

Gender Inequality Practices: A Precursor in Employees' Career Development

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Abstract

Discrimination is one of the most controversial phenomena to challenge the human resources function in the workplace. It has been discussed in depth by sociologists, politicians, and lawyers and remains a topical issue. Despite advances gender discrimination still persists and continues to be experienced by women in the contemporary workspace. In spite of research in various aspect of human resource management practices and career development in various sectors, there has not been a study on the influence of gender inequality practices on career development in Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and this form the general objective of this study which was carried out in petroleum industry in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was used with a target population of 9024 top level, middle level, and lower level management (supervisors) staff of the NNPC strategic business unit out of which 1235 employees were selected by a purposive sampling procedure. Structured questionnaire and personal interview were used to collect primary data. Pretesting of the research instrument was done to determine the reliability of the questionnaire by use of Cronbach alpha coefficient. Content validity of the questionnaire was used to ensure that the questionnaire answered the research question. The collected data were coded and entered into SPSS (V.22) to create a data sheet that was used for analysis. Data were analyzed using quantitative techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of collected data. Regression analysis was used to establish the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The study revealed that gender inequality practices had a significant negative influence on employees' career development in NNPC. The study also noted that gender practices in NNPC are quite visibly discriminated against women particularly in the technical areas. Career progression is favorably tilted in favor of the men folks. Women are not given the opportunity to prove themselves. The study recommended that career plans and related competency requirements should be made clear and more transparent for women.

Keywords: Gender Inequality Practices; Career Development; Human Resources Management Practices; Petroleum Sector; Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

1. Introduction

There has been a growing scholarly interest in the gendered nature career which has broadened the understanding of the career trends (Afande, 2015; Broad-Bridge 2008; Tesfaye, 2010. These studies have called for the adoption of human resource management (HRM) best practices which inspire gender inclusiveness and greater diversity within the work milieu. Gender issues have also been identified as critical to the achievement of organizational goals (Ejumudo, 2013). According to Afande (2015), during the past three decades and beyond, there has been a measured rise in the numbers of highly skilled female professionals and managers across different industries, which has led to a gradual re-configuration of the top management positions from male toward female (Ismail and Ibrahim, 2008).

Wentling (2003) observed that there is a persistent world trend affecting female managers where their career development plateaus at middle management positions. Although women have made some gains in entering and rising in managerial ranks in organizations worldwide, men continue to dominate

executive and senior management positions (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010). According to Ogenyi and Victoria (2004), women accumulating management experience and completion of professional education programs do not seem sufficient to ensure their access to senior management positions at a comparable rate to men. A business survey carried out internationally, revealed that: In four out of 10 businesses in the world, there are no women in senior positions. In the UK and USA, there has been an increase in the number of women in management at junior and middle management levels (Lyness, 2002). However, career advancement remains slow and uneven despite global call for gender equality and government legislation, legal sanction, and greater participation in education and increasing entry into the workforce in general and into management occupations in particular. Only a very small proportion of women advance to senior management positions (Metz and Kulik, 2014). Furthermore, a study carried out by the World Economic Forum to analyze the status of women in management revealed that although women were reported to be employed for wages in similar numbers to men worldwide, the number of women holding managerial positions was found to be much lower (Tlass and Kauser, 2010). For decades, researchers have sought to understand why so few women occupy senior management positions, and why many fail to reconcile ambitious career aspirations with family responsibilities (Ezzedeen and Ritchey, 2009). This study sought to address this gap.

In Nigeria, available statistics reveal a high level of disparity in levels of gender diversity at top management positions. Women constitute about 49.36% of the population of Nigeria estimated to be 182.202 million (United Nations, 2015). The women participation in the formal and informal structures and processes where decisions regarding the use of the resources generated by men and women are very minimal (Makama, 2013). In every career setting, men outnumber women and women are few in top positions. A sociological explanation of these classification is based on the premise that men's and women's job in a complex industrial society are different (sexual division of labor). All of which affected a woman's economic standing. Bombuwela and De Alwis (2013) revealed that the Glass Ceiling and women career development have a moderate negative relationship. The study also showed that individual factors, organizational factors, and cultural factors have a significant effect on women career development; whereas family factors have effects on the glass ceiling. Another factor encouraging gender inequality practices is the lack of social capital by women, because the society has constricted women's social networks to relationship based on strong family ties (family members and friends), it, therefore, means that their sources of information and level of interactions are largely limited and constricted.

Both are pillars of society, and without their equal participation in all spheres of life, no society can make meaningful progress. They further assert that as far as women capabilities are concerned, they are not less than men. From the Stone Age, women have been participating in socioeconomic life with men, but low labor force participation has not given that the same consideration as men's work has received. The status of women as second class citizen which is reinforced by the narrow vocational opportunities available to them. Their contributions remain invisible as most of them have to work in the unorganized and informal sector which encompasses all kinds of work, such as casual framework, labor in family enterprises, private crafts, private schools or unskilled labor in houses. In every circumstance, in every set of key development and socioeconomic status, women have fared worse than men in all areas and all levels of participation. In Nigeria, Chovwen (2006) noted that despite their increasing representation, women experience difficulties in developing their careers in male occupations. These difficulties are pointers to the complex realities of women's working in male-oriented workplace. By assessing women's perception of gender stereotype on career progression, the study will unearth these complex realities.

It should be noted that although great exploits have been made in ensuring that women are not discriminated against in Nigerian organizations, the case has not been so pleasant in the Nigerian national petroleum corporation (NNPC) where only the male folks have been able to make it to the top consecutively since its inception in 1977.

