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GENDER DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES IN CAREER CHOICE AMONG OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STUDENTS IN SOME SELECTED NIGERIAN POLYTECHNICS

Sulaiman AHMAD

School of Business and Management Studies
Department of Office Technology and Management
Federal Polytechnic Daura, Katsina State
babamakama@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The research intends to find out the gender differences in career choice among students of office technology and management. Four specific objectives, four research questions were raised to guide the study. The study adopted the descriptive survey design to the source of the data using structured questionnaire which was organized by the researchers to fetch the information from the target population of the study. The target population of the study is made up four hundred and fifty three (453) office technology and management students from four polytechnics in Kano, Katsina, Jigawa and Kaduna States of Nigeria. The entire population of (453) were purposely selected for the study. This questionnaire was designed for data collection from respondent's opinion. The respondents opinions were rated inform of strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) as an instrument for data collection of the study. The instrument of data collection of the study was validated by three expert and the reliability of .740 was obtained. The test re-test was also used. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents, the four hundred and fifty three (453) questionnaires were returned. The data collected for this were coded into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The package was used to calculate mean and standard deviation. It concluded that based on the major findings of the study, it was concluded that remuneration, Job security and personal fulfilment were among the major influence. It is recommended that students should choose a career option that suits them not to base their option on prestige attached to some careers. Therefore, students should choose a career in which they have the ability to do and not because of job availability.

Keywords: Gender Differences, Similarities, Career Choice, Office Technology, Management Students, Nigerian Polytechnics.

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INTRODUCTION

Career is the totality of work which people perform in their life time. It is a way of earning a living as well as a meaningful progression on a person's working life. It involves not only systematic education for initial occupation, but also a systematic occupational experience in which each occupation is considered as technical and social preparations for individuals. For the past few years, there has been an on-going argument on the career choice among office technology and management students. This is against the old tradition in which female students seems to dominate the profession.

According to Aromolaran (2003) secretarial profession refers to professional area which provides services of communication and records with focus on office functions such as receiving, recording, analyzing, sorting, classifying, storing and giving information. The professional secretary is functionally described as the executive assistant, the personal assistant, managers' manager, and executive's manager. The secretarial position is an important aspect of office organization as it relates to division of duties and responsibilities. Products of the profession has various names such as, personal secretary, confidential secretary, company secretary, administrative secretary, personal assistance, administrative assistant, etc., depending on the type of organization he/she works for.

Aromokan (2003) stated that a secretary is an assistant to the executive in performing secretarial duties such as taking dictation in shorthand from the executive and transcribe the dictated notes on the typewriter, handling personal and important mails most of which are confidential. The executive secretary is an administrative officer who is responsible to the Chief Executive in the daily running the affairs of an organization. The secretary is equally in charge of administrative matters which include supervision of both senior and junior officers of the organization. All functions of managers and the responsibilities for secretarial and administrative duties required a personal assistant. Therefore, secretaries are not managers as such, but they are indispensable to the management as no manager can function effectively without secretarial services.

In many organizations, the secretaries are provided with a position in the establishment even though they are normally attached to top or middle level management. In such establishments, the secretary has a clearly defined responsibility which often includes supervision of clerical and secretarial staff (Umaru, 2020). The secretary may be merely attached to a superior officer but without an establishment of her own, he/she sits outside of her executive office receiving his visitor/clients taking notes and transcribing. There is on-going argument on the career choice as to whether confidential secretary is better suited for men or women. Those who favoured the women claimed that there are aspects of the secretarial work that are perceived to be outside the competence of male. On the other hand, those who favoured males claims as well that there are aspects of the secretarial work that are outside the competence of women. Generally, the employers of government organizations have no choice whether male or female but some private establishment are found to express their preferences to either male or female secretaries depending on their demanding nature of work.

Secretarial profession is a difficult and challenging profession because it requires rigorous training for both genders. It can be more challenging profession for the women who combines secretarial position and other responsibilities. Both genders are expected to undergo rigorous training which spans from National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma

(HND) and first degree. The secretarial work whether for male or female is similar in the nature of the position

Statement of the Problem

Office technology and management is an important aspect of education which provides knowledge, skills and competencies for working in various organizations, self-employment for survival of economic growth and development of a nation. Despite the growing importance of office technology and management careers, gender disparities and similarities in students in this field remains of great concern. However, there is lack of research on gender and similarities in career choice among office technology and management students in polytechnics in Nigeria. Another issue lead to conduct research on this was nature of the job since it is always under subordination and dependent on the employer. In line with above aforementioned, the researcher intended to carryout research on gender differences and similarities in career choice among office technology and management students in some selected Nigerian polytechnics.

