

## Impediments to Women Career Advancement: The Nigerian Experience

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### Abstract

*Using an exploratory qualitative approach based on in-depth interviews with 72 executive and middle managers, this article explores barriers to career progress of females in acquiring top management positions and the challenges that come with such career development within the Nigerian context. Data was obtained through structured interviews of women working in the manufacturing, banking, insurance, telecommunication, and two public service sectors in Nigeria. The findings suggest that the challenges posed by individual factors i.e. cultural expectation of female within the family set up and Nigerian society and organizational factors within their context of operation are key barriers perceived by female managers to attaining the highest positions.*

**Key words:** women, managers, Nigeria, career development

**JEL Classification:** M12

### Introduction

There has been a growing scholarly interest in the gendered nature career which has furthered our understanding of the career trends (Tlaiss and Kauser 2011; Broadbridge 2007; Simpson et al, 2010). These studies have called for the adoption of human resource management best practices which inspire gender inclusiveness and greater diversity within the work milieu. Consequently, over the last three decades, there has been a measured rise in the numbers of highly skilled female professionals and managers across different industries, which has led to a gradual re-configuration of the top management positions from male towards female (Ismail and Ibrahim 2007). However, available statistics reveals a high level of disparity in levels of gender diversity at top management positions in Nigeria. For instance, in the Nigerian Federal Civil Service, which is the largest employer of labour in Nigeria, 76% of civil servants are men, and 24% are women with women holding less than 14% of the total management level positions in the Nigerian public sector (Goldstar, 2005/06) In Lagos state, Nigeria's largest commercial hub, private sector involvement of women as directors and top management were 13.87% and

13.84% respectively in 2005, while 8.14% and 13.11% were recorded for women directors and top managers respectively in 2006, representing a slight decline of their involvement in the succeeding year (Goldstar, 2006/07).

We explore the barriers to career progress of females in acquiring top management positions and the nature of career barriers experienced within the Nigerian context. The paper aims to explore some of the issues surrounding women managers in Nigerian organizations and the perceptions of these managers regarding gender stereotyping in terms of their personal aspirations regarding careers, mentoring, education, marriage, and having children. It would be interesting to understand how these factors impact on their career progression. The scarcity of research addressing gender issues in management within developing countries (Tlaiss and Kauser 2011; Tlaiss and Kauser 2010) makes it particularly important to investigate the extent to which Western perspectives are applicable in developing countries, given differences in the social, cultural, and religious infrastructures between these environments. We aim to provide a more precise explanation and understanding of the gender imbalances facing women managers in the Nigeria.

## **Existing Literature on Barriers to Women Participation in Management**

In many societies, top management activity has been seen as the prerogative of men (Hannagan, 2005). In these economies – more specifically patriarchal societies, there are structures regulating the roles of women. A number of these structures have aided the collective programming of the societal mind, making the under representation of women in management positions acceptable (Tai *et al*, 2005). A review of the literature brings to fore nine customary barriers they include i) Women-Not-Good-Enough Ideology; ii) Glass ceiling perspective; iii) Negative Stereotypical Assumptions; iv) Low levels of aspiration; v) Formal and Informal network forged by men; vi) Attributions for Successful work performance; vii) Training and Development Opportunities; viii) Leadership behavior; and ix) Impact of Organizational systems. The following section x-rays some of the barriers. Encompassing the ideas of those within an organization who believe that females are not as productive as the male. Such organizations and societies tend to differentiate or diminish the achievements of women. As Chow (1999) argues women who happen to rise to positions of high status within such cultures have their authority often undermined and resisted because they are thought to be incompetent (Chow, 1999). The failure of women gaining entrance into the workforce and their failure to attain the highest management positions can be described as “glass ceiling” or “glass wall” (Tlaiss and Kauser 2010). The glass ceiling perspective denotes an impenetrable barrier which is invisible and prevents upward movement while glass wall refers to a lateral movement into positions. Fagenson-eland and Parker (1998) identify six features of an organization with glass ceiling i.e. : they are often lonely, non-supportive working environment for women; these companies see and tend to highlight gender differences, weaknesses and exclude women from group activities because of these differences; the companies do not tend to help females to prepare for management position or prepare workers on how to achieve balance work/personal life issues. On the whole two vital rationalization has been given for the continuation of glass ceilings, these includes explanations related to behavioural and cultural issues and those related to organizational barriers (Oakley 2000).

