

Investigating Degree of Inequality in Public University Administration: The Case of Ambrose Alli University and University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Previous studies on gender equality in public universities were limited because they focused on the gender composition of the teaching and non-teaching staff. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining gender equality/inequality status of the university management staff. The focus was on Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma and University of Benin (Uniben), Benin City, both in Edo State. The study relied on secondary data on staffing from both institutions while primary data were collected using question guide administered on key informants among the management cadre of the universities. Data were analysed using percentage, means, Chi-square test of proportion and content analysis characteristic of qualitative interviews. The findings revealed gender inequality in staffing among the management staff cadre between the two institutions (AAU: male = 88.13%, female = 11.87%; Uniben: male = 75.1%, female = 24.1%). The gender differences was significant in favour of male (χ^2 : AAU = 414.47; Uniben = 422.69). Similar trend in distribution was observed among principal officers of AAU with men constituting a total average of 83.33% and women 16.67%. Major factors identified by the key informants for the gender inequality included cultural/institutional and political factors, lack of basic educational qualifications, domestic duties and lack of mentorship. The study

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recommends among others, the need for women in management positions to mentor younger women while women in tertiary institutions should be encouraged to improve on the educational qualifications.

Keywords: Gender inequality; administration; Public Universities; Ambrose Alli University; University of Benin.

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of women and the girl child have become topical issues in intellectual discourse in our contemporary society in Nigeria and the world over and emphasis have been placed on the achievements of women and their advances in all fields of human endeavours. This can be seen from the different international and national declarations, examples of which are the United Nations (UN) declaration of 1975 as the International year for Women; its declaration of the decade 1976 to 1985 as the United Nation Decade for Women; the UNESCO 1989 Abuja Conference, which emphasized the "Abuja Declaration on Participating in Development: The Role of Women in Africa in the 1990s". Other important conferences and declarations on women include: 1975 (Mexico City), 1980 (Copenhagen), 1985 (Nairobi), 1995 (Beijing). Thus, women empowerment, full participation on the basis of equality, access to power and participation in the decision-making process, are fundamental to the equity, equality, development and peace of any society.

Women constitute a little more than half the world population and make important contributions to the socio-economic development of societies; yet their involvement in political processes, where decisions on use of societal resources are made, remains minimal. The situation in Nigeria is not different. This is because the Nigeria society is essentially paternalistic in orientation, with a strong tendency to overlook women and their contributions to political, social, religious and economic activities.

If it is assumed, and rightly so, that in the pursuit of sustainable development, the people constitute a major resource that need to be effectively utilized as a precursor or precondition for development, then the neglect or exclusion of women, who form major part of the population, is dangerous and inimical to development [1]. Women play important roles in the socio-economic development of any nation. In Nigeria in particular, their contributions have been acknowledged by Fapohunda [2].

In spite of the fact that there has been considerable progress in developing the capabilities of women, their participation in economic and political decision making remains very limited. Infact, the United Nations Development Programme [3], emphasized this when it noted that in spite of considerable progress in development of women's capacities, women and men still live in an unequal world. At the national level, the government had made some attempts to address this discrepancy [4,5] as encapsulated in its programme on Women Education initiated in 1986, the Family Support Basic Education Programme (1994), Universal Basic Education (1999), development of a national policy on Women (2000) and national gender policy (2006) and the national policy on gender in education (2007).

In spite of all of these, it is still reported that women still lag considerably behind their male counterparts with regards to education, workplace staffing and management [6].

The main aim of this is to examine gender inequality in public university administration with emphasis on Ambrose Alli University (AAU) Ekpoma, and University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a) Examine the gender composition of management staff at the two universities under study;
- b) Examine factors perceived to be responsible for any gender inequality in the management cadre at the two universities under study.

The study hypothesized that there is no significant difference in gender composition of management staff in Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma (AAU) and University of Benin, Benin City (Uniben).

2. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of literature brings to light several studies on gender distribution at the workplace in

universities in Nigeria. Studies by Olaogun, Adebayo and Oluyemo [7], Adebayo and Akanle [8], Adegun [9], Ogbogu and Bisiriyu [10] and Gberevbie, Osibanjo, Adenij and Oluday [11] for example, assessed gender inequalities in the universities; but their focus was on academic staff. Other studies on gender discrepancies in staff distribution have been conducted on public tertiary institutions in Kwara and Osun States [12]. None of these were carried out in Edo State, nor was their focus, as earlier studies mentioned above, on the management system or staff cadre. However, Gbadomosi [5] studied gender discrepancies in management of tertiary institutions, but his study was limited to Ekiti State, while a similar study by Igiebor and Ogbogu [13] focused on southwest Nigeria. Furthermore, several of these studies did not account for the gender differences in the management of the universities. These are the research gaps this study addressed.

