

Exploring the Implication of Gender Balance and the Factors Affecting Women's Attainment to Top Leadership Positions in Organization

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Abstract: Underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions in organizations is a global phenomenon. Though studies show an increase in the number of women pursuing higher education globally (Catalyst, 2020) and approximately 47.1% of women have employment globally as well (International Labor Organization, 2014a), yet the obvious reality is that only few women occupy top leadership positions globally. This article reviews the implications of gender balance in leadership in organizations, discusses the leadership theory and leadership styles that serve as bedrock to this article, explains the apparent factors affecting women's attainment to top leadership positions in organization (Individual, Socio-cultural and Organizational Factors) and it concludes by highlighting the need to eliminate or mitigate the effects of these factors so that more women can attain to top leadership positions in organizations.

Keywords: Top leadership, Women, Organization, Patriarchy, Female Education, Social Role Theory, Transformational Leadership Style, Democratic Leadership style

Purpose: The purpose of this article is to present the implications of gender balance leadership in organizations and the factors that affect women's attainment to top leadership positions with the aim of highlighting the need to eliminate or mitigate the effects of these factors, in order to enhance the attainment of women into top leadership positions of the organizations.

Limitation Of The Study: The benefits of having women in top leadership positions and the factors that affect women's attainment to top leadership positions in organizations presented in this article are not exhaustive, many more benefits and factors are still available in the literature but the author has included few of them necessary within the scope of this article.

I. INTRODUCTION:

In recent times women assuming leadership positions is no longer a taboo as more women are assuming both political and corporate leadership roles, thus the researchers and scholars have shifted their research questions from whether a woman can lead to whether there is a difference between how male and female lead (Northhouse, 2018). Despite the progress women have made in leadership, it is obvious that "women leaders are strikingly low in every sector of the government and economy" (Bierema, 2016, p.1). Indeed, women who are CEOs of the world's largest corporations are very few and women who occupy senior roles globally represent only 29%, less than a third (Catalyst, 2020). In order

to remedy this situation it is important to portray the benefits of having women at the top leadership in the organizations and to be aware of the factors that affect the attainment of women to top leadership positions in order to eliminate or mitigate their effects so that more women can reach top leadership positions in the organizations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW:

This section reviews related literature on the leadership theory and leadership styles pertaining to women in leadership, the benefits of gender balance in an organization, and the factors that affect women's attainment to top leadership positions.

A- Theories and Leadership Styles Related to Women in Leadership

There are important theories that relate to women and their involvement in leadership and some leadership styles that are particular to women leaders. One of such theories is the social role theory, developed by Alice Eagly (1987) and selected leadership styles are transformational leadership style and democratic leadership style. Organizational performance (that is attainment of church mission) depends largely on the success of the leadership, informed by the leadership styles of the leaders in the organization (Nagendra & Farooqui, 2016). This section discusses the researches on social role theory and the two selected leadership styles concerning women and leadership.

Social role theory.

The social role theory posits that the behavioral differences between women and men stem from cultural stereotypes about gender. These gender role beliefs represent social roles in the society in which people live (Eagly & Wood, 2012). For example, a set of behaviors, traits, or actions that society associates with being female or male define gender roles.

These roles are organized so that women act as caregivers and men assume the role of primary providers, which often includes occupations and roles that involve leadership skills (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

These sex differences and similarities in behaviour that are essentially attributed to the societal stereotypes about gender

influence the type of employment of men and women as well. Men are generally attributed with agentic qualities such as assertiveness, outspokenness, forcefulness and ability to take control while women are attributed with communal qualities such as nurturing and caretaking (Alqahtani, 2019). Leadership roles are ascribed to men because of these agentic qualities, therefore women are not seen as qualified to be leaders. This theory is relevant for this study in that it poses a real issue which is based on stereotype that influence the representation of women in top leadership positions.

Transformational leadership style.

Transformational leadership style first emerged from the classic work of James M. Burns in the 1970s and it was later developed by Bernard M. Bass in 1980s (Northouse, 2018). It involves bringing out the best in the followers that eventually leads to high organizational performance as confirmed in the research of Almutairi, (2015). Transformational leaders “look beyond their own interests to act for the good of the organization” and they use certain techniques to achieve their goals such as “attributed charisma, idealized influence, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration” (Flynn, 2019, p. 2). According to Kark, Waismel-Manor, and Shamir (2012), transformational leaders score higher in communal factor of showing benevolence and being considerate to followers and they promote collective goals. These characteristics are attributed to female leaders.

