

CAREER ADVANCEMENT AMONG WORKERS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT *Recent studies have argued that workers no longer enjoy upward mobility in their careers due to a number of challenges. However, little is understood regarding some of the factors responsible for this development. This study examined career advancement among workers in private and public organisations in southwest Nigeria. A total of ninety-six questionnaires were distributed among the same number of respondents at selected public and private organisations in Ado Ekiti. The study also used in-depth interviews to elicit qualitative information from a total of twelve adult male and female respondents. Results indicate that respondents feel they have not enjoyed the desired career advancement at their workplaces.*

KEYWORDS: *Career, Promotion, Workplace, Organisation, Gender, Occupational mobility*

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The importance of career development cannot be understated; most workers at most organisations desire to be upwardly mobile in their chosen professions. While it may appear that the benefits of such mobility are only enjoyed by workers, studies have shown that the government, individuals and employees all have a stake and thus all benefit when these three areas function together effectively (Foster – Purvis 2011). For organisations, the career advancement of workers is one viable method for attracting and retaining the best employees; the success of

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workers due to career advancement is equally the success of the organisations. Aside from this, promotion gives employees a clear sense of direction and purpose, as well as ensures that the necessary skills are imparted to workers. Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton, and Swart (2003) observed that supporting career advancement is one of the key practices for encouraging organisational accomplishment. For individuals, careers have a “subjective component: the sense that people make of their own career, their personal histories, and the skills, attitudes and beliefs that they have acquired” (Arthur 1994). Apart from providing social and psychological satisfaction, career development involves a learning process: within any given organisation, advancement and learning are indivisibly linked (Schein 1978; Hall 1976). By implication, when opportunities for career advancement are lacking, all the above benefits are diminished or completely absent, and discouragement may set in for workers; this in itself becomes a problem for organisations because it threatens productivity, and in the long run constitutes a serious challenge to policy makers.

One of the challenges that has bedevilled workplaces in recent times is the lack of desired career advancement (Foster – Purvis 2011). Workers may put in years of training, hard work, and commitment to an organisation, without commensurate upward career mobility. For instance, studies argue that when employees are laid off at minimal notice, those fortunate enough not to be sent packing do not enjoy any form of career progression (Foster – Purvis 2011). While there is a dearth of data that explains the advancement of workers along their career paths, the little that is available suggests that demotion rather than promotion is the experience of many workers. The findings of a study conducted by Dickens (2000) revealed that low-income employees are more likely to retrogress than progress in terms of career and income (Dickens 2000). The implication is that, as the income gap continues to increase, income mobility decreases (Dickens 2000; Stewart – Swaffield 1999). A number of factors have been employed to explain this phenomenon. Brüderl and his colleagues (1991) and Spilerman and Peterson (1998) attribute the career retrogression to organizational structures and personnel rules at workplaces, which in most instances are not negotiable. Brüderl et al. (1991) further cited a number of factors inhibiting promotion to include personal characteristics and gender. For instance, it is claimed that women are marginalised when it comes to promotion within the work environment. Factors ranging from chauvinism and sexual harassment (Zippel 2000); structuring the workplace in favour of men (Dickens, 2000); culture (Hartman 1979; Bryd-Blake 2004); and the glass-ceiling effect (Savage 2002) – among others – have been said to hinder women from climbing the career ladder. This indicates that a number of factors influence the career im/mobility of workers within a given organisation.

While abundant research efforts have been designed to explore the dynamics of occupational mobility within developed economies, relatively little is known about career development within the work place in developing economies. As a matter of fact, Kellard and Mitchel (2006) argue that information about progression within the workplace is entirely lacking. The presently described explorative study was designed to aid understanding of how workers perceive their career advancement within work places. For this purpose, a comparative study of opinions from within private and public organisations was conducted. Attention was paid to the fact that focussing on entry-level employment and labour market conditions (and so on) may not provide a clear understanding of the dynamics of career mobility within the workplace; a public-private investigation of how women fare was thus considered to be critical (Reinhart – Rogoff 2008; Verick 2009; Cahuc – Carcillo 2011; Bell – Blanchflower 2011; Schroeder et al. 2008). Aside from this, a number of phenomenon are identifiable in developing economies in the twenty-first century such as economic challenges, growth, and the uptake of information technology, along with less of a sense of commitment on the part of employers to their employees (and vice versa), increasing pressure on the work place (Tsui et al. 1997). Some studies have connected economic challenges with declining career mobility (Büttner et al. 2010; Barone et al. 2011). A ‘survival of the fittest’ approach appears to be gradually becoming the norm, and in the words of Valcour and Tolbert (2003), investigation of the career paths of the genders demands careful exploration. The authors of the present study therefore set themselves the task of investigating how workers perceive career advancement within the work environment. The research questions for the study are the following:

