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Interrogating the Roles of Women Academics in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria: Prince Abubakar Audu University and Veritas University, Abuja in Focus

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Abstract:

The role of women in nation-building has continued to attract global attention. With changing policies and the resulting emphasis on female education, the ground is shifting as many women have entered previously male-dominated fields such as medicine, law, politics, the academia, among others. However, women still must pass some sociocultural and institutional hurdles to be able to attain a meaningful level of growth in their chosen careers. Despite the progress that women in the professional sphere have made, they remain underrepresented in strategic and essential positions. In fact, in academia, the representation of women can be likened to a pyramid where only a very small and, indeed, insignificant number of women exist at the top and in key leadership positions, especially in Nigeria. This position also applies to Prince Abubakar Audu University and Veritas University, Abuja, by implication. In this research, we have adopted the doctrinal approach and found that women still have a long way to go compared to men in attaining leadership roles. More work needs to be done collectively by men and women to place women in the leadership scheme.

Keywords: *Interrogating, role, women, tertiary institutions*

1. Introduction

The roles of women in various aspects of contemporary society have become a cause for study and advocacy. This is imperative because women have been trying to catch up in various sectors, but despite their equal endowment with male counterparts, they remain glaringly insignificant in many others.

Despite the advancements which women have made in many areas of public life in the past two decades, they are still a long way from participating in the same footing in academia as men. The global picture is one of the men outnumbering women in research and publication. Female Deans and Professors are a minority group, while female Vice-Chancellors are rare.¹

Also, over the years, the historical accounts of the evolution of human civilizations since the beginning of time are replete with the overwhelming achievements of men who invented, discovered, and introduced them into social structures and materials that are still of immense benefit to mankind today.² Although women like Ladi Kwali, Saraunia Amina of Zauzau, and Inikpi Oma Ufedo Baba, among others, have been mentioned in history, their number no way surpasses the number of male inventors and innovations.

According to Yonlonfoun,³ men's contributions include establishing religious organizations, the invention of electricity and the computer, means of transportation, communication, and so on. In all of these, it appears very rare to

¹Christiana O. Ogbogu, Gender Inequality In Academia: Evidence From Nigeria, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1072918.pdf>. Accessed on 10/07/22

²Yonlonfoun, V. B. (2004). A Comparative Analysis of the Performance of Male/Female Personnel in Management Positions in Nigerian Universities. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan.

³Yonlonfoun, V. B. op cit

find women who have performed similar feats, either in the past or present. However, human intelligence is the same in both sexes, and there are as many women as men in the world. Why does it appear that women are hardly found among outstanding people of distinction and excellence at the various levels of management in different parts of the world - university inclusive? One wonders whether the failure of women to occupy management positions in Nigerian universities is indicative that there are no women ripe enough for these positions.

These writers dare to say no. It is simply driven by the factor of patriarchy, a system of male domination and discrimination against women in all facets of life.⁴Gender discrimination abounds in many occupations and most parts of the world.⁵There 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, the gender gap is that wide separation, the unfilled space between males and females in various endeavours, which include education and management of a university or establishment.

Further buttressing this position of imbalance in the representation of females, both as academic staff and as students Balogun opines that only 12.4% of the academic staff consists of women.⁶ 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. Corroborating this view, Adegun added that many women lack advancement into leadership positions; because they are rare in upper levels of academics.⁷They 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.⁸

However, it is advocated that there is a promotion of gender equality and women empowerment as a tool for curbing all of these perceived biases against women. Globally, data on women in management or leadership positions, or women behind the scenes who may have advisory positions with no titles, are also few, in any case. Available statistics paint a picture of women's minimal representation in management positions—university management inclusive.⁹

In Africa, despite the progress that women in the professional sphere have made, they remain underrepresented in strategic and essential positions. In fact, in academia, the representation of women can be likened to a pyramid where only a very few women exist at the top and in key leadership positions, especially in Africa.

1.1. Discrimination against Women in Academics

One explanation for this lack of progress toward gender parity is negative and pervasive gender stereotypes, which may facilitate discrimination and reduce opportunities for women's career advancement. Currently, there is widespread interest in women's underrepresentation in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).¹⁰Women in STEM also have lower social capital (e.g., support networks), limiting women's opportunities to earn tenure jobs and learn about grant funding mechanisms.

However, progress toward gender equality in these fields is slow. Women in STEM-related faculties may also perceive their academic climate as unwelcoming and threatening and report hostility and uncomfortable tensions in their work environments, such as sexual harassment and discrimination.¹¹

More alarmingly, these gender disparities worsen when examining women's representation within STEM departments in academia. While the number of women receiving post-graduate degrees has increased in recent years, the number of women in STEM faculty positions remains largely unchanged. In academics, much remains to be accomplished in terms of gender equality. Many departments, especially those in the field of STEM, as well as law, are heavily male-dominated.¹²

Universities are established essentially to provide quality services to enhance the living standards of people in society through education. Competent employees, whether males or females, are needed to achieve these objectives. Universities are believed to be liberal and open-minded enough to support social movements that encourage the principles of democracy and social justice, particularly as it relates to governance.¹³

Globally, there are relatively few women in senior management positions in universities.¹⁴ While this remains a challenge across the globe, the situation in many African universities appears to be particularly challenging, with

⁴Ibid

⁵Adegun, P. T. (2009). The Woman Academic and Her Health: A paper presented at a seminar organized by National association of women in academics (NAWACS) University of Ado-Ekiti branch, Ekiti State.

⁶Balogun, A. M. (2010). Challenges of Higher Education in Nigeria – A Managers Perspective. Being a paper delivered in the 1st Annual lecture of the Faculty of Education, UNAD

⁷Adegun op.cit.note 5

⁸Abiodun-Oyebanji, O., & Olaleye, F. (2011). Women in University Management: The Nigerian Experience. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 4(9), 19–28. <https://doi.org/10.19030/cier.v4i9.5696>

⁹Oyelaja, F. D. (1992). Nigerian Women in Management: A comparative analysis of female managers in public and private organizations. An unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

¹⁰Casad B. J. et al., Gender inequality in academia: Problems and solutions for women faculty in STEM, *Journal of Neuroscience Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jnr.24631> Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jnr.24631> Accessed on 04/03/22

¹¹Ibid

¹²Clark, S. M., & Corcoran, M. (1986). Perspectives on the Professional Socialization of Women Faculty: A Case of Accumulative Disadvantage? *The Journal of Higher Education*, 57(1), 20–43. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1981464>

¹³Ogbogu, C. O. & Bisiriyu, L. A. (2012). Gender issues in recruiting and selecting academic staff in a Nigerian university. *Gender and Behaviour*, 10(2), 4751–

4766. http://reference.sabinet.co.za/sa_epublication_article/genbeh_v10_n2_a9. Accessed on 3/9/17.

¹⁴Abiodun-Oyebanji et al., *supra*, note 8

patriarchal practices having serious manifestations in institutions of higher learning.¹⁵ In African universities, women constitute only 29 percent of academic staff, compared to the global figure of 41 percent.¹⁶ Recent data from the Commonwealth Universities have also indicated that women comprised only 24% of full-time academic staff.¹⁷

Moreover, only six out of the 26 higher education institutions in South Africa—a country that houses many of Africa's top universities—are led by women. The smallest percentages were found in Ghana, where only 8 percent of professors from public universities are women.¹⁸ More broadly, across sub-Saharan Africa, women constitute only 24 percent of academic staff and 2.5 percent of vice-chancellors. The African Education Research Database also indicates that, out of 2,510 African-led studies surveyed by the database, only 32 percent were led by women.¹⁹

In Nigerian society, most people still seem reluctant to accept women leaders, even though there are qualified women for top management positions. It appears that many people think that women are harder 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. Still, the policy-making bodies in the university system seem to be heavily crowded by men. This is against the backdrop that women who can also occupy these management positions and perform excellently well as their male counterparts exist. It is, therefore, against the foregoing that the study seeks to interrogate women in university management.