With respect to the behavior and cultural school of thought, a range of studies have developed which seek to explain the glass ceiling problems faced by women at work. These studies include those that explain traditional gender roles. These roles which are ascribed by society sometimes attribute some negative stereotypes to women, such as the fact that women are expected only to care for the home front. This in turn can lead to women not being able to maintain a career; women are expected to be submissive, not ambitious and striving to rule, women get lower pay,

operate flexible work hours, have less emotional stability, possess lesser strength, and lesser aggression when compared to men, who are perceived to be more aggressive and competitive (Anker, 1997). Women's aspiration is believed to be constrained both by a need to restrict career hopes to "sex-appropriate" activities, and, by the strength of occupational segregation in a particular sector (Kanter 1997). Hence, Kront (2006) opined that women tend to direct their career goals towards occupations that are in line with social perceptions of female roles and they do not aspire for challenging jobs. Tlaiss and Hauser (2010) argued that women's expression of relatively low aspirations may not be unrelated to the actual barriers to their advancement.

The formal and informal network forged by men identified within the literature as – 'men's club' is acknowledged by women as a key factor that impedes women's advancement in organization (Carter 2000; Bruni et al 2004a). A review of the literature (Lewis 2006) revealed that women have not been readily admitted to organizations and those that are hired into managerial positions find it difficult to become part of the existing power coalitions, which is built upon work relationships and other social as well as relational networks. Men and the few women who are part of these networks earn more promotions and advance faster in their jobs than people who are not members of the network. For Coe (1992) some women break into these networks by developing mentor relationships with men or women in higher level organizational positions. Generally, women are gradually beginning to develop their own networks (Coe, 1992). Other factors impeding women from accessing top management positions include the fact that women lose out on access to formal training opportunities and access to firm sponsored training and development schemes, partly because of the high labour turnover rates of women, which amounts to indirect cost for employers (Anker, 1997). There is still a prevalent perjured perception of the leadership behavior or abilities of women. Many still believe men are better suited for leadership (Mordi et al 2010). Although several scholars (Madichie 2009; Hannagan, 2005) suggest in their studies that women can make effective top executives. Another difficulty for women gaining top executive positions is the assumption that organization are gender neutral and unaware of the possibility of institutional or organizational discrimination such as inaccessibility to power acquisition (Kanter, 1997). For Adler (1983), organizations largely created by men, have rules of conduct based on experience acquired through male socialization. As a result, men appear to be more capable of developing an instinct for organizational politics than do women. Adler, (1983) further contends that one reason why male managers limit the number of female managers is simply because they do not want more competition. The extent to which men are able to achieve this is a function of their power and authority.

## **Theoretical Assumptions about Women's Work Place Behavior**

There is no consensus in empirical evidence as to the work behaviour women exhibit in organizations (Mathur-Helm, 2005). The perspectives often employed to explain this, among others, are the gender-centered perspective, organizational structure perspective and gender-organization-system perspectives. (Fagenson-eland and Parker, 1998). The fundamental argument of the gender-centered perspective is that, gender, is a major determinant of an individual's preferences, abilities, skills, and, behaviours. Since men are stereotypically assumed to be more competent relative to women, they (men) are mostly considered for senior level positions. A related approach to the gender-centered perspective is the complementary contributions approach which argued that even though men and women are different, each make valuable contributions to the organization. The organizational structure perspective posits that observable differences in management behavior of men and women are due to contextual or situational variables (such as organizational promotion policies formulation and implementation, nature of work and type of industry).

The gender-organization-system perspective supports the other two approaches but went further to say that those individuals and organizations can be adequately understood only in relation to

the societal norms and values in which they operate. This implies that workplace experiences of women cannot be divorced from prevailing sex stereotypes in the society. This theory can be used to argue that opportunities for women in the business world result not from a single stand-alone event, but rather from complex interactions and convergence among multiple forces, including political and legal activities, societal beliefs, values, practices, and, organizational and individual actions. Furthermore, Anker, (1997) cited the Gender theory as a valuable contribution towards explaining occupational segregation by sex showing how closely the characteristics of female occupations mirror the common stereotypes of women and their supposed abilities and behaviour in the work place. The following 'Positive', 'Negative' and 'Others' stereotypes were identified. The Gender theory used family interests and personal qualities to explain female work behavior but it ignores the type of work and working conditions (Aina,1998). Again, it refused to consider the situational variables at the workplace, such as nature of product/service, organizational policies formulation and implementation, type of industry, etc.