Research Questions

1. What are the perceived patterns of career advancement in selected organisations?
2. What are the determinants (as perceived by the respondents) of career advancement, and does disparity exist in the process, and, if so, what is (are) the cause(s)?
3. What are the perceptions of selected respondents about occupational mobility in selected organisations?
4. Do respondents perceive any hindrances to career advancement in the selected organisations?

Based on the research questions, the following study objectives were defined:

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study was to examine the perceptions of workers about career advancement in selected public and private organisations in southwest Nigeria. Within the selected organisations the specific objectives were to:

1. Understand the perceptions of respondents about career advancement.
1. Examine the trends of career advancement for male and female respondents.
1. Explore the factors that enhance advancement.
1. Assess the perceived constraints to advancement.

BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the years, the belief has largely been that individuals within the workplace undergo unhindered career progression; that workers never change jobs, and that promotion, good pay and job satisfaction dominate almost all career paths (Valcour – Tolbert 2003). These kinds of beliefs are gradually declining in the modern era as evidence suggests that employment insecurity, a decline in organisational tenure, and difficulty in climbing the ladder of career development are gradually becoming common. Further, employers are no longer committed to employees, and the loyalty of employees is equally declining (Tsui et al. 1997). What is also interesting is that the gender composition of the work environment has changed considerably, such that there has been an increase in the number of women in the work force (Blau et al. 2002). These issues have together placed considerable pressure on organisations, meaning that they are no longer able to give their best to their workers.

The above situation supports the need for better understanding the factors that determine mobility within workplace, and the dimensions and impact of gender within the work environment as well. In explaining what a career connotes, Arthur, Hall and Lawrence (1989) and Blair-Loy (1999) refer to it as an arrangement of a person's work history and practices. To understand these past references and experiences, one of the factors that should be taken into consideration is how individuals move along the mobility ladder (up or down) within and across organisations (Valcour – Tolbert 2003). Schroeder et al. (2008) argued that while it is important to make such distinctions regarding career mobility, it is equally important to investigate whether groups or individuals are disadvantaged in the process of mobility, and whether the prospects are there for certain types of respondents in terms of making available to them the experiences and expertise that foster mobility (Schroeder et al. 2008).

It is clear from the foregoing material that more empirical evidence about how workers move along the career ladder is needed; especially in developing countries with hitherto insufficient data for explaining these dynamics. This study intends to fill this gap by adding to the existing body of knowledge about how social and cultural factors within and outside the work environment influence the career paths of workers in both private and public establishments in Nigeria.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The study was conducted in Ado Ekiti, in southwestern Nigeria. Being a relatively new state, quite a number of corporate bodies from within and outside the country have found their way to the state capital. The focus of the study was to increase understanding of the perceptions of workers about career advancement within public and private organizations, and it was easy to systematically select such organizations within the city for research. Two types of organizations were purposively selected for this study: public services owned by the state, and banking institutions owned by private individuals and bodies. The reason for selecting these two types was the fact that they have well-structured administrative systems, and they offer relatively high average salaries compared to other organizations within the state, meaning that employees desire to work at these institutions. From the two types of organizations, individuals were selected from one ministry (department) and two banks. Due to its large size of the ministry, a simple random procedure was adopted to select 43 respondents, while all the respondents in the professional and administrative cadres in the private establishments were selected for interviewing, totaling 53 respondents. A total of 96 respondents were thus included in this study. For the qualitative data, the study used in-depth interviews to elicit information from a total of 12 adult males and females within work settings (six males and six females). Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS software. Frequency distribution tables were plotted to analyze all the issues. Several variables were also cross-tabulated to understand the relationships between them. The hypotheses formulated for the study were also tested using chi square statistical methods. As regards the in-depth interviews (IDI), these were analyzed individually and quotes are included verbatim, where necessary, to support findings from quantitative data.