In the NNPC, it was only in March 2014 that a female attained the status of group executive director for the first time since 1977 when NNPC was incorporated. There appears to be a glass ceiling that is difficult to crack as far as female career growth is concerned regarding appointment to the top

(Bombuwela and De Alwis, 2013). The NNPC Condition of Service has no formal gender policy that will secure the rights of men and women and create a balance of genders in the organization so that no gender feels dissatisfied especially when it comes to postings, transfers, promotions/appointments, training, and leadership succession (NNPC Magazine, 2014). The problem here is that, as the workforce becomes more diverse, the organizations should recognize the diversity of the workforce and be more inclusive (Fatile et al., 2011 and Hicks-Clarke and Iles, 2000), and this includes the petroleum sector. This study will try to investigate why women in Nigeria are making slow and uneven progress in achieving equality in managerial positions. Gender issue in human resource management (HRM) is an area in gender studies that have not been given adequate attention in Nigeria. The emphasis of past work has been mainly in the area of political involvement of both men and women and the consequent implications of the dominance of male over their female counterparts (Fatile et al., 2011). There is no study that investigated the influence of gender inequality practices on the career development of employees in NNPC, hence the principal motivation behind this study, which sought to determine how the HRM practices of the NNPC align to gender parity to affect the employees' career development of the organization as the workplaces become more diverse and complex? Thus, this study aimed at establishing the influence of gender inequality practices on employees' career development.

2. Theoretical Framework

Several types of feminist theories emerged to address gender inequality and develop solutions for overcoming it (Lorber, 2005). They can be divided into three groups: Reform feminist theories (liberal, Marxist, socialist, and postcolonial), resistance feminist theories (radical, lesbian, psychoanalytic, and standpoint), and rebellion feminist theories (multicultural, feminist studies of men, social construction feminism, postmodern, and poststructural). Each of these theories brings unique concerns to the discussion of gender inequality. The common thread in all these theories is the fact that, they all incorporate an notion of making men and women more equal legally, socially, and culturally, so gender does not give privilege to men as a category or give them power over women as a category.

2.1. Reform feminist theories

Reform feminist theories comprehend the source of gender inequality in the difference in men's and women's status in the social order considering that it is not the consequence of individual preferences or unequal interpersonal relationships (Lorber, 2005). These theories view gender balance as the solution for promoting gender equality, where both men and women are valued equally according to their human potential. These theories conceptualize inequality as a problem of achieving equality as sameness (strategy of equal opportunities). According to this conceptualization, the problem of inequality is that women have been excluded from the governing and leading hierarchical positions (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). The solution for this conceptualization is seen in the introduction of women into these positions without challenging the underlying male tradition. The key issue of this conceptualization is equal opportunities for both men and women.

2.2. Resistance feminist theory

Resistance feminist theories aim at promoting gender-neutral social order of practices by providing women with more power. These theories claim that the gender order cannot be equal through gender balance since patriarchy; men's dominance is too pervasive. According to these theories, it is extremely hard to overcome patriarchy since it is deeply embedded into the minds of most men. Women's devaluation and subordination are part of the ideology and values of western culture, as represented in religion, mass media, scientific and social literature, movies, etc. (Lorber, 2005). Gender inequality may, thus, end up only by putting more attention toward women's experiences and perspectives in the production of knowledge and culture.

These theories view inequality as an approach of difference, which concentrates on the unquestioned male norm that women have to reproduce (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). According

to this conceptualization, focusing on similarities ignores the differentiated character and dynamics of inequalities. The equality that lies behind the claims of excluded groups for justice leads to the ignorance of differences between men and women (Scott, 1988). The solution for this conceptualization of gender inequality is, thus, the reconstruction of male dominant traditions by finding recognition of women's merits that have not been valued equally to men's merits. Only by insisting constantly on the differences between men and women, that gender equality can be achieved (Scott, 1988).

2.3. Rebellion feminist theories

Rebellion feminist theories claim that gender is a complex hierarchy of privileged and subordinated men and women. Rebellion feminists question the stability and the need for the whole gendered social order (Lorber, 2005). These theories conceptualize inequality as a vision of transformation or displacement. This proposition holds that gender inequality is not only about the exclusion of women from governing and leading positions and the predominance of male power but also about the gendered world itself (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). The dilemma of gender equality can be solved in relation to sameness and difference, but it cannot be reduced into either of them (Holli, 2003). Equality can only be conceptualized in between, in an intraspace or in a continuum of sameness and difference, where both of these concepts are present (Holli, 2003. p. 45). The solution for this ideology of gender inequality lies in deconstructing the equality discourse and adopting diversity politics, which can open the expression of on-going debates over the meaning of gender equality (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007).

2.4. Liberal feminist theory

Liberal feminist theory is one form of reform feminist theories. It seems the problem of gender inequality in terms of the exclusion of women from a public sphere dominated and defined by men (Lorber, 2005; Baker et al., 2004). The theory argues that women should have the same legal rights as men as well as the same educational and work opportunities. One of the main ideas of liberal feminist theory is to create a society where neither men nor women, are socially meaningful categories, and both genders are treated in a gender-neutral manner. It also aims at achieving equal individual rights for both men and women through government and organizational policies such as anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action programs (Khoreva, 2012). Due to men's social domination and prevalence of masculine traits and values in contemporary societies, liberal feminist theory has been criticized for exalting "manliness" (Lorber, 2005). It also has been criticized for not directly challenging dominant patriarchal values (Verloo and Lombardo, 2007). According to the criticism, liberal feminist theory treats women as they were equal to men. However, according to Scott (1988), women cannot be identical to men; thus, they cannot be equal. Despite the criticism of liberal feminist theory and conceptualization of inequality as a problem of achieving equality as sameness, this thesis builds on many ideas of this particular theory and this particular conceptualization. For instance, the liberal feminist theory claims that to achieve gender equality both genders should be provided with equal opportunities which refer to treating individuals as equals. Based on the main assumption of the theory, one would understand gender equality as treating men and women alike despite their different biology.