For instance, in Nigeria, only a handful of women have ever held the position of university Vice-Chancellor — Prof. Alele-Williams, who was a former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin; Prof. Jadesola Akande, (now late) former Vice-Chancellor (VC) of Lagos State University; Prof. Adenike Oladiji – VC Federal University of Technology, Akure; FUTA, Prof. Dorcas Omanyu Oluwade VC Salem University, Lokoja; Prof. Gambo Laraba Abdullahi — VC University of Abuja; Prof. Smarinda Olarinde – VC Afe Babalola University; Ado- Ekiti (ABUAD); Prof. A. Obayan, Vice-chancellor of Covenant University Ota, a privately owned university; Prof. Folashade Tolulope Ogunsola, Vice Chancellor, University of Lagos, and our own Prof. Marietu Tenuche (VC, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba among others.

Professor Grace Alele-Williams made history as the first Nigerian woman to become the Vice Chancellor of a Nigerian university.²⁰ She became a professor of Mathematics in 1976 before becoming a Vice-Chancellor at the University of Benin in 1985, where she served until 1991²¹. Even management positions like provosts of colleges, deans, heads of departments, directors, registrars, bursars, and librarians have been dominated by men.²² Except for a few universities in Nigeria, such as the University of Abuja, Ahmadu Bello University, Prince Abubakar Audu University, and Veritas University, Abuja where we have had female registrars and bursars, it seems it has always been a man's affair when it comes to occupancy of management positions in many Nigerian universities. It should be recalled that University of Nigeria had recorded only one female registrar, Mrs. Grace Ifeoma Okoye, since its existence.²³ Although Australian higher education is often seen as female-friendly, women remain a minority as senior academics.²⁴

This gender equity gap is sometimes attributed to the fact that, like most occupations, the academic profession at the beginning of modern times was a single-sex profession. Thus, female participation in policy-making bodies in the Nigerian university system is very limited, as they hold less than 35% of academic posts and are mainly represented in lower and middle-level academic and administrative positions.²⁵ While hiring women in academic fields have been on a slight rise, it is mainly an entry-level occupation and not for high-level positions where women are most lacking. Integrating women more thoroughly into academics is essential in developing future gender equality and greater research outcomes.

A recent report reveals that only 12% of third-year female Ph.D. students want a career in academics. This is because they would have weighed the sacrifices they will need to make to pursue the all-consuming and solitary pursuit in comparison with the benefits, which may only come towards their old age. Women achieve disproportionately less prestige and success in academics than their male counterparts. They are less likely to be tenured and to receive promotions to more influential or powerful positions. Women in academics also earn a lower income, on average, than their male counterparts. Where a woman finds herself in the same place of employment as her husband, he is more likely

15 Oiaogun, J. A., Adebayo, A. A. & Oluwemimo, C. A. (2015). Gender Imbalance in the Academia in Nigeria. *European Scientific Journal*, November 2015 / SPECIAL/ edition, 294-306. Available at: <http://eujournal.org/index.php/esj/article/download/6539/6264> accessed on 11/9/2017.

16 Boakye, A. (2011). Gender Equality in Tertiary Institutions: A case study of Ghana Christian University College. Dissertation submitted to Ghana Christian University College in partial fulfillment for the award of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Development Management by the University of Wales (UK). Available at: <https://www.academia.edu/5827494/Gender%20Equality%20in%20Tertiary%20Institutions> accessed on 11/9/17.

17. Egunjobi, Q. A. (2008) Women in Academics: The untold story of Gender Inequality and Discrimination against Women in the Ivory Tower. Lead Paper presented at the seminar organized by the National Association of Women in Academics (NAWACS), University of Ado-Ekiti Chapter, Ado- Ekiti, 2008.

18 Amina Mama, Rethinking African Universities; Gender and Transformation, *Barnard College* https://sfonline.barnard.edu/africana/mama_01.htm Accessed on 12/9/17.

19 Rebecca Afua Klege, Strategies for advancing African women in academia, Available at *Brookings* <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2022/03/15/strategies-for-advancing-african-women-in-academia/> accessed on 25/07/2022

20 Professor Grace Alele-Williams A Trailblazer-the pointer News online. Available at: thepointernews.com/professor-grace-alele-williams-a-trailblazer, accessed on 10/8/2017.

21 Grace Alele Williams. Biographies of Women Mathematicians.

<https://mathwomen.agnesscott.org/women/williams.htm#:~:text=Grace%20Awani%20Alele%20Williams%20was,now%20the%20University%20of%20Ibaden>).

21 Rebecca Afua Klege, supra, note 19

22 Joanne Pyke. Why female academics give up on becoming professors? Available at <https://theconversation.com/why-do-female-academics-give-up-on-becoming-professors-6563> Accessed on 17/9/17

24 Ibid

25 Ogbogu, C. O. (2011). Gender Inequality in Academia: Evidence from Nigeria. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research (CIER)*, 4(9), 1–8. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19030/cier.v4i9.5694>. Accessed on: 15/9/2017. Accessed on: 16/9/17

to be paid all the allowances such as housing, furniture, etc., even where they jointly share those responsibilities. He is also more likely to get a more accelerated promotion because he can do his research unhindered by intervening events.

It has been argued that during the 1960s, men being the sole providers for the families, adopted a significant amount of power in their homes, which contributed to feelings of male superiority.²⁶ Even though the Nigerian university system is over sixty years old, there are still pieces of evidence of low female participation as academic staff. For instance, in 2006 University of Ibadan had academic staff strength of 3081, out of which 2574 were males and 507 females, Obafemi Awolowo University had 1207 academic staff members, out of which 210 were females, and the University of Lagos's academic staff strength was 813 out of which 250 were females. Sciences, Technology, Mathematics, Engineering, medicine, and science disciplines remain strongly dominated by men, while the highest concentrations of women are found in the humanities and social sciences.²⁷ Economic research states that culture can transmit values and norms that last for centuries and even millennia, and they have nothing to substantiate them except handed-down beliefs.²⁸ Those beliefs seem to enhance male superiority and downplay the effective capabilities of women.

1.2. Prince Abubakar Audu University and Veritas University, Abuja, in Focus

Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba and Veritas University, Abuja, have had the good and rare fortune of having a female Vice-Chancellor and a female Registrar and Bursar, respectively.²⁹ Appointed in 2020 by the state government, she has earned her position and has creditably discharged her functions to the admiration of the university stakeholders. Having joined the services of the university in 2000 as a lecturer 1 in the Department of Political Science, she rose to become a Professor of Political Science in 2011. She was, until her current appointment, the Dean of the School of Post-graduate Studies and Chairman of Deans and Directors. She served as Dean of Arts and Social Sciences from 2000-2006, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic 2004-2006 & Administration from 2008-2011. This is a lady who has risen through the ranks to earn her position of pride.

However, besides the helmsperson of the university, the majority of management positions in the university follow the national pattern of being male-dominated.

It is without a doubt that her headship of the university should positively rub off on the participation of women in university management in general. Currently, there are seventy-seven management staff comprising both academic and non-academic which are broken down in the following order: Principal Officers are six out of which two are female. There are nine Deans, none of whom is female. There are fifty (50) Heads of Departments, out of which seven are female. Lastly, twelve directors are all males. This does not reflect any equity or fairness of distribution. There is a need for more to be done to encourage women to hold leadership positions.

In Prince Abubakar Audu University Anyigba, the total number of Senior Staff (both academic and non-academic) are 1,120. The total number of female academic staff are 121, while the non-academics are 155. This brings the total number of female members of staff to 276. This number is too small in comparison with male academics, which are 537 and 307 non-academics which bring the total number of males to 844. The total number of females in Management and Academic positions is 9. It is sad to know that there are no female staff in leading academic positions in Faculties of Arts, Management, and Social Sciences as well as Law.

Kogi State has been blessed with other trailblazing women in academics that have continued to put out the name of the state positively. Prof. Angela Okatahi is an outstanding professor of educational psychology from the prestigious University of Abuja. She has taught and researched in the University system for over forty years producing scores of post-graduate students and hundreds of undergraduate students in the process. She has also mentored several other academics, some of whom have become professors and senior administrators in various institutions in Nigeria and abroad. Prof. Emily Alemika is also another worthy Kogi woman academic worthy of celebration. She is the first female Professor of Law from Kogi State. She is a committed advocate for human and women's rights and a mentor of note. Other names that will ring a bell when Women in academics from Kogi State are discussed include Professor Jumai Lucy Ogbadu, Prof. Doris Laruba Obieje, Prof. Esther Ali Adamu, Prof. Faith Sale, Prof. Eunice Attah Okoroafor. In terms of percentage, these numbers are too small in comparison with male senior academics to make any serious impact without turning the outstanding female academics into sugar in plums.