Table 1: Gender, Age and Marital Status in selected Public and Private Organisations (Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)

	ORGANISATIONS				Frequency	%
	Public		Private			
Gender	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Male	28	65.1	27	50.9	55	57.3
female	15	34.1	26	49.9	41	42.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Age	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
21-25	7	16.3	8	15.1	15	15.6
26-30	4	9.3	35	66.0	39	40.6
31-35	8	18.6	8	15.1	16	16.7
36-40	5	11.6	2	3.8	7	7.3
41-45	9	20.9			9	9.4
46-50	4	9.3			4	4.2
51 +	6	14.0			6	6.3
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Marital Status	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Single	12	27.9	38	71.7	50	52.1
Married	30	69.8	15	28.3	46	46.9
Separated	1	2.3				1.0
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Educational Qualification	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Diploma	13	30.2	16	30.2	29	30.2
HND	5	11.6	11	20.8	16	16.7
B.Sc.	14	32.6	19	35.8	33	34.4
M.Sc.	6	14.0	1	1.9	7	7.3
B.Sc.+ Other Certificates	3	7.0	5	9.4	8	8.3
Others	2	4.6	1	1.9	3	3.1
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

The table above presents socio-economic and demographic characteristics about the respondents. As regards the gender composition of the study, a total of 41 females and 55 males participated in the study (42.7 percent and 57.3 percent, respectively). From the public organisation, 28 males (65.1 percent) and 15 females (34.1 percent) were represented in the study, while 27 males (50.9 percent) and 26 females (49.9 percent) participated in the study from private organisations. During the sampling procedure it was observed that there were more males workers in the public organisations than the private

ones. IDI clarified that the services of women were more needed in the banking sector (private) than those of their male counterparts. However, no explanation could be given for the male-female population ratio within the public sector. Findings about age showed that the majority of the respondents could be classified into the 21-45 age cohort for the public service, and 26-30 for the private (66.0 percent of the total). However, no respondents of age 41 or above were found in the banking profession. Findings from IDI revealed that the work force is usually concentrated within those age brackets because working in the banking profession is demanding. As regards marital status, 69.8 percent and 28.3 percent of the samples from the public and private organisations were married, respectively, while 27.9 percent and 71.7 percent (respectively) were single.

Findings about educational qualifications should not be thought unusual considering the strong educational pursuits of Nigerians at all levels, while Ekiti, the study area, is also noted for its strong drive to promote education. Within the city of Ado Ekiti alone, there are over four tertiary institutions, with another two tertiary institutions within the towns adjoining the city. This, of course, may make it easy for interested workers to acquire further education qualifications. Further, a number of institutions in the country also run distance-learning courses which may make it easier to attain higher-level educational qualifications.

The table above illustrates the percentage distribution of respondents according to their perceptions about the promotional exercise and procedures for employees in selected public and private organizations in Ado Ekiti. Respondents that joined their workplaces before 1990 in both public and private accounted for 9.3 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively; those that joined between 1991 and 2000 9.3 percent and 1.9 percent in both public and private organizations; those that joined public and private establishments between 2001 and 2010 in constituted 20.9 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively, while those that joined from year 2010 until the survey date in both public and private establishments constituted 60.5 percent and 86.8 percent (resp.). The majority of the labour force within both organisations joined their place of employment at some point after 2001. Respondents were asked whether promotion was a regular phenomenon at their work place; a majority of respondents of public organizations affirmed this, as did 42.7 percent of respondents from private establishments. The remaining respondents (32.6 percent and 57.3 percent) in both public and private organizations (respectively) were asked to state why this was not so. In response, 85.7 (85.5) percent from public and private establishments (resp.) responded that it depends on the positions available within their units.

