GENDER DISCRIMINATION AND WOMEN EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE

NNANA OKOI OFEM (PH.D)
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK, UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, CALABAR, NIGERIA, nnanaofem@yahoo.com

NSAN KINGSLEY TIKU (PH.D),
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, CALABAR, NIGERIA,
nzankingsley2018@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT
This study was carried out to examine gender discrimination and women employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State. The specific objectives of the study were to: examine the relationship between educational status and women's employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State; access the relationship between age and women's employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State, and identify the relationship between marital status and women's employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State. Relevant literature were reviewed in line with the topic under study. The structural functionalism and feminist perspective formed the theoretical framework for this study. The study adopted survey research design where research questionnaire was used as the main instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was designed in closed ended questions and administered to the respondents. 400 questionnaires were administered and retrieved for analysis. Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to sample respondents for the study. Chi-square statistical tool was used to analyze hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. After the analysis of data, the null hypotheses were rejected. The findings revealed that; there is a significant relationship between female genital mutilation and psychological development of the girl child, there is a significant relationship between educational status, age, marital status and women's employment opportunities in Calabar. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended amongst others that: Government should provide equal opportunities in education and also within the workforce which will accelerate a woman's career. The significance of equality should start from the classroom by teaching children that gender discrimination is not right. If girls are offered equal opportunities both academically and, in their careers, they will grow up to enter the workplace assured that their talents and abilities will not be overlooked.

Introduction

Gender discrimination in society is a stigma that has generated a lot of interest and literature for decades now. According to Husu (2017), gender discrimination is a type of disequilibrium that is based on gender of the individual. Usually women are treated differently and unequally to men, especially in their careers and economic pursuits, which results in naivety associated with low esteem and loss of confidence in societal astute. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Article 5 on Gender Equality states, "Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful and sustainable world". The magnitude to which this occurs varies from country to country and cuts across the social strata (Eke, 2017 cited in Nnana, Okafor& Lilian, 2024).

According to Kitch (2015), "throughout history, women have faced intense discrimination from lack of legal rights and very little independence from their husbands to being thought to have inferior brains". While people are born either male or female, they acquire some traits including how they interact with the opposite sex within households, communities, schools and workplaces. Women are always at the receiving end as they are oppressed and marginalized. They are regarded as subordinates to men. Egarami (2019) noted that females constitute over 50 percent of the world in terms of population. Inspite of this number, women are at a disadvantaged side and enjoy veryfew privileges and rights relative to men. These poor global records of women's status are worst in the continent of Africa. In Nigeria, the situation is not different, as the discrimination of women in favour of men can be traced right to the period of colonialism. In Nigeria, women were deprived of any official input into governance, as against what was operated in the pre-colonial era. Women were disenfranchised and deprived from governance, which they were a part of before the advent of colonialism. Colonialism, in effect denied women access to a level playing field as it transferred to Nigeria the gender discrimination that was the norm in the Western world then. It also imposed on a society, which had created a certain amount of space for women, a situation of non-involvement and the ability of women to complement the efforts of the men in the society.

The workplace has sometimes been referred to as an inhospitable place for women due to the multiple forms of gender discrimination present (Abrams, 2019 cited in Nnana,Tangban, Willie & Rita 2023). Some examples of how workplace discrimination negatively affects women's earnings and opportunities are the gender wage gap, e.g. the dearth of women in leadership (Eagly and Carli, 2017), and the longer time required for women (vs. men) to advance in their careers (Blau and DeVaro, 2017). In other words, gender discrimination contributes to women's lower socio-economic status. Importantly, such discrimination against women largely can be attributed to human resources (HR) policies and HR-related decision-making. Furthermore, when employees interact with organizational decision makers during HR practices, or when they are told the outcomes of HR-related decisions, they mayexperience personal discrimination in the form of sexist comments. Both the objective disadvantages of lower pay, status, and opportunities at work, and the subjective experiences of being stigmatized, affect women's psychological and physical stress, mental and physical health, job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and ultimately, their performance (Borrel et al., 2018).

Gender discrimination in Nigerian society can be divided into two categories: explicit and implicit discriminations. Explicit conscious discrimination refers to individuals' awareness of their prejudices in the form of their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes, which can be translated into physical, verbal, and psychological harassment or through exclusionary practices. Implicit discrimination is more subtle as one may not be aware of their own prejudices and can be in contradiction with their beliefs and value system. As such, implicit discrimination can seep through one's action and behavior without the person realizing it (Cohen & Huffman, 2013 cited in Nnana, Eno-obong, Anyang, Cecilia & Beauty, 2023). This may affect the assessment, decision-making, and relationship between the superior and subordinates in the employment process.

