

An Empirical Study of Gender Discrimination and Employee Performance among Academic Staff of Government Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract—Research has shown that a recruitment policy devoid of gender discrimination enhances employee performance in an organization. Previous studies in Nigeria show that gender discrimination against men and women based on their ethnic, religious and geographical identity is common. This survey, however, focuses on discrimination against women on the basis of gender and performance in government universities in Lagos State, Nigeria. The model used for this study was developed and tested in which one hundred and eighty seven copies of the questionnaire that were administered to respondents as completed by the academic staff of government universities in Lagos State were retrieved. Pearson correlation and regression were utilized for the analysis of the study, and the result showed that managerial roles based on gender discrimination against women in government universities in Lagos State have affected employee job performance negatively. The study concludes that for as long as gender discrimination rather than merit remains the basis for staff employment into positions of authority in Nigerian Universities, enhanced performance is more likely to elude employees and the educational sector in general.

Keywords—Academic staff, Employee performance, Gender discrimination, Nigeria, Universities.

I. INTRODUCTION

ORGANIZATIONS are established basically to achieve the goals of profit maximization or provision of quality services to enhance the living standard of the people in any society. To achieve these goals, competent employees are required. In addition, availability of quality management in terms of skills, education and experience that abhors gender discrimination of any kind determines organizational effectiveness. The implication of this position is that weak management irrespective of gender, breeds an inefficient organization in particular and the society in general [1]. In this regard, the universities in Nigeria are established to provide high-level manpower need of organizations whether in the public or private sector of the economy. Like any other sector, the ability of the Nigerian universities to achieve their goals

and objectives is a function of its ability to attract competent workforce irrespective whether they are males or females [2].

Workers in an organization, irrespective of their gender, are classified into management/senior employees and others. The management/senior employees are responsible for the overall administration of the organization for enhanced performance. These categories of employees provide the direction through effective leadership to achieve the overall goals of the organization; and this is where discrimination against women is mostly pronounced in Nigerian universities [3]. Nigeria, like other countries in Africa, has almost equal number of males and females that make up the total population. For instance, the last Nigeria's national population census that took place in 2006 showed that females were 68.3 million, which is about 48.78 percent and males constituted 71.7 million, which is 51.22 percent of the total population of about 140 million. In such a situation, it is out of place, therefore, to discriminate against women in the area of leadership in organizations, particularly in the Nigerian universities, if enhanced performance is to be achieved [4], [5].

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Previous research in Nigeria focused on discrimination against men and women in terms of ethnic, religious and geographical identity. To overcome the challenge, the Federal Government of Nigeria introduced the principle of federal character that has to do with equal representation of people from the different segments of the society in the management of government and any of its agencies, such as Nigerian universities, for performance. The federal character principle is a political settlement that enables every section of the Nigerian society to be represented in government and a mere euphemism for ethnic balancing, which has the potential of solving the problem and fear of domination of one section of the country over the others [6]. However, the federal character principle has been criticized for its inability to promote development [7]. Further, subjecting recruitment/appointment and promotion to federal character discriminates against merit, and therefore unfair to certain sections of the country to the advantage of others [7]. The objective of this study, therefore, is to examine the effect of gender discrimination against women on the basis of sex and denial of appointment into position of authority in Nigerian universities.

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III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies show that the concept of gender is not synonymous with female affairs alone in any society. "Gender refers to culturally based expectations of the roles and behaviour of males and females." [8] In the same vein, "the term gender represents male and female in social context, and different in attitude and roles [9]." In addition, "gender as an economic construct, specifying the implicit arbitrary scale by which both men and women are economically placed in our societies [10]." The foregoing shows that gender has to do with the roles expected of people, males and females in the society for orderly living and development. However, as obtained in the literature, in developing societies within the context of educational attainment, the rate of participation in governance, occupational structure and the negative traditional behaviours, social and cultural attitudes against women makes gender issues to be synonymous with attempts to understand the place, roles, problems and importance of women in men dominated developmental processes [11].