Table 2: Perceptions about Procedures and Exercises for the Promotion of Employees in selected Public and Private Organisations (Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)

Year of Employment	ORGANISATIONS				Frequency	%
	Public		Private			
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Before 1990	4	9.3	3	5.7	7	7.3
1991-2000	4	9.3	1	1.9	5	5.2
2001-2010	4	20.9	3	5.7	12	12.5
2010 until date of survey	26	60.5	46	86.8	72	75.0
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Is promotion a regular practice?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	29	67.4	12	22.6	41	42.7
No	14	32.6	41	77.4	55	57.3
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
If not, why?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Depends on available positions	12	85.7	33	80.5	47	85.5
Depends on the need for it	2	14.3	8	19.5	8	14.5
Total	14	100.0	41	100.0	55	100.0
How do employees get promoted?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
When management feels like it	1	2.3	17	32.1	18	18.8
After a stipulated period	28	65.1	33	62.3	61	63.5
Others	14	32.6	3	5.7	17	17.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

Respondents were further requested to explain the procedures for promotion within their work places. Employees of both public and private organizations (65.1 percent and 62.3 percent) claimed that promotion takes place after a stipulated period. However, 2.3 (32.1) percent of employees in public/private organizations claimed that promotion only takes place when the management feels like it. It appears that private organizations mainly follow this practice; IDI shed further light on this:

Promotion is a function of so many factors; you may have spent the statutory years, and the management may decide that you are not going to be promoted even when you have not committed any offence. I have a friend who has been at a particular

grade for five years without being promoted. The reason the management gave was that the organization simply didn't have the financial capacity to do that [make a promotion] (Female, IDI, Private establishment, Ado Ekiti).

These findings are not unusual: studies have confirmed that career advancement is a product of many factors which can be subsumed under the categories 'objective' and 'subjective'; objective factors include those factors that can be categorised as human-capital related (experience, education, continuous work history, and tenure), demographic (gender and marital status), interpersonal processes and organisational (mentoring) (Whitely et al. 1991; Whitely – Coetsier 1993). Subjective factors may not be directly observable, yet they are correlated to perceptions about the above issues and how they relate to career satisfaction and job satisfaction. In most instances, these are the issues generally considered by management when deciding on promotions. Workers equally have their own perceptions about what deserves or determines promotion, and in most instances such perceptions dominate those of the organisations, especially when the former are unable to meet the requirements of the organisation for career advancement.

Table 4: Number of times respondents have been promoted, and whether procedures for promotion are specified in selected Public and Private Organisations (Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)

	ORGANISATIONS					
	Public		Private			
Do well-defined criteria for promotion exist?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	42	97.7	38	71.7	80	83.3
No	1	23.0	15	29.3	16	16.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
No of times promoted	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	6	14.0			19	19.8
2	21	48.8	13	24.5	59	61.5
3	3	7.0	38	71.7	4	4.2
4	4	9.3	1	1.9	4	4.2
5	4	9.3			4	4.2
6	3	7.0			3	3.1
7	1	2.3			1	2.1
8	1	2.3	1	1.9	1	1.0
9	1	2.3			1	1.0
Total	43	100	53	100.0	96	100.0

Table 4 illustrates the existence of criteria for promotion for respondents within their work places. A majority (97.7 percent public, and 71.7 percent private establishment) of respondents confirm the existence of defined processes. IDI further support this:

For you to be promoted at the workplace, you must have spent a minimum of three years at that level, and must have been assessed by your immediate boss to behave well and be fit for promotion. Once this is done, there is usually a management meeting where a decision is made regarding whether you are qualified for promotion (Male, IDI, Public establishment, Ado Ekiti).

Table 5: Does gender have anything to do with promotion in selected Public and Private Organisations?

(Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)

	ORGANISATIONS				Frequency	%
	Public		Private			
Do you think your gender affects your promotion	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	4	9.3	33	62.3	37.59	38.5
No	39	90.7	20	37.7		61.5
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Which of the genders has better experience with promotion?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Male	7	17.0	15	26.3	22	23.0
Female	6	14.0	9	17.0	15	15.8
Not sure	30	69.0	29	54.7	59	61.5
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Do you think there is equality in promotion between genders?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	18	41.9	28	52.8	46	47.9
No	25	58.1	25	47.2	50	52.1
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

Respondents were asked to list the number of times they had been promoted within their work places. The majority of respondents in public organisations (48.8 percent) claimed they had been promoted two (2) times. A majority of respondents in private organisations (71.7 percent) also claimed that they had been promoted two times since they had joined their organisation. From the table above it can be seen that respondents enjoyed promotion commensurate with the number of years they had put into their jobs. Interestingly, respondents are well

aware of the rules that determine promotion within their workplaces. This may of course be responsible for the advancement they have enjoyed in their careers. However, respondents from private establishments seem not to have enjoyed the kind of promotion enjoyed by their colleagues in public establishments. According to Spilerman and Peterson (1999), the focus of related research over the years has been the nature of the barriers to movement; i.e. on earning income, rather than on what really constitutes career advancement within the organisation. Investigation of the internal structural arrangements of a firm, with its attendant implications for individual career advancement, is a difficult and emerging topic of research. Moreover, obtaining the necessary information regarding organisational structure and the work history of employees can be difficult, posing further challenges to researchers (Spilerman – Peterson 1999).