### **The Nigerian Context: Socio-Economic and Cultural Factors**

This section identifies and explores those rudimentary elements of the Nigerian labour market that shape the careers of individuals in Nigeria, they include the size of the labour market and unemployment, the lack of stable government and labour policies. There is no agreement as to the exact number of people that make up the Nigerian labour force; some estimate that the Nigerian labour market, which is the largest in Africa, has more than 47 million workers (CIA World Fact book, 2010). The labour force by occupation, in agriculture was 70%; industry 10%; and 20% in the services sector (CIA World Fact book, 2010). An immediate problem that arises in a country with an industrial sector that is basically weak and unstable and having surplus labour is the scarcity of jobs (Mordi *et al* 2010). In 2007, unemployment stood at 4.9 percent and inflation rate (consumer prices) was 5.5% (World Fact book, 2010). The population below the poverty line (2007 estimate) was 70% (World Factbook, 2010). Major parts of the labour force are low skilled and fall within the informal sector of Nigeria's labour market. More broadly, the Nigerian society and workplace is predominantly male-dominated, consequently the gendering of the workplace is still prevalent (Mordi *et al.*, 2010). It would appear the current workplace policies appear to favor men, for this reason, women engaging in traditional male occupation tend to find a lot of challenges in balancing work and family duties.

Another feature of the Nigerian labour market that influences the configuration of the labour market is the impact of the Nigerian political system, particularly the lack of stable government and robust labour policies (Mordi and Mmieh 2009). It can be argued that various governments have had a variety of political economic agendas. Since independence in 1960, Nigeria has oscillated between the democratic and military forms of government, with the latter being in existence for a total of 28 out of 44 regimes of government. One implication of frequent change of government is the lack of sustained labour policies. However, these policies were often changed due to the frequency with which military governments were overthrown or changed. On the whole these factors affects the nature of careers and the factors that aid or impede the carrier aspirations of females. In the next section, we discuss the research methods that guide the study.

### **Research Methodology**

This is a qualitative study which draws from interpretive-constructivist and constructivist-phenomenologist traditions which stress a persons' lived experience (Saunders et al 2009). The rationale for this methodological position is that it provides an appropriate framework for the development of an in-depth understanding of hitherto under researched phenomenon (Cresswell,

2007) and leads to the discovery of in-depth comprehensive narratives of the lived experiences of individuals. This approach has also been adopted by similar studies on careers management (see Tlaiss and Kauser 2011; Simpson et al, 2010).

The total sample of respondents used in this study was seventy two women managers spread across two (2) ministries and seven (7) private organizations in Lagos State, with an age composition ranging from 25 years to 55 years. The demographic characteristics of the sample are specified in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Demographic Statistics of the sampled Women Managers

| <b>Variables</b>                  | <b>Percentages</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Age of Respondents</b>         |                    |
| 25-30 years                       | 4.0                |
| 31-35years                        | 20.2               |
| 36-40years                        | 28.8               |
| 40-45 years                       | 18.9               |
| 46-50 years                       | 15.5               |
| 51-55 years                       | 12.6               |
| <b>Length of Years as Manager</b> |                    |
| Under 1 year                      | 10.8               |
| 1-5 years                         | 45.3               |
| 6-10 years                        | 27.5               |
| Above 10 years                    | 16.4               |
| <b>Occupation/Profession</b>      |                    |
| Banking                           | 24.2               |
| Insurance                         | 20.6               |
| Telecommunication                 | 18.3               |
| Manufacturing                     | 12.5               |
| State Ministry                    | 9.0                |
| Federal Ministry                  | 15.4               |