Recent researches have confirmed that female leaders display more of transformational leadership (Stempel, Rigotti & Mohr, 2015; Flynn, 2019; Sharif, 2019). The research of Saint-Michel (2018) “suggests that in the French context transformational leadership is perceived by followers as a particularly congenial style for female leaders” (p. 959). Transformational leadership has been often associated with women leaders because they are more prone to transform their followers’ feelings of self-interest into achieving the best for the organization. Women leaders generally display characteristics of collaboration and socialization, which is the motivation for transformational leadership (Northouse, 2018). According to Lammers and Gast (2017) women exhibit more people skills such as an increased cooperativeness in their leadership, display more empathy and good communication skills, which are integral parts of transformational leadership seen as very important in effective leadership of 21 centuries.

Organizations that practice gender diversity and inclusion in their top leadership tend to flourish better (Warren, Donaldson, Lee, Donaldson, 2019) because female leaders bring more of transformational leadership style that can enhance organizational performance. Therefore, this study explores women’s involvement in top leadership of the West-Central Africa Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and how it impacts the performance of the church in terms of the achievement of the mission of the church.

Democratic leadership style

White and Lipitti conceptualized the term democratic leadership in the 1960s (Terzi & Derin, 2016). Democratic leadership has two essential components, namely structures (enabling) and agency (participative and empowering) as suggested by Wood (2020). Democratic leadership is considered as the “most desirable type of leadership in management of political science and basic right”. It involves consulting the subordinates before a decision is made, minimizing the use of command when supervising the subordinates, allowing skilled subordinates to plan the details of their work, allowing for decency and decentralization, seeking for and accepting plurality of opinions, and encouraging teamwork (Allafchi, 2017, p. 170). Because of these aforementioned characteristics of democratic leadership, Terzi and Derin (2016) perceive it as an effective leadership style. Likewise, Iqbal, Anwar, and Haider (2015) consider democratic leadership as the best leadership style. This leadership style enhances organizational productivity because of the positive work attitude of the team members (Chukwusa, 2019; Meydita, Puspitaningtyas, & Murdiastuti, 2021).

Some literatures consider female leaders to exhibit democratic leadership more than the male leaders. Subathra (2019) affirmed that female leaders are democratic leaders. Likewise, female employees prefer democratic leadership styles. A study about female employees’ preference between autocratic and democratic leadership styles in Afganistan revealed that “female employees, highly educated employees, employees with extensive work experience, employees working in creative departments, and those with higher salaries prefer democratic leadership style” (Sadat, 2013, p.7). According to Klenke (2018), female leaders are “often consensus builders, conciliators and collaborators” in the contemporary organizations (p. 10), which constitute the main characteristics of democratic leadership style. Herrera, Duncan, Green, Skaggs (2012) reported researches on the perception of male and female managers on what constitutes leadership roles; It is noted that female managers “view collaborative and consensus building as crucial components of leadership” (p. 41). Democratic leadership style is important when studying women in leadership.

B- Implications of Gender Balance in Leadership

Recent researches have shown that both men and women can lead effectively though using different leadership styles (Mahanta, 2012; Mammadou, 2019). Some studies have also indicated that female representation in top management positions and in organizational boards enhances organizational performance (Dezső & Ross, 2012; Chen, Leung, & Evans 2018; Flabbi, Macis, Moro & Schivardi, 2019).

Researchers and scholars have carefully identified the leadership effectiveness of both men and women and their discoveries are beneficial to the organizations that consider the issue of gender balance in leadership serious. Though both

male and female leaders can lead effectively, it is still obvious that there are gender differences in leadership styles (Book, 2000). Researches have shown that women leaders use more of democratic and participative style of leadership than men (Engen & Willemsen, 2004). Women leaders are found to practice more of transformational leadership than men and they utilize more contingent reward behavior than men as well (Northouse, 2018).