One of the basic rights women have is not to be discriminated against in the workforce. Unfortunately, however, reality does not always comply with the law and even in Nigeria, women

continue to be discriminated against in manifold ways, especially in the civil service. The first problem which women encounter is a lack of access to the labour market. The main reason for all these problems is discrimination against women. Thecivil service employment rate of women is lower and their unemployment rate higher than that of men - although there are strong regional variations. In general, far more women than men work in part-time jobs (not only of their own choosing) and many women are overqualified for the work they do (Egarami, 2019 cited in Nnana, Ugal, Omini&Nsan, 2024). In addition, many women are what the International Labour Organization (ILO) calls "discouraged" workers: workers who are not included in the unemployment statistics of their country because they do not actively seek work although they do want to work because they feel that no work is available to them or they face discrimination or structural, social or cultural barriers. In most cases, women pay a gender penalty as actual or potential mothers. Many employers wrongly fear the cost and hassle motherhood may entail. Some fear the low educational status of most women, and to some point their income level. In fact, according to recent ILO research, the additional cost of hiring a woman is less than 1% of the monthly gross earnings of women employees. But women are not only discriminated against for economic reasons - they are mainly discriminated against because of stereotyping and misguided preconceptions of women's roles and abilities, commitment and leadership style (Abrams, 2019). Nigeria in her commitment to gender equality enshrined the principal of non-discrimination in section 2 of the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria. Despite her commitment to the principle of non-discrimination, the country falls short of desired result of giving male and females' equal opportunities to advance socially, educationally, politically and economically. Arising from the above, the research finding aims to examine the impactof gender discrimination on women employment opportunity in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Gender discrimination is a complex phenomenon that can be seen in organizational structures, processes, and practices. For women, some of the most harmful gender discriminations are enacted within human resources practices. This is because human resources practices (i.e., policies, decision-making, and their enactment) affect the hiring, training, pay, and promotion of women. Nigeria has a long patriarchal structure directly restricts women's availability for wage work and indirectly condition the term of employment for those who enter civil service (Robert, 2016). This patriarchal nature of relationship between men and women in the society was substantiated and justified by men quoting some verses from the Holy Bible that Eve was extracted from Adams' rib as proof of men superiority over women. This was used in most occasions with some sort of links with other cultural factors to make the women in the society to accept their position as divine providence (Robert, 2016 cited in Nnana, Ojiho, Nsan & Onen, 2024). It was further observed that women in the civil service are characterized by limited and insecure employment opportunities and marked substandard wages, poor working condition, unstable hours and disadvantageous employment contracts. Women are predominantly employed in low wage jobs or extremely small-scale ventures which shunt them into segregated reputation and repetitions of manual production.

Gender discrimination is the inclination to favour a candidate due to gender prejudice. It is a huge issue in employment processes especially in Calabar, Cross River State and can sadly affect all stages of the recruitment process. Historically, employment for corporate positions has been notoriously male favoured. In most government parastatals in Calabar, it is evident that when presented with equal-performing candidates, men were 1.5 times more likely to be employed than women. In the same study, it was discovered that women are more likely than men to be asked about children and childcare responsibilities. In most cases, women pay a gender penalty as actual or potential mothers. Many employers wrongly fear the cost and hassle motherhood may entail. Furthermore, the additional cost of employing a woman is less than 1% of the monthly gross earnings of women employees. But women are not only discriminated against for economic reasons - they are mainly discriminated against because of stereotyping and misguided preconceptions of women's roles and abilities, commitment and leadership style. A lack of diversity within an employing team means employers share similar personality traits or backgrounds which can lead to coinciding viewpoints. This means that women are likely to all agree on what makes the 'perfect hire' and will share similar visions when assessing job applications. Similarity bias means

employing someone similar to yourself. Humans have a tendency to like being surrounded by people who think just like them. In employment, this means if the hiring team is predominately made up of males it's likely they will unconsciously favour a male candidate over a female. However, this leads to an echo chamber in hiring decisions that contribute to gender bias that overlooks the opportunity to employ high-quality talent in the civil service.