The sampling technique adopted was both purposive and stratified. Purposive, because the study targeted strictly at women managers, and stratified because the respondents represented major relevant sub-sectors of the Nigerian economy (that is, manufacturing, banking, insurance, telecommunication sub-sectors and the public service sectors). Lagos state was chosen as the sample frame because of its cosmopolitan nature and its status as a commercial nerve centre, where a lot of managerial activities take place, coupled with a significant concentration of businesses in Nigeria. The interview questions were divided into four (4) major sections, which covered the following i.e. demographic characteristics of the respondents, gender characteristics of the women managers on twenty-four gender items, which either made them masculine, feminine or androgynous based on their own personal traits. The interviews also targeted the career aspiration measure of the respondents and other general questions on their career mobility. Participants were solicited through a combination of e-mail, existing personal contacts. All the respondents that agreed to participate in the field work were screened on the eligibility criteria that the person was currently a manager. We made efforts to minimize the possibility of bias occurring by seeking participants from a variety of organizations such as financial services, telecommunications and manufacturing and had a varied demographic profile. All the interviews were conducted in English. Each semi-structured interview, which lasted between 45 and 65 minutes, commenced with an introduction to the aims and objectives of the research and the establishment of issues of confidentiality and was conducted at the respective organization site or other preferred location. Interviews were tape-recorded with the consent of the interviewee using a pre-determined but flexible interview protocol. After each interview, a contact form was used to summarize the main themes, concepts, issues or questions that emerged. The data analysis was done simultaneously. The data analysis described in more detail in the next section was ongoing, starting from the outset of data collection and continuing

all through the study. This proved particularly helpful in providing information used in revising the initial set of interview questions and formulating new questions as the interviews progressed. It also provided us with the flexibility to conduct follow up interviews and to probe deeper into some interesting emergent themes. After interviewing fifty participants and analyzing the emerging data, it was perceived that themes were recurring and further data collection was unlikely to reveal new themes or insights. However, in order to further increase the reliability and to ensure that no important theme was uncovered, twenty-two additional interviews were undertaken to confirm the earlier result. The findings corroborated the themes found in the first fifty interviews and with no new theme emerging. Thus, it was perceived that we have reached a point of theoretical saturation.

## **Data Analysis and Discussions**

Data was analyzed using a grounded theory approach (Cresswell 2007). This aims to uncover theories, concepts, hypotheses and propositions that are “grounded” in the collected field data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The first stage involved the verbatim transcription of interview data. Secondly, a coding dictionary was developed using the interview schedule as a framework to organise and segment the data. Thereafter, the interview transcripts were coded independently by two researchers and involved indexing the transcripts. Codes with similar features were identified and where appropriate amalgamated to form categories. New categories were created when two or more similar codes did not fit with an existing category. Through the combination / collapsing of codes with similar properties five dominant categories emerged representing the different career barrier factors expressed by the participants. For instance, the codes created separately e.g. “*need a helper, I need someone who can teach me and advise me...*”, *someone to show me the way*, a coach were amalgamated to form a core category *on mentorship*. Along similar lines, codes emerging from the data for instance, “*being trained*”, “*sponsor for workshop and seminars and other related themes* were amalgamated to form core category *training and Development opportunities for women managers*. This coding process is akin to the approach used by Ituma et al 2009) in which any code mentioned by more than two participants is collapsed to form a category. We did not impose coding categories a priori; rather we remained open to insight by allowing the categories to emerge from the data in order not to miss any important theme. While we considered the labelling of the categories to be accurate and reflective of the meaning participants expressed about their career success, we recognise that this is an inherently subjective exercise (Ituma et al 2009). The transcripts were analyzed independently by two researchers and then corroboration given to emerging themes by comparing and discussing individual interpretations. The barriers to the career advancement of women to top management positions identified in the study include: Lack of mentoring; fewer opportunities for training and development for women; low aspiration level of women managers, challenges that come with social networking among women, and gender stereotypes. This list is not exhaustive of all the barriers, but this study has confirmed them as some of the prominent constituents of *glass ceiling* inhibiting the upward mobility of women managers.