Moreover, contemporary research also reveals the possibility of the influence of gender difference on the values held by leaders which can in turn affect how male and female lead (Eagly, 2013). One example of such is the fact that women more than men emphasize values that are socially based which enhance the welfare of other people in a very positive way, and this has a positive bearing upon leadership behaviors in organizations especially philanthropic ones (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005; Williams, 2010).

It is also observed by the researchers that gender differences account for the fact that women and men are more successful in leadership roles that are compatible with their gender (Eagly, 2013). Which means men are more effective in leadership roles that are masculinized such as military positions while women are more successful in leadership roles less masculinized such as education and social service organizations (Northouse, 2018). There may be an exception to this fact.

Concerning motivation to lead and commitment to employment, both women and men have the same level of commitment and they both consider their work as subordinate to their role in the family (Thoits, 1992). The contrast between men and women leaders according to Bowles & McGinn (2005) is that men are more likely than women to promote themselves for leadership positions, and women are more likely to prefer the use of facilitator or organizer than the use of leader (Fletcher, 2001). Another important point reveal in research is that women are less likely to negotiate and to self-promote themselves than men (Small, Gelfand, Babcock & Gettman, 2007), which reduces power struggle and fight for positions. Men have the tendencies to struggle more for higher positions.

In light of all the researches concerning the leadership styles, leadership values and effectiveness of both female and male leaders, it is obvious that male and female leaders are complementary to one another in leadership. The Strength balances the weaknesses of gender differences to enhance ultimate effectiveness in leadership. The discrepancy between the female and male leadership is reducing drastically because "leader roles become more androgynous and women become more agentic" (Northouse, 2018, p.604).

C-Factors Affecting Women's Involvement in Top Leadership

Many factors have been identified globally as barriers to women's adequate representation in top leadership. In the research carried out by Amondi (2011) on the

representation of women in the top educational leadership position in Kenya, organizational factors are the most significant factors hindering women from ascending to the top educational management positions, followed by socio-cultural and individual factors. In this section, three categories of factors are identified to affect women's mobility to top leadership within the scope of this study. These are; Individual factors (female education, negative perception about women, negative attitudes towards women), Socio-Cultural factors (male dominance/patriarchy, stereotype/prejudice, work and family conflict, lack of role models/mentors), and Organizational factors (employment discrimination, Queen Bee syndrome, glass ceiling, and sexual harassment).

Individual Factors

These refer to factors that hinder women's involvement in top leadership that are solely dependent on individuals, including women themselves

Female education

An important factor that seems to affect the representation of women in top leadership is the issue of female education. Girls often experience unequal access to education when compared to their male counterparts, whereas "education places women in a better position to organize their lives according to their intentions" (Lutz, 2017, p. 28). In many countries of the world, girls still have an averagely low level of educational attainment than boys especially when it comes to secondary and tertiary levels (Wodon, Male, Montenegro, Nguyen & Onagoruwa, 2018). In rural areas many girls do not have access to primary school education, which is the basis needed to know how to read and write. Sometimes the parents ignore the need for the female children to attend school, thus obliging them to take care of domestic chores while the male children go to school.

When female children attend school, they easily become dropouts when circumstances are not favorable. International Monetary fund (2021, para. 6) affirms that "girls are less likely than boys to complete secondary education" in Sub-Sahara Africa. Thus, the societies loose girls who could have scaled through educational systems to have higher degrees that qualify them for better employment that can facilitate reaching the top leadership positions in the society. However, other researches such as Eagly and Carli (2007) are suggesting an upper edge for women in university educational degree earning.

There is an improvement in the area of girl's education, especially at the graduate level where it is noted that majority of the university graduates are now women (Global Education Monitoring Report Gender Review, 2018). Despite this improvement, statistics show that among girls who are enrolled in primary school only a small portion will actually complete secondary school in many countries. This is due to many factors including poverty, violence, child

marriage, lack of schools and the effect of Covid-19 that has closed many schools, leaving children with limited access to remote learning opportunities (The World Bank, 2021). According to UNWOMEN (2012), two-thirds of the 796 million adults who are illiterate in the world are women. Therefore, if nothing is done to mitigate these factors against girls' education, it may eventually affect the number of women in the workforce and by extension to the representation of women in the top leadership positions.

