IMPACT OF CULTURE AND GENDER ON WOMEN MANAGERS IN THE HOSPITALITY AND FINANCIAL SERVICES IN ZIMBABWE

Alice Zinyemba*

Abstract: *Generally women are lowly represented at senior management level. This could be explained by the "glass ceiling" effect which poses invisible barriers to women's progression into positions of leadership, cultural issues and gender role expectations and responsibilities. Hofstede (1980) identified a number of cultural issues that affect women's participation in management and these include issues to do with what society regards as masculine and feminine behaviors and role expectations. Culture is not static. This means that strong traditional values often coexist with modern values and this has implications for the kind of leadership and gender challenges that women managers face.*

Keywords: *culture, gender, leadership, "glass ceiling", Zimbabwe*

*Faculty of commerce, University of Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Zimbabwe is traditionally a patriarchal society and women have always been marginalized when it came to leadership and management. In 2001, only 27% of the decision making positions (legislators, senior officials and managers) in Zimbabwe were occupied by women (CSO, 2001). In 2003, The Zimbabwe Human Development Report noted that women were still under represented in political decision making. In 2012 there were 32 women and 178 men in Parliament. Women constituted 17.9% of parliamentarians (Parliamentary Debates House of Assembly Report, 2012). The positions of leadership in the public and private sectors in Zimbabwe were mostly occupied by men (UNDP Progress Report, 2004). Generally, research findings show that women are blocked by socio –cultural- economical factors from entering into top positions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Few women are found at the top in management positions. Even though women comprise 47% of the global labour force, they account for only 6% of top management (Glancy, 2012). Women themselves may not take up top management positions because of the limitations of child bearing and mother hood placed upon them because of gender roles and cultural expectations. Barriers to breaking the glass ceiling also include tacit discrimination or stereotyping by sex because the top executives in most organizations are men.

The discourse on the impact of culture and gender on women in management and leadership positions calls for an understanding of the meaning and relationship of culture and leadership and gender and leadership and the "glass ceiling" effect.

CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Cultural issues affect gender and participation of women in leadership positions in organizations (Hofstede, 1980). Such cultural issues identified by Hofstede include avoiding uncertainty, distancing oneself from power, individualistic orientation as against concern for community and masculine behaviour as against femininity. Distancing oneself from power is measured by the extent to which less powerful members of an organization and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally and make their demands and behave accordingly. The less developed countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa have a higher power distance than Anglo and Germanic countries (Wikipedia, 2013). Individualistic societies put more emphasis on personal achievements and individual rights than on

collective identification. People with a high level of uncertainty avoidance tend to be more conservative and cautious. On the other hand people with a lower level of uncertainty avoidance tend to be more pragmatic and more tolerant to change. The research by Hofstede (1980) revealed that masculine cultures value being materialistic, assertive, ambitious, competitive and powerful. Cultures with a long term orientation attach more value to the future than the present and the past as compared to societies with a short term orientation which value tradition, steadiness and fulfilment of social obligations. The Hofstede finding shows that differences between cultural values are reflected in the extent to which women can participate in leadership positions.

The GLOBE team carried out a research that looked into these cultural issues (House, et al., 2002). The authors defined culture as consisting of values, beliefs, shared traditions, common identities and the way important events in the past are understood and passed on from generation to generation. The research findings show that culture is always changing. Over and above tradition, culture is also affected by international drive for reforms to improve the situation of women.

Research has shown that the more developed a country is the more women are found in positions of leadership in business and politics (Bullough, 2008). The author established that societies with minimal representation of women in business leadership, women's roles in society are more traditional and women are found solely in supportive and submissive roles of family care-giving and household responsibilities. Stereotypes and gender biases are extremely high and the glass ceiling is harder to break with Afghanistan during the Taliban rule being an extreme example of complete control of women by their male family members.