The implication of the above view is that in societies where the female gender is considered not fit enough to assume responsibilities of leadership, particularly at the higher level of an organization, either in the public or private sector, such as in the universities, development is bound to be a major challenge. Research has shown that "there is direct link between a country's attitude toward women and its progress socially and economically" [12]. Further studies show that "women power is crucial to the economic growth of any country" [13]. In addition, leadership in an organization either in public or private sector in any society requires capacity on the part of the leader to perform; and capacity is seen as the ability to marshal and use available resources people, money, talent, and time-in the best possible way for the good of an organization [25]. The authors argue that capacity is not just about structure alone; but it involves creative, committed and talented people who make the system work irrespective of gender.

In as much as research has shown that relationship exists between capacity to lead and organizational performance, there is nothing yet to prove that females lack the capacity to lead compared to their male counterparts in management positions for organizational performance either in public or private sector of any economy. Therefore, discriminating against women in leadership positions, based on sex, particularly at the higher level in an organization, is a recipe for underdevelopment. This implies that the more acceptable leadership roles ascribed to women is in a society, the more that society is likely to experience development in social, political, cultural and economic spheres. In addition, due to gender stereotyping, female children may not be given the privilege of acquiring western education, rather, they are given out in marriage at early age; and, also this informs their decision in choosing career because it is complicated and worrisome for female gender to combine home obligations and career [14].

A. Gender Discrimination and Job Performance

As obtained in the literature, the term "performance" can be explained as "degree of accomplishment of tasks that make up an employee's job" [15]. Performance as comprising of efforts directed towards achieving organizational goals, which is mathematically represented as $\text{Performance (P)} = \text{Ability (A)} \times \text{Motivation (M)}$ [16]. Performance shows the degree in which employees meet their job requirements. The phenomenon is often interchangeably used with effort; however, effort is said to be energy expended on the job, while performance is measured by the output. In other words, when an individual puts in great efforts in a task and the output is low, the effort is high but performance is poor. In the light of a job, performance refers to the aggregate effort comprises of abilities and task employees expended on their jobs. Effort refers to the total physical and mental energy expended by employees in executing tasks assigned to them. Abilities are individual personal characteristics such as competence, aptitudes and special skills individual exert on their jobs in order to accomplish tasks assigned. Put differently, the perceived individual expected performance is a function of variables such as motivation, emotional stability and psychological status. However, when there is any form of discrimination such as gender, it is expected that there would be a shift in emotional status of such individual, which tends to affect his/her performance and career advancement, and this has nothing to do with specific gender of such a person or the job to be performed.

B. Gender Discrimination in Recruitment Policies

Hiring the wrong person for the job can be costly. The time and expenses associated with advertising, agency fees, interviewing candidates and the negative long term financial and non-financial implications of hiring the wrong person make finding and hiring the right person critical. Traditionally, organizations have focused on identifying and selecting people based on their skills and experience. It makes sense if one can find a person who has the right set of skills and has done a similar job. There is a good chance that they will be able to perform effectively in a new role [15]. However, when it comes to the issue of gender, there tends to be some reservation, which sidetracks the female gender during the recruitment process. While some of these exceptions are accommodating because of the peculiarity of female gender, which could be as a result of their physiology or emotional status, some are rejected when it aligns with skills and experience. The concept of gender discrimination during the recruitment process also has to do with the nature of the job, such as long hours, travelling, relocation and the like, which females (mostly married) might not be willing and readily available accept such jobs. However, in academia, gender discrimination in recruitment policies is not expected to be visible because of the nature of the job, which is teaching, research and development. Though, there is need for long hours in the laboratory, article writing, and so on, in which family roles might not permit females to be fully represented. Therefore, it will be out of place to introduce recruitment

policies, particularly at the higher level in the university system based on gender.

C. Gender Discrimination and Managerial Role

The phrase glass ceiling has been understood to represent a variety of biases that prevent qualified minorities and women, though they are members of an increasingly diverse workforce, from advancing into mid and senior-level management positions within the workplace [17]. The concept of gender discrimination is synonymous with the concept of glass ceiling, which prevents female gender and minorities from assuming senior management positions in organizations. It is worth noting that, this denial has nothing to do with the skill, experience or capacity but simply because she is classified as female gender, which is natural and no one has a say in the creation of such individuals. Section 17 (1) (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria say: "That every citizen shall have the equality of right, obligations, and opportunity before the law; section 42 of the same constitution also says that no Nigerian citizen shall be discriminated against because of a particular sex, religion or ethnic group" [14].