The notion of 'pipeline problem' was formerly seen as a barrier to women in leadership. This term refers to a lack of qualified women to occupy leadership positions mainly because of educational qualifications (Northouse, 2018). However, the reality of nowadays whereby there are increased number of women who earn more bachelors and master's degree than men do, and even more doctorate degree than men (American Association of University Women, 2016) nullify this notion of "pipeline problem. The best way of putting the problem facing underrepresentation of women in leadership is rather the leakage of the pipeline because qualified women with academic qualifications are present in many organizations and yet they are not considered for elite leadership positions. Even in Australia, a country that is known to be world number one in rank for female education for 10 years now (Evans, Haussegger, Halupka & Rowe, 2018) is still faced with under-representation of women in the top leadership positions such as senior executive positions (Chief Executive Women, 2020).

Perceptions on women in top leadership.

Different people including women themselves have different perceptions about women in top leadership, which influence the ascension of women into top leadership positions or even undermine the influence of women leaders who are already at the top. Research conducted by Prime, Carter and Welbourne (2009) confirmed this assertion, as it revealed that senior managers perceived that women in key leadership positions are more inclined to care-taking leader behaviors while men leaders are more effective at action-oriented leader behaviors. This perception simply implies that women leaders are not taking charge of the responsibilities of the leadership positions they hold. This is detrimental to women in top leadership. In addition, an explanation given to women's underrepresentation in school headship positions is the perceptions that women have low self-esteem, and that they lack self-confidence (Sam, Amartel, Osei Owusu & Antobre, 2013); but these perceptions seem not to have any reasonable basis.

In certain contexts, leadership is traditionally considered as masculine enterprise with specific challenges and drawbacks for women, but this perception has been challenged through the study on how women lead. Eagly and Carli (2007) reported that though both men and women lead similarly in most cases yet there are slightly differences in how they behave. Therefore, women like men can lead

effectively. In their research on the factors influencing the underrepresentation of women in the top leadership positions of sport organizations, Aman, Yusof, Ismail, and Razali (2018) discovered among other things, that the factors attributed to social perceptions of gender and leadership roles incongruence serve to impede women's progress to top leadership in organizations

Attitude.

Out of individual factors that affects women's involvement in leadership is the attitude towards women in leadership as well as women's own attitude, which is more pertinent. People's attitude towards women in leadership can be positive or negative. Other women's attitude to a woman leader may not be favorable as well. In a research by Buchanan, Warning and Tett (2012), it is observed that women workers showed bias against female bosses and they prefer to have male bosses than to have female as their bosses, which is not the same among male workers. This may be a backlash to women leaders, whose leadership styles go contrary to the female stereotypic roles. Oftentimes women leaders are expected to be kind and cooperative as women and at the same time to be assertive and competitive as leaders. Women leaders find themselves in "role incongruity" dilemma (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This kind of attitude lacks support for women in leadership and it serves as a barrier to women's upward mobility

It is believed that some women do not want power or do not seek leadership positions, maybe they lack self-confidence or due to fear of criticism or fear of failure or simply because they do not want to go through the stress of leadership (Amondi, 2011). There are women who will simply reject any offer to leadership positions for personal reasons. They cannot imagine themselves to become leaders. This type of attitude of not seeing oneself capable to be a leader serves as a serious threat to the future of women leaders (Christman 2012). For Cook and Glass (2013), women's lack of assertiveness and spirit of competition constitute a setback for reaching top leadership positions. Amondi (2011) also remarked that "women are generally more concerned than are men about how they are perceived by others in their group" (p. 61), which accounts for the attitude of women to refrain from leadership.

Lack of motivation of women constitute another women's attitude that militate against women representation in top leadership. Research of Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) was one of the earlier studies that indicated that lack of motivation for women in management is one of the barriers to female representation to top leadership. Women need motivation by believing in themselves as capable of assuming leadership roles.

Socio-Cultural Factors

These refer to factors hindering women's involvement in top leadership affected by cultural norms and context, as well as

factors that stem from social relationships and interactions with others.

Male dominance/patriarchy.