In making a modest effort in her academic and legal career, Professor Josephine Agbonika (SAN), the lead author of the current study, was employed as Law Lecturer 1 at the University of Abuja in 1994. In 2010, she joined Kogi State University as a Lecturer and rose through the ranks at Kogi State University until 2021, when she was pronounced a Professor of Law. She is presently the pioneer Dean of Law at Veritas University, Abuja, on leave of absence from PAAU. Also, in 2021, Prof. Josephine Agbonika was recognized and admitted to the inner bar of the legal profession by the award of the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), making her the first woman from Kogi East to be so recognized. With this, she rose to the apex of her teaching and legal careers within a period of one week for each elevation. She became a SAN on December 8, 2021, and was announced as a Professor on December 16, 2021 (backdated to 2019). These were done amidst childbirth, child rearing, home care, reading, and publications. If Prof. Josephine Agbonika could do it, it is also possible for all women to struggle and do it.

²⁶ Eswaran, Mukesh. "Why We Think the Way We Do about Men, Women, and Work." Available at PBS

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/the-lasting-impact-of-the-plow-on-our-attitudes-about-gender-and-work> retrieved on 29-August 2017

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Mark Mayah, Kogi state varsity appoints first female acting VC, Available at Business Day website, <https://businessday.ng/uncategorized/article/kogi-state-varsity-appoints-first-female-acting-vc/>

On the other hand, at Veritas University, there are 55 female academic staff members. Altogether, 49 of them have publications in indexed journals, according to recent data from Veritas University, Abuja. A provision is made for suitable women's access programs for such mentorship at Veritas University. There are just six women in senior positions as of the 2022–2023 academic year, making up just 12.2 percent of the total. The Registrar is Dr. Stella Chizoba Okonkwo, and the Bursar is Mrs. Margret Ejima Akoje. Associate Professor Angela Ngozi Dick serves as both the Director of the Centre for Gender Studies and the Acting Head of the Department of English and Literary Studies. As earlier noted, Professor Josphine Agbonika SAN is the current Dean of the Faculty of Law. Professor Dorcas Omany Oluwade, a professor of Business, and Professor Bukola Catherine, a professor of Microbiology, are also members of the senior staff cadre.

Veritas University, Abuja, has been successful in putting up measures for women's growth despite the low presence of women in high positions. There are evidence of maternity and paternity policies that support women's participation in Veritas University, Abuja; accessible childcare facilities for staff and students in Veritas University, Abuja; women's mentoring schemes, in which at least 10% of female students participate in Veritas University, Abuja; and a policy on sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults that protects every adult, especially women, and girls. It is important to note that Veritas University, Abuja, being a Catholic institution renowned for its strict academic standards and adherence to the beliefs of the Church, is inspired and guided by God and does not have discrimination rules against individuals. However, women's representation in all facets of management is low. For example, no woman has been appointed the Vice Chancellor of the University since its take off in 2008.

1.2.1. Lack of Equal Respect

In the manner that female academics are sometimes addressed, one cannot but notice the unequal undertone, which portrays an aspect of discrimination. For example, when a female academician struggles in her own right to earn a degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) or a professorial chair, she is expected to attach the extra tag of Ms. or Mrs. to that title.³⁰ Surprisingly, her male counterparts do not bear Dr. (Mr.) or Professor (Mr.). One wonders whether the addition is merely to broadcast her marital status or to fulfil the male ego that despite her title, she is subordinate to her father or husband, as the case may be. The National Association of Women Academics has, since the 1990s, under the administration of Professor Irene Salami, taken a position in line with Hickey's view³¹ that both Dr. and Professor are honorific titles depicting that one has a doctoral degree or has become a professor and have no feminine forms. After that honour, the next thing we should see is the name of that person rather than his or her marital status since academic titles should have no extra appellation. Unfortunately, some women are intimidated into using it by some stereotypes, which are insecure and chauvinist in behaviour. Others enjoy reminding the world that they are married or single, as the case may be. This is a discriminatory practice and should be stopped. Discrimination against women is not restricted to academia. It also rears its ugly head in the Legal Profession, the Police, and politics, among others.

1.3. Discrimination against Women in the Legal Profession

When the issue of discrimination against women in the legal profession is raised, men are likely to claim that there is no discrimination because there are 'no women in the profession. Although this may seem patronising, the undertone is that women are incapable of being lawyers. They have to be cloaked with the status of a man to raise them from 'the weak' to 'the strong' to practice law. One would expect the institutions defending people's rights to be naturally willing to promote equality, fairness, and justice since that is what lawyers and judges are supposed to uphold throughout their careers. Unfortunately, the reality is a long way from this idealistic view of the justice system, as they are reluctant to enforce anti-discriminatory measures and laws.

It is common knowledge that clients often prefer male counsel to female, even among women clients.³² This does not mean that male lawyers are more brilliant, vocal, or more articulate than their female colleagues. It is just a question of the stereotype culture and belief that men are better and stronger than women. More regrettable is the preference of some senior lawyers to recruit male lawyers simply because of their prejudices against women for certain reproductive or domestic encumbrances that seem to make them less productive at work. She is more likely to take off time from work for reasons such as seeking anti-natal care, taking a sick child to the hospital, or even cooking for the family. Thus, indeed, it is man's world, even in the legal profession.

A woman lawyer continues to be seen and addressed as a man throughout her years of practice. As a legal practitioner, she remains a gentleman, and as a judge, she is my lord and not my Lady. Although some women may find this patronising, the reason may not be unconnected with the history that a woman is not contemplated in the definition of a 'person' for the legal profession, which used to be known as the profession of men. The first application by a woman to be admitted as a solicitor in the United Kingdom (UK) was in 1876.³³ Of course, her application was rejected because she was not recognized as a person within the definition of Law.

30 Amy Ericson. Mistress, Miss, Mrs or Ms: Untangling the Shifting History of Titles/University of Cambridge. Available at: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/mistress-miss-mrs-or-ms-untangling-the-shifting-history-of-titles>. See also Amy Louise Erickson, *Mistresses, and Marriage: or, a Short History of the Mrs.* *History Workshop Journal*, Volume 78, Issue 1, Autumn 2014, Pages 39–57 <https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbt002>

31 Robert Hickey, Honour & Respect. The official Guide to Names, Titles, and Forms of Address. Available at: <https://www.formsofaddress.info/> on 25/9/17.

32 Jennifer Ellis. Is there a Pattern of Male or Female clients Preferring Male or Female? Available at: <https://www.quora.com/Is-there-a-pattern-to-male-or-female-clients-preferring-male-or-female-lawyers-to-represent-them>. Accessed on June 14, 2017.

33 Guyard-Nedelec. Discrimination Against Women Lawyers in England and Wales: An Overview. *Gender Forum: An Internet Journal for Gender Studies*. Available at: http://genderforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/200717_WorkingOutGender.pdf, (accessed on June 15, 2017)

The pressure for change began in the 1870s when ninety-two women signed a petition demanding permission to attend lectures at Lincoln's Inn. The petition was rejected on the basis that only males could practice law.³⁴ Things only began to change in 1902 when Bertha Cave was accepted in Grays Inn, but the judges soon reversed their decision stating that "males, and males alone, were to be admitted to practise at the bar." Later, in 1912 Gwyneth Bebb's application in *Bebb v. Law Society*.³⁵ To be registered as a solicitor was rejected by the Law Society, and her appeal was rejected because she was not a 'person' within the terms of the Solicitors Act 1843. For Lord Justice Swinfen Eady, the very fact that women had never been solicitors meant that the law was that women could not be solicitors. For the same reason, women were refused admission to practice in Canada,³⁶ Australia³⁷ and Minnesota.³⁸ The struggle, however, continued, and finally, the case of *Edwards v. A.G. of Canada*³⁹ heralded the gallant entry of women into the legal profession in Canada.

The enactment of the Sex Discrimination (Removal) Act (SDA) 1919 paved the way for the admission of women to bars in England. The Act finally admitted that women were 'persons' and could hold public office. Thus, the first woman solicitor, Madge Easton Anderson, was admitted to Scotland in 1920.⁴⁰ England and Wales followed with the admission of four women, namely Maud Crafts, Carrie Morison, Mary Pickup, and Mark Skye, in December 1922.⁴¹ They were, however, only allowed to practise in restricted areas such as family law, matrimonial, and probate issues.⁴² One hundred years after the sex Disqualification (Removal) Act was passed, this was the story of the four women who changed the centuries-old status quo is still fresh.