D. Gender Discrimination and Nigerian Universities

Gender discrimination is a phenomenon that has negative implications on development of organizations and people. In this study, gender discrimination could be seen as obstacles against the employment or appointment into leadership positions or authority of an individual based on sex. It is a deprivation of rights of the individual that could have contributed positively to the development of the organization and the society at large. These rights include political, marriage/family and employment [5]. In recognition of the ills of gender discrimination against women, the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for non-discrimination and of equality between the sexes as basis for societal development.

To further overcome the challenge of gender discrimination against women in the formal sector of employment, the Federal Government of Nigeria put in place strategies in its policy on women employment to include: sponsored training in the public and private sector institutions on gender sensitization programmes on the role of women in the development process in order to raise awareness of women in the society; sensitization of the public through mass mobilization campaigns about the need for women to be in formal sector employment in order to break traditional attitudes and stereotypes about women's work; encouragement of women's active participation in labour relations; and the review of labour laws to include more and better protective measures for women workers [27].

Study in Nigeria shows that despite the effort of the Federal Government to put a stop to the menace of gender discrimination against women both in the public and private sectors of the economy, the ugly practice still persists. Sex discrimination and subordination against women by their male counterparts highly limits women's access to the acquisition

of the forces of production as well as opportunities to high status and job positions, educational qualifications notwithstanding [18]. Instead, they are largely employed in lower status jobs even in the Nigerian universities than their male counterparts in spite of their large population size and enhanced educational qualifications [19].

Commenting on the origin and reality of gender discrimination against women in management, politics and social affairs, it was argued that although the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for non-discrimination and equality between the sexes, in reality the gap between the law and the practice is quite wide and seemingly parallel [5]. Discrimination against women in Nigeria is rooted in traditional beliefs and practices that regard the man as superior to his female counterpart [20].

Discrimination against women in leadership position in the Nigerian universities seems to be an age-long phenomenon. Based on the fact that out of the total number of one hundred (100) universities in Nigeria own by the Federal and State governments, missions, and individuals, the numbers of female Vice-Chancellors in these universities are four. In this regard, Professor Aize Obayan, former Vice-Chancellor of Covenant University (2005 – 2012) in an interview with the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) argues that the core issue with gender marginalization in Nigeria was not about filling leadership positions with women, but about letting capable ones have access to top positions in the various professions. According to her the university system in Nigeria requires more female administrators heading key departments for them to showcase their leadership endowment. She noted that vice-chancellorship had been male dominated, which has remained a socialization challenge for the women folks in the country [26].

Since studies have shown that contribution towards development in any society is not gender discriminatory, the promotion of gender equality of men and women as a strategy for sustainable development, either in the public or private sector in Nigeria, is a healthy venture that is worth pursuing. This is particularly true because research shows that sustainable development in any society requires greater gender balance in power sharing between male and female in the society [21]-[23].

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The survey conceptual model is depicted graphically in Fig. 1. It shows the relationships between the dependent construct (*employee performance*) and independent constructs (*gender discrimination in recruitment policies, gender discrimination and job performance, and gender discrimination in managerial roles*) of the study.

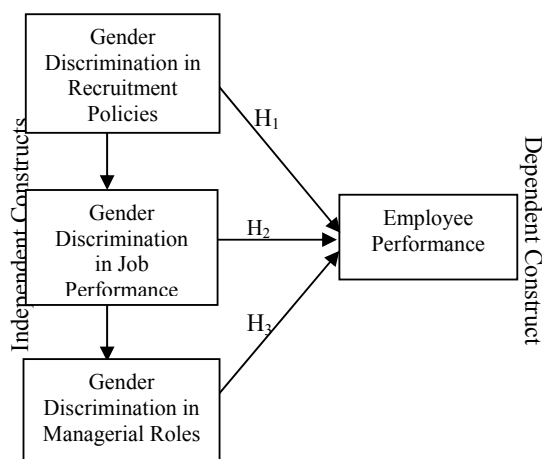


Fig. 1 The Survey Conceptual Model

The major hypotheses of this survey are highlighted below:

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between gender discrimination in recruitment policies and employee performance among academic staff of Nigerian government universities in Lagos State.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between gender discrimination and job performance in the Nigerian government universities in Lagos State.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant relationship between gender discrimination in managerial roles and employee performance in the Nigerian government universities in Lagos State.

