

# Managing Women at Work: Implications for Workplace Behavior

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## ABSTRACT

Women in the workforce have made significant contributions to the international economy, and this study suggests that those efforts should be amplified to keep humanity moving forward. This empirical investigation brought to light problems with the way gender diversity is managed, and how this affects women's behavior in the workplace. This study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data for a balanced triangulation of approaches. This work focuses on the study of the female gender in workplaces. This work intends to contribute to women and studies in gender to point to a link between the management of women in workplaces and the implications for work behavioral output. Periodic Dormancy, a period of planned temporary inactivity was highly recommended.

**KEYWORDS:** Behavior, diversity family-life, women, work-life, Management, Nigeria.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Women have contributed immensely to the world economic gross domestic product but although gender inequality has been a problem that many businesses face and one that has gotten a lot of attention in recent years, the impact of women's contributions has been attested to by scholars (Eke, 2023; Gull, et.al. 2023). Ball (2008) argues that more women are joining the workforce because of structural adjustment efforts which demand extra income for families. Anugwom (2009) posits that the Structural Adjustment Programme which was strategically used in Nigeria in the mid-1980s caused a decline in real wages, reduced government funding for social programmes, and the abolition or decrease of subsidies is consistent with this position. In light of these challenges, many women may have been driven to enter the workforce in

order to provide for their children. From 32.6% in 1980 to 52.4% now, more and more women are entering the workforce (World Bank Indicators, 2022). The increasing number of women in higher education and the growing number of women in the labor sector suggest that these trends will continue. With more and more women entering the workforce, the challenges of leading female employees must be addressed immediately. Gull, et al. (2023) identified gender composition of firm boards had a notable correlation with waste management and that female directors were better waste managers Tsui et al. (1992) found that compared to women, men are more negatively affected by gender diversity in the workplace. Several studies have pointed to fundamental gender differences in perspective, but there is growing evidence that contextual factors may also account for these differences. However, Ahmad and Shabnam (2023) argue that there is little or no correlation between a person's gender and their ability to solve problems analytically, their motivation, their sociability, or their intelligence in the workplace.

It is sufficient for this work to specify that the diversity context discussed is only female and male gender identities. The gender diversity examined here relates to the social roles that human beings who identify as female or male have performed historically. The terms female gender management and the management of women at work will be used interchangeably. It is hoped that this research will shed light on how to lessen the impact of biological and psychological stress women face in the workplace so that employees, particularly women, will behave as intended and "not at all" be preoccupied with biases and misconceptions on the basis of their gender.

## II. LITERATURE/THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The relative magnitude of the variables and their connections to one another were analyzed with the use of two theories that were crucial to this investigation. A theoretical backdrop for this study was the social role theory (Eagly, 1987). The social role hypothesis proposes that gendered norms of behavior and role-playing emerge as a result of social pressures. Women are stereotyped as being solely responsible for caregiving, as stated by Hoobler et al. (2009). This implies that in many parts of the world, women are primarily responsible for domestic duties. It is crucial to discuss the difficulties people have while trying to fulfill both their professional and personal responsibilities. The professional and personal lives appear to influence one another. Feelings of unease are not uncommon among those who have experienced either work interference with family or vice versa. Learning about and managing these disruptions was in line with the main goal of this work. Another theory heavily relied on in this study was the theory of relative deprivation (Martin, 1981) which asserts that individuals feel angry when their wishes are not realized and their rights seem to have been infringed upon. Individuals form opinions about their own deservingness and desires based on their estimations of the possessions of those around them. The theory predicts that one might experience acute deprivation while having very positive association outcomes, and the opposite is also possible: one could have very negative association outcomes without experiencing any sense of deprivation. A person's sense of deprivation might persist even if their circumstances improve if the resulting adjustments are not to their liking. This theory may provide light on how rewards affect employee morale and productivity when female gender diversity issues are predominant in an organization. The gap between what people think they are worth and what they really receive from the benefits they realize is what ultimately drives their behavior in the workplace.

### MANAGING WOMEN AT WORK

One would think that, given the current focus on gender equality, female gender management concerns no longer exist in modern firms. Several initiatives have been undertaken to promote gender equality and affirmative action. In spite of this, the subject of female gender management in the workplace still appears to be badly addressed. It becomes imperative to examine

some common issues in the management of women at work.

