Review Paper

Gender Sensitivity in Recruitment and retention of Workers in an Organization: A review

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Abstract

This paper examined gender sensitivity in the recruitment and retention of workers in an organization. It explains key issues such as gender, gender inequality and gender sensitivity, recruitment and retention of workers in an organization. It also described the role of gender in the recruitment and retention process of organization as well as the possible causes of gender insensitivity in the recruitment and retention of workers. Finally, it proffers some recommendations to ensure a gender sensitive organization in Nigeria and the world at large.

Keywords: Gender sensitivity, recruitment, retention, organization.

Introduction

Gender is socially constructed differences that exist between male and female that culminate in inequality and or unequal rights and advantages to a better life[1]. The World Health Organization defined gender as roles, activities, attributes and behavior a society consider appropriate for men and women[2]. The distinctive roles and behavior can culminate in gender inequalities. That is, differences between men and women that systematically favors one group (men) over the other (women). This, in turn, result in inequalities between male and female in sharing wealth, incentives, political appointment, access to quality education, and delivery of goods and services. Gender inequality is disadvantageous to both individuals and society at large, and the demerits can have multiplier effect for decades.

Emphatically, if we can strike a balance by placing female on the same pedestal with male, it will enhance the development of human potential for positive transformation the world over. The rights vis-a-vis needs of female and male are to be met equally if sustainable development is to be achieved. This is so much so because gender equality is not only advantageous to a particular person but to the society at large. In line with the useful effect of gender equality, the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations (FAO) suggested that if female had equal opportunity with male in accessing fund and other forms of incentive(s), they would enhance the productive potentials of farm output by 20-30% which would result to total agricultural productivity by 2.5-4% in developing countries, thus, decreasing hunger by 12-17% i.e. about 150 million people[3]. In Nigeria, women are responsible for 50% of keeping animals to produce food, 60% of food transformation activities and 70% of labor in farming[4].

Gender sensitivity is having the understanding of people's perception and consciousness of male or female such that they do not depend wholly on ancestral, immemorial, historic and doctrinal opinion on the functions of male and female. In the system of communication in speech and arts, this is unmistakably voiced via people's prime of words. For centuries, words such as "man" and "mankind" which are masculine in nature are used to describe all human. True gender sensitivity should use words such as human race, human being among others that include all and exclude none. These words (human being, human race) neither make female absent nor non-apparent unlike the use of man and mankind that foster less value for women in the society.

The conventional belief that women are not good enough for certain roles and leadership position but to get married and bear children has been embedded in the sensibility of men. Consequently, it affects their awareness and perception about the world around them[5]. For instance, at the National Conference being held in Nigeria in the recent times, greater percentage of male participants refused overwhelmingly the idea/motion to allow female occupy the Executive Positions in Nigeria polity. In addition, only about three (3) Vice-Chancellors in Nigerian Universities are women since the inception of University Education in Nigeria, and this include University of Benin (Professor Grace Alele-Williams), University of Uyo (Professor Comfort Ekpo) and University of Abuja. In furtherance of this,[6] opined that women lack confidence to venture into leadership role while[7] stated that "from an early age, daughters are groomed for their marriage roles of wife, mother and food provider and they are conditioned from an early age to believe that a woman is inferior to a man and that her place is in the home". Consequently, a greater interest in or desire for their family hinders or discourages female to apply for certain jobs and

become involved with certain institutions and or organizations that are not in proximity with their place of abode.

As a result of competitive pressure (i.e. the pressure an employee experience when competing with other employees) in the academic sector in Nigeria, Vice-Chancellors continue to explore avenues of enhancing and sustaining effective performance and good behavior of teaching and non-teaching staff in their various Universities through appropriate employee recruitment and retention practices. Recruitment is the process put in place by organizations to stimulate applicants who are available and qualified to fill vacant positions via written or oral interview(s). The overall aim of recruitment is to discover potentials (i.e. employee) that could contribute greatly to the growth and development of human resource need of the organization at a minimum cost[8, 9].

Retention is the action taken by employers to keep hard working employees in their organizations. It is a critical element of organizational approach in talent management, which is designed to enhance work place productivity by recognizing people with desired trait/skills to achieve the goals of the organization. Talent management programmes should be tailored to employees that contributed greatly to the success of the organization irrespective of gender differences.