Research has confirmed that cultural context is a significant factor in women's perceptions about work and family life balance (Thein, et al., 2010). For example a study comparing Chinese and American women (Thein, et al,. 2010) revealed that sacrificing family time for work was regarded as a self sacrifice for the benefit of the family whereas in America sacrificing family life for work was seen as failure to care for family. The research showed that long working hours would not pose many problems for the Chinese women as it would to American women. In both Singapore and Hong Kong the research showed that paid work was seen as very important in generating money needed to meet financial and material

needs on one's family. The high cost of living and the culture that priorities material success in these societies explains why work is seen as a family responsibility and does not in any way conflict with family obligations for women. Family support is an important source of for working women. Coping strategies include family support and use of domestic help in the form of a maid.

The GLOBE study also notes that in spite of the influence from industrialization and modernization there are some strong cultural practices which endure the test of time. Because culture is not static it means that strong traditional values often coexist with modern values. This has implications for the kind of leadership and gender challenges that are faced by women in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe.

GENDER AND LEADERSHIP

A review of literature on gender role and gender stereotyping helps in the understanding of how gender and culture influence leadership.

One is socialized into a gender role by ones culture which may differ from society to society. Gender role or sex role refers to the behaviours, attitudes values, beliefs that a particular cultural group considers appropriate for males and females on the basis of their biological sex. It has been suggested that sex role refers to whether someone lives a male or female role, while gender role is how he, or she, lives that role, (Bland, 1998).

Gender role/identity refers to a person's understanding and acceptance of what is expected of him/her by society and how he/she adapts to it. Gender or sex role stereotype is a socially determined model which contains the cultural beliefs about how one should fulfil his/her role.

Gender not only varies from culture to culture but it also varies within cultures over time. Culture in not static, it evolves as societies become more complex the roles played by men and women are not only determined by culture but by socio political and economic factors as well.

Women and men, because of their different gender roles and responsibilities, have different experiences and needs. It is common knowledge that men's work is usually outside the home, that they have more leisure time and that they are more involved in decision-making.

Martin (2006) points out that the dynamics associated with gender routinely make workers, particularly women workers, feel incompetent, exhausted and devalued. The author notes that what one says about gender could be different from what one does about gender. There could be a difference between what one says about gender from the way one practises gender. People do practise gender intentionally but they also practise it unintentionally. Gendering practices are the "what to do/ can be done/ is done" relative to a particular gender status and identity. Gendering practices include widely known and accepted forms of dress demeanour, language, expressions, actions and interests that are culturally available to and normatively to stereotypically associated with one or the other gender. People actively display forms of dress, demeanour and interests that are appropriate to their gender status. This implies that there is a conscious effort to conform to what is expected of one's gender.

THE "GLASS CEILING"

"The glass ceiling" is a term often used to describe the invisible barriers that women face as they climb the corporate ladder. It has been defined as "a barrier to entry into top-level management positions based on attitudinal or organizational bias – simply because they are women rather than because they lack the ability to handle jobs at higher levels" (Morrison, et al., 1987:68). These barriers are seen as blocking women leaders from moving up the corporate ladder. The problems are associated with not just challenges related to leadership effectiveness but also to gender roles and gender stereotyping. Most senior management positions require long working hours and this poses challenges for women managers. A major part of the problem lies in the stereotyping of leadership with effective leaders being seen as shrewd and tough while women are seen as weak and soft.

Historically leadership has largely been construed in masculine terms (Vinkenburg, et al., 2011). Their studies also show that women managers believed that behaving like a man were the traits required for success for women managers. Hence being assertive and forsaking a family life were regarded as the only option to get ahead in women's careers.

Gender inequality in appointments to managerial and supervisory positions in organizations is a well known phenomenon. There are many studies which have shown that gender is one of the important criteria that determine an employee's position at the work place (Adler, 1994, Priola, 2004,). These authors note that women tend to be given less authority,

autonomy, and control at the work place. The studies also show that women's prospects for promotion are different from those of men with similar education and status (Adler, 1994).

In 2004 in UK men represented 63% of the academic staff and occupied the most senior academic and managerial positions. Only 7% of the universities world-wide were managed by women, (Priola, 2004).