In many societies of the world, male dominance can easily be noticed whereby men take control of the public sphere, make decisions and women only play subordinate roles. Male dominance and patriarchy are used interchangeably. As Bishop (2015) pointed out, patriarchy is “any form of structural organizations—be it social, tribal, familial, political, religious, or others – in which there is an unequal distribution of authority based on gender, with favorability given to male” (p. 1), which is of two types, overt patriarchy and systemic one. Overt patriarchy as an explicit and unhidden expression of discrimination against gender, notably against women, while systemic patriarchy is often associated to developed societies that diffuse the patriarchal attitude under the surface of society even as it seems progress against women’s discrimination is happening. Furthermore, Sultana (2012) alluded to Patriarchy as the “prime obstacle to women’s advancement and development (p. 1), whereby men dominate women by giving absolute priority to themselves and limit women’s right. Likewise, Makama (2013) argues that patriarchal society provides the basis for women’s structurally unequal positions both in private and public spheres, and it serves as a determinant of male dominance over female.

Some researches point to patriarchy as a key element that hinder the upward mobility of women to top leadership positions. Patriarchy is “male dominance in the position of authority” (Johnson, 2005, p. 5). An example is found in the article written by Adams (2014) which presented the result of a research on women’s experiences of patriarchy in a particular Higher Education Institution, it is observed that patriarchy truly affects women’s upward mobility and even prevents them from getting their deserved promotion at work. This has a great impact on the emotional and intellectual wellbeing of the female employees in the institution studied. In another research carried out in Pakistan on barriers to women’s representation in academic excellence and positions of power, Yousaf & Schmiede (2017) reported that patriarchy among other factors, contribute to keeping women in lower organizational positions irrespective of their qualifications and education, because the organizations simply prefer to appoint males as heads. Therefore, patriarchy fosters male dominance that makes many organizations hostile to the upward mobility of women to top leadership.

Stereotypes/prejudice.

Another known barrier to women’s progress to the top leadership positions is the stereotype/prejudice. The society has stereotypic roles assigned to male different from females and it is expected of each gender to abide with these roles; these are called social norms. Unfortunately, these gender stereotypes are detrimental to women’s realization of their full potentials (Batool, 2016). According to Bierema

(2016), varied expectations and behaviors of men and women created by different societies are only rooted in stereotypes. Stereotypes classify the behaviors and roles expected as appropriate for women different from men, communal qualities that include nurturing and caring are attributed to women while agentic qualities such as assertiveness and outspokenness are attributed to men (Bauer, 2012). Violation to these expected social norms by a woman meets with disapproval and critics that contribute to affect female representation in leadership. Domestic responsibilities are seen as primarily the work of women, therefore, any position or job that infringes on these fundamental duties of women are frowned at in most societies. Thus, women face greater level of conflict to manage work and home because of these disproportionate responsibilities they assume for domestic duties (Hoyt, 2010).

The social stereotypic roles of women consist of being helpful, emotional, kind; sympathetic which constitute communal qualities of a woman, while the gender stereotypic roles are the ability to control, being forceful, direct and independent from others, which are considered agentic qualities (Alqahtani, 2019). These stereotypes constitute societal barriers to women’s upward mobility to top leadership because these leadership positions are already caged in the attributed social roles to be accessed only by men with agentic qualities. Any attempt by a woman to exercise her leadership skills is considered as a violation of the social norm and the woman is misjudged and mistreated in the society. According to gender stereotypes, women leaders are either feminine, warm and incompetent or masculine, cold and competent. It is believed that a woman leader cannot be competent and friendly at the same time (Madden, 2011). Therefore, when women leaders display characteristics that are different from the perceived characteristics that their leadership position demands, they are subjected to biased evaluations as leaders (Saint-Michel, 2018).

In a research carried out by Raja (2015) in Pakistan on the barriers to women’s representation in senior management positions, the result showed that stereotypes about the roles of women play a major role in preventing women from the position of senior management. The study further reveals that women are more associated with teaching profession, which the societal norm accepts to be related to family training that a woman needs to take care of, but sees senior management roles as authority that is solely for men. Prejudices are biases that many people carry about gender roles in the society. These biases have their impact on what is expected as acceptable work and positions of both men and women. Yousaf & Schmiede (2017) note that prejudices make people to expect “greater competence from men than from women, and thus to expect greater rewards to go to men” this reduce the interest of many men on information that undermines expectation based on gender (p. 4).