Until the early 1960s, women constituted no more than 3 percent of the legal profession, and it was not until the 1970s that all accredited law schools eliminated sex-based restrictions.⁴³ Law firms in the UK were not obligated to hire female Barristers under the provisions of the SDA. However, the situation drastically changed in 1990 with the enactment of the Courts and Legal Services Act (CLSA), which made it unlawful for a barrister or barrister's clerk in relation to any offer of pupilage or tenancy to discriminate against a woman.

Indeed, until in the early 20th century, judges, legislators, and legal educators largely agreed that women lacked a 'legal mind' and that the "peculiar qualities of womanhood, such as gentle graces, purity, delicacy, and emotional impulses were not qualifications for forensic strife."⁴⁴ Thus, even after formal legal restrictions were removed, informal barriers persisted. The fact that fewer women than men are appointed Queens Counsel QC (now Kings Counsel) ⁴⁵ or Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SAN) draws attention to prevailing patriarchal patterns and the persistence of sex discrimination. From 1975 to 2022, a total number of 693 Lawyers were conferred with the distinguished rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria.⁴⁶ Out of these, only 26 persons making them about 4.2% are women.⁴⁷ The creation of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA),⁴⁸ when there is International Bar Association (IBA), it is not connected with the issue of Discrimination.⁴⁹

In 1944, at the IBA conference in Mexico, Linda Bates, an American whose candidacy for the Board of the IBA was rejected because she was a female, met Esther Talamantes, who was the sole female Mexican Lawyer in attendance. From their conversation, they found Linda's rejection disgusting and agreed to start an association consisting of only female Lawyers. FIDA was born on August 4, 1944, with the following founding members; Rosalind G. Bates from the USA, Esther Talamantes from Mexico, Luisa Maria Capo from Puerto Rico, Isabel Sierro Perez from Cuba, and Alma Paredes from Salvador. Their first convention took place in 1945 in Havana, Cuba, and the first President was Isabel. FIDA now has membership in 73 countries worldwide and, as a non-governmental organisation, has a special voice in the Bar Association activities. Although Linda died mysteriously in November 1961 under the circumstances suspected to be hired killing, Esther died at the age of 95 years in 2015, having become the second President and a life vice president of FIDA.⁵⁰

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ 1913 B.305.

³⁶ Schultz, U., & Shaw, G. (Eds.). (2003). *Women in the World's Legal Professions*. London: Hart Publishing. Retrieved August 16, 2017, from <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472559395>. Also available at: <https://www.bloomsburycollections.com/book/women-in-the-worlds-legal-professions/>

³⁷ John Emerson. History of the Independent Bar of South Australia. Available at https://books.google.com.ng/books/about/History_of_the_Independent_Bar_of_South.html?id=G2PXRJQ_5SwC&redir_esc=y Accessed on 28/7/17.

³⁸ The Martha Angle Dorsett case (1876-1878) Minnesota Legal History Project. Available at <http://www.minnesotalegalhistoryproject.org/assets/Dorsett%20Case.pdf> Accessed on August 9, 2017.

³⁹ *Edwards v Canada* (AG) 1930 AC. 124 available at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwards_v_Canada_\(AG\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edwards_v_Canada_(AG)) Accessed on 12/8/17.

⁴⁰ Madge Easton Anderson, *Wikipedia*. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madge_Easton_Anderson

⁴¹ Catherine Baksi, Landmarks in Law: When Female Lawyers were declared 'people.' *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2019/feb/15/landmarks-in-law-when-female-lawyers-were-declared-people>

⁴² Our History, the Law Society

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/about-us>. Accessed on August 17, 2017

⁴³ Fossum, D. (1981). Women in the Legal Profession: A Progress Report. *American Bar Association Journal*, 67(5), 578-582. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20747132>.

⁴⁴ Karen Morello, *The Invisible Bar: The Woman Lawyer in America. 1638 to the Present* 181 (1986); Deborah L. Rhode, *Justice and Gender* 20-23 (1989); Deborah L. Rhode, "Perspectives on Professional Women," 40 *Sum. L. Rev.* 1 163. 1166 (1988); In the Matter of Goodell. 39 *Wis.* 232 (1875) accessed at <https://cite.case.law/wis/39/232/>

⁴⁵ Arising from ascension to the throne by king Charles following the death of his mother, Queen Elizabeth the 2nd.

⁴⁶ Wondrous Nnaemeka, There are 693 Senior Advocates in Nigeria. *The Whistler Newspaper*. <https://thewhistler.ng/there-are-693-senior-advocates-of-nigeria/>

⁴⁷ Mia Essien, SAN. Only about 4.2% of Senior Advocates are female. This Day - Press Reader. <https://www.pressreader.com/nigeria/thisday/20180227/281951723309305>.

⁴⁸ FIDA is an acronym for the Spanish name Federation Internacional De Abogadas.

⁴⁹ FIDA History <https://fidafederation.org/en/about-us/history/>

⁵⁰ Ibid

In 1935, just about a decade and a half after the remarkable entry of women into the legal profession, Nigeria produced its first female lawyer (Stella Jane Thomas later Marke).⁵¹ Nigeria also had Justice Modupe Oladunni Ebo (Nee) Akingbehin, appointed as the first female High Court Judge in Lagos State, Nigeria, in 1969.⁵² Things, however, began to pick in the upward direction in the 1980s with the appointment of the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria, Chief (Mrs.) Folake Solanke.⁵³ In 2009, Honourable Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, who incidentally was appointed the first female justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, was also the first female lawyer from the northern part of Nigeria.⁵⁴ She made history as the first female Chief Justice of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (CJN).⁵⁵

During trials, lawyers are expected to announce their names before they represent anyone. Judges sometimes add to the embarrassment of female practitioners when they seek to know, after such appearances, whether she is a 'Miss' or 'Mrs' as though she was in court as a candidate for marriage rather than the practice of law. Her younger male counterparts are never asked for such clarifications when they announce their appearances. One wonders whether such judges merely seek to satisfy their curiosity or assist in advertising female lawyers for marriage or perhaps seek to puncture the pride and self-esteem of such female lawyers. This question is highly unnecessary in the face of the assumption that there are no ladies at the bar but gentlemen.

The book 'Women in Law' is a historical and statistical study of the lives of women lawyers in Nigeria⁵⁶ was presented to the public to show that there are women who can still make a difference in national life. Cataloguing the women in the book and using the examples of Plateau State and Lagos State examples, Balogun encouraged chief executives to appoint women as Chief Judges and Attorneys General since they are full of talent. It is only a matter of time before full equality becomes an accomplished fact. In the American Bar Association ABA Journal's 2000 poll, only a quarter of female lawyers and three percent of male lawyers thought that prospects for advancement were greater for men than for women, while 58 percent believed they had equal opportunities at their firms.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, some lawyers, either for reasons of complexity or illiteracy, opt to indulge in a linguistic sex change to bend or transform their gender from female to male. For such categories of lawyers, they will prefer to be addressed as gentlemen instead of ladies, or as my lord instead of my lady or my ladyship, as learned brother silk instead of learned sister silk, as Sir instead of Ma'am. Chinua Asuzu⁵⁸ refers to such categories of Women as those suffering from linguistic sexism and has this for them:

*If you appear before a female judge who doesn't like being called Lady, then address her in the third non-person as this Honourable Court. Never address a female judge as my lord or your lordship. You don't have to partake of her ladyship's unrepentant illiteracy, nor must you join the cult of linguistic gender benders.*⁵⁹

Women should, therefore, take pride in their God-given gender. Although there is discrimination against women in the legal profession, it is not on the top list of other cases of discrimination against women in Nigeria. In Nigeria, a lot still needs to be done in the area of the glass ceiling, especially in the appointment of Senior Advocates of Nigeria and senior academics. Gender bias surveys have put it in the following terms:

*Time [will] take care of the problem...The so-called gender gap is vastly overblown. If people who enter the arena will concentrate on the job and get the chip off their shoulders, they should do fine in today's society...Of all the problems we have as lawyers, discrimination is low on the list of important ones.*⁶⁰

1.4. Discrimination against Women in the Police and Other Military or Paramilitary Forces

By virtue of Section 127 of the Police Act, married women are prevented from seeking enlistment in the Nigeria Police Force. Under section 127, when an unmarried police woman is pregnant, she would be discharged from the police force. She can only be reinstated with the approval of the Inspector General of Police. Regulation 124 requires that women police are to apply for permission to marry.⁶¹ A woman police officer who is desirous of marrying must, therefore, first apply in writing to the Commissioner of Police of the State Police Command in which she is serving to request permission to marry and must give the name and address of the person she intends to marry. Permission will be given for the marriage if the intended husband is of good character and the woman police officer has served the force for a period of not less than three years.