Gender differences in patterns of promotion can be explained at two levels, at the individual level and at contextual level. At the individual level, according to the human capital view, women have less experience than men in administrative and lack suitable training for these positions. Thus experience and training hinder women's promotion at the individual level, (Raccah and Ayalon, 2002).

At the contextual level the differences in promotion between the genders can also be explained by the fact that women are seen to be less committed to jobs that require effort and investment of time because of the roles that they play in the family and at the work place. In college women tend to be concentrated in the arts, nursing, foreign languages and communications or education, while men study engineering, technology, mathematics or architecture. These positions mainly relate to matters of pedagogy and the curriculum. Men, more than women, are found in positions with an organizational orientation, such as principals or vice principals, management positions that emphasize hierarchy, control and power. The study by Raccah (2002) also notes that the gender composition of an organization affects the relative positions of men and women within it. The higher the proportion of either group within an organization, the more power and influence group members can gain, and it is easier for them to access to senior positions. This may indicate gender preferences in hiring and promotion to senior positions within an organization.

Women are usually located in staff service departments which offer limited advancement opportunities. Such women find it difficult to reach/hold top decision – making powerful positions. Staff jobs do not generate income. They are rather considered overhead or expenses and they are the first to go when there are budget cuts. Such jobs lack power. Line jobs are normally located in the profit centres of business operations. It is these jobs which offer advancement opportunities because they generate money.

In general it has been observed that men at work are more powerful, have more say and influence over resources, than do women (Martin, 2006). Men hold the most powerful

positions and most women are subordinate to men in the formal authority structure and relative to gender. The writer comments that when men call women 'girls', they infantilize them and call into question women's competence and authority.

Women often find themselves in a double bind when it comes to gender role expectations and leadership demands. The bind happens when acting "feminine" is associated with incompetence, and acting "competent" is associated with masculine traits that when adopted by women leads to the conclusion that one must be "unfeminine" to be competent.

Few women attain positions of real political clout. It has been noted that in USA only about 2% of members of boards were women, (Belle, 2002). The reason suggested in this study could be that women tend to put family before career, whereas men put career first.

The same study reveals that problems facing women is reconciling the claims of both career and family life. Women managers acknowledge the fact that most outperform their male counterparts to prove their worth in the eyes of themselves and of others. Hence the inevitable strategy of overdrive and over-efficiency which, coupled with an evident effort to play down their femininity, is meant to make their position unassailable. The same study also revealed that in 1997 women constituted only approximately 3-5% of Australian senior managers.

The inter-relationships between motherhood and full time working and having dependent children greatly influence career outcomes (Gartzia, et al, 2012). The study established that motherhood impacted significantly on career progression opportunities for women. For career women motherhood implied a complex relationship between working hours, breaks in careers and dependent children. This contributes to the explanation of gender disparity in top management positions. The study also showed that women with children of school going age were at a disadvantage especially when the children were younger (Gartzia, et al., 2012).

Another factor preventing women from getting into top positions are work life balance and the struggle to be taken seriously in a male dominated business (Rapaciolli, 2012). This shows the problem associated with stereotyping of leadership.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is to determine the impact of culture on leadership and gender challenges for women managers the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research study was carried out into the leadership and gender challenges facing women managers in the hospitality and financial services sectors in Zimbabwe (Zinyemba, 2013). The research methodology involved an in depth case study of 8 women managers. A questionnaire was also administered to 60 participants in the same sectors. Fifty seven questionnaires were complete and returned. The research findings revealed that a lot of the challenges that the women managers faced had to do with culture. The challenges included difficulties in striking a good work life balance and gender prejudices.

THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN ZIMBABWE

The population of Zimbabwe in 2002 is put at eleven million six hundred and thirty one thousand and six hundred and fifty seven (11 631 657) and 52% of that is women (CSO, 2002). Zimbabwe is a patriarchal society. This means that traditional culture requires a woman to move from her family to join the husband's home and family upon marriage. The children emanating from that union assume their father's surname and traditionally "belong" to the husband. Not much recognition was given to women before independence. Pre colonial attitudes regarded women as inferior (Baden, et al., 1999). The socio economic policies of the colonial government tended to support the advancement of men at the expense of women, thereby exacerbating the situation of women. Traditionally women's participation in activities outside the home was discouraged and very little value was placed upon it. Women could not own property and were legally regarded as minors regardless of age (GOZ, 1995). Access to formal employment for women before independence was limited to nursing and teaching professions. Those few women who entered formal employment were not treated as individuals in their own right for tax purposes. Their wages and salaries were regarded as additional to the husband's income. The husband was regarded as the bread winner and the bulk of the tax that a married woman and her husband were liable to pay was deducted from the wife's income.

The situation of women in Zimbabwe before independence showed that culture influenced participation of women in management and leadership positions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The leadership and gender challenges experienced by the participants in the research study mirror the assertion that one of the barriers to breaking the "glass ceiling" was the limitations due to gender roles, expectations and responsibilities to do with child bearing and motherhood.These limitations are very much influenced by the culture of the country.
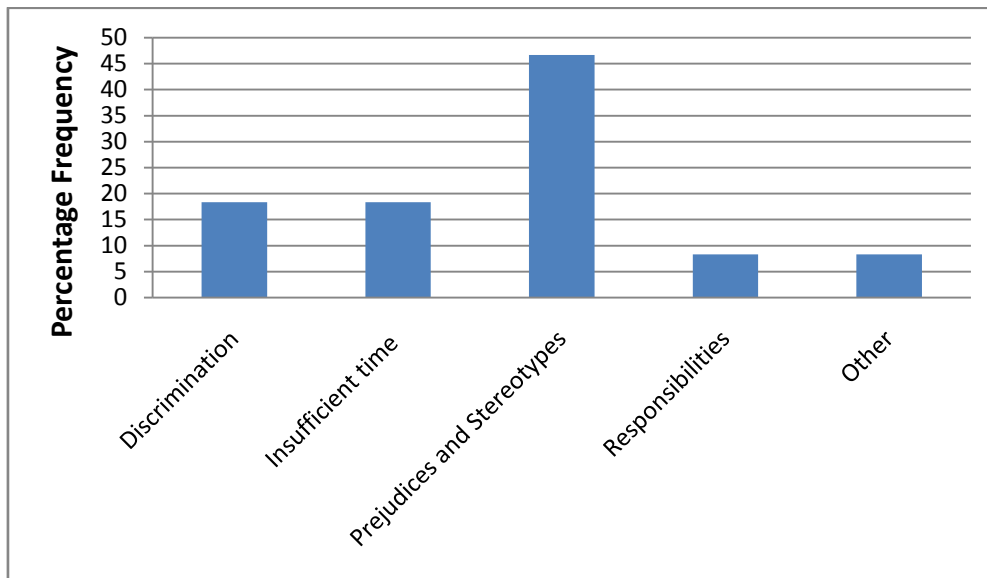
Figure 1

Figure 1 above shows that the challenges that the participants faced were mostly prejudices, discrimination, insufficient time and demanding responsibilities. A common denominator in all these challenges is the impact of culture. Findings from the research indicated that there was a gender imbalance at management level especially in the hospitality industry. There was a perception that in the hospitality industry general managers had to be male. This led to the conclusion that women were discriminated against when it came to promotion to executive management levels. Respondents also sensed a feeling of resistance from their male subordinates and male colleagues and that men were not comfortable receiving criticisms from women managers which was a clear sign of gender prejudice and stereotyping. Insufficient time to attend to family and work demands resulted in an unhealthy work life balance for the participants in the study. Time pressures made it difficult for women to attend to the various cultural demands placed upon them as married women and mothers. These demands included caring for the children, husband and extended family needs.

With reference to gender biases, prejudices and stereotyping Martin (2006) pointed out that when men call women "girls" at work, they infantilized the women and called into question women's competence and authority. This is the experience of one of the participants who was constantly referred to by her make colleagues as "that girl".

Research has shown that gender is one of the important criteria that determined an employee's position at the work place (Adler. 1994, Priola, 2004). This study has found that in the hospitality sector certain positions of management especially in operations and restaurants are quietly reserved for men as indicated in 30% of the cases.