Despite some progress made over the last few decades in increasing women's labour force participation and narrowing gender gaps in wages, gender discrimination and women employment opportunity still remains an elusive goal. While millions of women have become successful entrepreneurs, women are still grossly underrepresented. In particular, women continue to form a large majority of the working poor, earn less income, and are more often affected by long-term unemployment than men. This is due to women's socio-economic disadvantages caused by gender-based discrimination and their double roles of being a worker and a care taker for the society. Women often have less access to productive resources, education, and skills development and labour market opportunities than men in many societies. Largely, this is because of persistent social norms ascribing gender roles, which are often slow to change. Furthermore, women continue to undertake most of unpaid carework, which has become an increasing challenge in their efforts to engage in productive work, both in subsistence agriculture and market economy.

It has been stressed over time and space, and within the historical conjectures of the Cross River State Civil Service that female gender had suffered untold subordination and discrimination. While in an ideal setting, the state supposed to guarantee the protection of female gender and accord them equal right and opportunities with the malecounterparts, such an ideal condition rarely exists in human societies, especially in aspect of crucial and sustainable participation in policy making, strategic plan and implementation. According to a report by on "staff screening and verification of local government Areas, 2015" in Cross River State, out of two thousand two hundred and twenty-three (2,223) civil servants at the local government area, the male gender constituted about 65% of the total population of civil servants in the workforce. Suffice it is to note that the determinants of gender discrimination to some extent are culture, religion, educational, marital and income level, which combine to shape gender imbalance in any society or region of the world. The central agony in the discrimination is the orchestration or uplift of men over women in the society, which glorifies one as superior and another as inferior; hence, the quest for a study of this sort. '

Literature Review

Gender discrimination is unequal or disadvantageous treatment of an individual or group of individuals based on gender. Abas (2019) defined gender discrimination as treating an individual differently based upon his/her gender in academia or extracurricular activities, academic programs, discipline, class assignments given in a classroom, class enrolment, physical education, grading, and/or athletics. According to Bernama (2017), gender discrimination refers to any situation where a person is denied an opportunity or misjudged solely on the basis of their sex. Gender discrimination is any unequal treatment based on gender and may also be referred to as sexism. Gender discrimination occurs when a person shows a prejudice towards another that would 'not occur had they been the opposite sex.

On the other hand, Kadiresan, et al, (2015), sees gender discrimination as any unequal treatment, including privilege and priority, on the basis of gender. Gender -equality is discrimination on the basis of sex or gender causing one sex or gender to be untimely privileged or prioritized over another. Lim (2019), noted that Gender equality 3 a fundamental human right and that right is violated by gender based discrimination. Gender disparity starts in childhood and are right now limiting the lifelong potential of children around the world - disproportionately affecting girls. Abd-Mutalib, et al.,2018), noted that discrimination based on gender (or sex) is a common civil rights violation that takes many forms, including sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, and unequal pay for women who do the same jobs as men. Gender discrimination is fueled by sexism, which is prejudice based on sex or gender. In most countries, sexism devalues women and femininity and privileges men and masculinity. Because gender relates to how someone feels, rather than their biological characteristics, anyone who identifies with a gender that their society deems less valuable can experience gender discrimination. This includes trans and other gender-expansive people (Abd-Mutalib, Yahya &Shaari, 2018). They further

described gender discrimination to include the follows:

Workplace gender discrimination: Gender discrimination in the workplace is a widely written issue in the literature. However, there are many strands to it. Scholars have been writing about gender discrimination from an economic perspective (i.e., Oster, 1975), a sociological perspective (i.e., Bielby& Baron, 2013; Cohen & Huffman, 2016; Charles, 2017), and a law and governance perspective (MercatBruns, 2016). Based on the literature, gender discrimination at work, can refer to labor market discrimination, gender-based wage discrimination, or even sexual harassment at the workplace. This issue is not unique to Malaysia as research has been done in other parts of the world. Bielby and Baron (2013), for example, used data from 290 economic establishments in California from the years 1964 to 1979 to test whether different gender traits and turnover costs arethe reasons for gender segregation within mixed occupations. It was found that gender discrimination does exist in the workplace, especially among men and women who hold the same occupation but work in different establishments or have different job titles within the same organization. However, there are no efficient or rational differences in skills and turnover costs. Charles (2017) argued that employer-based discrimination against women is unstable. Nevertheless, discrimination in the workplace is ongoing and prevalent because of employee discrimination. In other words, employers segregate workers based on gender due to discriminatory attitudes held by male employees. It was discovered that by minimizing women in the workplace, employers could maximize male workers' productivity. This finding-is similar to findings by Fusch, et al., (2015). From observations made within the United States army,' it was concluded that sexual harassment happened because men felt threatened by women's presence in the barracks. In a cross-national survey, Charles (2017) found that while the gender gap in institutions such as education and the labor market has indeed narrowed, the trajectory differs between vertical (hierarchical) and horizontal (inter-occupation) discrimination. Developed countries have more women in managerial positions, which is following modernization theory. However, there is still gender segregation across different occupations. Based on neo-institutionalism, Charles (2017) argued that the state plays a vital role in addressing gender discrimination in the workplace. Since some states are more conservative (North African countries) than others (Scandinavian countries), females still find themselves working in different occupations than males, despite