The parameter for determining good character is not provided, which makes it amenable to abuse. It is important to note that this provision has now been declared illegal, null, and void for being inconsistent with section 42 of the

⁵¹ Kelvin Osakpolor Onile, Stella Jane Marke: First Woman Lawyer (Nigeria). Pioneer African Women in Law. <https://www.africanwomeninlaw.com/african-women-in-law/Stella-Jane-Marke>

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Wikipedia Folake Solanke https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folake_Solanke

⁵⁴ Hon. Justice Dr. Aloma Mariam Mukhtar GCON, HLR-Hall marks of Labour. <https://hallmarksoflabour.org/citations/hon-justice-dr-mrs-aloma-mariam-mukhtar-gcon-hlr/>

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Igbinovia J., Women Lawyers are Showing They Are Equal to the Task, says Mrs. Hairat Balogun.

<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/07/women-lawyers-are-showing-theyre-equal-to-the-task-says-mrs-hairat-balogun/> Accessed on June 4, 2017

⁵⁷ Lynn S. Glasser. "Survey of Female Litigators: Discrimination by Clients Limits Opportunities," in The Woman Advocate: Excelling in the 90s, at 60, 72 (Jean Maclean Snyder & Andrea Barmash Greene, eds. 1995) (58% of women surveyed believed they had equal opportunity at their firms).

⁵⁸ Chinua Asuzu. Linguistic Sexism: of course, there are Ladies at the Bar. <https://barristerng.com/linguistic-sexism-of-course-there-are-ladies-at-the-bar-and-by-chinua-asuzu/>

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Report of the Ninth Circuit Gender Bias Task Force, The Effects of Gender in the Federal Courts 60 (Discussion draft, 1992); Diane F. Norwood and Arlette Moiling, "Sex Discrimination in the Profession: 1990 Survey Results," Tex. Bus. J., June 1992, at 50, 51; for similar comments, see Judith Resnik, "Gender Bias: From Classes to Courts," 45 Stan. L. Rev. 2195, 2207 (1993) (quoting comments that surveys were "a complete waste of time and money" and "much ado about nothing").

⁶¹ (LN 93 of 1968).

constitution. The Nigerian Inspector General of Police IGP was on the news recently for having relationships with two police officers whom he gave special promotions. Senator Misau, a serving senator of the National Assembly, revealed this by giving the names of the girls as Amina and Asta.⁶² In his defence, he said there was nowhere in the law where the IGP was prevented from marrying a policewoman. As to whether the act of having extra-marital affairs is contrary to subsection 2 of Regulation 124, an act that brings discredit to the Police Code of Conduct, Misau was unable to prove his allegations against the IGP.⁶³ In *Women Empowerment and Legal Aid Initiative (WELAI) v. A.G. of the Federation*,⁶⁴ the Regulation was declared illegal, null, and void.

It has also been contended that the Air Force Act, which used 'airmen' to refer to both female and male officers, is discriminatory.⁶⁵ There is no rationale for preferring the male sex over the other. The words officers, Air officers, officials, or personnel would make sufficient reference without worrying about their sexes.

The Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Act also accentuates the discrimination of women in some of its regulations. For example, under Article 5(1) of the NDLEA Order, 2002, "All female applicants shall be unmarried at the point of entry, and shall upon enlistment remain unmarried for not less than two years." Article 5(2) provides, "All unmarried female members of staff that wish to marry shall apply in writing to the Chairman/Chief Executive, asking for permission, stating details of the intended husband." This means, therefore, that the decision as to whether or not she marries remains the option and opinion of the Chief, who may choose to withhold permission for extraneous reasons, especially if he is also interested in the lady or desires to punish her unduly. The marital status of male officers, on the other hand, is not of interest to any force, whether at the point of entry or subsequently.

The new rule seeking to refuse women from enrolling as combatant military recruits is also discriminatory.⁶⁶ This policy in the newly ratified conditions of service of the military is, according to the Chief Security Officers, tantamount to taking ten steps backward.⁶⁷ The Harmonized Terms and Conditions of Service of Officers 2017 proposed this in recommendation 19. The first set of women to be admitted during President Jonathan's regime in 2010 brought in 20 women in 2011 who were nicknamed 'Jonathan's Queens'.⁶⁸ One wonders about the position of those women who were first enrolled. The likelihood is that they will be blocked and will suffer untold discrimination in that they may never get to head any arm of the Nigerian Military as non-combatant soldiers.⁶⁹

1.5. Discrimination against Women in Industry and Business

Most top and high-power positions in businesses and companies are held by men.⁷⁰ Research has shown a consistent difference in favouring men in accessibility to and utilization of resources for power.⁷¹ Thus, businesses and industries worldwide still see a harsh split between the genders in terms of who has control.⁷² Women have been praised for financial propriety. Therefore, having women in leadership positions can be in the company's best interests, as this could mean broader perspectives and opinions, resulting in better outcomes.⁸⁵ A study on firms in Denmark found that "the proportion of women in top management jobs tend to have positive effects on firm performance, control, and direction."⁷³ Additionally, a 2004 study from Europe found that: "Companies with the highest representation of women on their top management teams experienced better financial performance than companies with the lowest women's representation."⁷⁴ Women make up less than 5% of CEOs at Fortune 500 companies but hold less than 25% of management roles and just less than 19% of board roles globally.⁷⁵ Women currently hold 4.4 percent of Fortune 500 Chief Executive Officer (CEO) roles and 4.4 percent of Fortune 1000 CEO roles.⁷⁶

62 IGP Impregnated serving Policewoman - Senator Misau. <https://saharareporters.com/2017/10/04/igp-impregnated-serving-policewoman-senator-misau> Accessed on 16/8/17

63 Abiodun Alade. Fact-Check: Does the Police Act bar IGP from marrying female cops? *Daily Trust* October 6, 2017, <https://dailytrust.com/fact-check-does-police-act-bar-igp-from-marrying-female-cop/> Accessed on 18/8/17.

64 Unreported, Suit No. FHC/IKJ/CSMI28/2010.

65 Imasogie, M.Q. Gender Sensitivity and Discrimination against Women under Statute and Common Law in Nigeria *OiDA International Journal of Sustainable Development* 02: 05 (2010) 11-18. Available at: <https://oidajisd.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/02-05-01.pdf> Accessed on October 21, 2016

66 Olanrewaju Evveniyi. The Nigeria Military Wants to Stop the Admission of Combatant Female Cadets. Available at: www.konbini.com/lifestyle/nigerian-military-wants-to-stop-the-the-admission-of-combatant-female-cadets/ on 19/8/17.

67 Taiwo Ojoye, Military Stops Admission of Combatant Female Cadets, Available at: <https://punchng.com/military-stops-admission-of-combatant-female-cadets/> Accessed on 20/8/17.

68 *Daily Times Nigeria*, Women May Never Head Arms of the Nigerian Military, Available at <https://dailytimesng.com/women-head-arms-nigerian-military/> Accessed on 2/8/17

69 Ibid.

70 Amalisa Merelli, Only 4.2% of Fortune 500 companies are run by Women. Available at *Quartz* <https://qz.com/925821/how-rare-are-female-ceos-only-4-2-of-fortune-500-companies-are-run-by-women> Accessed on 23/8/17.

71 60. European Union. European Commission. Women on Boards - Factsheet 1 The Economic Arguments. Web. April 25, 2014. <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/womenonboards/factsheet-general-1-en.pdf>. Accessed on 26/8/17

72 Women CEOs of the Fortune 1000. Catalyst. Retrieved on: 24/8/ 2017

73 Catalyst, The Bottom Line: Connecting Corporate Performance and Gender Diversity, Equity in Business Leadership, January 15, 2004. Web. April 25, 2014, Available at:

https://www.catalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/The_Bottom_Line_Connecting_Corporate_Performance_and_Gender_Diversity.pdf.