### Traditional Stereotyping

Women have traditionally been responsible for domestic duties in Nigerian and other traditional African civilizations. Women are expected to "be obedient to their husbands" by managing the family, but they are discouraged from pursuing occupations that will take them beyond the home (Ehigie & Idemudia, 2000). The women's roles as career women and traditional roles as home caregivers are seen to be mutually exclusive and incompatible. Women in Nigeria are increasingly entering the job, bringing with them unique perspectives and perspectives from their community-oriented culture and society. Nwachukwu (2000) observed that working wives tend to take more time off than their male counterparts. Whenever anyone in her immediate family, including her husband, one of their children, or her parents or in-laws, gets sick, she remains at home to care for them. Moreover, Nigerian Labour Law affords women a number of rights that work to their advantage. Sections 54, 55, 56, 57, and 58 of the Nigerian Labour Act of 2004 appear to back this up. A lady is just as productive as any other employee in the organization when she is not pregnant. The Nigerian Labour Act of 2004 specifies that pregnancy qualifies as a temporary "health condition" for the purposes of Section 54. Supervisors shouldn't treat women badly because they're experiencing a temporary, common health issue; rather, they should be sympathetic and understanding. More and more businesses are providing fathers of newborn children paid time off to help out at home while their partners are in labor or recovering from giving birth.

### Home and Work Conflicts

Rapid economic development all over the world has given more young professional women the avenue to increase their occupational pathways. This has also made prominent the issues of having home and work conflicts. As more men and women get involved in child care such issues will have to be addressed at work. Work-family conflict has been linked to negative consequences including increased burnout and stress at work, as well as decreased employee devotion and productivity, thus it's important for individuals and organizations to pay attention to it (Irfan, et al., 2023). Females face additional pressure to enter a pitch where men predominate. Cultural standards that set differing expectations on women and men provide major

difficulties for many working women and men in achieving parenthood, marriage, and professional success. The conflict between work and home life affects married women and mothers of young children more frequently than it does males. Work-family stress has been proven time and time again to be detrimental to both the health and family life of workers (Adekola, 2010). Time-based, strain-based, and behavioral conflicts have been identified as the three main types of work-family tensions in the literature (Michel et al., 2010). The origins of all three types of war may be traced back to outside interference. There is a time-based conflict when the time spent on one function's responsibilities cuts into the time available for the other functions. Shift work's ubiquity and irregularity, as well as the overall amount of hours, worked each week, all contribute to the possibility of this kind of dispute occurring. (Akintayo, 2010). Strain-based conflict occurs when stress, concern, or tiredness from one role transfers to another and negatively affects performance. Working and caring for a family at the same time can be challenging due to the pressures and stresses of both roles (Fako, 2010). Conflicts based on behavior can emerge when one party's expectations for how they should behave in one situation are at variance with how they should behave in another (Olanrewaju and Yetunde, 2011).

### **Invincible restrictions**

There are several hypotheses put up to explain women's underrepresentation in upper management, but the invincible restrictions phenomenon, more popularly known as the "glass ceiling" phenomenon is by far the most talked about. As a metaphor for the unseen, patriarchal, and structural hurdles that prohibit women from rising to the highest levels of management in many organizations, the term "glass ceiling" has become common parlance. These difficulties continue, as found by studies (Lin, et al.,2023; Taparia, & Lenka,2022). The more managers incorrectly perceive female workers in certain stereotypical light, the more the female employees face negative consequential outcomes which adversely affect women's professional advancement.

### **Intra-gender violence**

Intra-gender violence is a situation where persons of the same gender work against and exhibit hostile behaviors toward one another. One could assume that women's movement leaders primarily sought equality with males. It is possible that for some women, competition with other

women is fiercer than the competition with males, especially for a limited number of occupations. Some women may plot to advance their careers at the expense of their female employees by spreading rumors against them. It seems that women are the worst opponent of themselves. It has been observed that women do not support one another and that when one woman in a group makes an attempt to stand out, the other women in the group immediately become hostile. Cases of intra-gender violence have been highlighted by several scholars (Huang, et al.,2022; Noor, et al.,2022;) Why women are so competitive with one another can be explained by intra-gender violence, a phenomenon akin to horizontal antagonism or hostility. Horizontal antagonism has the negative impact of dividing members of oppressed and marginalized groups, making it more difficult for them to establish the coalitions necessary to eliminate their oppression. Intra-gender violence is a typical case of the same powerless and marginalized group fighting against one another, rather than the differential forces oppressing them. The fight for scarce resources like power, positions, tenure, and authority is hypothesized to contribute to horizontal enmity. Employees who are involved in Intra-gender violence make it more difficult to complete any given job since members of different affected groups within the organization may be unable to help one another.