The major approaches for organizations to hold fast to their employee(s), which include: improving employee's perception of organizations core values and social responsibility, and the plan of the organization (i.e. employers) to meet their needs[10]. Human capital development programmes should be through gender sensitive policies. In Nigeria, only 28.5% of gender related cases in the organization was reported, which indicates low level of reported cases of gender insensitivity. Consequently, employers should put in place good and implantable measures to facilitate their employee(s) in reporting cases of gender abuse and insensitivity.

Table 1
Cases of gender insensitivity[11]

	Amount of cases in 2011	Comprehensive cases in 2011 (%)
Gender inequity	28,534	28.5%
Race discrimination	35,395	35.4%

Gender sensitivity in recruitment process of organizations (e.g. Universities) in Africa: Organization refers to a group of people who form a business together so as to achieve a particular purpose. Gender as a social conception is profoundly embedded in the social entities and performs a meaningful role in the working organizations. The organizational norms and values are reflected through the manner, an organization deals with the notion of gender role and identity. Policy is a plan of action agreed by a business organization vis-à-vis institution which influences how their employee(s) behave. The policies in some organizations are skewed to impact negatively on women

despite their individual productive potentials and priorities at workplace. Similarly, the procedures for assigning roles to employee(s) are based on conventional and ancestral beliefs of what is/are female jobs and male job[12,13]. Management of gender sensitivity at workplace appears to be one of the most challenging issues for organizations since gender diversity measures indicate that male are dominating organizational practice.

Organizational theory determines the art of businesses and bureaucracies in organizations and the way people are connected and affect each other in their environment. It provide different areas of knowledge that influences (i) employee(s) behavior and attitude in the workplace, (ii) the impact of employee(s) perception and course of action on organization, (iii) the input, output and sustainability of organizations, (iv) the symbiotic effects of environments, the polity and traditional beliefs on organizations and (v) using methods and principles to acquire knowledge on topics of interest[14]. Many academic disciplines from which organizational theorists have drawn inspiration to contribute to organization theory include Sociology, Cultural Anthropology, Political Science, Biology-Ecology, Economics, Social Psychology, Engineering, Cultural studies, Linguistics among others. So many organizational theories have been examined but open-systems theory seem to be well acknowledge than other (theories) in the public domain. Max Weber (1864-1020) theory on organizations hang onto the official rules and ways of doing things in an organization which is based on law, knowledge and way of thinking, organization and controlled state. Henri Fayol is another important contributor to organizational theory and he is believed to have postulated employee recruitment, incentives to improve staff dedication and commitment to duty as appropriate guideline for profitability and sustainability of organizations. Gendered organization theory identifies the overrepresentation of male workers in the labor market that allow them performing leading and dominating role. Indeed, there is an overall picture of gross under-representation of women in the employment profile of public universities and this gender disparity is more pronounced at Senior and Administrative positions[15]. The statistics of female academic staff in tertiary institutions in some African countries indicate that 6.1 per cent are employed in Ethopia, 12.4 per cent in Nigeria, 17.6 per cent in Sierra Leone, and 19.7 per cent in Uganda[16].

According to United States Agency for International Development[17], female involvement in paid labor has increased within the last three decades in third world countries as a result of the need to meet up with economic demand of families. Notwithstanding this, increased participation of women in paid labor force has not translated to equal employment opportunities for men and women.

Gender identities are the most critical aspect of organizations that are often disregarded by the management. The negligence of this social phenomenon results in the creations of gender

neutral organizations where most of the leading roles are being performed by the males. The situation leads towards gender discrimination where the women are provided with lesser opportunities to foster their professional career. Gender sensitivity should be strategically managed through systematic theories of gender roles to prevent gender biasness and discrimination of the workforce.

Gender discrimination also has its roots in the traditional conceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the women in connection with their families. Women engagement with domestic responsibilities, child birth, and child care prevents them from being well committed to their professional career. This portrays women as workers that need flexible working conditions where they will neither be available nor fully committed workers. These theories indicate that family affiliations also act as an important role in creating gender discrimination at workplace.