Work and family conflict.

According to Sandberg (2013), the most challenging obstacle in the way of women desiring top leadership positions is the challenge of balancing work and home responsibilities. It is even worse for women who are single parents to navigate between the work and home responsibilities (Hess & Kelly, 2015). In the research carried out by Shankar (2010) about what women themselves perceive as hindrances to the ascension to leadership positions, homework balance seems to be the uppermost though many women with high educational background perceive themselves to possess management capabilities. An employee is perceived in an organization as committed and seen due for promotion as a result of his or her level of sacrifice (especially long hours of work) to get the job done and the priority given to the job above personal and other things (Hejase, Haddad, Hamdar, Massoud, Fahra, 2013). Women with family especially with younger children find it difficult to make such sacrifice on continual basis for fear of losing their family. In addition, networking with team to develop expertise is also necessary and requires time, which most professional women with families find difficult to juggle with domestic responsibilities. According to Rose & Hartmann (2008), women than men are more likely to spend time out of the workforce and to work irregularly because they are the primary care takers of the home.

Another barrier to women's upward mobility to top leadership position is identified as "Jobs that lack family-sensitive employee benefits (such as, paid pregnancy leave, paid parental leave, paid days off for caring for infants and sick children, and provision of on-site or other child care)" (Hejase et al., 2013). Laughlin (2011) remarks that women who do not have access to paid leave at work are more likely to quit the job than those who have access to paid leave. Unfortunately, as the workplace's responsibilities increase so the domestic obligations for women increase as well which is not the same for the male counter at the same workplace; women therefore carry the huge burden of care and home responsibilities (Hochschild & Machung, 2012). For these reasons, some women prefer to forgo having children so as to pursue their career. Friedman (2013) reported that the number of graduates both men and women who choose to have children has dropped to about half in the last two decades. Some people prefer to opt out of parenthood instead of compromising their career goals because they are "faced with the challenges of being a dual-career couple" (Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, & White, 2015, p. 67).

Lack of role models/mentors.

Role models and mentors are necessary for aspiring leaders to learn and to gain leadership experiences. They also serve as support network for the aspiring leaders. Hewlett, Peraino, Sherbin, and Sumberg (2010) confirmed that the social capital gained from networking with significant leaders is more vital to climb leadership ladder than even job

performance. In addition, professional relationships in which mentors serve as sponsors to share status and opportunities with their mentees are seen as more beneficial than the traditional mentorship (Catalyst, 2011). When there are no senior role models to serve as mentors for aspiring women leaders they face some sort of hindrances to attain and remain in top leadership positions" (Hannum et al., 2015). Glover (2010) remarks that there are fewer women in the top academic ladder, thereby making it difficult for the aspiring woman to find female colleagues who will mentor and supervise her or serve as a role model to her.

Organizational Factors

These refer to factors that pertain to actions in the workplace that hinder women's involvement in top leadership.

Employment Discrimination.

Employment of women in organizations remains a serious issue globally. Though the employment of women has increased nowadays, yet situational factors, including objectivity in hiring and promotion have an impact on the upward mobility of women in an organization (Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, & Webster 2009). If there are objective standards for hiring that are not biased against any gender, people will be hired based on their qualifications irrespective of their gender, and this will open doors for qualified women to be employed (Keohane, 2014). This same fact goes for promotion—objective promotion standards in an organization will also favor any qualified person in his or her ascension to top leadership positions irrespective of their gender. This is substantiated with the researches that when there are objective hiring standards and enough time is spent in management position that offer necessary experiences, an employee can easily get to top leadership positions (Kellerman & Rhode, 2014).

The discrimination against women in the employment and in workplace forms the basic barrier for the upward mobility of women into top leadership positions. Discrimination against women concerning employment is increasing at an alarming rate in many countries of the world, though "issues relating to discrimination against women on the labor market have been addressed by international institutions for over 60 years" (Zwiech, 2011, p. 52). World Values Survey cited by the UNICEF (2006) reveals the men's discriminatory attitudes towards women as related to employment, that more than 50% of men (from 4 countries in sub-sub-Saharan African) agreed or strongly agreed that "when jobs are scarce men should have more right to a job than a woman" (p. 6).