Public universities, as a workplace, is of particular interest in this study; according to Adebayo and Akanle [8], universities represent centre of new ideas and new ideals that are necessary to shape the general society. Not out of place therefore, is it if gender policies at the workplace start from this places. The universities should be models for the general society to emulate particularly with respect to how women are accorded opportunities in management positions [9]. Anya [14] opined that for any gender policy to be effective will require that women are fairly represented in leadership positions, including that of the universities. Furthermore, Johnson [15], over two decades ago, expressed concern about female representation at the workplace in higher education institutions. But the situation in present times has been described as still worrisome [16,17].

3. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Edo State with focus on the two public universities in the State, namely Ambrose Alli University (AAU), Ekpoma (a state-owned university) and the University of Benin, Benin City (a federal university). Edo State is located in the south-south geo-political zone of Nigeria. It boasts of several tertiary institutions such as polytechnics, colleges of Education and private Universities.

The study adopted descriptive and qualitative research designs. The descriptive component

was based on sourcing secondary data (i.e. gender composition of management staff) from the institutions under study while the qualitative designed entailed conducting key informant interviews with purposively selected management staff from the institutions. These constitute the target respondents of the study and included staff, both male and female, occupying management positions at the university level. In all, a total of twenty two key informants were interviewed from each institution making a total of forty two.

The interview sessions were guided by the use of a question guide which explored reasons for observed gender inequality in the management staff cadre of the university. The respondents' responses were written down after prior consent was obtained by the researcher while the analysis of the views was done using content analysis. Specifically, the qualitative responses were analysed, compared and categorized under specific themes (i.e. constraint factors). The quantitative data, obtained from the records of the university staff data base were analysed using descriptive statistics entailing frequency and percentage and graphs). Inferential statistic (i.e. Chi-square test of proportion) was employed in the testing of the formulated hypothesis.

4. ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Gender Composition of Management Staff by University

Table 1 shows the gender distribution of staff appointed as Deans, HODs and Directors, an important management structure with regards to senior management at the tertiary institutions. On the average, for AAU, the proportion of women that occupied these management positions ranged from zero percentage in 2014/15 and 2015/16 sessions to 16.85 in 2016/17 session. For Uniben, the range was 16.3% in 2017/18 session to 33.71% in 2015/16 session. Overall, for AAU, women representation accounted for as low as 11.87% of the management staff relative to that of men which was 88.13%; for Uniben, women accounted for only 24.1% of the management staff relative to men which accounted for 75.9% of the management staff. These results suggest that the level of gender inequality in staff distribution among management cadre (i.e. Deans, HODs and Directors) was high. This variability in gender composition is depicted in Fig. 1.