74 European Commission, Women on Boards: Commission Proposes 40% Objective, November 14, 2012. Web. April 25, 2014. Available at: https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-12-1205_en.htm

75 Herminia Ibarra, Robin J. Ely, and Deborah M. Kolb. "Women Rising the Unseen Barriers." *Harvard Business Review*. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2013/09/women-rising-the-unseen-barriers> Accessed on 27/8/17.

76 Ragins, B. R. & Sundstrom, E. (1989). Gender and power in organizations: A longitudinal perspective. *Psychological bulletin*. Vol. 105, No. 1, 51-88. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Belle_Ragins/publication/232499085_Gender_and_Power_in_Organizations_A_Longitudinal_Perspective/links/56baaf1f08ae3af6847d8c13.pdf

To try to achieve greater gender equality in workplace leadership positions, the European Union established a goal to have 40% of women in non-executive board-member positions in publicly listed companies by 2020.⁷⁷ A significant body of research shows that for women, the subtle gender bias that persists in organizations and society disrupts the learning cycle at the heart of becoming a leader.⁷⁸ Once this bias is rectified, women will be able to gain leadership positions in their companies and/or organizations.

Female executives also often face double standards and a double bind. Ascribing a higher standard for a female is a double standard. They risk appearing too 'soft' or too 'strident,' too aggressive, or not aggressive enough.⁷⁹ What appears assertive in a man often appears abrasive in a woman. Where a man is said to be scolding an employee, a woman doing the same thing would be said to be nagging or quarrelsome. A related obstacle is that women often do not receive the same presumption of competence as their male counterparts.

1.6. Discrimination against Women in Positions of Power or Politics

Women in positions of power are women who hold an occupation that gives them great authority, influence, and/or responsibility. Historically, power has been distributed among the sexes by stereotypes. Positions of power can exist in almost any setting, from small-scale, unofficial groups or clubs to the obvious leaders of nations or CEOs of companies. These more official situations are found in many areas, such as politics, legal practice, industry and business, science and academia, the media, and many other sectors. Positions of power and gender are so intertwined that power differences frequently underlie what appears to be gender differences in behaviour. As society is currently configured, power and gender are never independent.⁸⁰ As such, gender relates to power in the different ways power is acquired, used, and manifested. A further relationship between gender and power is that women and men differ in power motivation by history and culture.

In the history of the West, certainly, women have had less access to most forms of power than men. Many people believe that men are interested in power and concentrate on getting it while women are not. Women were deprived of exercising political power in every country until they were granted the right to vote, which came after a long struggle. After earning the right to vote, it took decades for women to turn out to the polls in numbers proportional to their male counterparts.⁸¹ In the U.S. today, women are statistically more likely to vote than men. This pattern occurs in certain countries, such as Scandinavian countries, while the opposite occurs in others, such as India or Nigeria.⁸² Scandinavian countries have the greatest female representation in government positions. Exercising the right to vote is a reflection of the power women feel they have in their political systems. Voting rights did not come to women as a matter of course. They had to struggle for it. Although women have the legal right to vote and stand for elections in almost every country of the world, cultural barriers to women's use of their political rights, including family resistance and illiteracy, remain.⁸³

For many years and in most regions of the globe, women were not allowed to play significant roles in politics. Even in the early 1900s, politics was viewed almost exclusively as the domain of men.⁸⁴ However, women's movements and culture-changing events such as World War I and II gradually increased women's rights and roles in politics, culminating in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.⁸⁵ Many factors go into the degree of female participation in governments across the world. The share of women in professional occupations and cultural attitudes toward the role of women in politics each play a role in accounting for variation in the degree of gender inequality in political representation around the world.⁸⁶ Many other factors play a serious role in female participation in government, such as the "perceived liability" when a party fields a female candidate for an office.⁸⁷ When Sarah Jibrin came out as a Presidential candidate of PDP amidst cheers and supposed support, it shocked onlookers that she got only one vote, which was probably her vote.⁸⁸ Surprisingly, she was not advised against contesting. Today, no country in the world has 50% or higher female participation in a national legislature, and 73% of countries have less than 20% female participation.⁸⁹

Others hold that men and women differ in the ways that they establish, maintain, and express power. Studies have shown that increasing women's participation in leadership positions tends to decrease corruption, as women are

⁷⁷ China Gorman, Global Workforce Gender Diversity: It's Not Happening. Available at <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/global-workforce-gender-diversity-it-s-not-happening>

⁷⁸ Sapna Welsh, *Worldly Women - The New Leadership Profile: How to Expatriate with Excellence* (2013) iUniverse

⁷⁹ Kathleen Hail Jamieson, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership* 4, 129 (1995); Ann M. Morrison et al., *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Can Women Reach the Top of America's Largest Corporations?* 54, 61- 62 (1994); Deborah L. Rhode, "Gender and Professional Roles," 63 *Fordham L. Rev.* 39, 67 (1994);

⁸⁰ Winter, D. G., & Barenbaum, N. B. (1985). Responsibility and the power motive in women and men. *Journal of Personality*, 53(2). 335-355.

⁸¹ Tripp, Aili M.; Kang, Alice (March 2008). "The Global Impact of Quotas on the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation." *Comparative Political Studies*. Sage. 41 (3): 338-361.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Kenworthy, L., & Malami, M. (1999). Gender inequality in political representation: A worldwide comparative analysis. *Social Forces*, 78(1), 235-268. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3005796>.

⁸⁵ Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

⁸⁶ Cunovich, S., & Paxton, P. (2005). Pathways to Power: The Role of Political Parties in Women's National Political Representation. *American Journal of Sociology*. 111(2), 505-552.

⁸⁷ Iyer L., Mani A., Mishra P., & Topalova P., *The Power of Political Voice: Women's Political Representation and Crime in India*. Harvard Business School BG1E Unit Working Paper, (11-092). Accessed at: https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/11-092_05eaf393-0012-4d12-9d73-0c07d3f7af46.pdf

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Wikipedia, Women in Positions of Power. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_positions_of_power#:~:text=Women%20in%20positions%20of%20power%20are%20women%20who%20hold%20an,men%20as%20opposed%20to%20women. Accessed on 27/9/17

less involved in bribery and are less likely to condone bribe-taking.⁹⁰ A study on gender and corruption from 2000 also found that:

*Cross-country data show that corruption is less severe where women hold a larger share of parliamentary seats and senior positions in the government bureaucracy and comprise a larger share of the labour force.*⁹¹

This general assumption does not seem to work in some isolated situations of women in power in Nigeria." When Patricia Etteh was elected the Speaker House of Representatives, she was impeached on account of fraud, mismanagement, and embezzlement.⁹² Alison Madueke, the former Minister of petroleum, is still being investigated for embezzlement-related charges.⁹³ Not left out of money laundering and theft charges are also women like Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, and Toyin Saraki.⁹⁴ Stella Oduah was involved in the 255 million BMW bulletproof car purchase, and Ndidi Okereke embezzled funds of up to N1.5 billion leading to the crash of the Nigerian Stock Exchange market in 2009.⁹⁵ Cecilia Ibru was also involved in a big corruption scandal that earned her imprisonment and forfeiture of N191 billion cash and assets to the government.⁹⁶ In addition to the male-female split in the distribution of positions of power, many other discriminatory factors play a role in who has power. Race, class, sexuality, age, and other factors all play a significant part in who is in control, especially when coupled with gender differences. Additionally, the degree to which a system successfully includes women can indicate a propensity for the system to include other disenfranchised minorities. The double burden of racism and sexism exacts a toll on their mental health and restrict their opportunities.⁹⁷

There are different degrees to which women partake in the multiple levels of power positions in the government, from the local level to the national level. For example, in India, large-scale membership of women in local councils can be more effective in exerting influence over crime rates than their presence in higher-level leadership positions.⁹⁸ However, it is important to have women at all levels of government to ensure representation and enact laws and policies in the areas of women's interests.

