

Influence of Networking and Mentoring on Women's Participation in Organizational Decision-Making in Selected Organizations in Nigeria

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Abstract

Networking and Mentoring rank among key issues that are constantly being viewed and reviewed as factors that researchers in the fields of education and social sciences have established as capable of influencing women's participation in organizational decision-making. It is on this basis that this study investigated to what extent networking and mentoring influenced women's participation in decision-making in selected work organizations in Nigeria.

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The participants were 365(three hundred and sixty-five) female managers in three(3)purposively selected work organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria. Organisational Integration and Adaptation Inventory ($r = 0.83$) was the instrument used for data collection. Data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, Chi-Square and Analysis of Variance.

Findings indicated that networking and mentoring influenced women's participation in organizational decision-making of selected work organizations. i.e. networking $\chi^2 = F = 2359.47$; $df = 76$, $p = .000$, mentoring = $\chi^2 = F = 1667.03$; $df = 88$, $p = .000$. Therefore, it is recommended that favourable organizational culture, healthy mentor-protégé relationship, eradication of stereotypical activities, zeal for gathering useful information, are key areas that should be addressed in order to enhance women's use of the tools of networking and mentoring for effective participation in organizational decision-making.

Key words: Organisational decision-making, Women participation, Work-organisation, Stereotype, Networking.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers in the areas of natural and social sciences as well as in education have agreed that women now play vital roles in the economic, socio-cultural and political development of Africa in general and Nigeria in particular (Udegbe, 2003; Chovwen ,2004; and Cleas ,1999). Though women's struggle against stereotyping and chauvinism continues, record is replete on the enviable roles they play in the public and the private sectors of Nigeria economy. Even when rated comparatively with the performances of their male counterparts in similar circumstances, women have more often than not, demonstrated more reliable signs of managerial prowess(Eagly and Johnson, 1990).

However, despite the great inroads made so far by women into the labour market and wage employment, little achievements have hitherto being recorded in terms of women getting or rising to management positions in work organizations the world over. Only a few women have been successful in their bid to attain decision-making level of their organizations and establishments. Udegbe and Omare (1994) observed that women experience de-facto vertical and horizontal occupational segregation, unlike their male counterparts. The report of a study on 'women at the top' by Hansard Society Commission (1990) summarized the barriers that hamper women's progress in the organizational hierarchy as well as the strategies adopted by employers to perpetuate it, as mainly discriminatory attitudes of managers and employers based on assumptions. Goldberg (1986) believes that the few women who have attained leadership positions are anomalies to the natural order of things.

For instance, Gerald and Hussar (2002) reported that the National Centre for Education Statistics has it in record that women in America currently occupy more than half the seats in the nation's college classrooms and earn more than half the MBAs, they comprise half the U.S. workforce and their numbers in traditionally male -dominated

environments are steadily growing, yet they continue to be significantly under-represented in the executive ranks of nearly every industry and enterprise in the nation. To support this view, Kirchmeyer (2002) posited that even despite attaining the necessary educational, social and economic heights to bridge identifiable stereotypical gaps between men and women, the fact remains - men still achieve greater extrinsic career success than women. In line with the above, African social scientists like Benneth (2002) Manuh (2002) and Pereira (2002) ascribed patriarchal institutional cultures as one factor adversely affecting upward mobility or career progression of women in employment. Tsikata (2001d) also supported the view that gender disaggregated data and the general failure to incorporate women and gender in development policies might not be unconnected with the reasons for women's slow career progression unto decision-making levels.

However, perception of participation in decision-making is important not simply as an index of actual participation, but also because it may affect morale and career performance. It is at least reasonable to speculate that people who, rightly or wrongly, believe they are left out of decision-making in their organizations may as a result feel anger and resentment or suffer discouragement, with consequent adverse effects on their work performance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his/her country. The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women's social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable governance and sustainable development in all areas of life. The power relations that prevent women from leading fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.