Table 1. Comparative Appointment of Deans, HODs and Directors in AAU and Uniben

Year	Post	Ambrose Alli University					University of Benin				
		Male		Female		Total	Male		Female		Total
		Freq	%	Freq	%		Freq	%	Freq	%	
2010/11	Deans	10	76.92	3	23.08	13	19	82.61	4	17.39	23
	HODs	60	95.24	3	4.76	63	117	90.00	13	10.00	130
	Dir.	9	81.82	2	18.18	11	31	83.78	6	16.22	37
	Sub-Total	79	90.80	8	9.20	87	167	83.50	33	16.50	200
2011/12	Deans	12	92.31	1	7.69	13	19	82.61	4	17.39	23
	HODs	61	95.31	3	4.69	64	117	90.00	13	10.00	130
	Dir.	9	81.82	2	18.18	11	45	88.24	6	11.76	51
	Sub-Total	82	93.18	6	6.82	88	181	79.74	46	20.26	227
2012/13	Deans	12	92.31	1	7.69	13	18	78.26	5	21.74	23
	HODs	58	89.23	7	10.77	65	114	87.69	16	12.31	130
	Dir.	10	90.91	1	9.09	11	48	69.57	21	30.43	69
	Sub-Total	80	89.89	9	10.11	89	180	74.38	62	25.62	242
2013/14	Deans	12	92.31	1	7.69	13	20	86.96	3	13.04	23
	HODs	57	87.69	8	12.31	65	99	76.15	31	23.85	130
	Dir.	10	90.91	1	9.09	11	50	68.49	23	31.51	73
	Sub-Total	80	89.89	9	10.11	89	169	73.80	60	26.20	229
2014/15	Deans	12	92.31	1	7.69	13	17	73.91	6	26.09	23
	HODs	53	82.81	11	17.19	64	116	89.23	14	10.77	130
	Dir.	11	100.00	0	0.00	11	55	70.51	23	29.49	78
	Sub-Total	76	86.36	12	13.64	88	188	69.12	84	30.88	272
2015/16	Deans	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	19	73.08	7	26.92	26
	HODs	55	83.33	11	16.67	66	105	80.77	25	19.23	130
	Dir.	11	100.00	0	0.00	11	53	77.94	15	22.06	68
	Sub-Total	78	85.71	13	14.29	91	177	66.29	90	33.71	267
2016/17	Deans	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	18	69.23	8	30.77	26
	HODs	53	82.81	11	17.19	64	105	80.77	25	19.23	130
	Dir.	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	45	71.43	18	28.57	63
	Sub-Total	74	83.15	15	16.85	89	168	76.71	51	23.29	219
2017/18	Deans	12	92.31	1	7.69	13	19	76.00	6	24.00	25
	HODs	57	86.36	9	13.64	66	115	88.46	15	11.54	130
	Dir.	11	84.62	2	15.38	13	56	77.78	16	22.22	72
	Sub-Total	80	86.02	13	13.98	93	190	83.70	37	16.30	227
	Aver.	Aver.	88.13		11.87		75.9		24.10		

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 2. Summary of gender composition of management staff by university

	AAU		Uniben		Pooled	
	Observed N	Expected N	Observed N	Expected N	Observed N	Expected N
Male	629	357.0	1480	1016.5	2109	1373.5
Female	85	357.0	553	1016.5	638	1373.5
Total	714		2033		2747	
Chi-square*	414.47*		422.69*		787.71*	

*Significant at 5% level (df = 1)

Source: Computed from field survey, 2018

The null hypothesis which posted a non-significant difference between the distribution of male and female management Staff in both AAU and Uniben between the time period of 2010/11 and 2017/18 academic sessions was tested

using chi-square goodness-of-fit. The results (χ^2 : AAU = 414.47; Uniben = 422.69; Pooled = 787.71) are significant at the 5% level (Table 2). This indicates that, over the years there was a statistical significant difference between the

distribution of male and female management staff at the institutional and pooled levels, with the male being significantly more in number.

4.2 Gender Composition of Principal Officers by University

Principal Officers of the university form the highest day to day decision-making organ of the university. Data for this analysis, i.e. the gender composition of the different offices since inception of the university, was only available for Ambrose Alli University. The results are presented in Table 3. The findings revealed that only two women had occupied the position of Vice chancellor in the university since its inception, constituting an overall 12.5% indicating that that the position has been dominated by males. Similarly, only 10% of those who had occupied the office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor had been women; the proportion of women that have been Registrars and Bursars of the university was 11.11% each. The only office which recorded a comparatively higher female presence was the position of the University

Librarian with a percent of 66.67%. Overall, as shown in Fig. 2, males have dominated the position of Principal offices in the university with an aggregate percent of 83.33% while females had only featured 16.67% of the times.

4.3 Perceived Factors Responsible for Low Women Representation in Management

Table 4 showed the responses of key informant interviews conducted on factors responsible for low representation of females in university administration in the surveyed universities. Seven (7) factors were identified based on the responses of the key informants. All the respondents (100%) identified “cultural/ institutional and political factors”, “lack of basic education” and “domestic duties/family demands” as important factors. Other factors identified included lack of mentorship (92.86%), lack of leadership skills (61.9%), “economic” factor (50%) and intelligence and technological” factors (16.67%).