Educational status and women's employment opportunities: Tallburi (2015) defines education as "instrument per-excellence for effective national development as well as a dynamic instrument of change; it is also the basis for the improvements of status of women", hence educating a man means educating a man and educating a woman means educating a generation. Moreover, when education is provided to women they act as "a Home minister, Health minister, Finance minister and Defense minister in the house", therefore education intelligibly changes the girls and women's lives for better since education reduces poverty, assists to create the role models in the communities, and provides great employment opportunities and most importantly cultivating leaders (Talburi, 2015). Employment can be defined as the state or condition to have paid work. Sen (2019), argue that by the help of employment many other income generating activities and events women's economic position improves & strengthens women's status within the family and society. Through the deep study of literature, it is found that there is list of barriers which have created hurdles and will definitely create in the future to women's employment opportunities. Education builds strong societies, is a "widely accepted humanitarian obligation" and an internationally mandated human right (van Hooff, Jenny, 2018). Receiving a quality education uneducated population has a direct effect on the labor market and country's ability to shift from an agrarian to industrial economy. However, a stagnant labor market, particularly for women, directly impacts country's poverty. Today, people lacking with higher education skills face ahigher risk of poverty and poor employment options which in turn, contribute to social and economic inequality and marginalization in (UNESCO, 2010)

Kadiresan and Javed (2015) while studying the Effect of Female Education onFamily Size in Pakistan in Quetta City state that the value of women's education hasalways been accepted throughout the world, since it improves women earning abilityand also empowers them in taking decisions about family size, and household

decisions,have freedom to choose husband and increase opportunities for working in distinctposition in the country. A women who is educated delay marriages, can use methods offamily planning, tends to having small family, undergoes in motherhood late whichresults in population reduction that helps the families to control expenses, attains betterhealth, gets education facilities which decreases child labor in the third World country such as Pakistan. Women's education is observed as a prominent tool for the women'semployment (Robert, 2012 cited in Omini&Ofem, 2023). Participation in the civil service is an effective strategy forstrengthening the empowerment of women and her bargaining power both within andoutside the home (Agarwal, 2014). In addition, Sen (2019) claim that by employmentand income-generating activities, economic position of women improves which thenleads to a well treatment she received from her household.

According to OECD's 2017 "The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle", it showed that despite decades of progress, women are still much less likely than men to engage in paid work and, when they do work, are less likely to progress in their careers or become business owners, more likely to work shorter hours, and end up stuck inprecarious, low-status jobs. Women with low levels of education suffer a double disadvantage. Gender discrimination in the civil service exist across all levels of education, but tend to be widest among men and women with low levels of education. On average across OECD countries, the gender employment gap among men and women with low educational attainment stands at 19.5 percentage points, more than double the gap among highly-educated men and women (8.5 percentage points). This pattern holds across almost all OECD countries, though there are exceptions. For example, in Korea, where highly educated women's options to return to well-paid regular employment after a period out of the workforce to provide care to young children or dependent relatives are limited. Rather than taking up low-paid non-regular employment, many well-educated Korean women do not return to the labour force if they can afford to do so. Education correlates with wages, and less-educated women generally earn less than both highly-educated women and less-educated men. Childcare' fees further reduce the attractiveness of labour force participation, and for many less-educated women with low wages it does not always pay (or pay much) to be in work.

Friedman and Jennifer (2014) suggests that fewer opportunities within the labor market may, in fact, contribute to women's unequal treatment will causes parents to have lower aspirations for daughters. It also reinforces the idea that women have less need for services such as higher education if there is no place for them outside home. In many world societies, traditional patriarchy influencing the way in which both men and womenpositions of authority and power, many resources and opportunities are automatically given to them e.g. decisions related to financial and family matters, on and employment etc. (Eke, 2017). Though, women are becoming more prominent, yet they are increasingly fighting long-standing prejudices.