Another barrier to breaking the "glass ceiling" is work life balance and the struggle to be taken seriously (Rapaciolli, 2012). This study confirmed the same barrier. The findings indicated as the major challenge, the insufficient time and challenges of balancing work and home expectations.

The situation of women changed after independence in 1980 when government embarked on a number of reforms to improve the status of women. The reforms relating to culture and gender affecting women in Zimbabwe are elaborated below:

1.   Equal Pay Regulation Act of 1980

Before 1980 women were paid less than their male counterparts for performing the same job and even with the same qualifications and experience. The Equal Pay Regulation Act of 1980 enabled women to enjoy equal pay as their male counterparts for performing the same job.

2.   Legal Age of Majority Act 1982

The Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982 made women and men equal before the law. Women could now make decisions in their own right without needing the approval of their husbands or guardians. They could not vote, enter into any legal contracts on their own without the approval of the guardian, father or husband.

3.   14th Amendment to section 23 of the constitution of Zimbabwe in 1996 (the Bill of Rights)

This amendment prohibits all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex and gender.

4.   Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1991)

This prohibits discrimination against women. Discrimination includes exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of their rights, irrespective of their marital status on a basis of equality with men (ZWLA, 2010).

5.   SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

Zimbabwe is signatory to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Article five of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development provides for member countries to place affirmative action measures for women in order to eliminate all barriers which prevent them from participating meaningfully in all aspects of life and create a conducive environment for such participation (ZWLA, 2010). In the spirit of this protocol political parties in Zimbabwe have adopted a quota system which has seen an increase in the representation of women in party politics but it is still below the AU and SADC 30% quota requirement and still below the 50/50 gender parity in the SADC Protocol on Gender (UNFPA, 2011).

6.   National Gender Policy (2002)

The Ministry of Women Affairs and Community Development was created by government in 1996 to oversee conditions of all gender programmes and to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all sector ministries. The Ministry's The National Gender Policy (2002) provides guidelines and the institutional framework for gender all sectoral policies, programmes, projects and activities at all levels of society and economy. To this end gender focal points were established in all ministries and parastatals to spearhead gender mainstreaming.

Zimbabwe is signatory to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Article five of the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development provides for member countries to place affirmative action measures for women in order to eliminate all barriers which prevent them from participating meaningfully in all aspects of life and create a conducive environment for such participation (ZWLA, 2010). In the spirit of this protocol political parties in Zimbabwe have adopted a quota system which has seen an increase in the representation of women in party politics but it is still below the AU and SADC 30% quota requirement and still below the 50/50 gender parity in the SADC Protocol on Gender (UNFPA, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The reforms cited in this paper have resulted in some improvement in the representation of women in the decision making levels in politics in Zimbabwe. For example in the 2005 parliament there were 34 women out of a total of 150 members and in 2012 the number had come down to 32 women in Parliament comprising 17.9% women representation (Parliamentary debates, House of Assembly Report, 2012). This is a drop in representation when compared to the start of the Global Political Agreement (GPA) in 2009 when the representation of women had increased from 13% to 20% (UNFPA, 2011). No figures are available for the representation of women in leadership and management in the private sector.

Culture influences gender roles and expectations. Culture impacts on the participation of women in management in general. The biggest challenge to the progression of women into management positions emanates from gender role expectations and responsibilities of mother, wife and manager at work. The need to strike a balance between work life and family life in itself becomes a challenge.

REFERENCES

1. Adair, J. 1984. Power differences at work: a comparison of supervision and policy makers*, Sociology Inquiry*: 357 – 55.

2. Adler, N. J. C. 1994. Competitive Frontiers: Women Managing across Borders, Journal of Management Development, Vol. 13 Iss 2: 24 – 41.

3. Adler, N. J., Doktor, R., and Redding, S.G., 1986. From the Atlantic to the Pacific: cross cultural management reviewed, *Yearly review of Management of the Journal of Management,* 12 (2): 295 – 318.