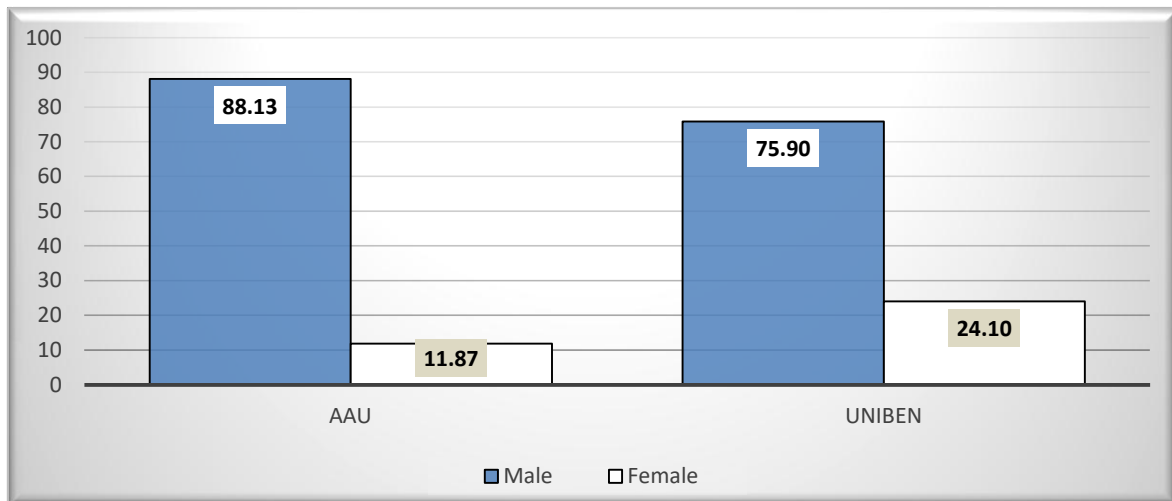


Fig. 1. Average percent distribution of appointment of Deans, HODs and Directors in AAU and Uniben

Table 3. Principal officers of the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, from inception till Date

S/No.	Position	Male		Female		Total
		Freq	%	Freq	%	
1	Vice Chancellor	14	87.5	2	12.5	16
2	Deputy Vice Chancellor	18	90	2	10	20
3	Registrars	8	88.89	1	11.11	9
4	Bursars	8	88.89	1	11.11	9
5	University Librarian	2	33.33	4	66.67	6
	Total	50	83.33	10	16.67	60

Source: Field Survey, 2018.

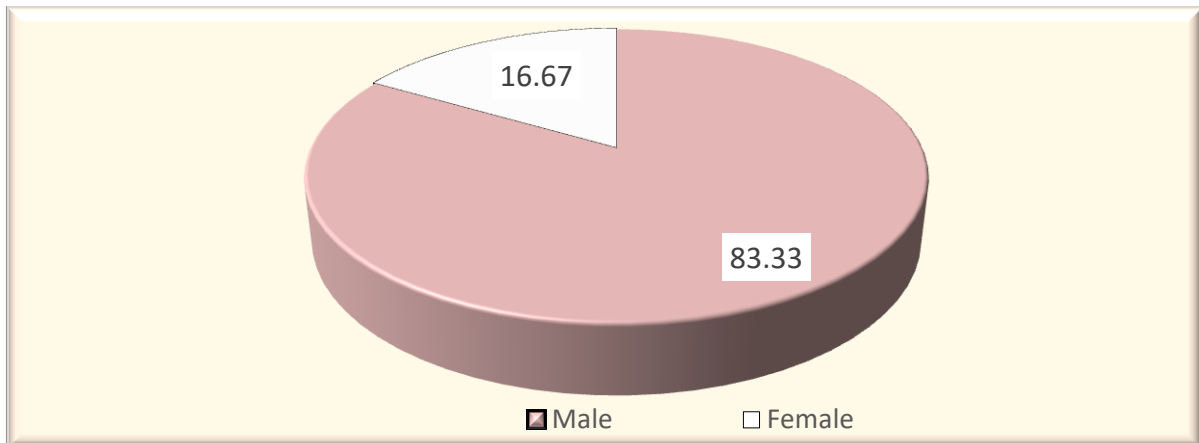


Fig. 2. Aggregate gender percent composition of principal officers of Ambrose Alli University (from Inception till Date)

Table 4. Perceived factors responsible for low women representation in senior management position in universities

Factors	AAU (n = 21)*		Uniben (n = 21)*		Pooled (n = 42)*	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Lack of basic educational qualification	21	100.00	21	100.00	42	100.00
Domestic duties/ family demand	21	100.00	21	100.00	42	100.00
Cultural/institutional and political factors limiting females	21	100.00	21	100.00	42	100.00
Lack of mentorship	21	100.00	18	85.71	39	92.86
Lack of leadership skills.	11	52.38	15	71.43	26	61.90
Economic actors impending females educational and rise in career	12	57.14	9	42.86	21	50.00
Females are not intelligent nor technological inclined	5	23.81	2	9.52	7	16.67

*Multiple response
Source: 2018 Field Survey.