Age and women's employment opportunities: It is undeniable that several forms of discrimination exist in the labour market despite extant national and international laws. In Nigeria, factors like ethnicity, religion, gender, marital status, disability and age and are major prejudices that influence employment even when the educational and professional requirements are excellent. Among the several prejudices that affect the chances of employment, ageism-is one that has become widespread and almost accepted as a norm. Ageism is a significant issue affecting employment opportunities in Nigeria, particularly for older workers. It is also a societal problem that is deeply entrenched in Nigeria. The concept "Ageism" is seen as the stereotyping, prejudice or discrimination based on a person's age. It is a vicious cycle that stifles innovation, restricts social progress and denies employers the full right of their workforce (Husu, 2017). Many women (both the aged and youth) in Nigeria, have faced discrimination in one way or the other in the labour marketas a result of their age. The effects of ageism on Nigerian employment manifest in two ways. It is important to state that; ageism does not affect the aged ones only, but also affects the youths. Therefore,the first is how ageism affects the aged group of women and the second is how young women are marginalized.

According to Onabekum (2021), one of the key ways that ageism affects women's employment opportunities is through mandatory retirement ages. Employers often have predetermined retirement ages, which tend to be between 60 and 65 years old. This can mean that older workers are forced into retirement before they are ready, thereby creating financial and

employment uncertainty for women. Many retirees in Nigeria are challenged to make ends meet because they are cut off from their primary source of monetary support, especially women who were not married, which often results in poverty for them. Moreover, ageism limits employment opportunities for women too. Employers frequently view older,, female workers as being less productive or technologically incompetent than younger workers. Some employers assume that older women are not set in their ways, are inflexible, and are unlikely to adapt to changing job requirements. As a result, they lose the opportunity to fully utilize the years of knowledge, experience and skill that younger workers bring to the workplace. In turn, older workers are unable to leverage their contributions to society in ways that can improve the Nigerian economy (Onabekum, 2021).

Ho (2020) on the other hand buttressed that there are several other ways that ageism manifests in Nigerian workplaces. One of them is the fear that older workers will outlast their younger colleagues, who are more likely to adapt to technological changes. Meanwhile, the total number of unemployed females stood at 10.61 million (35.2%) relative to 12.58 million unemployed males (31.8). This shows that more females in the working population in Nigeria are either unable or unwilling to work as at the reference period (NBS, 2021).

Marital status and women's employment opportunities: Around the world, finding a job is much tougher for women than it is for men. When women are employed, they tend to work in low-quality jobs in vulnerable conditions, and there is little improvement forecast in the near future. The current global labour force participation rate for women is just under 47%. For men, it's 72%. (ILO, 2017). That's a difference of 25 percentage points, with some regions facing a gap of more than 50 percentage points. Women who want to work have a harder time finding a job than men. This problem is particularly marked in Northern Africa and the Arab States, where unemployment rates for women exceed 20%. While vulnerable employment is widespread for both women andmen, women tend to be overrepresented in certain types of Vulnerable jobs: men are more likely to be working in own-account employment while women are more likely to be helping out in their households or in their relatives' businesses. Gender roles and the pressures to conform to these roles for women vary across regions, religions and households. One way the. pressure to conform manifests itself is through marital status. For instance, in developed and emerging economies, women who have a spouse or a partner are less likely to berates between women and men in developed countries are relatively small. Women even register lower unemployment rates than men in Eastern Europe and North America. Conversely, in regions such as the Arab States and Northern Africa, - female unemployment rates are still twice as large as men's, with prevailing social norms continuing to obstruct women's participation in paid employment. Another example of these differences is that the gap in employment participation rates between men and women is narrowing in developing and developed countries while it continues to widen in emerging countries. However, this may be a reflection of the fact that a growing number of young women in these countries have joined formal education, which delays their entry to the labour market.

Theoretical Framework

(i) Structural Functionalism

The major proponent of this theory is Talcott Parsons (1951). Structuralfunctionalism or simply functionalism attributes to social systems is the characteristics of commitments, agreements, cohesion, consensus, solidarity, integration, persistence, cooperation, reciprocity, and stability. Structural functionalism has implication to the present study since the functionalist theory attributes to social system where women are part and parcel of. Their participation in development projects especially at the rural level contribute positively to the operation or functioning of the system as a whole.

Each society has certain needs in that there are a number of activities that must be carried out for social life to survive and develop. Goods and services must be produced and attributed in order for people to survive, there must be some administration of justice, a political system must exist, andsome family structure must operate so as to provide a means to reproduce the population and maintain social life on a daily basis. In the structural functional model, individuals carry out each of these tasks in various institutions and roles that are consistent with the structures and norms of the society. The functionalist sees any specific social factor,

occurrence or change as necessary to the survival of the system on the principle of functional interaction (Ottong, 2006).