3. Literature Review and Hypothesis development

3.1. Gender inequality practices

Gender inequality refers to a practice or discrimination with regard to the unfair treatment against a person based their gender. According to the United Nations, often women and girls are discriminated against in health, education and labor market resulting in negative consequences that limit their freedom to develop their full potential, and this has remained serious barriers to human development. The International Labour Organization declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work identified four categories of employment principles, namely freedom of association and the effective recognition

of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labor, the abolition of child labor and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Employment discrimination, perceived gender inequality generally occur when an employee is intentionally treated differently due to his or her race, color, religion, national origin, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age by the employer in either the phases of hiring, discipline, performance appraisal, or termination of appointment. In Nigeria, the labor laws prohibit discrimination in a number of work-related areas, including recruiting, hiring, job evaluations, promotion policies, learning, compensation, and disciplinary action. Moreover, treating a person differently from others violates equal employment opportunity laws advocated by most countries (Owoyemi and Olusanya, 2014).

Gender is a construct that is culturally defined and over time has provided a basis for distinguishing roles, behavior, mental, economic, and political characteristics of the male and the female as prescribed by the society (Zosuls et al., 2011; Bussey and Bandura, 1999). In recent times, discrimination on the basis of gender in the workplace has generated a lot of public, national, and societal attention. Gender-based discrimination is an adverse action or differential treatment against a person that would not have occurred if the person had been of another sex. It is a form of prejudice which is illegal in most countries. Trentham and Larwood (1998) have categorized gender discrimination at workplace into four, namely direct gender discrimination, indirect gender discrimination, harassment at work, and victimization.

3.1.1. Direct gender discrimination

This occurs when people are obviously treated differently at work, and it includes acts such as differences in salary and benefits based on gender consideration. For instance, when men and women are doing the same job, but get promoted at different times and get paid different amount of money. Indirect gender discrimination: This occurs when certain labor laws favor a sex group than the other; thereby people of certain sex cannot qualify under those laws. Harassment at work: This is the worst form of discrimination because it causes emotional and psychological trauma for those involved, for examples, sexual harassment, verbal harassment, workplace bullying, and incivility. Victimization: This is an unfair or biased treatment based on the employee's gender. It involves unwarranted singling out of an individual or group for subjection to discrimination, and it is adversity resulting from being made a victim.

The differences between men and women have been a major source of controversy and have indeed persisted over the centuries but mostly in the 20th and 21st centuries where the roles of women have dramatically changed in comparison to their forebears. According to Gray-Brown and McFarlane (2010), gender issues are not limited to the corporate world even though it is highly exhibited much more in this environment, where compensation and authority, acknowledgment for productivity, and leadership and managerial position are used to differentiate the gender or sexes. Furthermore, gender differences are also exhibited in the area or treatment, equality, fairness, and rights and privileges of persons with regard to their gender, and notwithstanding women emergence as skilled, knowledge workers and educated professionals and the introduction of equal opportunities legislations, researchers have found that graduate women skills are still more likely to be undervalued and under-utilized in most countries (Gray-Brown and McFarlane, 2010).

3.2. Career development

Career development has been an issue in HRM. Career is a a pattern of work-related experiences that span the course of a person's life. Dessler (2013) defined career as the occupational positions a person has had over many years. Foong (2008) sees career as a "development process of an individual along a path of different work experiences and jobs in one or more organizations" (p. 2). Moreover, to underscore the individual responsibilities in developing and creating his/her Career is, a journey, story, action, and series of roles which the individual takes an active part in the course of his/her working life. Oduma and Were (2014) opined that career development covers an employee's working

life. It starts with, for example, staff orientation, on-job training, experience, short courses, professional courses, postgraduate degrees, or diplomas. According to Armstrong (2001) career development is of great importance to both the individual employee and the organization. This is so because there is an interaction between the organization for which he/she works and the development of the organization through the employee's career. An employee develops his/her career through a continuous acquisition of managerial or professional skills and experience which may bring about reward and promotion. Graham and Bennett (2005) agree with this and contend that career development involves higher status and responsibilities which can take place in one organization or through movement between organizations or a combination of both. Pareek and Rao (2012) concur and argue that career development of employees should be seen as an investment, not a cost; and that bad performance, ignorance, and low commitment to duty are very costly barriers in an organization. It is pointed out that the key to high levels of performance lies in having employees who are willing to work, are well managed, well led, and well-motivated and are always re-skilling. A woman's career development can be defined as a woman's lifelong process involving the development of attitudes, values, and capabilities that lead to future occupational choices. Employees are major assets of any organization; they play an active role toward the company's success that cannot be underestimated. Equipping these unique assets through effective training becomes imperative to maximize the job performance. Career development often used to close the gap between current performances and expected future performance. Career development programs enable all the workers to make progress in the organization from the beginning. It also helps the individual employee to determine his/her career paths and eliminate all the impediments against the advancement of the employees.