Among AAU respondents, all the key informants identified lack of basic educational qualifications, domestic duties and cultural factors as important impediments to women high representation in senior management positions in the university. Female lack of intelligence and low technological competence (23.81%) was the least factor identified by AAU informants. For Uniben, all the key informants opted for lack of basic educational qualification, domestic duties and cultural factors as reasons for low women representation in the management positions. The least factor was female lack of intelligence and technological competence (9.52%).

5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The overall results indicated an unhealthy skewness in the composition of management

staff by gender in favour of men. This is poor and shows that all the factors that have been said to hamper the progress of women generally are real and present a grave danger to not just the girl-child and women, but to humanity in general. With the lack of presence of the female gender at this decision-making level of the academia, it is not surprising that the female gender continues to be short-changed in tertiary education. This aligns with the observations that women are discriminated against when it comes to leadership or administrative positions in organisations [16,17].

The results for gender composition of principal officers was only available for Ambrose Alli University. The general results showed an unequal or skewed distribution of male and female, in favour of the former. This may

possible reflect gender bias borne out of culture. In sum, the average distribution of Principal Officers by gender of the university was 83% male and 17% female. The gender imbalance in the administration of our tertiary institution is such that, women are relatively removed from decision making process of our universities. This has implications on the potential role they can play in effecting or promoting change in tertiary institutions in the country and the study area in particular. According to Kotter [18] and Egunjobi [19], individuals at the reins of power are more in the strategic position to effect changes in the society.

The key informants identified several factors responsible for the high gender imbalance in management cadre. All the respondents mentioned Cultural/Political Considerations. For example, a female respondent from Uniben noted that, *“our culture is to blame for the way we (women) are discriminated against in the society and even in this university. That is why we don’t have too many women in administrative positions in the university”*. Cultural norms and acceptance have fixed the roles of women in the society and most often, this has not changed even by the advent of modernisation Bem and Bem [20]. This sex role of the girl child to be passive and dependent has its own implications on the future ability of the girl child and also on their motivational habit and zeal to excel, seek for and readily accept responsibilities and initiate new ways of doing things.

In modern day Nigerian, the role of women in the society have been so downgraded that it has become abnormal to see a woman in certain activities, for example, women who get involved in politics are considered to be prostitutes. It was also noted that political parties do not put measures in place to encourage women at the party level. Apart from the compulsory positions of women leaders, there is nothing in the constitutions of the parties to enhance women’s participation.

Lack of requisite educational qualifications was another identified by all the informants. For example, a male respondents from AAU noted that *“women do not appear to be fully committed in pursuing higher or tertiary education, and this has seriously affected them so much that they are hardly seen occupying leadership positions”*. In similar fashion, another male respondent from Uniben, holding same view, opined that *“the low educational qualification of women has being the*

major reason why they are mostly found at the lower or junior cadre in most organisations, including the university”. A female respondents from Uniben blamed this situation i.e. of women limited educational attainment, on cultural factors saying that *“the society believe that women are supposed to take care of the home while the men go out and look for money”*. Entry qualification into the Public Service of any modern state is strictly based on merit which is a function of performance at examinations and educational qualification. Such entrants must have at least the minimum qualifications and those with maximum or enhanced qualifications have the opportunity or potential to rise to the highest level in the organisation. Female illiteracy has become a very important factor that not only isolates them from career progression but also ensure that they are mostly concentrated in low-opportunity and low mobility jobs with few prospects for upward advancement. Thus, without the requisite skills and knowledge, women become clustered in such jobs that require minimum skills and knowledge. The implication of this is that more men are therefore found in the service than women, especially in the managerial positions.

Lack of mentorship was another factor ranked high by respondents. The respondents generally agreed that mentoring is a big factor limiting the rise of women in senior management position. According to one of the people we interviewed who incidentally is a Professor,

It is not easy to mentor a woman at any stage, even when the accusation sexual harassment is not in the mix. At the stage I am now, a woman I should mentor should be married even if she is an assistant lecturer. How do you explain the chains of communication to her husband or explain to society that both of you are travelling for an academic conference or an international conference for that matter. It is by far easier to mentor a young or older man than a woman at any age or marital status.