In addition, Healey (2014) also noted that only "40 out of every 100 wage-earning jobs in the non-agricultural sector were held by women in 2011 globally" (p. 6). Whereas, United Nations, the first international organization to raise issues regarding discrimination against women, has incorporated women's right related to employment in 'The

Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women' (CEDAW) of December 1979. This includes the right to permanent employment with equal working conditions, equal remuneration for work of equal value and right to promotion at work among other rights (Zweich, 2011).

Another term for gender inequality in the workplace is gender discrimination. According to the World Health Organization (2021, p.1), "gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other." Simply put, "gender is the social elaboration of biological sex" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013, p. 2). Gender equality occurs when both men and women at workplace access and enjoy the same rewards, resources, and opportunities (Healey, 2014). But this is not often the case in many workplaces, whereas "research suggests that organizations that respect and value the diversity brought by both women and men are better able to attract and retain high performers and improve operational performance" (p. 32).

Queen bee syndrome

Aspiring women often face the challenge of less women's opportunity for career support from a few women who are in top leadership because of what is commonly termed as "queen bee" syndrome that stems from the effects of systemic bias (Derks, Van Laar & Ellemers 2016). "Queen Bee" phenomenon has appeared in literature as early as in 1970s. Staines, Tavis, and Jayaratne (1974) describe it as a label given to women who uniquely pursue their own success in male-dominated organizations or work settings. They do so by assimilating to male leadership characteristics as they climb leadership ladder, by distancing themselves from other women especially subordinates either physically or psychologically, and by legitimizing gender hierarchy (Derks et al., 2016).

Sobczak (2018) defines queen bees as women who are in top leadership positions but who fail to help and support other women to grow and reach their professional height. The women labelled as queen bees see themselves than other women who have not reached their level of professional achievements as being more ambitious, agentic and more willing to sacrifice for their careers (Derks, 2017). Therefore, they feel more superior to other women. This phenomenon serves as a serious hindrance to women as they navigate their way to the top leadership. The queen bee syndrome has a serious negative effect on the women labelled as such in that it will prevent them from having the support of their younger women subordinates to be effective leaders while it also blocks the career advancement of younger women (Derks et al., 2016).

Glass ceiling.

Gender inequality is often associated with the notion of "the glass ceiling", which is explained as "an invisible

upper limit in corporations and other organizations, above which it is difficult or impossible for women to rise in the ranks" (Lewis, 2019, p. 1). It was coined in 1986 by the Wall Street Journal on corporate women by Hymowitz and Schellhardt (Stephen and Shashi, 2018); it is a "concept that most frequently refers to barriers faced by women who attempt, to attain senior positions (as well as higher salary levels) in corporations, government, education and non-profit organizations (p. 2).

The glass ceiling is a reflection of a job inequality that cannot be explained despite a person's qualification and achievement, it is labor discrimination and it denotes a gender difference that cannot be supported by other job-relevant qualifications (Cotter, 2001). The research by Channar, Abbassi & Ujan. (2011) revealed that women than men are discriminated more in private sectors than in public sector; that this discrimination results in low level of satisfaction and motivation as well as low level of commitment and enthusiasm of the employees, increasing the stress level of the employees.

Sexual harassment

In many organizations, the work environment is very hostile to women. Women sometime face the challenge of sexual harassment that impedes their career's success. Hill, Miller, Benson and Handley (2016) ascertain that "many women's experiences in business, education, and politics are profoundly affected by sexual harassment) (p. 17). Even though both men and women are sexually harassed at workplace, Hersch (2015) affirmed that women are the majority of victims according to the International survey data. According to Hentze and Tyus (2021), the law in the US equates sexual harassment to sex discrimination and it applies to government and labor organizations as well as private employer with 15 or more employees.

Sexual harassment in the workplace constitutes one of the most challenging situation one can face in the workplace, even though many cases of sexual harassment are not reported officially (Equality and Human Right Commission, 2020). It includes "unwelcome sexual advances, inappropriate touching, and forms of sexual assault, sexual jokes, displaying pornographic photographs or drawings, or sending emails with material of a sexual nature" (para. 2). McLaughlin, Uggan and Blackstone (2012) explained that sexual harassment does not necessarily due to sexual desire but it can serve as an "equalizer against women in power, motivated by more of control and domination" (p. 1).