4. Gender Inequality Practices and Career Development

Several studies have been carried out to determine factors that impact on gender and career development and the subject matter of gender inequality in the formal and informal sector. The ILO in adopting an integrated approach to gender equality and decent work specifies that equality between women and men includes the following: Equality of opportunity and equal treatment in employment; equal remuneration for work of equal value; equal access to safe and healthy working environment and social security; equity in association and collective bargaining; equity in obtaining meaningful career development; and a balance between work and home life that is fair to both women and men and equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

The ILO, therefore, advocates that organizations must pay special attention to women's needs and perspectives. European Foundation (Eurofound 2017, Occupational Change and Wage Inequality, European Jobs Monitor 2017, Publications Office of the European Union), Luxembourg, in a comparative study of the different countries of Europe (except Norway and Sweden), found that although careers are changing in most countries, the nature of the change has been a gradual erosion of traditional work patterns, rather than a transformational work which is expected to improve opportunities for women. It further found that gender segregation remains a significant problem despite women's increased activity rates; female workers still dominate part-time work with its associated poor remuneration, poor opportunities for training, and promotion and that many employers are still reluctant in embedding policies that would prioritize gender and career. In a similar study, the Research Institute of the Finnish Economy (2011) found that men start their careers from higher ranks of the hierarchy than women do; men are also more likely to be promoted than women especially during the 1st year in the labor market, thus amplifying the gender differences in hierarchical positions already apparent at the labor market entry-men earn more starting wages than women.

Yusuff (2014) found that although women have embraced academic opportunities and the numbers of women obtaining PhD in all fields have increased substantially, unfortunately, gender gaps remain where it matters most. The result showed a significant relationship between gender stereotype and career advancement among the academic staff that hampers advancement of women in academics. This is due mainly to some organizational procedures which academicians are expected to comply with and also other social factors that slow down women's movement into higher management positions in the academia.

North-Samardzic and Taksa (2011) in their study found the organization as an arena in which some underlying cultural processes maintain gender distinction and barriers, thereby limiting the efficacy of policies specifically designed to increase the number of women at senior level. The study further highlighted the way an organizations gender culture legitimates continuing gender distinctions and impose pressure on women to comply with masculine behavioral norms while accepting gender distinction and arrangements that reproduce inequalities. It further reveals that despite the “best practice” award made too many organizations with regard to gender and equity initiatives, the masculine culture of the organizations show that there is still need for systematic organizational support aimed at the advancement of women.

Khoreva (2012) in her study of perceptions of gender inequality, gender gap, and gender pay inequality in the finish society and workplaces established that for long gender inequality has been found to exist numerous ways - women often receive lower pay for the same or comparable work done by men and that they are often limited in their chances for promotion, especially to top positions. She noted that women continue to experience glass ceiling in their workplaces and that men’s skills, qualification, and cognitive experiences often continue to be granted greater recognition and value more than women’s cognitive skills, qualifications, and experiences. She nonetheless also highlighted that gender inequality can also disadvantage the men as they are the ones who do the most dangerous and heavy work: Firefighting, policing, rescuing, and building construction. She recommends providing equal opportunity to all genders to enable each achieve his/her human potentials. Furthermore, she recommends the need for continuous monitoring by government officials to increase the awareness of gender parity to engage all resources to effective organizational and national development.

Owoyemi and Olusanya (2014) in their study found that in spite of increasing awareness and attention that has been focused on discrimination against women, the practice has persisted. The study found cultural and social factors, religious, psychological, and biological constraints as some of the contributory factors to women discrimination practices in Nigeria. Their study emphasized that there is discrimination against women in paid employment, and the rights of women are violated and perniciously undermined. Khoreva (2012) illustrated that women continue to experience glass ceiling in their workplaces and that men’s skills, qualification, and cognitive experiences often continue to be granted greater recognition and value more than women’s cognitive skills, qualifications, and experiences. These views are in line with the findings of Olusola et al. (2012), who affirmed that external funding issues, family and social commitment, apathy, and time constraints, respectively, are impediments to career development programs and strategies for female professionals in the construction industry.

Hicks-Clarke and Iles (2014) found that the organizational climate has effects on career and organizational attitudes and perceptions. The results of research from both private and public sector organizations, with emphasis on service, indicate that climates for diversity do impact significantly on a range of career and organizational attitudes and perceptions. Gray-Brown and McFarlane (2010) in their study also revealed that for both men and women, the pay cheque is the most important source of income and wondered why both genders do the same jobs and earn differently. Hicks-Clarke and Iles (2000) in their study considered the degree to which there is an organizational climate in which human resources diversity is valued and in which employee’s from diverse backgrounds are welcomed and included, and its effects on individual career attitudes in the organization are it private or public. It is, therefore, essential to investigate the impact of gender inequality practices on the career development of the employees in the oil and gas industry. This review reveals the following hypothesis:

H_0 : Gender inequality practice does not significantly influence employees’ career development.

5. Research Method

5.1. Research design

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of correlational type with a face-to-face administered survey questionnaire for data collection. The research design was adopted

because it allowed the data generated to be analyzed quantitatively and to draw inferences about relationships among the variables. The design of the study is in line with the design used in previous studies.

5.2. Population and sample

The target population for this study was 9024 top level, middle level, and lower level management (supervisors) staff of the NNPC who has spent >5 years in the organization and have up to 5 years before retirement age of 60 years. The NNPC is made up of 12 subsidiary companies, and two partly owned subsidiaries and some associated companies manage the upstream, midstream, and downstream activities of the NNPC (NNPC, 2014). Due to this wide geographical spread, limited time factor as well as the financial constraints on the study, the researcher purposefully chose strategic business units (SBUs) in two cities to focus the study on. The cities are Abuja (Corporate Headquarters and PPMC Headquarters) and Lagos (NAPIMS). The operations of the SBUs chosen cut across the main sectors of the oil and gas business: Upstream, downstream, and commercial and investment sectors.

5.3. Sampling technique

A purposive sampling procedure was used in selecting the participating SBU which were based on the location and the line of business in the oil and gas value chain. From each of the three SBUs and locations, selection of the participating employees was done using proportionate sampling technique, and a total of 1235 employees were selected. This technique was used to ensure that all the selected SBUs and cities had an equal representative. Furthermore, a proportionate sampling technique is employed to give male and female employees an equal chance of being selected. The strata were the SBU of the corporation. They are headquarters, NAPIMS, and PPMC. This sample is used as a representative of the population of the entire staff in the NNPC.