Researchers have therefore attempted to specifically identify such factors as networking and mentoring as having the greatest likelihood of influencing women's participation in organizational decision-making. (Opeke & Ifukoh, 2000; Roose and Lane, 2002; Okurame, 2002; and Maurer, 2002). In spite of the significance attached to these factors however, it has been observed that women in work organizations have not been able to utilize these tools to their advantages. Ragins and Sundstrom(1989) observed that women lack access to informal networks and are excluded from informal relationships with male colleagues. Thus, exclusion of women from male networks denies them access to several ingredients important for career success, such as knowledge, information, resources, support, advice, influence, power, allies, mentors and sponsors-privilege.

Also, Mentoring is increasingly being recognized as a powerful and effective career management tool within organization because it has enormous potential advantages, not only to the organization, but also to the individuals involved. However, experiences such as mentoring critical to success in organization might be restricted for women. While some women do have mentors others have found it difficult finding appropriate ones. Few women at the top may be available as mentors and these few are likely to be in great demand and the greater visibility of women in organizations makes the 'female mentor' and the 'female protégé' relationship easily noticeable.

It is therefore against this background that this study investigated the extent to which Networking and Mentoring could influence women's participation in organizational decision-making in selected work organizations in Nigeria; with a view to determining how best can women make use of the tools to their advantage as well as that of the organizations.

Theoretical framework and literature review

This study was anchored on sex segregation theory which usually occurs in form of statistical discrimination and exclusionary behaviour of employers (Fernandez and Sosa, 2005; Reskin and Mcbrier, 2000). Networking is an indispensable tool for information dissemination, decentralization and mobilization. It also serves as a basic avenue for power redistribution. Networking is a very important communication strategy that takes place between independent individuals and individuals affiliated to diverse formal and informal organization. It can be political, professional, social or personal, but motivated by the basic desire for information, solidarity or a desire to meet other personal, ethical or professional goals. Rosser & Lane (2002) posited that networking can be a mechanism for women across the disciplines to interact with each other, in the study, respondents reported that they felt a lack of peer network to be a barrier. Bagilhole (2002), Winkler, (2000), also observed that women often lack the informal network that lead to collaboration.

The above assertion also find support in the theoretical findings of theorists like Miller and Donald. Miller and Donald (1941) and Bandura (1977) have opined that women may not be advantaged to make use of the tool of network because of the gender behaviour which makes women feel unconcerned and non-challant about vital happenings within their environment, that unless women are woken up from their slumber they behave as though, they are less concerned about certain things even if such things will eventually adversely affect them. More so, in a situation where men, who are supposed to be the reinforcers because of their numerical strength in organizations , may not feel obliged to do so for fear of competition and other functions. However, Bandura, though agreeing with his colleagues on the above position, was blunt in observing that there is an obvious interplay of reinforcement between the person, the environment and the behaviour. That women are one of such

variables wherever they find themselves and so must strive to influence other variables to achieve results.

Likewise, Opeke & Ifukor (2000) also advised that women should not depend on other people to perform their roles for them out of sheer passiveness and non-challant attitude, but rather rise up and get involved in actions that will favour them and move them up to the topmost ladder of their careers, this was based on the observation that women depend on communal access path. Also, theorists like Nussbaum (1999; 2000) warn women not to always hide under the excuses of gender or sex, but rather strive to achieve personal capabilities, skills and functions that will position them on the right path of labour market competition. For example, he advocated good and quality education, determination to perform and succeed as well as good interpersonal relationship as very vital weapons through which women can effectively participate in decision-making of their organizations. Such qualities are what Ronald, Mitchel and Julia (1995) called developmental relationships, which they opined will help women in their quest for the right positions in their organizations.