Table 5 presents responses to the question whether gender has any relationship with promotion. Findings suggest that there is no relationship between gender and workplace promotion in public organisations (90.7 percent of all respondents said that gender does not affect promotion). However, the situation is different in private establishments, where 62.3 percent of respondents claimed that gender does affect promotion within their workplace. Respondents were further asked to describe which of the genders has better prospects of promotion. 17.0 (26.3) percent claimed that males are more likely to be suitably promoted than females, while 14.0 (17.0) percent opined that females are more often promoted than males in public and private organisations (resp.). However, 69.0 (54.7) percent of respondents from public and private organisations (resp.) claimed they were not sure which of the genders had better experiences with promotion. This finding contradicts what was initially claimed by respondents regarding whether gender disparity exists regarding promotion. It appears that the majority of respondents were not willing to provide a categorical response to the question which of the genders gets promoted more, and the number of ‘not sure’ responses given by respondents clearly attests to this fact. The IDI session, however, throws some light on the perceptions of respondents regarding the trend of career advancement of respondents in relation to gender:

Of course, we all know that when it comes to men and women accessing opportunities, women always have a better chance than men, and the same scenario may be applicable to the work situation but that doesn't mean that women are not hardworking or that they cut corners to get promoted within the work environment (Female, IDI, Public establishment, Ado Ekiti).

Respondents were asked whether they think gender equality exists regarding promotion within their work setting. Responses revealed that 41.9 (52.8) percent

in public and private organisations were of the opinion that it does exist. However, 58.1 (47.2) percent of respondents in public and private establishments (resp.) submitted that it does not exist. From the table it can be seen that a little more than half of all respondents felt that there was gender disparity in promotion. The IDI session helped clarify the situation:

There is disparity in promotion between males and females in any organisation. Women always know how to corner men, they always get what they want at any time; they always know someone that knows the people who decide about promotions (Male, IDI, Public establishment, Ado Ekiti).

Respondents believed that gender affects career advancement. Some studies have confirmed this position, arguing that career advancement differs according to gender status (Bateson 1990; Gallos 1989), although others have argued that gender and career progress are not correlated (O'Neil et al. 2008). There has evidently been a lot of improvement regarding gender differences and career advancement. Studies show that gender may not be an impediment to career advancement, a more significant effect being played by other factors such as education (Peter – Horn 2005). However, considering the present study, while the statistical evidence may not support the presence of a link between gender and career advancement, interview reports clearly suggest otherwise. The perception of respondents is that the issue of gender affects career advancement at certain times. Quite a number of respondents were still of the opinion that gender differences still determine career advancement.

This section examines the factors that enhance occupational mobility and how it affects respondents at the workplace. To start with, respondents were asked whether there are factors that enhance mobility in productivity at their work place; in their responses, 86.0 (81.1) percent of respondents in public and private establishments affirmed this, while 14.0 (18.9) percent of respondents (public and private establishments, resp.) disagreed. Following up on this question, respondents were also requested to identify the factors that they felt enhanced productivity at their work place; 9.3 (52.8) percent of respondents in public and private organisations attributed this to training, while 90.7 (47.2) percent in public and private organisations (resp.) ascribed this to leave and holidays. Respondents were further asked whether these factors were consistent within their work places. A majority of respondents (86.7/ 73.6 percent) in public and private organisations responded positively. Respondents were further asked whether these factors were binding for both males and females. Their responses were affirmative, as 90.7 (92.5) percent of

respondents in public and private establishments (resp.) agreed. Some of the responses obtained from the IDI session are that represent the arguments of the respondents included below:

We go on our annual leave when this is due...both males and females have access to this at any time they like, but it's not everybody that has the opportunity to go for training (IDI, Male, Public Organisation).