5.4. Data collection procedures

Qualitative and quantitative approach was used in data collection. Primary data collected using questionnaire and structured interview scheme were utilized in this study to enhance the originality of the study. The use of a questionnaire is justified because it aids the proper collection of required data in a way that allows the respondents to express their opinions objectively. The research instrument used for this study was closed-ended questionnaire. The questionnaire is an amalgam of self-structured questions arising from the literature reviews, and adapted from different sources: Kane et al. (1999) with Cronbach's Alpha reliability estimates of 0.91–0.71 with reliability estimate of 7.0 for the variables.

5.5. Validity and reliability of the research instrument

The researcher carried out a pilot study to ensure that the main study will be able to identify clearly the research questions and also determine the adequacy of instructions to research participants who completed the questionnaires, this approach helps the researcher to refine the questionnaire as the need may arise to ensure that the research instrument measures what it is expected to measure. The pilot study for this research was carried out at the NNPC/PPMC Mosimi Area Office in Ogun state which is another section of an organization that is not part of the study population. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, and 94 were returned.

According to Somekh and Cathy (2005), validity is the degree by which the sample of test items represents the content the test is designed to measure. The validity of the instrument was ascertained by giving out drafted copies of the questionnaires to the project supervisors, specialists in human resources and strategic management to look at the structure and construction of questions to ensure accuracy and that it aligns with the different dimensions of the study as in the literature reviewed in Chapter two of the study.

Reliability refers to the consistency of measurement and is frequently assessed using internal consistency method. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument a pilot test was conducted at the PPMC area office Mosimi, Ogun state. The reliability of the instrument was further ascertained by subjecting the result of the pilot test using the instrument to a Cronbach alpha test based on a reliability level of 0.7 and above. The result of the pilot study was used to rectify some questionnaires inconsistencies. The result of the reliability test indicates that the variables have high reliability which indicates that there is similarity among the variables. The result of the test is shown in Table 1.

5.6. Method of data analysis

The researcher perused completed questionnaire to document analysis recording sheets. Quantitative data collected using questionnaire were analyzed using quantitative techniques. Quantitative information is usually analyzed through statistical procedures. Statistical analyzes cover a broad range of techniques, from simple to complex procedures. The collected data were coded and entered into SPSS (version 22.0) to create a data sheet that was used for analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of data collected. Simple regression model was used to analyze the data. The simple regression equation applied to regress dependent variable against the independent variable. The simple regression equation was as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + e_i$$

Where:

y = Career development

β_0 = Constant

β_1 = Regression coefficient

X = Gender inequality practices

e = Error term

6. Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This section presents an analysis of the data on the effects of gender inequality practices on employees' career development of NNPC. The section also provides the major findings and results of the study and discusses those findings and results against the literature reviewed and study objectives. The data are mainly presented in frequency tables, means, and standard deviation.

6.1. Response rate

A total of 1235 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the sampled respondents. Out of the total number of the questionnaire distributed 926 were retrieved representing a response rate of 74.9% while 309 copies of the questionnaire could not be retrieved because the participants did not continue with the study while others were not properly filled or mutilated.

6.2. Analysis of sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

Respondents were asked about gender, working experience, ranks, and divisions. Their responses were summarized in Table 2.

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2. Table 2 showed that majority (64.5%) of the respondents were male while 325 (55.1%) were female depicting a high

Table 1: Reliability test

Variable	Cronbach's alpha
Gender inequality practices	0.78
Career development opportunities	0.76

level of gender inequality in NNPC. The finding also confirmed that 8.9% of respondents had spent between 6 and 10 years working with the corporation, 385 (41.6%) of the respondents had between 11 and 15 years working experience, and 303 (32.7%) of them had between 16 and 20 years working experience, while 155 (16.9%) had working experience of above 20 years. In addition, the result reveals that 14 (1.5%) of the respondents were top managers and 196 (21.2%) were in middle managers, while 716 (77.3%) were supervisors spread across the SBU investigated. Furthermore, the result shows that majority of the respondents are working in commercial and investments directorate (31.4%), followed by finance and services directorate (27.6%), exploration and production directorate (176 or 19%), and refining and technology directorate (138 or 15%).

6.3. Descriptive statistics analysis

This section gives analysis of the descriptive findings and discussion in relation to the objective of the study.

6.3.1. Gender inequality practices

The study sought to determine the extent to which respondents agreed with the following statements assessing the level of gender inequality practices in NNPC. A six-point Likert scale was used as previously indicated. The results were presented in Table 3.

Table 3 shows the opinions of respondents on gender inequality practices. The analysis in Table 3 reveals that 63.7% (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and slightly dissatisfied combined) of the respondents are not satisfied with the implementation of the corporate core values of equality, fairness, and justice when it comes to the way the different genders are treated in the corporation regarding deployments and appointments. In addition, 574 (62.5%) of the respondents are not satisfied with the way male and female employees are treated on the matter of equal opportunity for career progression to the top management in the corporation. Further analysis as to whether members of staff are satisfied with the organization's disposition toward encouraging female employees to achieve their potentials fully revealed that 547 (59.7%) of the respondents declined. As to whether the employees are satisfied with the consideration of women in regard to appointments to top positions in the organization, 526 (57.4%)