Social interaction between men and women also establishes the pattern of dominance and submission that enforces the femininity and masculinity norms held by an organization. The image of the business leader is created as powerful and successful masculinity that is applicable to a male manager only. The social conception about the business leader also works to create gender biasness that prevails at each process of business ranging from selection and hiring to deciding the pay scale and working hours. Women also encounter discrimination in form of sexual and non sexual harassment, bullying and unfair treatment in the promotion process.

Causes of gender insensitivity in recruitment of workers in organizations: i. A common perception bias which binds "genius" to mostly men and boys, ii. Male networking traditions (informal exchange of favors), iii. Poor working conditions with poor work-life-balance in science jobs, iv. Rising pressure for geographic mobility, v. Bias in the presently used methods of determining "excellence", vi. Strong hierarchisation of academia, vii. High risks of associated careers for young people, viii. Rejection of candidates with other than (typically male) straight career paths, ix. Over-competitive behaviors' in view of scarce resources, x. Traditional conceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the women in connection with their families, xi. Social interaction between men and women also establishes the pattern of dominance and submission because in turn this interaction enforces the femininity and masculinity norms held by an organization

Gender sensitivity in retention process of organizations: Employee retention is important to practicing Managers. However, as technology becomes more complex and tasks tend towards greater complexity, the turnover costs increases. Turnover reduces the bonding and commitment levels of existing workforce, *inter alia*, increasing the costs of recruiting and retraining of workers. In view of this, employees may think that their job is not secured; hence they try to explore other opportunities believing that the organization may handle them badly in the future. Studies have shown that job satisfaction is one of the reasons why workers intend to quit their jobs.

In a highly competitive academic environment, holding fast to highly committed and dedicated employee(s) are very crucial in sustainability of organization. However, it is imperative to state that when the key employees are women, many organizations are befuddled on to how to retain this valuable cohort. Emphatically, gender inequities at top Management cadre and unfair compensation retrogresses the utilization of employee potential in organizations.

Women would not want to be queried for striking a balance between workplace and family issues. Rigid policy and non-flexibility of duty schedule in organization is a major reason why employee(s) desire to leave for other jobs. Consequently, employers in organizations should be willing to permit their workers' to spend time with their family. Gender equality in organization particularly at Management position will promote greater participation of women in leadership role. This, in turn, will enhance their perception to accept greater responsibility as well being role model in an organization.

Causes of gender insensitivity in retention of workers in organizations: i. Ancestral and historic belief that women are minorities. ii. Customary work cultures that does not take into cognizance the importance of gender sensitivity. iii. Traditional "gendered" belief that streamlined work into "female" clerical while male is for management position. iv. Life a "life cycle" that affect working hours and progression of female career in organization.

Summary

Gender sensitivity in an organization is connected with activities that influence the behavior of male and female. Organizations acknowledge gender diversity and allow both male and female to be part of decision making process as well as provide opportunities for promotion in the organization. Sensitivity entails taking into cognizance those factors that affect men and women in an organization.

Gender sensitivity evolves from ancestral and historic belief of the role of male and female in the society. Many people have a fixed idea that female is suppose to be in the home while male work and do business to provide the necessary support for their families. This conventional belief often results in discrimination vis-à-vis inequities in organizations as well as affects the recruitment and retention process in the workplace. Male and female differ in the way they understand information, and this can culminate in feelings of sexual abuse in workplace. Consequently, Chief Executive Officers (CEO's) should explore avenues of enhancing employee(s) perception on gender via training programmes. The training programme (on gender) will improve the mental capacity of employee(s) as well as

encourage male and female to see their role as complementary to each other in an organization.

Conclusion

Inequalities still exist in the recruitment and retention of employees at workplace in most organizations. The rights and needs of women and men are to be met equally if sustainable development is to be achieved in Africa. Gender sensitivity can only be accomplished in an organization when male and female have equal opportunity for incentives, rewards and promotion.

Recommendation
In this study, the following recommendations are made: Remuneration should be equal for male and female in work of comparable value. Employers should get rid of all forms of gender discrimination that hinder gender equality in an organization. In addition, employers should put in place adequate measure(s) to encourage female to aspire leadership role in an organization. Finally, they should allow flexible work hours for both male and female in workplace

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