D- Suggestions on How to Mitigate/Eliminate the Effects of Factors Affecting Women's Attainment to Top Leadership in Organization

In order to achieve gender balance in organizational leadership, there is a need for a significant organizational reform to eliminate or mitigate the effects of the factors affecting women's attainment to top leadership positions. In order to eliminate or mitigate the Individual Factors, training

and awareness program need to be organized while Family-Benefits incentives in addition to training and awareness will be necessary to eliminate or mitigate the effects of Socio-Cultural Factors. In the same vein, new organizational culture, quota system, leadership opportunities and career development will be needed to mitigate or eliminate organizational factors. The following suggestions will go a long way to help the organizations who are keen in achieving gender balance in their top leadership:

Change in Organizational Culture

Each organization has its own culture, that is, the way of doing business. Culture is defined as a norm, a custom or a way of life particular to a group of people, which accounts for their uniqueness (Northouse, 2018). Change in organizational culture by intentionally including more women in top leadership will entail a serious paradigm shift. This is possible as the current leadership understands and accepts the fact the positive implication of gender balance in the organizations. The leadership itself ought to own this fact first. Then, the next step will be to engage in series of training and discussions that will enlighten all the stake holders about the need to involve more women in top leadership in the organization. Firmness and perseverance on the part of the leadership will overcome any barrier that can be presented against this organizational change.

Providing Opportunities for Women's Leadership Roles

Many qualified women do not have opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills because they were not given leadership opportunities. It is important for any organization that considers the issue of gender balance as important to deliberately provide opportunities for qualified women to assume leadership roles whereby their competence and skills will be put to action. Women can also be given opportunities as team leaders, to conduct seminars, to present papers and to lead in all capacities. In addition, qualified women should have the opportunities to compete with men for all leadership positions so their leadership skills and competences will grow as they see the opportunities for exercising them. Creating such an environment in the workplace will make women to strive in leadership roles (Power, 2018)

The Use of Gender Quota for Leadership Positions

The use of quota has a significant impact to bridge the women's involvement gap in leadership. The research carried out to explore the effect of the Norwegian gender quota of 40% on the likelihood of women assuming the top leadership roles of board chairs and corporate CEOs by Wang and Kelan (2013) indicated an increased representation of women leaders which in turn provides an open door for more women to access top leadership positions. This is an evidence that when a gender quota is established, it encourages a conscious determination to include women in leadership. Therefore, there is a need for the organizations that what to

consider involving more women in top leadership to determine a quota that will enhance more women's involvement in top leadership of the organization.

However, the gender quota will not have any effect nor respected if it is not incorporated into the policies of the organization. There is a need to incorporate changes to policies and to officially and legitimately open doors for women to be nominated into the top leadership of the organization. Changes to policies in addition to trainings is a powerful tool to bridge the gender gap in any organization (Grausz & Mahesri, 2018).

Career Development and Effective Mentoring Opportunities

Researches have proven that women have fewer career developmental opportunities because of the prejudice against them (Northouse, 2018). It is also noted that women are less likely than men to receive appropriate formal job training and to have access to key networks that can help in career development (Knoke & Ishio, 1998). This is a reality in some organizations. Many of the scholarships given for higher education and for job development are given to men, thereby decreasing the chance of women getting formal job training necessary to access top leadership positions.

Therefore, there is a need to give equal career development and mentoring opportunities to women by attributing scholarships for them to gain higher education degrees and intentionally involving women in various trainings and key networks of mentoring if truly women are to be fitted for top leadership positions in the organizations.

III. CONCLUSION

Women are underrepresented in top leadership positions according to the literature reviewed. In order to remedy this problem there is a need to understand the implications of gender balance in leadership in organizations that show the benefits the organization gains by having both men and women in top leadership. The main factors affecting women's attainment into top leadership positions are individual factors, socio-cultural factors and organizational factors. Elimination or mitigation of the effects of these factors will help to solve the problem of underrepresentation of women in top leadership and hence enhance the organizational performance and benefits.

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