V. RESEARCH METHODS

The study aims at contributing to the discussion on gender discrimination and its impact on employee performance among the academic staff of Nigerian government universities. The general characteristics of the respondents involved in this study include faculty members irrespective of their career attainment or position. The respondents for the survey could be considered representative of the faculty members in Nigerian government universities in Lagos State, because there are one hundred and forty nine (149) universities in Nigeria, and out of which seventy eight (78) are owned by the Nigerian Federal or State governments, representing 52.3% of the total and Lagos State has two (2) universities by the Federal and State Governments. The justification for Lagos State as the study centre is based on the fact that it is the most urbanized, industrialized, commercial-nerve centre, and former capital city of Nigeria. However, the data used for the survey was obtained through the administration of questionnaire to two hundred and fifty (250) members of faculty in these universities owned by the Nigerian government (Federal & State), Lagos State, Southwest Nigeria. After deleting incomplete and missing cases, the total valid copies questionnaires analyzed for this survey was one hundred and eighty seven, representing 74.8% of the total. We are to note that one hundred and eighty seven

copies of the questionnaire were administered while the school academic session was on and respondents took time to complete them during their free periods, and the administration process took about five minutes.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts; the first part 'A' sought to obtain the respondents' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, educational attainment, and position; while the second part 'B' contained fifteen (15) items, five items drawn from each hypothesis, which attempted to draw respondents' opinions about the subject matter. All these were based on a five-point Likert scale (5 – Strongly agree; 4 – Agree; 3 – Undecided; 2 – Disagree; and 1 – Strongly Disagree) that best explains the degree to which the respondents align with each of the items in the questionnaire. The proposed research model was tested using correlation and regression analyses. The survey sought to add to the existing literature on gender discrimination and its impact on employee performance in emerging economy such as Nigeria. The dependent variables utilized for this survey include employee performance, while the independent variables for this survey include recruitment policies, job performance and managerial role. All the studied variables were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. In order to establish the reliability of the scale used for this study, the scale was checked using Cronbach's Alpha, which is displayed in Table I.

TABLE I
CHECKING RELIABILITY STATISTICS OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.814	15

The number of items on the research instrument is 15 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .814, which is above .7. Therefore, the scale used for this study can be considered reliable.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Evidently, as obtained in Table II, the gender classification of the respondent was almost equally shared, with 51.9% representing male while 48.1% representing female. This suggests that male population of the academic staff in the Nigerian universities is just a fraction above that of the females. This makes this survey appropriate and valid because there is no room for gender discrimination in this survey. Further, looking at the age distribution among the respondents, 70.5% (cumulative percentage) of the respondents were within the active age bracket (20 – 40 years), while only 8.6% were 50 years and above. Essentially, it is shown that 30.0% of the respondents have obtained their Doctoral degrees, which is a representation of what is obtainable in universities in Nigeria. The distribution of academic positions amongst the respondents show that 67.4% (cumulative percent, comprises Graduate Assistants, Assistant Lecturers, Lecturer IIs and Lecturer Is) were in junior staff category, while the senior cadre constituted 32.6%.