Aim and Objective of the Study

The aim of the study is to determine the gender differences and similarities in career choice among office technology and management students in some selected Nigerian polytechnics. Specifically, the objectives of the study is to:

- Find out the reason(s) that influences the choice of career among male and female secretarial students gender preference for the popular secretarial career options
- Examine if remuneration, prestige job satisfaction are the major factors in the Choice of secretarial career to men and women secretaries.
- Determine what type of employer do the male and female secretaries need to work with.
- Ascertain if marital circumstances have influence choice of secretarial career

Research Questions

- What are the reason(s) that influences the choice of career among male and female secretarial students' gender preferences for the popular secretarial career options?
- What are the gender preferences for the secretarial career options?
- What type of employers do the male and female secretaries like to work with?
- How does marital circumstance influence choice of secretarial career?

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the descriptive survey design to the source of the data using structured questionnaire which was organized by the researcher to fetch the information from the target population of the study. The target population of the study is made up of four hundred and fifty three (453) office technology and management students from four polytechnics in Kano, Katsina, Jigawa and Kaduna States of Nigeria. Four hundred and fifty three (453) were purposely used for the study. The questionnaire was designed for data collection from respondents' opinion. The respondents opinions were rated inform of strongly agree (4) agree (3) disagree (2) and strongly

disagree (1) as an instrument for data collection of the study. The instrument of data collection of the study was validated by three experts and the reliability of .740 was obtained. The test re-test was also used. The researcher administered the questionnaires to the respondents, the Four hundred and fifty three (453) questionnaires were returned. The data collected for this were coded into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The package was used to calculate mean and standard deviation.

Research Question One: What are the reason(s) that influences the choice of career among male and female secretarial students?

Table 1: Mean rating and standard deviation of the reason(s) that influences the choice of career among male and female secretarial students

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
1	Job security influence the your choice of career in secretarial studies	453	3.28	1.220	Agree
2	Family influence played role in career choice of secretarial studies.	453	3.08	1.210	Agree
3	Career advancement opportunities in your decision to pursue a career in secretarial studies.	453	3.48	1.219	Agree
4	Financial stability in you decision to pursue a career in secretarial studies	453	1.76	1.238	Disagree
5	Role model play roles in your choice of career in secretarial studies	453	3.82	1.234	Agree
6	Personal fulfilment is the key decision to pursue a career in secretarial studies.	453	2.32	1.860	Disagree
Grand mean		453	2.96	1.330	Agree

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 revealed that most of the items of the variable on the influence of career choice among male and female secretarial students in Nigeria have a mean score of above 2.96. The mean scores ranges from 1.76 to 3.82. The grand mean of choice of career among male and female secretarial students, Nigeria is 2.96 which is above the benchmark of revised four-point Likert scale of 2.50. The results indicated that items 1, 2, 3, 5, (job security, family influence, career advancement and role models) influences the choice of career among male and female secretarial students, while items 4 and 6 (Financial stability decision to pursue a career in secretarial studies and personal fulfilment to pursue a career in secretarial studies) do not influence career choice among male and female secretarial students.

Research Question Two: What are the gender preferences for the popular secretarial career options?

Table 2: Mean rating and standard deviation of gender preferences for the popular secretarial career options

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
7	Male secretaries are more efficient.	453	3.28	1.220	Agree
8	Female secretaries are more organized.	453	3.08	1.215	Agree
9	Gender stereotyping in your preference for a secretaries	453	3.47	1.219	Agree
10	Female secretaries are more communicative.	453	3.65	1.238	Agree
11	Male secretaries are more tech-savvy	453	3.62	1.234	Disagree
12	Gender bias in your preference for a secretaries	453	1.32	1.961	Disagree
Grand mean		453	3.07	1.347	Agree

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 revealed that items 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the variable influences gender preferences of the popular secretarial career options, while items 11 and 12 do not influence gender preferences. The popular secretarial career options mean ranges from 1.32 to 3.65. The grand mean of choice of career among male and female secretarial students in Nigeria is 3.07, which is above the benchmark of revised four-point Likert scale of 2.50. The results indicate that the respondents agreed with statements of on the gender preference for the popular secretarial career options in Nigeria.

Research Question Three: What type of employers do male and female secretaries prefer to work with?