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Description	Characteristics	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	597 (64.5)
	Female	325 (35.5)
	Total	922 (100)
Working experience	6–10 years	83 (8.9)
	11–15 years	155 (16.8)
	16–20 years	203 (21.9)
	20 years and above	485 (52.4)
	Total	
Ranks	Top management	14 (1.5)
	Middle management	196 (21.2)
	Supervisory	716 (77.3)
Divisions	Group managing director's office	65 (7.0)
	Finance and services	256 (27.6)
	Commercial and investments	291 (31.4)
	Exploration and production	176 (19.0)
	Refinery and technology	138 (15.0)

Source: Researcher's field survey result, 2016

of the respondents responded in the negative. To determine whether members are satisfied with the NNPC's practices regarding positions available to be occupied by women, Table 3 further indicates that (very dissatisfied, dissatisfied, and slightly dissatisfied combined) 523 (57%) of the respondents were completely dissatisfied with that. The responses with respect to whether member of staff are satisfied with the NNPC's HRM/Management disposition toward helping both male and female employees to develop to their maximum potential revealed that majority of the respondents (540 or 58.9%) are not satisfied with the NNPC's HRM/management disposition toward helping both male and female employees to develop to their maximum potential. The analysis further revealed that 489 (53.3%) of the respondents are not happy with the level at which political consideration guides gender matters relating to employee careers in the organization. Overall, the analysis revealed that the employees are not satisfied with the way women are treated as regards key decision-making in the NNPC.

It is obvious from the above results that male and female employees are treated unequally on career progressing matter in NNPC. On the surface, there may appear to be no gender inequality practice challenges in the NNPC, but when one examines the number of females that make it into the top positions it is highly limited, and this is because as in Khoreva (2012), organizational cultures of most companies supported by the sociopolitical environment in which they operate continues to give priority to equal opportunity rather than the recognition of unequal practice. The corporation disposition toward encouraging female employees to achieve their potentials is not encouraging. In fact, NNPC's HRM/management disposition toward helping both male and female employees to develop to their maximum potential is low.

6.4. Career development

The study sought to determine the extent of employees' career development in NNPC. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 presents respondents opinion on career development measuring scale. The results of the descriptive analysis showed that NNPC does not have established a career path for employees and professional groups as reported by 629 (67.9%). The majority (67.8%) of respondents indicates that employees in NNPC do not understand what to do at any time to make progress in their career (strongly disagreed, disagreed, and slightly disagreed combined). Furthermore, the table revealed that in the corporation, the majority of the respondents (69.1%) disagreed that training and development opportunities are explicitly linked to the strategic direction of NNPC.

Furthermore, the result reveals that employees in NNPC do not receive formal career advice from their supervisors and managers. A total of 70.5% of the respondents confirm this. 599 or 64.7% of the respondents declined that there is a formal mentoring and career development workshops in the corporation, (65.9%) disagreed that employees in the corporation know what the key skills are that corporation needs in the next 5 years to achieve its objectives, (61.2%) are of the view that the business strategy of the corporation is not consistently communicated to all levels of employees through the management chain, through special communications and through training and development activities, (85.9%) reflect that employees are not actively encouraged to share their knowledge with colleagues, not just subordinates, by coaching, mentoring and formal training within their work group and cross-functionally, (67.5%) disagreed that there is ample career advancement opportunities that is open to all relevant employees in the corporation and (68.8%) disagreed that there is visibility to Senior management in the organization on matters of career development.

It is evident from the results of descriptive analysis about career development that there is no established career path for every employee and professional groups in NNPC, and training and development opportunities are not explicitly linked to the strategic direction of NNPC. As a result, employees do not really know the key skills that a corporation needs to achieve its objectives. In addition, employees in NNPC do not receive formal career advice from their supervisors and managers.

7. Analysis of Personal Interview

The study interviewed 13 NNPC executives and directors. The purpose of the interview is to enable the researcher to consider the appropriateness of the proposed theoretical framework and to validate the

Table 3: Descriptive statistics summary on gender inequality practices

Gender inequality practices	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Slightly satisfied	Slightly dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Mean±SD
Overall, how satisfied are you with the way the corporate core values of Equality, fairness, and justice when it comes to the way the different genders are treated in the corporation regarding deployments and appointments?	108 (11.7)	152 (16.4)	77 (8.3)	87 (9.4)	309 (33.4)	188 (20.3)	3.82±1.488
How satisfied are you with the way male and female are treated on the matter of equal opportunity for career progressing to the top management in the corporation?	133 (12.2)	155 (16.7)	79 (8.5)	53 (5.7)	313 (33.8)	208 (22.5)	3.73±1.439
How satisfied are you with the organizations disposition toward encouraging the female employees to achieve their potentials fully?	145 (15.7)	168 (18.1)	52 (5.6)	69 (7.5)	316 (34.1)	162 (17.5)	3.79±1.430
How satisfied are you with the consideration of women in regards to appointments to top positions in the organization?	133 (14.4)	201 (21.7)	60 (6.5)	68 (7.3)	309 (33.4)	149 (16.1)	3.70±1.467
How satisfied are you with the NNPC's practices regarding positions available to be occupied by women?	128 (13.8)	171 (18.5)	95 (10.3)	50 (5.4)	253 (27.3)	220 (23.8)	3.55±1.468
How satisfied are you with the NNPC's HRM/ Management disposition toward helping both male and female employees to develop to their maximum potential?	126 (13.6)	134 (14.5)	112 (12.1)	62 (6.7)	300 (32.4)	178 (19.2)	3.63±1.551
How satisfied are you with the level at which political consideration guides gender matters relating to employee careers in the organization	98 (10.6)	161 (17.4)	144 (15.6)	48 (5.2)	217 (23.4)	224 (24.2)	3.35±1.578
How satisfied are you with the way women are treated as regard key decision making in the organization?	122 (13.2)	179 (19.3)	101 (10.9)	61 (6.6)	216 (23.3)	204 (22.0)	3.43±1.556