Since society is composed of different parts, and the proper operation of these part is necessary to the smooth operation of society as a whole, this theory is relevant in that women participation in rural development is essential. In relation to' this theory, women essentially are agents of change where they play key roles in running households and make major contributions both at home and the society at large. As posit by the functionalist, "change in any part of the structure could affect the other". Thus, this theory is essential in placing women as part and parcel of the employment beneficiaries in the civil service structure of Cross River State.

(ii) The feminist perspective

This theory was propounded by Margaret Sanger (1966). In sociology, social stratification occurs when differences lead to greater status, power or privilege for some groups over others. Simply put, it is a system by which society ranks categories of people like the women in a low hierarchy status. Members of society are socially stratified to many levels, including socioeconomic status, race, class, ethnicity, religion, ability status and gender. Gender stratification occurs when gender differences gives man greater privilege and in turn they use it to discriminate women as a result of their socioeconomic status. Feminist theory is the extension or feminism into theoretical or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and discrimination, and examines women's social role, experiences, and interest, while generally providing a critique of social relations, much of feminist theory also focus on analysing gender inequality and the promotion of women's right to high socioeconomic status and as well to fight against gender discrimination amongst women. The salient conceptual explanation of feminist theory to the present study is that, feminist theory seeks to promote the legal socio-economic status of women as equal and undifferentiated from that of men in order to develop the required capacity to fight against gender discrimination to any level as ascertained by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792).

Feminist theory thus also uses the conflict approach to examine the reinforcement of gender roles and equalities. Conflict theory posits that stratification is dysfunctional and harmful in society, with inequality and discrimination perpetrated because it benefits the men/powerful and rich at the expense of women/the poor. Therefore, various discrimination do not act independently on women but as a result of men high level of their socioeconomic status that gives them the edge to oppress the women in all ramification and this theory attempt to look for alternative of arresting the problem of gender discrimination to the apex.

Methodology

A research design is a structural framework for conducting research. Its methods are essential part of the research because they determine to a large extent which analyse the outcome to expect from the study. When a design is badly done, it could lead to margin error in the result generated (Levin, 2015). This study employed a cross sectional design to assess gender discrimination and women employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Furthermore, a cross-section design is a study that is conducted within a short period of time. This method will assist the researcher to study the characteristics of interest (experiences and perception of people about socioeconomic factors and gender discrimination) at a particular point in time.

The area of study is Calabar Metropolis in Cross River State. Calabar metropolis comprises of Calabar Municipal and Calabar South Local Government Areas. Calabar Metropolis is the capital city of Cross River state, Nigeria. The city is adjacent to the Calabar and great Kwa rivers and creeks of the cross river (from its hinterland). Calabar is often described as the tourism capital of Nigeria. Administratively, the city is divided into Calabar municipal and Calabar south local Government Areas. It has an area of 406 square kilometres (157sq ml). The population of Calabar South is 191,515, while that of Calabar Municipality is 183,681 (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Calabar metropolis is characterized by two distinct seasons - the rainy season and the dry season. During the rainy season, Calabar metropolis is characterized by very high rainfalls coupled with a relatively low temperature ranging between 25°C and 31°C. However, during the dry seasons the temperature increased to about 31 °C and 35°C with very little amount of rainfall. Also, between the months of December and early February, the area

experiences average cold weather, known as 'the Harmattan period'. The people of Calabar metropolis have a rich cultural heritage and are famous for display of Ekpe Masquerade, as well as other tradition events like the Abang Dance (Ekombi), Nnabo, etc. Prominent among the annual festivals celebrated in the area is the Christmas festival which comes up every 25th of December. The main occupation of the people is fishing, however majority of the people are now into business and civil service. The people communicate in the Efik language as well as the English language and Pidgin English.

The population of the study consisted of parents, guardians and children from different communities in Calabar Metropolis. According to the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023), the population of Calabar South is 191,515, while that of Calabar Municipality is 183,681. These figures constitute the population of the study. Calabar Municipality is made up of eleven political wards, while Calabar South comprises of 12 political wards (Wikipedia.com, 2021). The total population of Calabar Metropolis is 375,196 (NBS, 2023).To achieve the sample size for this study, the Taro Yamane (1967) formula for calculating sample size was adopted. This is a simplified formula for calculating sample size at 95 percent confidence level. This is expressed as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = Tolerable error (level of significance) = 0.05

1 = Constant Substituting for the formula:

$$n = \frac{375,196}{1 + 375,196\ (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{375,196}{1 + 375,196\ (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{375,196}{1 + 937.99}$$

$$n = \frac{375,196}{938.99}$$

n = 399.5

n = 400

Thus, the sample size for the study comprised of 400 respondents.