### **Workplace Behavioral Implications**

Firms cannot afford to ignore acts of violence, hatred, and deviance in their workplaces. These behaviors may represent a major violation of organizational standards and put the firm and/or its members in danger. The consequences of deviant behavior in the workplace may be devastating. Discrimination, especially on touchy subjects like gender, can have far-reaching impacts despite an employer's best efforts. Whether or not a barrier actually exists, it might cause individuals to act as though one did. Persons experiencing discrimination believe they are being treated differently or unjustly because of the group to which they belong (Manzi, (2019; Merhaut, 2019). Furthermore, when people feel they are being mistreated because of a component of their recognized identity, they are left feeling alienated and angry, which might lead to unfavorable conduct at work. If workers do not feel that their opinions matter, they may decide to stop trying altogether or settle for playing less of a part in the company's success. Everyone loses out when talented people's ideas and efforts go to waste. If

more women are leaving the organization, it might be because they feel their voices are not being heard by management. Several organizations in Nigeria have policies in place to avoid discrimination and harassment of women at work. It appears that these organizations' decision-making is consistent with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended in 2011, the Public Service Regulations (2008), and the Labour Act (2004). If employees have a negative reaction to the workplace because of how gender is managed, it might have serious consequences for the company's bottom line. Employee distraction and unhappiness, workplace accidents, drug misuse, sick absence, conflict within work teams, lost productivity, and employee turnover are some of the individual and collective costs that businesses incur as a result of not managing women in the workplace.

Businesses lose a lot of money due to absenteeism. It will be more challenging for the firm to run properly and accomplish its goals if employees aren't showing up for work or if some employees are there but unengaged. Negative effects on productivity include halts in the normal flow of work, the postponement of important decisions, lower-quality output, and even the closure of the facility. Losing employees is always bad for the company, regardless of whether the departure was voluntary or involuntary. When turnover rates increase, so do the costs associated with replacing them and retraining existing staff. The cost to the company in terms of time and money lost when searching for and hiring new key personnel is substantial.

Employee low morale, distraction from job responsibilities, anxiety, sense of deprivation, issues of mental and emotional health, greater rates of stress, dissatisfaction, disengagement, cognitive distraction as well as psychological distress all of which have serious implications for outcomes of work behavior should be taken into consideration for the ultimate health of the organization itself.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The participants were women employed in corporate and private sectors in the Nigerian city of Port Harcourt, located in the country's dynamic south-south geopolitical zone. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Methodology was used to randomly choose the 380 participants. Both objective and subjective approaches were used in this study. As a result, we used questionnaire and in-depth interviews to gather primary data. The predictor and criterion variables were measured using a

custom-developed 5-point Likert scale. The instrument's acceptability scale ran from 1 (the least acceptable) to 5 (the most acceptable). Cronbach's alpha coefficients above 0.7 were considered satisfactory for survey reliability. A non-parametric correlation was used for the data analysis. The level of work anxiety regarding the gender role expectations was a stand-in for the predictor variable. Employees' productivity was one measure of the criterion variable; employees' innovativeness was another; employees' conscientiousness was another; and finally, employees' absenteeism was another. All of these were measures of the employees' work behavioral output in terms of the employees' ability and willingness to do their jobs thoroughly.

### IV. RESULTS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Employee absenteeism is negatively correlated with female gender management (-0.876,  $P < 0.01$ ), but productivity, innovativeness, and conscientiousness are positively correlated with female gender management at 0.899,  $P < 0.01$ ; 0.868,  $P < 0.01$  and 0.725,  $P < 0.01$  respectively. This study's findings therefore, indicated that better management of gender roles among employees led to decreased absenteeism rates, as well as more productivity, better inventive behavior, and greater conscientiousness. Many stereotypes and assumptions about women result in sweeping generalizations and unfair categorization. For instance, the "perfect worker" in the eyes of many firms is someone who puts her work first and has admirable qualities like being willing to go the extra mile. Individuals who are perceived as having to put outside commitments ahead of the organization are thought to be less than entirely invested in the success of the business (Llorens et al., 2021). The misconception that women put family before work is addressed in further detail elsewhere in this work. An employee's chances of advancement increase if their superiors view them as committed to the organization (Hoobler et al., 2009). A worker's performance and behaviour might deteriorate if she does not get the recognition she deserves, if she believes she is stereotyped as slow because of her gender, or if she realizes she cannot advance in her career as quickly as she would want. Those who are stigmatized may alter their actions if they worry about how others will perceive them (Bikos, 2021; Van, et al. 2019).

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A basic premise is that companies will face significant consequences in terms of their overall business success as a result of women's behavior at work. This research shows that ineffective gender management contributes to excessive absenteeism, low productivity, suppressed innovation, and decreased diligence. None of the aforementioned behavioral effects is desirable for businesses. The goal of this paper was to highlight the importance of managing gender roles in the workplace, and not promote an affirmative action agenda or advocate for laws that favor one gender over another. The research results and conclusions draw a link between effective management of gender roles and positive employee behavior.

It is recommended that managers should critically consider all the female gender management concerns raised in this study and efforts made to eliminate any form of perceived bias, violence or conflict and promote favorable behavioral results. Periodic Dormancy, a period of planned temporary inactivity is highly recommended. Women could engage in periodic dormancy to take time off their careers to handle the stress and anxiety of pregnancy and the nursing of young ones. Managers could encourage such periods so that female employees feel more at ease if their pace of advancement is slower than that of their peers.

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