4. Alimo-Metcalfe, B. and Metcalfe, A. J. 2005. Leadership time for a new direction, *Leadership*, Vol.1 No 1: 51-71.

5. Avalio, B., Walumbwa, F., O. and Weber, T. J. 2009. Leadership current theories, research and future directions, Annual Review of Psychology, Vol. 60: 421 -49.

6. Baden, S., Ruzvidzo, T. and Reeves, H. 1999. *Gender Handbook for DFID Zimbabwe Programme,* BRIDGE, Institution of Development Studies, University of Sussex.

7. Bass, B. 1990. From transactional to transformational leadership: learning to share the vision

8.   Belle, F. 2002. Women managers and organizational power, *Women in Management Review*

9.   Bland, J. 1998. *About Gender:Definitions,* http://www.gender.org.uk/about/00_defin.htm

10. Bullough, Amanda M. 2008. "*Global Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Leadership*"

11. CSO. 2002. Zimbabwe National Accounts, Government Printers

12. Gartzia, L. Marloes van E. 2012. Are (male) leaders "feminine enough? Gendered traits of identity as mediators of sex differences in leadership styles. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, Vol.27

13. Glancy, S.2012. Pressure builds to smash the glass ceiling, *Financial Times*, www.ft.com/cms/s/02

14. GOZ, 1995. Zimbabwe First Report on The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, UNICEF.

15. GOZ, 2004*. Ministry of Women's Affairs Gender and Community Development, The National Gender Policy,* Government Printers.

16. Hofstede, G. 1980. *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work – related Values,* Sage, and Beverly Hills, CA.

17. House, R., Javidan, M., Hanges, P. and Dorfman, P. 2002. *Journal of world Business,* 37: 3-10.

18. Industrial Society 1997. Leadership – steering a new course. *Briefing Plus*, October: 4-5.

19. Lewis, D., Midland, J., Malone, S. Murphy, M. et al 2006. Appreciative Leadership: Defining Effective Leadership Methods, *Organization Development Journal*: Spring Volume 24, No1: 87.

20. Lichtenberg, R.2005. *Pitch Like Girl, Get Respect, Get Noticed, Get What you Want,* Holtzbrinck Publishers

21. Martin, P. Y. 2006. Practising Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity. *Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol.13 No. 3 May, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

22. Morrison, A. M., R. P., and Van Velsor, E. 1987. *Breaking the glass ceiling: Can women reach the top of America's largest corporations?* Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley The Centre for Creative Leadership.

23. Ogden, S.M., McTavish, D., and McKean, L. 2006. Clearing the way for gender balance in the management of UK financial services industry: Enablers and barriers*. Women in Management Review,* 21 (1), 40.

24. Parliamentary Debates House of Assembly Report, 2012.

25. Priola. V. 2004. Gender and Feminine identities – women as managers in a UK academic institution, *Women in Management Review* Vol 19, No. 8: 421-430, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

26. Rapaciolli, S. 2012. Beyond The Glass Ceiling in www.cimaplobal.com/Documents. [accessed 06/06/ 2012].

27. Rosener, J. B. 1990. "Ways women lead", *Harvard Business Review*, November – December: 119 – 25.

28. Thein, H.H., Austen S., Currie J. and Lewin E. 2010. The impact of cultural context on the perception of work/family balance by professional women in Singapore and Hong Kong, *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 10 (3):303 – 320, SAGE

29. UNDP Progress Report, 2004.

30. UNFPA. 2011. http:// country office,unfpa.org/Zimbabwe/2010/11/20/289/gender.

31. Vinkenburg, C. J.,van Engen, M. L., Eagly, A. H., Johannesen – Schmidt, M. C. 2011 *The Leadership Quarterly,* Vol. 22 Iss 1: 10 -21.

32. Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, [accessed 17 Jan 2013].

33. Zinyemba, A. 2013. *Participation of Women in Management in the Hospitality and Financial Services Sectors in Zimbabwe: Strategies For Meeting Leadership and Gender Challenges.* University of Zimbabwe, Unpublished thesis.

34. ZWLA, 2010. SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.