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result, 2016. SD: Standard deviation, NNPC: Nigerian national petroleum corporation

Table 4: Descriptive statistics on career development

Career and development	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Mean±SD
NNPC has an established career path the corporation use for every employee and professional groups	47 (5.1)	83 (9.0)	112 (12.1)	273 (29.5)	194 (21.0)	162 (17.5)	3.01±1.510
Employees in the corporation understand what to do to at any time to make progress in their career.	56 (6.0)	155 (16.7)	62 (6.7)	173 (18.7)	195 (21.1)	260 (28.1)	3.51±1.941
Training and development opportunities are explicitly linked to the strategic direction of NNPC	23 (2.5)	47 (5.1)	200 (21.6)	203 (21.9)	199 (21.5)	238 (25.7)	3.50±1.637
Employees in NNPC receive formal career advice from their supervisors and managers.	39 (4.2)	69 (7.5)	149 (16.1)	215 (23.2)	214 (23.1)	224 (24.2)	3.52±1.352
There is a formal mentoring and career development workshops,	29 (3.1)	100 (10.8)	180 (19.4)	182 (19.7)	215 (23.2)	202 (21.8)	3.26±1.425
Employees in the corporation know what the key skills are that corporation needs in the next 5 years to achieve its objectives.	18 (1.9)	159 (17.2)	117 (12.6)	167 (18.0)	199 (21.5)	245 (26.5)	3.21±1.698
The business strategy of the corporation is consistently communicated to all levels of employees through the management chain, through special communications, and through training, and development activities	27 (2.9)	177 (19.1)	88 (9.5)	185 (20.0)	193 (20.8)	234 (25.3)	3.33±1.690
Employees are actively encouraged to share their knowledge with colleagues, not just subordinates, by coaching, mentoring and formal training within their workgroup and cross-functionally	23 (2.5)	96 (10.4)	35 (3.8)	145 (15.7)	497 (53.7)	153 (16.5)	2.38±1.996
There are ample career advancement opportunities that are open to all relevant employees in the corporation	39 (4.2)	191 (20.6)	53 (5.7)	220 (23.8)	186 (20.1)	219 (23.7)	3.51±1.341
There is visibility to senior management in the organization on matters of career development	27 (2.9)	167 (18.0)	72 (7.8)	211 (22.8)	216 (23.3)	210 (22.7)	3.37±1.373

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Result, 2016. SD: Standard deviation, NNPC: Nigerian national petroleum corporation

quantitative results obtained. The results of the personal interviews have been content analyzed, and the views expressed by the interviewee executives are documented here. Verbatim reportage of some of their expressed views has been done to make readers have a feel of the real situations. Two questions were raised, and the interviewee was provided answers to them. The results of their submissions are presented accordingly.

How do the organization's HRM practices align with fairness to all regardless of their, ethnicity, state of origin, gender, religion in terms of placement, deployments, and appointments?

What role do these factors play in employee career growth in deployments and appointments? How would you describe the gender practices in the NNPC regarding career development?

There is no fairness in HRM practices particularly on decisions of posting, career development opportunities because the policies are not being followed. The invisible guidelines used in HRM practices are ethnicity, state of origin, gender, and religion among other. The gender practices in NNPC are quite visibly discriminated against women particularly in the technical areas. The discrimination against women has to do with culture, religion, tradition, political, and cultural considerations. Career progression is favorably tilted in favor of the men folks. Women are not given the opportunity to prove themselves. They are seen to be weaker sex and may be distracted by domestic responsibilities, hence, heavy discrimination against them. Although the discrimination against women in NNPC, there are still not enough qualified women for career professional positions. As a result of this, deliberate policies on gender equality for appointment deployment, postings, and enforcement should be put in place. Women should also work hard to prove themselves instead of relying on their feminine attributes. Finally, the results of the interview conducted reveals that HRM practices in NNPC are influenced by external factors order than merit. Premenstrual syndrome is subjective and appointments are highly subjective.

7.1. Test of the research hypothesis

In this study, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to test the influence of gender inequality practices on career development. The research used a statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS V 22.0) to code, enter, and compute the measurement of simple regression. The results are presented in Table 5.

7.2. Regression analysis of gender inequality practices on career development

The regression result presented in Table 5 shows that gender inequality practices have a negative and significant influence on employee career development in NNPC. The coefficient of this variable is -0.741 with a t-value of -26.438 ($\beta = -0.741$, $t = -26.438$, and $P = 0.000$). According to the results, the coefficient of this variable is statistically significant at 5% level of significance, thereby confirming that gender inequality practices negatively influence employee career development. Test regression result also shows that a unit increase in gender inequality practices would reduce the employee career development by a factor of 0.741. The results of the analysis show that there is a strong positive relationship between gender inequality practices and employee career development. The correlation coefficient between the two variables was 0.658 implying a strong positive correlation between the two variables. The results presented in Table 5 also indicate that gender inequality practices are responsible for 43.3% variance in employee career development. The F-statistic, which is a measure of the significance of the regression model has an estimated value 698.960 and a probability statistic of 0.000. This indicates that the regression model is statistically significant in predicting factor influencing employees' career development in NNPC. From the data in Table 5, the established regression equation was:

$$Y = 9.130 - 0.895X$$

Where:

Y = Employees' career development

X = Gender inequality practices

From the above regression equation, it was revealed that employee career development in NNPC would be at 9.130 when gender inequality practices are constant at zero. A unit increase in

gender inequality practices would reduce employee career development by a factor of 0.895. The factor was statistically significant as its significant value was less than $P < 0.05$. In general, the study found that there is a very high remarkable influence caused by gender inequality practices on employees' career development. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that gender inequality practices do not significantly influence employee career development is hereby rejected.