Table 3: Mean rating and standard deviation on the type of employers male and female secretaries prefer to work with

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
13	Male secretaries prefer to work with private sector employer.	453	3.38	1.221	Agree
14	Female secretaries prefer to work with Public employer.	453	3.08	1.315	Agree
15	Female secretaries prefer to work with non-profit employer.	453	3.49	1.222	Agree
15	Male secretaries prefer to work with small business owner/entrepreneur	453	3.02	1.227	Agree
16	Male secretaries are prefer to be and independent person.	453	3.20	1.211	Agree
17	Female secretaries prefer to work with private organization	453	1.52	1.671	Disagree
Grand mean		453	2.95	1.311	Agree

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 revealed that almost all the items of the variable influences the type of employers male and female secretaries prefer to work with in Nigeria, Only item 17 showed disagreement. The mean scores of the type of employers male and female secretaries prefer to work with in Nigeria ranges from 1.52 to 3.49. The grand mean of the type of employers male and female secretaries prefer to work with is 2.95, which is above the benchmark of the revised four-point Likert scale of 2.50. The results indicate that the respondents agreed on the types of employers male and female secretaries prefer to work with.

Research Question Four: How does marital circumstance influence choice of secretarial career?

Table 4: Mean rating and standard deviation on how marital circumstances Influence choice of secretarial career

S/N	Items	N	Mean	SD.	Remark
18	Being a single is a factor in choosing secretarial career.	453	3.38	1.211	Agree
19	Being a married influence your decision to pursue a secretarial career	453	1.28	1.212	Disagree
20	Having children is consideration in choosing secretarial career.	453	3.47	1.213	Agree
21	Spousal support influencing your decision to pursue a secretarial career.	453	1.86	1.277	Disagree
22	Marital responsibility have an impact on your choice of secretarial career.	453	1.62	1.234	Disagree
23	Being a single parent is a factor in choosing secretarial career	453	1.32	1.942	Disagree
Grand mean		453	2.15	1.348	Disagree

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 revealed that only two of the items (18 and 20) of the variable influence marital circumstances in choice of secretarial career in Nigeria, while items 19, 21, 22, and 23 showed disagreement. The mean scores of the influences on the marital circumstances on choice of secretarial career in Nigerian polytechnics ranges from 1.28 to 3.47. The grand mean of 2.15 on the marital circumstances do not have influence on the choice of secretarial career in Nigeria because the grand mean is below the benchmark of the revised four-point Likert scale of 2.50. The results indicate that the respondents disagreed that marital circumstances have influence on choice of secretarial career Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the research question one (1) indicates that the respondents agreed with statement reasons for the choice of career among male and female secretarial students. This is in line with findings of Ogungbemij et al. (2009) who noted that personal fulfilment has influence on student's choice of secretarial studies. Shittu and Eke (2019) also found out that job security is the most influence on career choice on secretarial studies in Nigeria.

The findings of research question two (2) indicated that the respondents agreed with the statements on gender preference for the popular secretarial career options. This is in line with Ovbiagele and Amiaya (2008), who described that gender preferential for the option of career choice on secretarial profession in polytechnics in Nigeria.

The findings of research question three (3) indicated that the respondents output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 3 revealed that the five out of the six items of the variable agree to the type of employers male and female secretaries prefer to work with. However, disagreed with the findings of Ogungbemij et al. (2009), who noted that private organization were preferred to work with female secretaries other than male secretaries.

The output of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 revealed that two (18 and 20) of the items of the variable of the influences agree that marital circumstances have influence on choice of secretarial career, whereas four of the items (19, 21, 22, and 23) disagreed. The grand mean showed that marital circumstances do not influence choice of secretarial career at 2.15, which is below the benchmark of revised four-point Likert scale. The result indicated that the respondents disagreed that marital circumstances have influence on choice of secretarial career. This is in line with the studies of Amoor and Aliyu (2014) and Igbinedion (2011), who asserted that marital circumstance does not have influence on students' career choice in secretarial profession in polytechnics.

CONCLUSION

Based on the major findings of the study, it was concluded that gender differences and similarities in career choice among office technology and management students in some selected Nigerian polytechnics has great influence on students career choice in Nigerian polytechnics. It is also found that Job security and personal fulfilment were among the major influences.

Recommendations

In line with the findings and with the student's opinions, the following recommendations were made:

- The polytechnics should put more emphasis on entrepreneurship development which is an aspect of the OTM training program because female secretarial students in the programme wanted to be self-employed on graduation.
- The government and curriculum planners should provide adequate skills related to gender in office technology and management profession.
- Both public and private organizations should provide adequate employment vacancies to both male and female secretaries in their organizations.
- Government need to embark on more strategic on public enlightens and mobilization on the need for married women on the choice of office technology and management as profession.

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