However, as Fogarty and Dirsmith (2001), Maurer (2002), Hardre, (2003) have observed, organizational structure or culture that excludes, or devalues women can make any qualification effectively redundant and one would expect highly qualified women in every material respect to be disadvantaged accordingly, they then posited a research proposition - that work content and context variables will influence self-efficacy for development and that instructional design must fully address the motivational needs of women. August and Waltman (2004) was however quick to observe the danger inherent in efforts at establishing networking routes for women, without considering the immediate environment that might frustrate their efforts if not carried along. Hence, he posited that a satisfying work

environment (of men and women) must be fostered and maintained in which they are better supported and empowered to 'perform well and prosper'.

Mentoring in business has gained significant popularity in professional practice and attention by academic researchers. Those who study mentor/protégé relationships have concluded that mentors provide psychosocial and instrumental career support for protégés. The results of such findings show, among other things, five distinct outcomes of mentor/protégé relationship i.e. success, awareness, advancement, attitudes and behaviours (Stephen, C. Belts & Louis J. Pepe, 2005). Research indicates that mentors serve two basic types of functions, career and psychosocial (Sosik & Godshalk (2000) Kram (1983). Mentoring relationships usually occur when a senior employee takes a junior employee "under his or her wing" and provides career and psychosocial functions. As observed by (Ragins & Cotton, 1999) the career related functions often help the woman learn the ropes and facilitate the protégés advancement in the organization while the psychosocial functions address the interpersonal aspects and enhance the woman's sense of self-efficacy, competence, professional and personal development.

Sponsors and mentors seem to be important to women's progress and as (Neo's 1988 and Okurame's 2002) findings suggested that though starting cross-gender relationships may be a problem but once it is established, the benefits are immense. The career and psychosocial mentoring functions are important to organizations that are beginning to make important or encourage formal or informal mentoring programs as a method of fostering career development. Bower(2007), Fagen-Eland, Marks & Amendola (1997), Ragins & Cotton(1999) found that the formal and informal mentoring programs utilizing both career and psychological functions may help the entry-level woman to grow, adapt and develop in facilitating life-long learning. As important as mentoring is to the corporate and individual

existence of an organization and the employees, certain hindrances might make the value in-achievable, if not addressed. For instance (Judge et al, 1995; Okurame, 2002; Ragins and Cotton, 1993) observed that women mentors are significantly few, their mentoring behaviour is likely to be a function of their perceived career satisfaction which may be low because of uncomfortable work-place experiences and men mentors' lukewarm attitude to take on women as protégés.

These observations are theoretically consistent with the findings of (Russ-Eft, 2002; Maurer, 2002) who advocated work-place learning and transfer as well as employee learning and development orientation to support the rationale behind the place of mentoring in organizations. The issue of few number of women mentors brought to the fore, the truth in the assertion that tokenism can work against women in their efforts to get to decision-making level of their organizations. This in effect is what theorists in the human capabilities theory and in Nussbaum (1999; 2000; 2001) in particular referred to as 'social injustice' which may be as a result of men trying to perpetuate their kind in the organization or lack of incentive by women as a result of low career satisfaction. He then argued that, for justice to be done and be seen to have been done, gender-based-division of labour must be removed in society.

It has been stressed that women should be exposed to the 'cognitive demands of new technologies' that will make them function efficiently at work (Turraco, 2002) and organizational socialization to understand fully the 'knitty-gritty' of the organizational structure and culture (Fogarty and Dirsmith, 2001). However, there was a dissenting voice from one of the human capabilities' theorists (Grossbard-Shechtman, 2001) who believed that gender-based division of labour is normal, innate and a social necessity, it is consistent

with what he called ‘Biology of destiny’.

Methodology

This study, being a research that does not require manipulation of Independent variables adopted the use of the descriptive survey research design of the ex post facto type. The study’s participants are three hundred and sixty-five (365) purposively selected middle and top management levels female managers from three (3) selected work organizations in Lagos State. The participants were selected using the total enumeration sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was an adopted 5-points Likert type questionnaire. The ‘Organizational Integration and Adaptation Inventory’ adopted from Barbara (2005) has a reliability co-efficient of 0.83 using the test retest method of reliability. The data collected were collated and analyzed using the descriptive statistics of frequency counts and simple percentages and the inferential statistics of ANOVA, Chi-Square and multiple regression.