8. Discussion

The study sought to establish the influence of gender inequality practices on employee career development in NNPC. The result of the analysis of this study shows that gender inequality practices significantly affect employee career development in NNPC. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported in this study. The finding agrees with the result of Yusuff (2014) that although women have embraced academic opportunities and the numbers of women obtaining PhD in all fields have increased substantially; unfortunately, gender gaps remain where it matters most. The result showed a significant relationship between gender stereotype and career advancement among the academic staff that hampers the advancement of women in academics. This is due mainly to some organizational procedures which academicians are expected to comply with and also other social factors that slow down women's movement into higher management positions in the academia. The result is also supported by North-Samardzic and Taksa (2011) who found pointed out that organization is an arena in which some underlying cultural processes maintain gender distinction and barriers, thereby limiting the efficacy of policies specifically designed to increase the number of women at senior level. The researchers highlighted the way an organizations gender culture legitimates continuing gender distinctions and impose pressure on women to comply with masculine behavioral norms while accepting gender distinction and arrangements that reproduce inequalities.

The European Foundation (Eurofound, 2017) in a comparative study of the different countries of Europe (except Norway and Sweden) found that although careers are changing in most countries, the nature of the change has been a gradual erosion of traditional work patterns, rather than a transformational work which is expected to improve opportunities for women. It is explained further found that gender segregation remains a significant problem despite women's increased activity rates; female workers still dominate part-time work with its associated poor remuneration, poor opportunities for training and promotion and that many employers are still reluctant in embedding policies that would prioritize gender and career. In a related study, the Research Institute of the Finnish economy (2011) found that men start their careers from higher ranks of the hierarchy than women do; men are also more likely to be promoted than women especially during the 1st year in the labor market, thus amplifying the gender differences in hierarchical positions already apparent at the labor market entry-men earn more starting wages than women. Adegoye and Adegun (2008) in their study on gender disparity reported that there is a huge gap in women's participation in the informal sector of the Nigerian economy, in contrast to this view are those of Owoyemi and Olusanya (2008) that posited that women in Nigeria having limited access to education and formal employment does not hold water anymore.

Table 5: Coefficients of regression gender inequality practices in relation to employee career development

Items	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Significant
	B	Std. error	Beta		
Constants	11.492	0.858		13.391	0.000
Gender inequality practices	-0.741	-0.028	0.658	-26.438	0.000

Dependent variable: Employee career development. Source: Researcher's field survey from SPSS output, 2016. $R = 0.658$,

$R^2 = 0.433$. Durbin Watson = 1.558, $F = 698.960_{1,914}$, $P = 0.000$

The findings revealed that the discrimination against women has to do with culture, religion, and tradition. There is no gender policy in NNPC. Women hardly make it to the top, and the few that do are seen as a threat to the men. This demoralizes many people and could frustrate some out of the organization. This finding aligned and agreed with some previous research that cultural attitudes to women work, family gender roles and employer discrimination are the factor that encourages on gender inequality practices. Previous research also highlighted the factors that religion plays in restructuring the roles that women play in the public and private domains. It is, therefore, important to note that such as India and Pakistan that are predominantly Moslem, the decision makers in Nigeria establishments like the NNPC are predominantly Moslem. It has been argued that Islam restricts women's freedom to a greater extent than other religions.

From the analysis of descriptive statistics, 574 (62.5%) of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the way male and female are treated on the matter of equal opportunity for career progressing to the top management in NNPC. Furthermore, 58.9% of the respondents are not happy with the NNPC's HRM/management disposition toward helping both male and female employees to develop to their maximum potential. In addition, 453.3% of the respondents are not happy with the level at which political consideration guides gender matters relating to employee careers in the organization. The result is also supported by reports of the structured interview that HRM practices in NNPC are quite visibly discriminated against women particularly in the Technical areas.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

9.1. Conclusion

The study concludes that there exists a relationship between gender inequality practices and employee career development. The study also concludes that gender practices in NNPC are quite visibly discriminated against women particularly in the technical areas. The study further concludes that inequality practices negatively influence employee career development. The negative result (low career satisfaction) was related to levels of importance of career development initiatives. Women with more negative work feelings were more interested in such initiatives. The study concludes that employee is not happy with the level at which political consideration guides gender matters relating to employee careers in the organization. The result is also supported by reports of the structured interview that HRM practices in NNPC are quite visibly discriminated against women particularly in the technical areas.

9.2. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the study recommends that NNPC management should have objective HR policies in which recruitment, training and development, performance appraisals, and promotions are determined in an objective manner, one that does not discriminate based on gender. The management of NNPC should understand that diversity in the workforce embodies different perspectives and approaches that enhance and develop performance; accordingly, they should encourage women's promotion. Career plans and related competency requirements should be made clear and more transparent for women. Promotion criteria and measures should be clearly identified, including the related procedures to make the promotion process more structured and transparent for women.

Furthermore, NNPC should monitor the implementation of its policies HRM. NNPC should come up with a scheme for career progression. The government and organizations working with women should develop public awareness of gender as relevant to national development, to influence the socialization process generally. There is a need to focus on gender in management. The study exposed the sociocultural diversity of the Nigerian nation and its impact on HRM practices in the NNPC. In this regard, the effort is to be focused on making coherent HR policies that fit closely with the business strategy of the organization.

9.3. Suggestion for further study

The study indicates that gender inequality practices have a significant influence on employees' career development in NNPC. Further research directions could, therefore, include, among others a replication

of the study in specific areas of the oil and gas industry such as downstream and upstream sectors in Nigeria. The study also proposes that further studies should include other HRM practices with the one already investigated to determine their joint influence on employee career development and job performance.

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