Many countries have instituted quotas dictating a minimum number of women to be given elected positions in governments. In general, the quota system has acted as a fast track to incorporating greater female representation into the governing systems. Several countries, such as Rwanda, have established quota systems successfully, which have even surpassed traditionally high-gender representative countries.⁹⁹ However, there are still flaws to quota systems, and there is some controversy over the effectiveness of representation, as some studies have found actual policy change to be limited.¹⁰⁰

1.7. Factors Responsible for Lesser Roles for Women Academics in Nigeria Universities

These high disproportions in fields that are seen as being male fields are the consequence of gender socialization that push women into specific fields, otherwise known as 'care' fields, such as teaching, nursing, and catering. In 2009, only a quarter of appointments to senior positions from the level of associate professor went to women.¹⁰¹ Do women not qualify for those positions, or are they being distracted or simply lazy? Why are most professors men? Some of the reasons are not far-fetched. Interruptions, according to the Pew Research Center, are the key barriers to why women either are not advancing in their careers or are not being viewed as competitors for top positions in companies. There are many interruptions related to motherhood that may make it harder for women. Even if women have full-time jobs, they are still the ones responsible for family dilemmas rather than men. Men and women share unequal responsibilities for child/family care in the home. They are more likely to take time off work to look after sick children/family members or interrupt their careers to have children of the marriage, clean the house, and cook. If these compete with the active period of a woman's career, then no doubt, her pace would be reduced.

Research work of an academic is better done at one's active young age. That age also competes with when a young lady would be trying to create her new family, which could last for a period of ten years or more. Coupled with these are the domestic chores she usually carries out to maintain her home. These are systemic gender inequality practices that can cancel out the effect of any effort to foster gender equity. In a bid to balance work and other

90 Swamy, A., S. Knack, Y. L., and Azfar, O., Gender and Corruption in Knack, S. F. (Ed.). (2003). *Democracy, governance, and growth*. University of Michigan Press., 191-224.

91Ibid.

1. 92 Sahara Reporters, House Renovation Scandal: Mrs. Patricia Etteh Guilty on all Counts-House Panel Conclusion, <https://saharareporters.com/2007/09/25/house-renovation-scandal-mrs-patricia-etteh-guilty-all-counts-house-panel-conclusion> Accessed on 1/9/17.

93 Khadijah Thabit, 7 Women Embroiled in Huge Corruption Scandals in Nigeria: <https://www.legit.ng/541086-7-prominent-female-nigerians-embroiled-in-corruption-scandals.html> Accessed on 1/9/17.

94Ibid.

95 Nick Tattersall, UPDATE 2-Nigerian anti-corruption police hunt bank debtors, Available at Reuters, <https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-banks-idUSLQ30949420090826>

96 Innocent Anaba, Cecelia Ibru goes to Jail, Available at Vanguard, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2010/10/cecilia-ibru-goes-to-jail/> Accessed on 26/01/2023

97 Zweigenhaft, R. L., & Dombhoff, G. W. (1998). Diversity in the power elite: I love women and minorities reached the top? (Vol. 670). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

98 Pintor R. L., & Gratschew, M. (2002). Voter turnout since 1945: a global report. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA). Available at: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voter-turnout-since-1945.pdf>

99Ibid.

100Tinker, Irene (November 2004). "Quotas for women in elected legislatures: Do they really empower women?" Women's Studies International Forum. Elsevier. 27 (5): 531-546.

101 Pew Research Centre Report, Women and Leadership - Public Says Women are Equally Qualified, but Barriers Persist Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2015/01/14/women-and-leadership/> Accessed on 17/9/17.

responsibilities, such as caring for the family and home, some women may choose not to pursue senior academic positions and may hide behind their mates who are male and have suffered no parallel interruptions. This could be demoralizing for the female unless she sets it as a goal not to have a family or to succeed at all costs with a lot of determination despite all odds.

Some of the factors responsible for lesser roles for women in the management of Nigerian universities are hereby considered.

1.7.1. Public Expectations

The belief that the academic profession is masculine and patricidal in nature is an opinion that many hold. The stereotype is built on a male worker norm with job schedules built around a model of an 'ideal worker' who is unencumbered by responsibilities outside of paid labour. Thus, males are empowered and have more power, which gives them access to resources and facilities.¹⁰²

1.7.2. Low Remuneration

Gender inequality in Nigerian universities is also attributed to the poor remuneration of academic staff generally. This may be because income is a major variable that significantly attracts new entrants into a profession and also influences job satisfaction and staff retention. Hence, economic wages and other appropriate organizational incentives are vital to staff retention.

Since women are also caregivers at home, their ability to earn additional income from other sources to supplement is highly diminished or non-existent. If a male works in the same place as his wife, all additional allowances for housing, furniture, etc., are built into the salary of the male even if, in some cases, women also participate in these payments. IN 2020, among full-time year-round markers, women earned less money than men at every education level. Women need to earn at least an extra degree to receive the same earnings as men with less education.¹⁰³

1.7.3. Lack of Mentorship Opportunities

The absence of mentoring for the younger female academics was identified as a major indicator of disparity in academia. Mentoring has a network-building effect, increases self-confidence, creates career awareness, and promotes progression in personal work. Everyone agrees that mentoring is a useful tool in climbing the academic ladder and also an outlet for the mentees to release their frustrations about all the barriers and realities working against them in the system. Mentorship critically helps to overcome gender inequalities and unequal opportunities because of the networking that the relationship often provides. Since there continues to be a lack of female role models and mentors in Nigerian academia, the female respondents expressed fear that gender inequality in academia would persist for a long time to come.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, the lack of female role models and mentors to guide young talented women through their academic careers exacerbates the gender gap: Female students are more likely to enroll in graduate studies when they encounter successful women role models. They often drift towards their male mentors for guidance, and even this can be misinterpreted by a stereotypical husband or male partner to mean sexual irresponsibility unless the respondent stands firm in her quest to be mentored.

1.7.4. Lack of Policy or Regulatory Oversight

Most universities do not have gender policies that seek to level the playing field for all genders. This stems from the lack of women in critical decision-making bodies in the institutions. Nationally, the proposed Equal Opportunities Bill has not seen the light of day at the National Assembly. The Bill seeks to mainstream gender equality in most aspects of national life and set up a commission to monitor and enforce the implementation of the same.

1.7.5. Numeric Underrepresentation

Because women in management positions are always a rarity, they can hardly form a critical mass to tilt university policies and decisions toward women's empowerment. The few in management seem either overwhelmed when issues are put to the vote, especially at Senate or Council, and cannot be seen to turn the appecart.

1.7.6. Family Demands and Maternity

Women tend to take career breaks more often than men because of pregnancy and childcare. Maternity is quite a delicate point from a discrimination law perspective, mainly because there is no male comparator: In the 1980s, the result was to dismiss claims of sex discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy. Then, pregnant women used to be compared to men who were off sick from work. This meant that pregnancy was considered a form of illness. This comparison with the ill man meant that pregnancy was stigmatized as unhealthy, thereby making the woman look incapable of maintaining her job if this subsists. This gave pregnant women the possibility to claim protection from sex discrimination law, as it relates to the employee's ability to work, thereby ignoring the positive medical and social reasons for maternity leave. While pregnancy used to be a good opportunity for employers to dismiss women workers, it is now automatically considered unfair dismissal. Undeniably, the employer who has a distaste for hiring and working alongside blacks and women and who seeks to maximise expected profit will discriminate against them if he believes them to be less qualified and reliable,

¹⁰²Ogbogu, C. O. (2009). An Assessment of the Institutional Factors Affecting Female Labour Input in the Nigerian University System. *Asian Women*. Vol. 25(1): 55-74

¹⁰³Jarosz B., Mather M., & Martinez M., Does the Gender Pay Gap Explain Why Women Complete College at Higher Rates than Men? Available at Project Review Board <https://www.prb.org/articles/does-the-gender-pay-gap-explain-why-women-complete-college-at-higher-rates-than-men/>

¹⁰⁴ Ogbogu C. O, Gender Inequality In Academia: Evidences From Nigeria, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1072918.pdf>

on average, than whites and males.¹⁰⁵ An employer will believe that a young woman, especially if she is married, will have children, go on maternity leave, and afterward be less involved in her job because of childcare. Discrimination is all the more unfair when assumptions are based on averages and prejudice and do not take into account the fact that some women do not want to have children or have concluded their families, thanks to contraceptive aids. Consequently, women are discriminated against on the grounds of pregnancy even before being pregnant. Furthermore, it is also very difficult for them to keep their clients over the period they are away, and when they come back from maternity leave, they frequently feel marginalized by their male colleagues, who may have taken some of those clients. The first 6 months to 1 year after return from maternity are the most stressful times for the following reasons:

- The financial constraints are increased not only by lack of income but also by having to find the child minder's salary or nursery fees for the baby,
- The children who may still be tiny and vulnerable may increase the woman's urge to go home frequently to nurse the baby,
- the return to chambers can be lonely and isolating as many members of chambers may not notice that the practitioner has returned, and
- If work does not flow in quickly, the anxieties of the practitioner are further increased because she has less work and therefore has time to worry about other issues discussed above.