*A. Respondents Demography*TABLE II
RESPONDENTS DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	97	51.9%
Female	90	48.1%
Total:	187	100.0%
<i>Age</i>		
20 – 30 years	60	32.0%
31 – 40 years	72	38.5%
41 – 50 years	39	20.9%
50 years & above	16	8.6%
Total:	187	100.0%
<i>Educational Qualification</i>		
Bachelor Degree	33	17.6%
Master Degree	98	52.4%
Doctorate	56	30.0%
Total:	187	100.0%
<i>Status/Academic Position</i>		
Professor	4	2.1%
Associate Professor	17	9.1%
Senior Lecturer	40	21.4%
Lecturer I	28	15.0%
Lecturer II	36	19.3%
Assistant Lecturer	33	17.6%
Graduate Assistant	29	15.5%
Total:	187	100.0%

Source: Survey, 2013

Generally, strong and significant association exists between the studied variables. As shown in Table III, male senior staff friendlier appear positive and significantly related to equal appraisal equality ($r = 0.345$ at the 0.01 significant level). In similar direction, between managerial role for male and assessment equality exists significant correlation ($r = 0.395$). In addition, the relationship between the following pairs of variables appears strong and positive: discrimination experienced and male promotion opportunities ($r = 0.393$); male promotion opportunity and gender inclusive culture ($r = 0.289$); gender influence profession and male promotion opportunity ($r = 0.318$). However, the significant relationship exhibited between tested variables could find reasonable explanation that discrimination does exist though in mild and subtle manner. Put differently, gender stereotyping in the society has relegated female children into second fiddle in the society, and also the behaviour of male counterparts does not help in any way.

The results of the tests of relationship that exist between the survey dependent and independent variables are shown in Table IV. This survey tends to compare the contribution of each independent variable as illustrated in standardized coefficients section, beta column. However, the largest beta coefficient value is .282, which represents the item that respondents have more potential and ability than their current position, which suggests that this variable makes the strongest unique contribution to the perceived gender discrimination that tends to impact the employee performance, also makes statistical significant contribution ($p > 0.000$). The gender

inclusive in recruitment policies variable has the second largest value, which makes strong unique contributions to the survey dependent variable, in addition it makes statistical contributions to the prediction of the survey dependent variables (β coefficient = .228, $p > 0.001$).

The result supports the study hypothesis (H_1) where gender inclusive culture exists in recruiting and selection policies is a significant predictor of employee performance among the academic staff of Nigerian Universities (β coefficient = .228, $p > 0.001$). In similar direction, gap in salary plays unique role predicting employee performance (β coefficient = .133, $p > 0.060$). Another variable that predicts degree at which employee performs in his job is that male takes higher roles, though does not make statistically significant contribution to the prediction of the survey dependent variable (β coefficient = .109, $p > 0.135$).

TABLE III
CORRELATION MATRIX OF VARIABLES

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender inclusive culture	Pearson Correlation	1								
	Sig. (2-tailed)									
2. Male promotion opportunity	Pearson Correlation	.289**	1							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000								
3. Discrimination experienced	Pearson Correlation	.361**	.393**	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000							
4. Salary gaps	Pearson Correlation	.251**	.218**	.197**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.003	.007						
5. Gender influences profession	Pearson Correlation	.192**	.124	.318**	.247**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.090	.000	.001					
6. Assessment Equality	Pearson Correlation	.000	.291**	.161*	.253**	.108	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.999	.000	.028	.000	.141				
7. Appraisal Equality	Pearson Correlation	.076	.016	.097	.007	.227**	.069	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.300	.831	.186	.920	.002	.348			
8. Male Senior staff friendlier	Pearson Correlation	.088	.164*	-.047	.167*	.058	.201**	.345**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.233	.025	.522	.023	.430	.006	.000		
9. Managerial role only for male	Pearson Correlation	.213**	.408**	.225**	.153*	.188*	.395**	.105	.114	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.002	.037	.010	.000	.151	.120	
	N	187	187	187	187	187	187	187	187	187

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

TABLE IV
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE VARIABLES

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	-.862	.573			-1.505	.134
Gender inclusive	.288	.088	.228		3.259	.001
Delegation	.061	.084	.054		.731	.466
Ignoring Gender	.044	.099	.031		.443	.658
1 Performance mgt. equally	.087	.074	.088		1.173	.242
Salary Gaps	.159	.084	.133		1.890	.060
Potential	.355	.096	.282		3.712	.000
Male Active more	-.085	.085	-.076		-1.004	.317
Male Mgr. friendlier	-.036	.087	-.032		-.417	.677
Male takes higher role	.136	.090	.109		1.501	.135