Chi-square table on networking and women’s participation in organizational decision-making

Questionnaire items	Responses					X ² Crit	X ² Cal	DF	P
	SD	D	U	A	SA				
Q1	83 (22.7%)	116 (31.8%)	15 (4.1%)	101 (27.7%)	50 (13.7%)	43.7	2359.47	76	.000
Q2	18 (4.9%)	56 (15.3%)	21 (5.8%)	188 (51.5%)	82 (22.5%)				
Q3	119 (32.6%)	98 (26.8%)	15 (4.1%)	103 (28.2%)	30 (8.2%)				
Q4	52 (14.2%)	116 (31.8%)	47 (12.9%)	109 (29.9%)	41 (11.2%)				
Q5	10 (2.7%)	56 (15.3%)	28 (7.7%)	189 (51.8%)	82 (22.5%)				
Q6	56 (15.3%)	106 (29.0%)		132 (36.2%)	71 (19.5%)				
Q7	3 (.8%)	3 (.8%)	3 (.8%)	150 (41.1%)	206 (56.4%)				
Q8	7 (1.9%)	8 (2.2%)	3 (.8%)	220 (60.3%)	127 (34.8%)				
Q9	3 (.8%)	11 (3.0%)	13 (3.6%)	215 (58.9%)	123 (33.7%)				
Q10	3 (.8%)	11 (3.0%)	14 (3.8%)	221 (60.5%)	116 (31.8%)				
Q11	15 (4.1%)	17 (4.7%)	21 (5.8%)	227 (62.2%)	85 (23.3%)				
Q12	9 (2.5%)	55 (15.1%)	26 (7.1%)	215 (58.9%)	60 (16.4%)				
Q13	20 (5.5%)	81 (22.2%)	87 (23.8%)	128 (35.1%)	49 (13.4%)				
Q14	20 (5.5%)	50 (13.7%)	77 (21.1%)	168 (46.0%)	50 (13.7%)				
Q15	7 (1.9%)	7 (1.9%)	37 (10.1%)	167 (45.8%)	147 (40.3%)				

The result from the chi-square analysis showed a value of 2359.47; $df = 76$, $p = .000$. It has been revealed that the majority of the women used for this study their organizations believe in the activities of networking and that the studied organizations agreed that networking is an important tool in the area of women's participation in organizational decision-making. This result was in line with the positions of Bagilhole, 2002; Winkler 2000; Rosser & Lane 2002; Opeke and Ifukor, 2000; that networking is an indispensable tool for career women in the areas of information dissemination, mobilization and collaboration useful for women's participation in the decision-making activities of their organizations.

The findings also revealed that work schedules allowed a little time for informal interaction or networking in the studied work organizations. This corroborated the positions of researchers like Bandura 1977; Nussbaum 1999; 2000; Fogarthy and Dirsmith 2001; Ronald, Mitchel and Julia 1995; Maurer 2002; Hadre 2003; that women may be disadvantaged in making use of networking as a result of a situation whereby men attempt to frustrate this, for fear of competition and that it is an obvious fact that organizational structure or culture often deliberately disadvantage women to use networking as a tool to achieve participation in organizational decision-making. It was also revealed that information gets to women often, which means that the fault lies with women, if they lack in networking. This is in line with the position of Opeke and Ifukor, 2000; who advised women to depend less on other people and be alive to their responsibilities as well as the defence of their fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, through study, it has been revealed that it was not the fault of management if women perceive poor networking structure, Ronald, Mitchel and Julia (1995) discovered that women's own developmental relationships, if faulty may hamper their strength in networking. The findings also revealed that without networking, women managers

may find career progression rather difficult, and this is in line with Coe's 1992 position that networking is of such paramount importance that can help women "hit the glass-ceiling" or penetrate the barriers to the top management positions. It was also found that networking is difficult for women because they do not easily build relationships like men. This position relied on the work of Brass (1984) which has found that the interaction patterns of men and women in an organization can have significant effects on perception of influence and actual promotion; as well as Regins and Sunstrom (1989) who opined that women may not be as skilled as men in building networks.