Table 6: Factors enhancing career mobility in selected Public and Private Organisations (Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)

	ORGANISATIONS					
	Public		Private			
Are there factors that enhance productivity at your workplace?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	27	86.0	43	81.1	80	83.3
No	6	14.0	10	18.9	16	16.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
What are they?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Training	4	9.3	28	52.8	32	33.3
Leave/holiday	39	90.7	25	47.2	64	66.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Are these factors consistent?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	36	83.7	39	73.6	75	78.1
No	7	16.3	14	26.4	21	21.9
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Are these factors binding for both genders?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	39	90.7	49	92.5	88	91.7
No	4	9.3	4	7.5	8	8.3
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
What are the criteria for promotion?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
-Educational qualifications	7	16.3	4	7.5	11	11.5
-Years of experience	25	58.1	26	49.1	51	53.1
-Connections	2	4.6	15	28.5	17	17.7
-Availability of position	9	20.9	8	15.1	17	17.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

Further, respondents were asked to describe the criteria for promotion at their workplaces; 16.3 (7.5) percent attributed it to educational qualifications/ attainment; 58.1 (19.1) percent to years of experience; 4.6 (28.5) percent to connections (i.e. who you know at management level to fast track your promotion) while the rest (20.9/15.1 percent) attributed it to the availability of positions within the work settings (all findings correspond to public/private establishments, respectively). IDI, however, identified some contrasting comments, some of which follow:

Promotion is a function of management interest. If you are not giving them what they want in terms of productivity, certificates, years of experience and all the formal issues may not count (IDI, Male, Private Organisation).

Another respondent:

Experience and hard work matters when it comes to promotion, but you need to know people where it matters that can assist you ... (IDI, Male, Public Organisation).

To explain the determinants of career advancement within the workplace, each organisation usually defines patterns or requirements for promoting its staff and for achieving its aims. These are typically understood and in line with employees' goals. Studies emphasise the importance of creating synergy between employees' personal goals and organisational ones (Sturges et al. 2001). However, from the study it appears this may not occur in reality: respondents clearly have their own goals and perceptions which, in the long run, enable them to form opinions about what constitute criteria for promotion at their workplace.

Table 7: *Hindrances to career advancement in selected Public and Private Organisations (Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)*

Barriers to staff promotion	ORGANISATIONS					
	Public		Private			
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Transfers	36	83.7	46	86.8	82	85.4
Laziness	1	2.3	1	2.3	2	2.1
Incompetence	1	2.3	3	5.6	4	4.2
Appraisals	2	4.7	1	2.3	3	3.1
Productivity Issues	1	2.3	1	2.3	2	2.1
Absenteeism	2	4.7	1	2.3	3	3.1
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

Are there other considerations for promotion, apart from the established benchmarks?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	35	81.4	28	52.8	63	65.6
No	8	18.6	25	47.2	33	34.4
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
What are they?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Economic situation	25	58.1	17	32.1	42	43.8
Management interest	18	41.9	36	67.9	54	56.2
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
Who often benefits from these other considerations?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Male	23	53.5	25	47.2	48	50.0
Female	20	46.5	28	52.8	48	50.0
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

The table above examines the hindrances to career advancement as perceived by respondents. Respondents were asked to highlight the barriers to staff promotion. A majority of respondents (83.7/86.8 percent) in public and private establishments (resp.) specified transfers. This may be considered unusual as transfers may not have much to do with promotion. However, during the in-depth interviews, respondents shed light on this idea by arguing that, in most cases, promotions are often accompanied by transfers, and employees are not willing to move, then there is no promotion. Further, respondents were asked to explain whether there are other considerations that their organisation takes into account in making promotions, apart from those documented, or those used as benchmarks. 81.4 (52.8) percent of respondents in public and private establishments claimed that such criteria exist. Following this, respondents were asked to describe such criteria. 58.1 (32.1) percent of public and private establishment respondents (resp.) attributed it to the prevailing economic situation, while 41.9 (67.9) percent attributed it to management interests. IDI shed more light on some of these responses:

Management often acts in a way that is not black and white regarding promotion – if they claim they don’t have enough funds to handle promotion there is nothing anyone can do; one would rather be careful so that one is not laid off: half a loaf of bread, as they say, is better than none (IDI, Male Public Organisation, Ado Ekiti).