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

R Square = .241; Adjusted R Square = .202; F = 6.231; Sig. = .000

VII. CONCLUSION

The survey supports the opinion obtained in the literature that gender discrimination has a unique and strong impact on employee performance [24]. Further, the empirical findings derived from this study show that gender discrimination inclusive in recruitment policies, salary gaps, and potential misalignment, make strong contribution to explaining the degree of performance among academic staff of Nigerian government universities in Lagos State. Generally, the concept of gender discrimination could be traced to many factors such as gender stereotyping, the behaviour of male counterparts, male managerial behaviour, and also cultural belief. Essentially, the concept of gender discrimination is mild and

subtle among the academic staff in the studied sample. However, the cultural belief suggests that female child is a second fiddle and does not have cultural right to compete with her male counterpart, experience, age, skills notwithstanding.

The survey reveals that the respondents support the view that institutions operate gender inclusive culture in recruitment process, which, therefore, suggests that management should ignore this phenomenon during recruitment and selection process to promote equality among employees. In addition, it was reported that male staff are given promotion opportunities, but it is important to note that this opinion could be out of context, since promotion criteria are based on pure academic new discoveries arising from research and

publications in learned academic journals. Therefore, female academic staff who meet the criteria are not supposed to be denied their promotion. In order to buttress this argument, very few (about 30.5% of the respondents) stated that they had experienced gender discrimination in their workplace at one time or the other.

Another dimension to the phenomenon (*gender discrimination*) is that males are argued to be more active in managerial role compared to their female counterparts, also more friendly and possess good human relations. This could be attributed to the male being preferred above female when it comes to managerial positions, which was evident in this survey, whereby 67.4% of the respondents agreed that male staff take the highest managerial role in Nigerian Universities. Also, as obtained in the primary data analyzed, 42.8% agreed with the statement that female staff usually face obstacles when given managerial role.

Management should, therefore, make conscious efforts not to allow gender discrimination concept creep into their policies such as recruitment process, promotion, and appointment to higher offices or positions. Adoption of positive, equal opportunity and fairness in engaging workforce which tends to increase employee performance, subsequently increases organizational performance should be pursued.

APPENDIX

Research Instrument

This section requested you to tick your background information that is most appropriate.

Section A:

1. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Age: 21 – 30years ☐ 31 – 40years ☐ 41–50years ☐ 51 and above ☐
3. Highest Level of Education: Diploma ☐ Bachelor Degree ☐ Master Degree ☐ Doctorate ☐ Other:
4. Level of position: Graduate Assistant ☐, Assistant Lecturer ☐, Lecturer 1 ☐, Lecturer 2 ☐, Senior Lecturer ☐, Associate Professor ☐, Professor ☐

Section B:

Using the key given, choose or tick the right alternative that fits your opinion as follows:

Strongly Agree =SA, Agree =A, Undecided = U Disagree =D, Strongly Disagree =SD

H₁: Gender Discrimination in Recruitment Policies

1. Nigerian Universities have gender inclusive culture in recruiting and selection of academic staff.
2. The management does not consider gender in delegating job assignment.
3. An organisation that tends to ignore gender discrimination during recruitment and selection processes tends to promote equality by giving individuals to display his/her worth.
4. Male staff are given promotion opportunities more in this institution.
5. I have experienced gender discrimination in the workplace.

H₂: Gender Discrimination in Job Performance

6. Appraisal/Performance Management is treated equally in this institution.
7. There are salary gaps among the same level in my institution.
8. I believe that I have more potential and ability than what I apply in my current position.
9. My gender does influence my profession.
10. There should be equality when assessing the performance staff in any institutions.

H₃: Gender Discrimination in Managerial Roles

11. Male are more active in managerial role compared to female counterpart.
12. Male managerial staff are friendlier during academic and non-academic services.
13. Male staff take a higher managerial role in this institution.
14. Female staff always face difficult task ahead of them when given managerial role.
15. I am looking forward to promotion/ career advancement but being denied as a result of my gender.

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