The findings also indicate that circulation of information is made easier and faster through networking which was in line with Rooser & Lane's (2002) work and Winkler's 2000's position that networking is a mechanism for women to interact, collect and share information as well as collaborate among themselves in the organization as well as fellow women in other organizations. The observation that networking also enables easy link among women managers was confirmed. This position was also in line with WINAP 1988's submission that networking has the capacity to support local struggles by linking women with wider issues of regional, national or international organizations and that women can speak with one voice on issues of mutual interests.

In the same vein it has been revealed through literature review that networking provides motivation, specific job related messages and has also been effectively co-ordinated in the selected work organizations used for the study. On a final analysis it has been established through literature and findings that networking is fast challenging the passive and silent nature of women. This again is in line with the position of Opeke and Ifukor, 2000; Akande 1994; Bandura 2001; who, in their different works alluded to the importance of women's improved interaction and the ability to be alive to one's responsibility and the need

to build relationships across the gender through socialization process. In a nutshell, findings have been able to establish the fact that networking is a potent and relevant tool through which women can conveniently achieve participation in organizational decision-making.

Chi-square table on the influence of mentoring in the participation of women in organizational decision-making

Questionnaire Items	Responses					X ² Crit	X ² Cal	DF	P
	SD	D	U	A	SA				
Q1	13 (3.6%)	(%)	12 (12.3%)	212 (58.1%)	128 (35.1%)	43.7	1667.032	88	.000
Q2	11 (3.0%)	4 (1.1%)	22 (6.0%)	239 (65.5%)	86 (24.4%)				
Q3	14 (3.8%)	23 (6.3%)	18 (4.9%)	234 (64.1%)	76 (20.8%)				
Q4	11 (3.0%)	15 (4.1%)	27 (7.4%)	231 (63.3%)	18 (22.2%)				
Q5	21 (5.8%)	11 (3.0%)	34 (9.3%)	228 (62.5%)	71 (19.5%)				
Q6	17 (4.7%)	18 (4.9%)	29 (7.9%)	240 (65.8%)	61 (16.7%)				
Q7	11 (3.0%)	35 (9.6%)	17 (4.7%)	218 (59.7%)	84 (23.0%)				
Q8	7 (1.9%)	23 (6.3%)	14 (3.8%)	237 (64.9%)	84 (23.0%)				
Q9	10 (2.7%)	43 (11.8%)	49 (13.4%)	205 (56.2%)	58 (15.9%)				
Q10	39 (1.7%)	76 (20.8%)	76 (20.8%)	126 (34.5%)	48 (13.2%)				
Q11	36 (9.9%)	104 (28.5%)	72 (19.7%)	115 (31.5%)	38 (10.4%)				
Q12	68 (18.6%)	100 (27.4%)	52 (14.2%)	101 (27.7%)	44 (12.1%)				