Further, respondents were also asked about which gender benefits more from other criteria that are not documented; 53.5 (47.2) percent of respondents in public and private establishments claimed that males benefit more, while 46.5

(52.8) percent of respondents in public and private organisations (resp.) argue that females tend to benefit more.

Newman (1993) submits that, within organisations, career advancement may be limited by the following factors; human capital (deficient education, domestic restrictions, inadequate financial resources and deficient experience), socio-psychological (social psychological obstacles including sex-role labels/role prejudice, undesirable perceptions about women's capability for managing, doubtful motivation, and limiting self-concepts) and systemic barriers (isolation of sexes in the labour force, discrepancy in career ladder opportunities, sex-based segregation of domestic labour, limited access to professional training, restricted access to informal networks, lack of advisors, lack of power, sexual harassment, perceived lack of compatibility, and a lack of female role models). The beliefs and attitudes of members of the workplace have always been considered to have the greatest impact (Cooper Jackson 2001). Workers form views and perceptions about the workplace and are of the opinion that organisations operate using procedures for making promotions which are not clear to them, coupled with a perception that the opposite sex is a hindrance in this regard. Interestingly, most studies have tended to emphasise male-female differences (particularly the claim that females are short-changed by males) as the major hindrance to career advancement, with less emphasis on the beliefs and values held by members of the organisation. Our research suggests that males also believe that women hinder them from advancing in their careers.

Table 8: Gender and career advancement in selected Public and Private Organisations (Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)

	ORGANISATIONS					
	Public		Private			
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Do women experience challenges with promotion?						
Yes	13	30.3	26	49.1	39	
No	9	20.9	18	34.0	27	
Sometimes	21	48.8	9	16.9	30	
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	
Are there issues that hinder women from being promoted?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Unwillingness to be transferred	5	11.6	19	35.8	24	25.0
Motherhood and childbearing	6	14.0	4	7.5	10	10.4
Education	25	58.1	22	41.5	47	49.0
Unforeseen family problems	7	16.3	8	15.1	15	15.6
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

The table above illustrates how gender differences constrain the career advancement of respondents. Respondents were asked whether women generally experience any form of challenges when it comes to the issue of promotion; 30.3 (49.1) percent of respondents in public and private establishments (resp.) said 'yes', while 20.9 (34.0) percent of employees of public and private establishments said 'no'. However, 48.8 (16.9) percent of respondents from public and private organisations claimed that women sometimes experience some challenges with promotion. IDI responses from two respondents are summarised below:

Promotions have nothing to do with gender. The reason is that there are benchmarks that are measurable and must be achieved before promotion can take place, so it is not an issue of an individual being male or female (IDI, Male, Public Organisation).

Another respondent:

I agree that women may be at a disadvantage when it comes to promotion, and this is because of factors such as family, motherhood, and children, but I believe it is up to the woman to organise herself (IDI, female, Private Organisation).

As a follow up to the questions above, respondents were asked to describe activities that they think could hinder the promotion of women within the workplace. From the table above it can be seen that 11.6 (35.6) percent of respondents within the public and private establishments attributed this situation to the unwillingness of women to be transferred when asked to; 14.0 (7.5) percent in public and private establishments attributed it to motherhood and childbearing; 58.1 (41.5) percent attributed it to education and training issues, while the rest (16.3/15.1 percent, resp.) attribute it to unforeseen family issues. The IDI session further corroborated this data. Some of the respondents' responses are summarised below:

Even after marriage, it is still easier for a man to afford to further his education. By implication, a man will have time to obtain a professional certificate or such a thing at any age, but it may not be entirely possible for a woman to do this. This may be because of pregnancy, or childbirth, or the demands of the workplace; these phenomena increase her responsibilities greatly; that is, she is more likely to be burdened with family matters than a man (IDI, female, Private Organisation).

As discussed earlier, workers within every organisation are guided by their perceptions and beliefs. According to the above findings, women still believe that they are short-changed in terms of their access to benefits within the workplace based on the roles associated with their gender.