### **Lack of Mentoring**

A key impediment to women advancement is the lack of organizational and career mentor and coach. Respondents interviewed highlighted various problems associated with the issue of mentoring such as the fact that there were fewer women mentors, ‘overbearing’ male bosses, sometimes ‘flirtatious’ male mentors who tend see women as sex objects. Women had problems of getting female mentor than their male colleagues. A few women who were given male mentors complained about the morality of the issue. They felt it was against their religious beliefs to have close relationship with a man who was not their husbands. It is important to note that Nigeria is highly stratified along religious lines. The realities in Nigeria align with Scandura

(1999) who suggest that there is scarcity of female mentors at higher organizational ranks, and because cross-gender mentoring relationship was less likely to engage in close friendship and that social roles that involve after-work networking activities could be threatened with an appearance of romantic involvement. As one of the female Human resource managers respondents put the mentoring dilemma:

*I was in the Banking sector for over 12 years. Also in the oil and Gas sector for a reasonable length of time. There was a stage in my career where I was discriminated against as a family woman, when I was given a mentor, he was too bossy and spoke to me sometimes as if I were his girlfriend. He wanted me to stay late evening at work and wanted me to also met up with him in restaurants, cateens...I could not keep up with this demands and our relationship became tense.... I prefer to have female mentor...it is easier to compare notes and learn from one another's effort. In Nigeria it is tough combining motherhood with managerial duties.*

The study affirms the findings of Aladejana et al, (2006), where they found multiple (i.e. one mentor, several mentees) and same-gender (i.e. female/female) mentoring were found to be more common and more successful than single and cross-gender mentoring. Women in this study overwhelmingly prefer senior women as their mentors or role models at work than men. However some women seem to prefer men mentors as they argued from experience, some women do not like to have a fellow woman as a mentor. The reason for this according to some is that woman tend to be more bossy than men, and often allow their ego and position in the organization to get into their brain. A middle cadre manager explained to us that:

*We are our own worst enemy as women... For some reasons we women are more jealous of ourselves from the very mundane thing like dressing to beauty, not to talk of qualifications and position attained. We seems to feel threatened for no reason, and tend to make up our minds against ourselves easily. Men are luckier as they move on easily if when they have problems with themselves. Thus, how do you know what to do as a woman to please another who is supposed to mentor you?*

Manager in the government ministry

A study conducted by Brown (1986) revealed that cross-gender mentoring relationship could be as beneficial and successful as female-to-female mentoring. A number of women had refused to submit themselves to the cross-gender mentoring relationship arrangement because, they preferred women as mentors. They thought that women, having gone through some experience could better identify with their problems and challenges, whereas, they were doubtful whether men mentors would misunderstand these problems to be their weaknesses instead of helping them out with those problems (Ghosh,2003). Nevertheless, Okurame (2006) described cross-gender mentoring as a more beneficial mentoring relationship. The increasing diversity of the workforce adds a new dimension to the mentor-mentee matching process. People were attracted to mentors who talked, looked, acted and communicated like them. Gender, race, ethnicity and religion could play a role in matching (Wilson and Elman, 1990).

### **Training and Development Opportunities for Women Managers**

Many scholars (Abdullahi, 2006; Ola-Aluko, 2003) identified the lack of adequate education, training and experience in the past, as contributive to the difficulties women experience in getting management jobs. For instance, respondents pointed out:

*The problem I have in my organization is that there are few developmental or training opportunities available to women. Every time they decide who will go for a training, the men managers tend to settle this issues among themselves and often training programmes are filled with men – particularly training which take place outside the country. Ever since I have been here there has been very few opportunities for women.*

*T.C customer account manager, Telecommunications, Lagos*

Access to organizationally sponsored training and development schemes, and to educational opportunities is often unequal between the sexes. The human capital model is frequently adopted to justify differential treatment towards male and female employees with respect to training and educational opportunities (Anker, 1997). The model stressed that employers tried to maximize profits by minimizing costs to the extent possible. Women were often considered to be higher-cost workers due to family issues such as: Women were often said to have higher rates of absenteeism (probably in part because of family responsibilities which caused women to miss work in order to care for family members). Women were late to work frequently (probably in part because of family members). Women had higher labour turnover rates, which could be an important indirect cost for employers' who had to find and train new workers (Anker, 1997; Beck and Steel, 1998). The above position was buttressed by one of our interviewees who asserted that:

*If I have to be fair to my organization I think am contributory to my inability to get as many training as would have been given. In this organization, it is clear to all that punctuality and rate of absenteeism are some of the factors taken into cognizance when there are training opportunities, and am sure I will not pass the test. Of course, I use to be punctual and was never absent, but ever since I got married and become a mother, I have had to struggle with all of that. To be honest, am not sure if I will be prepared to leave my little child for a week to go abroad for training, leave her with who? ..... Not when I know what I went through to have her. May be in few years time, I might be willing to do that, which again depend on whether or not my husband will allow it.*