For the women, it is a problem created by society and men themselves. A female lecturer noted that she would not mind being mentored. In her words,

The problem still lies with the men. Personally, I would love to be mentored so I can grow. But imagine a mentor

calling me at home at night or we work late in the office on papers. What would my husband or even people at work say? It is a terrible situation we (women) find ourselves in.

The problem of mentorship goes beyond this. Zulu [21] found that the even amongst the students, gender stereotypes existed. Majority of male and female students showed a preference for male leadership. This impact negatively on the rise of the female to greater heights in the academia. The greatest argument here is that the country is a patriarchal society. This basically translates to the fact that women are seen as the property of the husband. This also means that the woman has little or no rights unless she asks for her husband's permission. It thus explains some of the career constraints women face in their bid to rise to administrative cadres in the university. A woman has to thus get her husband's permission to aspire to succeed. This explains why some women suddenly withdraw from occupying certain positions in the academia and elsewhere. This impact on the rise of the female gender in administrative positions in our tertiary institutions, in line with the position of Ihimodu (2015) and Agbalajobi [22]. In fact, Ogwu [23] observed that gender differences were created and are still sustained by society through its traditional customs, conventions, norms and regulations.

It was unanimously agreed by all key informants that women are hindered by gender specific roles. A female respondent from AAU reported, concerning women, that *"we are very busy, taken care of the home, going to hospital, carrying children to and from school and other house matters; because of this, we don't have time to pursue management positions the way men do"*. These factors include prenatal visitations to the hospital, childbirth, breastfeeding and associated baby nursing activities, general babysitting and childcare. In addition to all of these, the mother and wife still needs to take care of the husband and do other household chores. This impacts heavily on the woman who, in addition need to carry out with office duties. In other words, work-life balance presents a greater challenge for the female gender than to her male counterparts. This imbalance is enough to disadvantage any woman, no matter how strong, in her bid to rise to higher administrative positions in the tertiary institutions. This supports the study by Sutherland (1985), who found that the issue of family responsibility was cited by university

women as a major source of conflict between their career and family life. Ogbogu [24] asserts that in a patriarchal society such as Nigeria, female academics are more likely than men to experience a work-family conflict involving incompatible demands. She further reveals that female academics experience a high level of work-family conflict because of the socio-cultural expectations regarding women's role in the family, as well as the lack of support and understanding of family issues at institutional levels.

Another factor identified by the respondents was economic factors i.e. lack of assets or capital or credit. This reflects the reality that women are economically less empowered than men. In many parts of Nigeria, women are not allowed to inherit property. One of the key informants even cited the Ibo tradition where women are forbidden to be around where men are discussing issues concerning landed property. Culturally, women are not allowed to share in the inheritance. This automatically places the male gender at an advantage over their female counterparts. This goes a long way in undermining women economically and in the long run, affects their academic and work pursuits.

Some of the male respondents identified lack of intelligence as a factor that should be considered. They asserted that women are not aware of modern technologies and facilities, and that even when they are, they are not conversant with them. One male respondent buttressed his argument with the fact that women generally shy away from science and technologically oriented courses, stating that *"you fine women and the girl child mostly in social sciences and home-based subjects such as Home Economics"*. On the other hand, most of the female respondents however, argued and disagreed with this stating that women are not readily exposed to modern technology because of gender stereotyping. They insisted that girls and women who venture into sciences and technologically oriented courses sometimes come out tops in their classes.

6. CONCLUSION

The major thrust of this research was to assess gender status of management staff of public tertiary institutions in Edo State. Available data revealed a huge and significant skewness in gender distribution in the surveyed institutions.

Some factors were identified as being responsible for this, hence, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Parents should be enlightened and encouraged to support the formal education of their girl-child. The acquisition of this has long term implication on the child and women self-motivation to seek higher responsibilities and management positions at their place of work.
2. There is need to have in place gender-equity policies in the tertiary institutions. Such policies should specify the minimum proportion of women that must be appointed into management positions.
3. Women in existing management positions should be encouraged to provide mentorship to younger female staff in order to deepen the later leadership capacity and motivation to seek management positions.
4. Parents and the society in general, should de-emphasize gender socialization that prevents female or women from acquiring scientific and technological skills.
5. To tackle the perceived financial constraints that may hinder women acquisition of formal education, scholarships should be targeted at the girl-child or women as an encouragement for parents to send them to school or to deliberately seek to improve their educational qualifications.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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