1.7.7. Sexism Norms

One reason women may not be advancing to top positions at their workplaces is due to past sexist norms that are still rooted in our society today.¹⁰⁶ Women in Nigerian universities hold less than 35 percent of academic posts. They are mainly represented in lower and middle-level academic positions, and their participation relative to men decreases at successive levels.

1.7.8. Legislation

The European Court of Justice has introduced another notion of equality by stating that there is no need for a comparator of any sort since only women get pregnant.¹⁰⁷ Any unequal treatment or any other form of discrimination when a woman is pregnant is, therefore, automatically sex discrimination. The approach promoted by the European Courts is based more on substantive equality than on formal equality, which avoids the difficulties and technicalities of the SDA in interpreting its provisions according to the aim of the Act. This purposive approach seems to be much more desirable than the technical approach as regards maternity and discrimination.¹⁰⁸

Some establishments in Nigeria set up rules that prevent female employees from getting pregnant within a stipulated period after resuming their appointment. Others deny maternity leave to unmarried female employees. Sometimes women may be asked to continue to work until the day of delivery before she is permitted to go on maternity leave. In some organizations, a pregnant worker may be required to reapply for her position when she is ready to return.

The Nigerian Labour Act provides that a pregnant employee is entitled to 6 weeks' leave before the expected delivery date and another 6 weeks after delivery making a total of 12 weeks of statutory leave. It provides further that where a woman has worked in an establishment for a period of at least 6 months before proceeding on maternity leave, she is entitled to at least 50% of the salary she ought to have earned if she had been present at work. To enhance the nursing of her child, the Act allows 30 minutes twice a day during working hours for a nursing mother who has resumed work. Furthermore, where a woman is unable to resume after maternity leave due to conditions arising from her delivery, her employer cannot terminate her employment. The provisions of the Labour Act though laudable, are limited in their scope of operations to those in the public and civil service. Those in the private sector usually draw up their agreement, which may not tally with the Labour Act requirements. Once both parties have signed, the courts are likely to uphold them.

Nigeria is a signatory to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention on Maternity Protection. This convention provides employment security for pregnant women and nursing mothers by publishing dismissal during pregnancy. It also provides for a guaranteed period of 14 weeks of maternity leave.¹⁰⁹ Although Nigeria is yet to domesticate this convention, the Minister of Labour and Productivity promised to further extend the period to 18 weeks of maternity leave in Nigeria.¹¹⁰

1.7.9. Sexual Harassment

The demanding role of women in the caregiving economy and childrearing, coupled with excessive administrative burdens, further delays career progression. Female lecturers and students also face sexual harassment or,

106 Herminia Ibarra, Robin J. Ely, and Deborah M. Kolb. "Women Rising the Unseen Barriers." Harvard Business Review. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2013/09/women-rising-the-unseen-barriers> Accessed on 27/8/17.

107 Andrew Clapham, Human Rights: A Very Short Introduction. Oxford University Press. Available at https://books.google.com/books/about/Human_Rights.html?id=6MKPCgAAQBAJ

108 Equality and Human Rights Commission, Indirect Discrimination, Available at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-discrimination#acc-para385> on 11/12/17.

109 Article 4(1) of C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). Available at https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C183.

110 Ojoma Akor. FG to Domesticate 18 weeks Maternity Leave, Daily Trust June 28, 2016. Available at <https://dailytrust.com/fg-to-domesticate-18-weeks-maternity-leave/>

at the very least, are too often judged by their weak or beautiful physical appearance, thereby objectifying them rather than looking at their intellectual capabilities. This could further dissuade them from staying in academia.

1.7.10. Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling is a phenomenon in which women in the workplace climb the corporate ladder with qualifications equal to those of their male counterparts, only to find that they cannot proceed past a certain point due to gender stereotypes and other implications.¹¹¹ These gender stereotypes create barriers for women trying to reach positions of power. This is responsible for creating and influencing the glass ceiling effect. The glass ceiling directly affects those women who spend many years working in an industry to build up achievements and a status of credibility to be considered for positions of power within the company or industry.¹¹² Yet despite their competence, women are not offered top-level positions because of their sex and existing stereotypes.

Removing the glass ceiling is not only important but can also aid in attracting women, particularly minority ethnic women, into the profession.¹¹³ The gender differential in earnings (pay gap) is paralleled by a differential status. Though it is hard to speak of occupational segregation while only dealing with one kind of occupation, vertical or horizontal segregation is easily observed in the academic and legal professions.¹¹⁴ For instance, when employed in City firms, women are more likely to work as an assistant or junior solicitors, or barristers than as associates or partners. In the same manner, women in academics are more likely to be found in the ranks of Assistant Lecturer to Lecturer1 and not from Senior Lecturer upwards.

1.8. Strategies towards Better Roles for Women in Nigeria

The following strategies, if duly adopted and implemented, would enhance the roles of women academics in university management.

1.8.1. Deliberate Gender Policies and Implementation

African universities must first commit, develop, popularize, and be intentional about institutional inclusive gender policies such as affirmative action, adaptable work environments accommodating childcare, and sexual harassment policies to advance female representation to break the glass ceiling. This strategy requires a well-articulated mechanism to track, monitor, and evaluate the implementation process. In addition, academic institutions should implement gender sensitization initiatives, which are vital in reducing tensions between female and male colleagues.¹¹⁵ The enactment of the Equal Opportunities Bill into law and faithful implementation will go a long way in elevating the position of women academics in the universities.

1.8.2. Tailored Mentorship Programs

Given that representation matters, mentorship programs tailored for junior academic ranks and led by a senior female in the faculty offer a tremendous motivational tool in the quest to attract more women. In addition, identifying and building alliances with both women and men who are passionate about the advancement of women is another way to avoid isolation and combat hostility.¹¹⁶

1.8.3. Improved Welfare Packages for Women Academics

Women should be offered equal pay as men, including all fringe benefits, to prevent them from pursuing better-paying jobs outside of academia. Their pay should be enough to also take care of the domestic staff that will be doing the domestic chores while they devote their productive time and energies solely to academic endeavours.

1.8.4. Striking a Work-Life Balance

Women academics must make efforts to strike a balance between the demands of the office and family life, especially bearing and raising kids. This is most important because neither of the two roles can afford to be dispensed with or suspended indefinitely. This task lies with each woman academic to have her eyes on the academic ball while not compromising her responsibilities to family and society.

1.8.5. Institutional Support

Policies to make the environment safer and more open to opportunities must start even before young, academically-minded women enter the labour market. Since the minimum requirement for most senior academic positions is a Ph.D., leaders must consider strategies to first increase the quantity and quality of women in post-graduate studies in Africa. Initiatives such as funding and research collaboration opportunities, institutional capacity to run doctoral programs, and efficient supervisory processes are crucial to executing this strategy.

¹¹¹Julia Kagan, The Glass Ceiling: Definition, History, Effects, and Examples, Investopedia, Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glass-ceiling.asp> Accessed at 26/1/2023

¹¹²forbes.com Retrieved on: August 29, 2017.

¹¹³Storu M.O.T. & Academia, W.I. (2005). Women Faculty Make Little Progress in Education.83 (44). 38-39.

¹¹⁴Ibid

¹¹⁵Rebecca Afua Klege, supra note 19

¹¹⁶Op cit.

2. Conclusion

It is obvious from our discussion herein that women's participation, i.e., Nigerian and African university management, has been less than representative of their potential. This can be attributed to social, economic, legal, and regulatory issues as well as the other institutional issues that impede career progression for women academics and limit those chances of attaining management positions in the universities. All hands must, therefore, be on deck to remedy this anomaly and grant women their places of pride in the scheme of things in the universities.

Finally, the determination, motivation, and gift of each woman's academic and the hand-holding support of colleagues, irrespective of male and female, will see women attaining and excelling in academics and management positions in universities and other establishments. The PAAU Anyigba and Veritas University, Abuja examples highlighted herein are eloquent testimonies that there is a silver lining for women academics that are ready to push towards smashing the proverbial glass ceiling. Individual and collective efforts to make positive differences are required to make a serious impact.

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