Business Development Manager, Cement Manufacturing Company Office

### **Low Aspiration of Women Managers**

In this study women's aspiration appeared to be constrained both by a need to restrict career hopes to "sex-appropriate" activities and by the strength of occupational segregation in a particular sector. Expectations are viewed highly in sex-typed terms to express greater interest in a job only when they are aware that a high proportion of women have been successful. Many respondent pointed out that:

*I am not too keen in being senior manager, let's leave that role for men. I am happy with my role in the company. If I become the overall boss in the company, I will not be able to cope with the family, kids, husband, and relatives; and you know that is a recipe for disaster. I think culturally even in the church and mosques we are taught that men are the head, they are better at these things. In Nigeria we are not really prepared for female leaders of industry in Nigeria. We still have a long way to go. Just this little position of authority I have, I went through a lot of challenges. As a woman, keeping a job and the home is challenging, except for a supportive husband and relations.*

Mordi et al, (2010) opined that women tended to direct their career goals towards occupations that were in line with social perceptions of female roles. Contradicting the assumption that women had relatively low levels of aspirations, Kanter (1997) argued that women may make their aspirations consistent with realistic expectations about promotion and advancement for women.

*You need to realize that men are more jealous than women, and as a married woman, the moment my aspirations increases and become evident, chances are that my husband might start getting funny. You know, move up requires the extra-ordinary like late meetings, weekend workings, unofficial networking and going to places that you*



*naturally will not, but playing the office politics. So, how can ones aspiration see the light of the day with a jealous man and young children.*

C.O., Insurance Broker Financial sector

In a similar vein, Powell, Posner and Schmidt (1984) reported that given that women had to surmount several barriers to hold managerial positions than men, they tended to display more concern for their career in comparison with their family. Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) equally contested that if women expressed relatively low aspirations it may not have been unrelated to the actual barriers to their advancement.

### **Family Responsibilities**

Females within the Nigerian society are beginning to reach the pinnacles of their careers (Madichie 2009), although this has sometimes come at the detriment of their families and health. A good number of women have problems with juggling roles as mothers, housewives, home-makers & managers at work. The challenge of maintaining work/life balance has affected them in meeting their various commitments. They get frustrated and feel trapped (Hassan, 2007). For example one of the respondents suggested that :

*“The corporate environment here in Nigeria is difficult and very Macho. As a woman you have to strive harder and do twice as well as the guys in order to be noticed or succeed. Women are always considered not fully committed, especially if married with children. Even when they perform better than the guys, the men always get the best positions. This is a situation I have learnt to accept and live with, so I always make sure that I work hard and that I am acknowledged..... with three children and a husband, it has not been easy at all..... Luckily I work for an organisation that understands and encourages a good work /life balance. Whatever I do, I always make sure that I prepare my children for school in the mornings and I try and get home on time to check their homework and put them to bed myself..... I see myself as very ambitious and determined.”*

F. P., Assistant General Manager, Banking

The girl child in Nigeria is culturally expected to be on the home front, while the boy child is trained to work. A reversal of these roles has not always been perceived as positive by the Nigerian society. This expectation is typical of high patriarchal societies such as Nigeria where the social relations and activities of Nigerian women and men are governed by patriarchal systems of socialization and cultural practices which favor the interests of men above those of women. Within the work milieu, access of women to leadership positions is often constrained by the societal perception of gender roles of men and women (Mordi 2010). However, it is important to note that as a result of difficult economic circumstances in which employment is scarce, there is a slow or slight shift in public perception to women attaining top positions. Carlson, Kacmar and Stepina (1995) stressed in their study on work-family conflict, identified that the conflict between work and family responsibilities had become a source of concern for both organisations and individuals. An assistant director told us that:

*I wish the Nigerian society could emulate what is happening in some developed countries today, where flexi- and flexible working arrangement is more pronounced. It is not easy combining family responsibilities with work. I went through hell to have risen to this level, and was able to because i got married ‘late’.....late for a woman in the Nigerian context. So, I was able to record some successes before settling down in marriage but the price was heavy as family pressure was huge. Today, as a director, I work from home when am on maternity leave, yet, am productive. This is something that wouldn't have been allowed if I were a junior person. I hope we get there someday.*

The multiple roles performed by individuals in the society today can become overwhelming and result in work-family conflict. The role theory provides a strong explanation for the study of work family conflict because it assumes mutually incompatible pressures between roles (Tlairs and Kauser 2010). Furthermore, the feminist/gender theories and related explanations made by Anker (1997) attributed subordinate positions being held by women to the fact that women carried out all the tough duties at the home front, and had little time at their disposal to work outside the home.

