools among others in Abeokuta metropolis. Four hundred and ninety-six of the questionnaires were returned completed while the remaining four copies could not be retrieved. The returned rate is 99% of the administered questionnaire.

Test of Hypotheses

Variable	Chi-Square	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Notes
Career outcomes → Career progression	20.400a	495	.000	0 cells (.0%) have expected count < 5. Minimum expected count = 5.0
Domestic responsibilities → Career progression	17.000a	495	.004	5 cells (100.0%) have expected count < 99.2. Minimum expected count = 4.2
Roles conflict/roles set → Career progression	21.400a	495	.003	0 cells (.0%) have expected count < 5. Minimum expected count = 99.2

The Chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the effects of career outcomes, domestic responsibilities, and role conflicts on career progression among women in the private sector in Abeokuta. The results revealed that career outcomes have a significant effect on career progression ($\chi^2 = 20.400$, $df = 495$, $p = .000$), indicating that employees with better performance, skills, and achievements are more likely to advance in their careers. Similarly, domestic responsibilities were

found to significantly influence career progression ($\chi^2 = 17.000$, $df = 495$, $p = .004$), suggesting that women who bear heavier family and household obligations may face challenges that limit their advancement opportunities. Furthermore, the roles performed by female employees, including balancing multiple responsibilities at home and work, significantly affected their chances of career progression ($\chi^2 = 21.400$, $df = 495$, $p = .003$), highlighting the impact of role conflict on career advancement. Overall, the findings demonstrate that both organizational factors, such as career outcomes, and personal factors, such as domestic responsibilities and role conflicts, play a significant role in shaping women's career progression. Addressing these barriers could therefore enhance opportunities for female employees to advance in the private sector in Abeokuta.

Summary

The study examined the relationship between gender discrimination and career progression, with particular attention to how cultural and traditional norms shape gender equality and how limited access to training and development opportunities influences advancement. Three hypotheses were tested, and the findings revealed notable insights.

First, career outcomes were found to have a significant influence on career progression within the private sector in Abeokuta. Factors such as salary, promotion opportunities, and career satisfaction were identified as important determinants of advancement. This finding aligns with Jima (2015), who emphasized that compensation, promotion prospects, and overall job satisfaction are critical drivers of career growth. However, evidence from the Nigerian public sector suggests that work experience and academic qualifications play a more dominant role in determining career advancement.

Second, women's domestic responsibilities were found to significantly influence career progression in the private sector in Abeokuta. In many African societies, women traditionally perform dual roles as wives and mothers, while also contributing economically to support their families. These multiple responsibilities may limit their ability to fully pursue career advancement. This outcome is consistent with Shrestha (2016), who observed that women's career paths are shaped not only by external constraints such as family obligations, limited educational facilities, and employment barriers, but also by internal factors including motivation and skills.

Third, the findings indicated that gender-specific roles do not necessarily diminish women's chances of career advancement. Although the roles typically performed by women may differ from those of men, they are complementary and contribute meaningfully to organizational objectives. In some cases, these distinctive contributions can enhance career progression. This supports Gupta (2017), who found that strong job performance outcomes significantly improve career advancement in the service sector.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that both push and pull factors play significant roles in shaping women's career advancement. Push factors, such as job dissatisfaction or limited career opportunities, may drive women away from certain professional paths, while pull factors, including family and domestic responsibilities, may draw them away from upward mobility. Personal attributes, such as reluctance to relocate and certain personality traits, were identified as barriers, whereas education, continuous learning, and dedication were recognized as important enablers of career progression.

It was also concluded that women in the private sector often occupy lower hierarchical positions for various reasons. Some remain in these roles to better balance work and family commitments, while others encounter structural and cultural barriers when attempting to advance. Gender discrimination in recruitment and promotion practices reduces women's likelihood of attaining top managerial roles, as they are frequently concentrated in departments such as housekeeping, marketing, and human resources. Barriers to advancement can generally be grouped into individual, organizational, and societal factors. Common obstacles include the glass ceiling phenomenon, workplace discrimination, limited networking opportunities, harassment, lack of role models, management bias, insufficient training, gender stereotypes, unsupportive work environments, and cultural restrictions. In certain contexts, such as the United States, additional factors like the importance of sponsorship, strategic lateral moves, and token representation in male-dominated executive settings have been emphasized.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations were proposed:

1. Women should be encouraged to pursue and accept roles in occupations traditionally dominated by men.
2. Organizational management should promote flexible work arrangements and supportive policies that enable married women to achieve a healthy work-life balance, thereby enhancing their commitment and advancement in the private sector.
3. Opportunities should be created for female employees to build and strengthen informal professional networks, as this can improve access to career development opportunities.
4. Cultural beliefs that restrict women from participating in certain professions should be challenged and discouraged.
5. Women should be regarded as collaborative partners in organizational development rather than as competitors, in order to create a more inclusive and productive work environment.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study made significant contributions to the existing literature on gender issues and career progression. While many previous studies have concentrated on the public sector, this research specifically examined the private sector, thereby providing additional insight and enabling comparisons between both sectors.

Furthermore, the study enriched stratification theory, which posits that society is structured into patterned systems of inequality that tend to persist over time. Although men and women belong to distinct social categories, the theory acknowledges their unique yet complementary contributions toward shared objectives. The findings of this research reinforced this theoretical perspective by demonstrating how structural inequalities influence career advancement while also recognizing the valuable roles played by both genders in organizational settings.

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