This study adopted the simple random and purposive sampling technique.

The main instrument for data collection in this study was the questionnaire. Tables and simple percentage were used to present the data, while the chi-square statistical tool was used to test the significance of the stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. Chi-square (x^2) formula is represented as;

$$X^2 = \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

X^2 = Chi square

Z = Summation

O = Observed frequency

E = Expected frequency

Findings

This aspect of the study is concerned with the presentation of data gotten from

the field. Simple percentage was used to present the demographic data and chi-square statistical tool for the hypotheses.

Table 1: demographic data of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Males	211	53
Females	189	47
Total	400	100
Age Group		
15-20	87	22
21 -26	150	38
27-32	106	27
33-38	34	9
39 and above	23	6
Total	400	100
Occupation		
Trader	34	9
Student	220	55
Civil servant	42	10.5
Fishermen	8	2
Others	96	24
Total	400	100
Marital Status		
Single	290	73
Married	68	17
Divorced	25	6
Widow	15	4
Widower	2	0.5
Total	400	100
Educational qualification		
Primary	64	16

Secondary	. 130	33
Tertiary	206	52
Total	400	100

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

The table above shows that out of 400 respondents, 211 (53%) were males while 189 (47%) were females. Thus, the male respondents dominated the study populations. The table also shows that out of 400 respondents, 87(22%) respondents are 15 - 20 years, 150 (38%) respondents are 21 - 26 years,106 (27%) respondents are 27 - 32 years, 34 (9%) respondents are 33-38 years, 23 (6%) respondents are 39 years and above. The age group of 21-26 was more in the study due to the fact that they were more available in the course of the study.

The table above indicated that out of 400 respondents, 34 (9%) are traders, 220 (55%) are students, 42 (10.5%) are civil servants, 8 (2%) are fishermen while 96 (24%) fall under other occupation. This indicated that students were more in the study.

The table above shows that out of 400 respondents, 290 (73%) were single, 68 (17%) were married, 25 (6%) were divorced, .15 (4 %) were widows while 2 (0.5%) were widowers. Single and married persons are more in the study as a result of their direct experience of poverty in the study area. The table above shows that out of 400 respondents, 64 (16%) have primary education, 130 (33%) had secondary education while 206 (52%) had tertiary education. Respondents who were in had tertiary education were more in the study in that they are well exposed to the subject under study.

Table 2: Respondents view to question 8 on the questionnaire under hypothesis one

Response	No. of respondents	Percentage %
Yes	234	59
No	156	39
No idea	10	2.5
Total	400	100

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

The table above shows that the view of respondents whether poverty can be reduced if employmentopportunities are provided. Out of 400 respondents, 234 (59%) agreed to the question, 156 (36%) disagree, while 10 (2.5%) indicated that they have no knowledge about the question.

Table 3: Respondents view to question 14 on the questionnaire under hypothesis two

Response	**No. of respondents**	**Percentage %**
Yes	201	50
No	185	41
No idea	34	9
Total	400	100

Source: Field Survey, (2024)

Test of Hypotheses:

In the course of this study some hypotheses were formulated. These hypotheses

were tested so as to accept or reject them. The hypotheses shall be tested using the chi-square (X2) statistical analysis.

Hypothesis One

H0: The is no significant relationship between women's educational status and their employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State.

To test this hypothesis, the chi-square statistical tool was used at 0.05 level of significance

Contigency Table

Cell	0	e	o-e	$(o-e)^2$	$(0 - e)^2$ **e**
1	107	45.27	0.27	0.0729	1.6
2	70	51.73	0.27	0.0729	1/4
3	75	14.93	2.07	4.2849	1.3
4	69	17.07	2.07	4.2849	1.3
5	56	9.8	1.8	3.24	0.3
6	32	11.2	1.8	3.24	0.3
					$X^{2=}$ 6.2

Therefore $X^2 = 6.2$

Degree of freedom

(Df)-

(C-l)(r-l)

(3-1) (2-1)

2x1=2

Df=2

Table value = 5.99

4.2 < 5.99.

Decision Rule

Accept null hypothesis if X^2 calculated value is less than the table value otherwise accept the alternate hypothesis. The measure of difference between the observed and expected frequencies is given by the. The calculated value x^2 is 6.2 and the table value is 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance with 2 degree of freedom. Since the calculated x^2 is greater than the table value and bearing in mind our decision rule, we reject the null hypothesisand accept the alternate hypothesis, stating that there is a significant relationship between women's educational status and their employment opportunities in Calabar.