The result of the chi-square analysis $\chi^2=1667.03$; $df=88$; $p=.000$, indicated that mentoring is significant in the process of women's participation in organizational decision-making in selected work organizations used for this study. For instance, findings have shown that mentoring is a sustained relationship between a younger, less experienced individual and an older, more experienced individual. This fact corroborated the position of Okurame (2002); Chovwen, C.O (2004); and Stephen C. Betts & Louis J. Pepe (2005). They also agreed that mentors usually provide support, visibility, resources and direction for proteges just like findings in this work have clearly revealed judging from the number of respondents who agreed in line with the position i.e. 88 out of 102. The fact that mentors serve two basic functions i.e. career and psychosocial as well as the fact that mentors enhance the possibility of career advancement have been established through findings thereby corroborating the positions of Chovwen, 2004; Ragins & Cotton 1999; Bower 2007; Aremu A. & Adeyoju,C.2003 . Findings have also held that mentoring affect the degree of job related stress as well as enhance the proteges' self-image. These findings are in consonance with the positions of Okurame, D.E. (2006a); (2006b); (2007); and Adeyemo 2006; when they variously posited that psychosocial factors such as mentioned can predict career commitment and also that mentoring can actually enhance protégé's self image as well as reduce job variously posited that psychosocial factors such as mentioned can predict career related stress.

Furthermore, findings have shown that both formal and informal mentoring are necessary for women's development and organizational productivity while it has also been established that women learn appropriate organizational behaviour through mentoring and that such mentoring is better arranged across gender,(Okurame, 2007) as women mentors are still few. These findings safety rely on the position of Chovwen (2004); Okurame (2006b) and also consistent with the theoretical findings of Russ-Eft, 2002; and Maurer 2002. As

revealed through findings, mentoring activity is highly effective in the work organizations studied and women in some cases are allowed to choose their own mentors even though managements may assign mentors in other cases. However, the issue of management assigning mentors is thinly supported as the number of respondents who disagreed i.e. 100 was so close to the number of respondents who agreed, i.e. 101. This findings can infer that the two styles of mentoring are available in the studied organizations and that there appears to be no hard and fast rule in terms of whether proteges independently choose mentors or they are assigned official mentors, that it is present at all is important and consistent with the findings of Torraco 2002; Olomitutu, 1999; who differently posited that women should be exposed to the cognitive demands of new technologies, and the point that career commitment is a function of job satisfaction which according to researchers, can be effectively brought about by mentoring.

The findings have further revealed that mentoring is capable of giving awareness to women about their prospective tasks and areas of responsibility, they are made to identify available options and goals. These findings were strongly supported by Torraco, 2002; Forgarthy and Dirsmith, 2001; who posited that mentoring will make women function efficiently at work, to understand the 'knitty-gritty' of the organizational culture. However, the clause that mentioned identifying available options and goals was in consonance with the positions of Gross-bard-Shechtman 2001; who believed that gender-based division of labour is normal, innate and a social necessity he called 'Biology of destiny' submitting that women are responsible for choices they make. This is instructive in that women are expected to weigh carefully the benefits accruing to them in a mentoring activity and make the right choices out of the available options, also Umoinyang, I.E., Nsemu A.D., Ntukidem E.P; Obi F.B., Joshua M.T. (2004) talked about choices indirectly when they posited that one's personality traits can predict workers' professional efficiency. The findings were able to

establish that women, without mentoring, are susceptible to non-participation in decision-making and also that mentoring is capable of enhancing personal influences like networking, guidance, interests and self-actualisation of women and that the absence of mentoring can lead to women developing low self-esteem. These findings corroborated the position of Adebayo,1999; on the need for self-esteem, internal control etc. of women, so essential that such variables can make or mar their chances in career satisfaction. By and large, findings were able to validly concretize the position that mentoring is a tool through which women's participation in organizational decision-making can be achieved, while ability to make the right occupational choices in line with personality traits will enhance the gain that mentoring can offer for career women's advancement.

Conclusion

Judging from the above verification and findings on the influence of networking and mentoring on women's participation in organizational decision-making, it has been clearly established that factors that can make or mar the chances of using these tools include favourable organizational culture, good mentor-protégé relationship, eradication of stereotypical activities, positive attitude to work by women managers, increased zeal for gathering useful information, enablement for more women to get to the top management for easy mentoring of younger women. To adopt the highlighted key issues will enhance women's chances of upward organizational movement as well increased organizational productivity.

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