Table 9: *How to improve the career advancement of employees in selected Public and Private Organisations*

(Frequency of Responses of Respondents) (%)	Organisations				Frequency	%
	Public		Private			
How can employees' career prospects be enhanced?	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Prompt payment of salaries and benefits	16	37.2	17	32.1	33	34.4
Regular training	7	16.3	6	11.3	13	13.5
Regular promotions	20	46.5	30	56.6	50	52.1
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0
How can gender disparity in workplace promotions be reduced	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
-Increase education for women	10	23.2	10	18.9	20	20.8
-Increase equal opportunities at workplace	20	46.5	26	49.1	46	48.0
-More dedication to women in government policies	2	4.7	3	5.7	5	5.2
-Management policies	7	16.3	1	1.9	8	8.3
	4	9.3	3	24.5	17	17.7
Total	43	100.0	53	100.0	96	100.0

Respondents were asked to explain how employees' careers can be further enhanced within the workplace. In response, 37.2 (32.2) percent of respondents within the public and private organisations (resp.) submitted that there should be prompt payment of their salaries and benefits. Further, 16.3 (11.3) percent of respondents from public and private establishments believed that their careers could be further enhanced through regular training and workshops, while 46.5 (56.6) percent believed that their careers could advance through being promoted when this is due at the workplace. Some of the responses given by respondents during the IDI session are included below to corroborate these submissions.

I think that management should endeavour to promote when it is due; the result would be more money and prestige, and one would be able to fulfil one's career dreams before retirement (IDI, Male, Private establishment, Ado Ekiti)

Further, respondents were requested to suggest ways in which disparity in gender promotion could be addressed. 23.2 (18.9) percent (public/private, resp.) emphasized the need to increase education for women; 46.5 (49.1) percent stated a preference for increasing equal opportunities for all in the workplace; 4.7 (5.7) percent specified more dedication by women; 16.3 (1.9) percent emphasised the importance of government policies, while 9.3 (24.5) percent argued that management policies must be better targeted. IDI sessions corroborated these findings; some responses are detailed below:

A big change would occur if men within the management circle changed the way they saw women in general; they need to see them as equals and not as subordinates, and of course judge individuals by what they can do, not by what they feel or think (IDI, female, private establishment, Ado Ekiti).

This statement is of course the expression of the values and beliefs of an employee and, as earlier argued, organisational goals should always support individual needs in the organisation, for it is in such cases that both parties can achieve their goals and objectives.

TESTING OF HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses formulated for this study are stated and discussed below in alternative forms.

Chi-square Test of Association

The first hypothesis claims that *a significant relationship exists between gender and career advancement*. With a Chi-square of 3.841, it appears that a significant relationship between the variables does not exist. What this finding suggests is that the gender of respondents may not have much to do with career advancement, as respondents claim. This finding contrasts with the IDI reports,

as respondents were of the opinion that women stand to benefit more at the workplace than men when it comes to career advancement. This finding is further correlated with the earlier arguments. There are different perspectives regarding gender differences and career advancement. What becomes clear is that individuals within the workplace hold different values and opinions which shape their attitudes towards goal achievement (e.g. career advancement).

Factors responsible for promotion in the workplace	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Educational qualifications	4	7	11
Years of experience	5	12	17
Qualification plus level of experience	19	32	51
Influence/connections	12	0	12
Dedication to work	2	3	5
Total	42	54	96
Chi-square=3.841, df=4, p=.000			
Educational Qualifications	Do promotions regularly happen at your workplace?		Total
	Yes	No	
Diploma	3	7	10
HND	3	7	10
B.Sc.	20	26	46
M.Sc.	5	3	8
Dedication	9	8	17
Other Certificates	2	3	5
Total	42	54	96
Chi-square=11.070, df=5, p=.000			

The second hypothesis posits that *a statistical significant relationship exists between educational qualifications and the career advancement of workers*. However, findings (11.070) show that there may not be a significant relationship between the variables. In other words, education alone may not be a strong determinant of career advancement. This finding, however, does not agree with the conclusions of earlier studies that claim that education has a considerable effect on career advancement. A number of factors can bring about career advancement, including organisational goals that extend beyond education.

CONCLUSION

Career advancement in the selected public and private organisations may not measure up to the expectations of respondents. This is frustrating; the respondents were of the opinion that management devises procedures for promoting their workers which are not known to them. Further, what constitutes career advancement to respondents in private organisations is seen a bit differently by those in the public sector. Respondents in public organisations emphasised training more strongly. However, respondents also believed that career advancement involved regular payment of their salaries and benefits, and prompt promotion to the next level when due.

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