### **Social Networking among Women**

The position of developmental relationship is increasingly changing (Noe, Green-berger and Wang, 2002), and this is equally evident in social and organizational psychology literatures. Thus, Hersby, Ryan and Jetten (2009) were of the opinion that womens' networks could be a vehicle for individual strategy in advancing their career, and could as well be a strategy to give the women a voice in an organization and better their lots. Therefore, in order to appreciate the social networking of women, it is paramount to understand the socio-structural context of the society where they live, and more specifically as it affect their organization. In Nigeria, women networking are still a challenge, which could be as a result of a number of factors like ethnicity, religion, culture, family background and social status. Respondents pointed out that:

*Networking among women folks will be one of the best thing that can happen to women career development as there will be so much to share as long as we keep a focus. I do recognize that it will come as a challenge as class and status might be created in the course of it thereby making it impossible for some to be part of. And as you know, fear spring from ignorance, so, once you create a fence for some, the network will be labeled negatively. Having been abroad many times, I know we as women we stand gain so much if we network in a coordinated manner.*

For there to be the desired social change, it is important for organizations to pay attention to the issues of gender inequalities that dominates the Nigerian work environment.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This research on women managers discovered a significant relationship between the gender stereotype of a woman manager and her career aspiration. The findings also reveal that women managers possess all the attributes for top management, but what affects them are family issues, individual factors (gender-imposed) and organizational factors. Suggestions on what can make women better managers are grouped and listed below: Gender-sensitivity in the organization, women Education /Education of the Girl child, male involvement in home front care, leadership training and development for women, mentoring of women and social networking among women. The respondents were of the opinion that the sex of an individual should not be a basis for handling a managerial position, and that elevation should be based strictly on merit and meeting stipulated criteria drawn by the organization as conditions for promotion to higher cadres. This will no doubt enhance the aspiration of women for managerial duties. Thus, for women to break the barriers of stereotypical assumptions held against them by the men and the organizational culture facing them. They need to possess some essential skills that include the need to earn credibility and gain power in their organizations; recognizing the importance of networking among themselves; and that personal achievement and successes should come before public victory. Furthermore, there should be a sustained focus on the education of the girl child and capacity building to achieve economic empowerment of Nigerian women. The Federal Government's Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy that provides free and compulsory primary education, if fully implemented, is a step in the right direction. Inadequate education of women has contributed to the slow advancement of women in the workplace. The various world

conferences on women coupled with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) of the federal government have increased the awareness of the need for gender equality and equity in all aspects of life including the religious sphere. Leadership training and development of women are also recommended, so that the many women managers can assume leadership roles as much as their male colleagues. It is believed that the attention to the above will positively affect the 'psyche' of women managers and further sensitize their aspiration for managerial positions.

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## Impedimente în promovarea femeilor în carieră: experiența nigeriană

### Rezumat

*Utilizând o abordare exploratorie calitativă bazată pe interviuri detaliate cu 72 de manageri executivi și de nivel mediu, articolul de față studiază barierele progresului femeilor în carieră către pozițiile de top management și provocările care apar odată cu o astfel de evoluție în Nigeria. Datele au fost obținute prin intermediul unor interviuri structurate, la care au participat femei angajate în domenii precum: producție, bănci, asigurări, telecomunicații, și două sectoare de servicii publice din Nigeria. Rezultatele sugerează faptul că provocările datorate factorilor individuali, spre exemplu așteptările culturale privind rolul femeii în întemeierea familiei și în societatea nigeriană, precum și factorilor organizaționali din cadrul contextului lor de operare constituie barierele principale percepute de managerii de sex feminin în ocuparea celor mai înalte poziții de conducere.*