Hypothesis Two

H0: The is no significant relationship between women's age and their employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State.

To test this hypothesis, the chi-square statistical tool was used at 0.05 level of significance

(c-1) (r-1)

(3-1) (2-1)

2X1=2

Df=2

Cell	0	e	(o-e)	(o-e)2	(0 - e)2 e
1	98	53.67	1.33	1.7689	2.03
2	87	61.33	1.33	1.7689	0.03
3	64	9.8	1.8	3.24	1.033'
4	71	11.2	1.8	3.24	1.03
5	63	6.5	0.5	0.22	1.04
6	17	7.47	0.5	0.25	1.03
					X^2 = 0.76

ThereforeX^2=0.76

Table value = 5.99

Level of significance = 0.05

0.76 < 5.99

Decision Rule

Accept null hypothesis if chi-square,calculated value is less than the table value at 0.05 level of significance, otherwise accept the alternate hypothesis. The measure of difference between the observed and expected frequencies is given by the formula. The calculation shows that the X^2 calculated value is 6.193 and is greater than the table value of 5.99 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the X^2 calculated value is greater than the table value, we accept the alternative hypothesis and thus reject the null hypothesis.

Discussion of findings

From the analysis of hypothesis one, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between women's educational status and their employment opportunities in Calabar, Cross River State. To further buttress this hypothesis finding, OECD report (2017) showed that education correlates with wages, and less-educated women generally earn less than both highly-educated women and less-educated men. Childcare fees further reduce the attractiveness of labour force, participation, and for many less-educatedwomen with low wages it does not always pay (or pay much) to be in work. On average across OECD countries, the gender employment gap among men and women with low educational attainment stands at 19.5 percentage points, more than double the gap among highly-educated men andwomen (8.5 percentage points). This pattern holds across almost all OECD countries, though there are exceptions. Cohen & Huffman (2016) on the other hand also supported that education builds strong societies, is a "widely accepted humanitarian obligation" and an internationally mandated human right. Receiving a quality education is more than a human rights issue; an uneducated population has a direct effect on the labor market and country's ability to shift from an agrarian to industrial economy. However, a stagnant labor market, particularly for women, directly impacts country's development and put family institution at the verge of poverty.

Hypothesis two testing revealed a significant relationship between women's age and their employment opportunities in Calabar. This is in accordance to the assertion of Darlington (2022) that the distributing women in the working

population by their age groups, women within the age bracket of 15-24 years were the largest, accounting for 30% (18.48 million) of the total women in the working population. Women within 25-34 years followed closely with about 17.98 million being in the working population, while 12.79 million women in the working population were within the age bracket of 35-44 years. The numbers however started to drop significantly in the older age ranges as only 7.94 million women in the working population were between 45-54 years of age.Similarly, women in the working population between 55-64 years stood at 4.43 million as of Q4 2020.

Conclusion

Gender differences between men and women have been given historically as the basis for discrimination against women. Gender discrimination turns the job seekers and employees' emotionally brittle, simple peace loving people transform into paranoid and suspicious, fearful and angry individuals. Elimination of gender discrimination is crucial for the satisfaction and motivation, commitment and enthusiasm and for protecting the constitutional rights of the women. Discrimination in employment must be discouraged through the enactment of various legislations and by effective and efficient enforcement mechanisms. The fundamental human rights enshrined by the constitution will only be of utmost advantage to humanity when the main source of sustainability which is employment has not been hindered. Time has come for Nigerian as a nation to reinforceits fight against discrimination in work places to adopt and implement policies that will totally eradicate it. This can only be achieved with the involvement of the human right organizations, labour organizations, social workers and other non-governmental organisations who should also take it as a challenge. Legal services should be free and available to those who cannot afford one in order to help people in the society seek legal redress. By allowing employment discrimination to continue existing in the society the end result is an increase in poverty, inequality, disutility and other impacts which are legion.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

i. Government should provide equal opportunities in education and also within the workforce which will accelerate a woman's career. The significance of equality should start from the classroom by teaching children that gender discrimination is not right. If girls are offered equal opportunities both academically and in their careers, they will grow up to enter the workplace assured that their talents and abilities will not be overlooked.

ii. Organizations, firms and company should create a flexible environment for women to contribute effectively at work while having time for the family, irrespective of their age variation.

iii. The government should create a full and decent productive employment opportunities for both single and married women, and access to finance, as well as provision of social protection.

iv. States should employ more social workers in administrative panels in employment legislations to investigate reports of discrimination against women in the public service, punish and provide redress to women who are subjected to discrimination in employment.

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