



Organizational Policy and Sexual Harassment as Predictors of Career Advancement among Female Bankers

Enyelunekpo R. Roberts¹, David E. Okurame², Dennis H. Odungweru³, Emmanuel E. Uye^{4*}

Rivers State University, Nigeria¹

University of Ibadan, Nigeria²

Rivers State University, Nigeria³

University of Ibadan, Nigeria⁴

Corresponding author: emmanuel.e.uye@gmail.com*

Received: 27-12-2024 Reviewed: 10-01-2025 Accepted: 27-01-2025

Abstract

Career advancement among females has continued to generate research interests among scholars. Studies have investigated career advancement among female bankers using different predictors with varied results. Therefore, this study investigated organizational policy and sexual harassment as predictors of career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted, while a purposive sampling technique was used to select the study population. Data were conveniently collected from 250 participants using validated questionnaires and analyzed using multiple regression analysis to test one hypothesis at $p = .001$ significance level. The result indicated that organizational policy and sexual harassment jointly predicted career advancement among study participants [$R^2 = .534$, $F(2, 227) = 130.006$, $p = .001$]. Furthermore, organizational policy ($\beta = .306$, $p = .001$) and sexual harassment ($\beta = -.642$, $p = .001$) independently predicted career advancement among study participants. The study concludes that organizational policy and sexual harassment are robust predictors of career advancement among study participants. It is recommended that bank management put policies and programmes that are gender friendly and reduce sexual harassment germane to career advancement among female bankers.

Keywords: Organizational policy, sexual harassment, career advancement, female bankers, Port Harcourt

Introduction

Career advancement refers to the progression and growth of an individual's career within an organization. It involves moving up the organizational hierarchy, gaining higher-level responsibilities, acquiring new skills and knowledge, and achieving professional goals (Bonnie, 2009). Some factors have been identified as predictors of career advancement in

different organizations. One factor considered in this study to predict career advancement among female bankers is organizational policy, a set of guidelines, rules, and practices established by an organization to govern its operations and employees' behaviors (Odungweru, 2023). In the context of this study, organizational policies include gender equality initiatives, diversity and inclusion programs, anti-sexual harassment policies, mentoring and sponsorship programs, flexible work arrangements, and career development opportunities. These policies shape the organizational culture and provide a framework for promoting gender equality and supporting career advancement, including female bankers. Studies have found organizational policies that support career advancement among workers to include top management support and commitment to their advancement, the regular use of gender in decision-making such as in recruitment, career planning and employee development (Milon, Al-Amin, & Saha, 2022; Orbih & Imhonopi, 2019). Others include the development of policies and procedures consistent with supporting women, providing rewards for providing the required support and achieving agreed upon goals for women's advancement, and becoming a model in the wider community (Afande, 2015).

The second factor considered as predictor of career advancement among female bankers is sexual harassment which is described as any unwelcome sexually determined behavior such as physical contact and advances, sexually colored remarks, showing pornography and sexual demands, whether by words or actions toward the opposite gender (CEDAW, 1992). Moreover, the International Labor Organization (ILO, 2010) sees sexual harassment as any form of violence against women. These include behaviors such as joking, flirting and asking someone on a date, forced fondling, attempted or actual rape and sexual assault. To qualify as sexual harassment the behavior must be deliberate and/or repeated. Studies have found that many women have at one time or the other faced sexual harassment or assault in their workplace with many stuttering in silence, possibly for fear of further victimization or loss of employment (Khan, 2024; Maran, 2022; Worke et al., 2021). In addition, Bello (2020) found sexual harassment among female bankers to be more among older, more educated and longer-tenured workers than younger, less educated and shorter-tenured employees. Extant study by Olowookere (2010) found that sexual harassment lead to decline in performance, stagnation, invasion of privacy, stigmatization, firing, resignation, defamation of character and reputation.

Studies investigating career advancement among different populations and samples have produced varied results. Also, specific studies on organizational policy and sexual harassment among female bankers in Nigeria are scarce thus leaving gap in knowledge to fill. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the predictability of organizational policy and sexual harassment on career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. The research question guided the study: Would organizational policy and sexual harassment jointly and independently predict career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis?

The study would give a fresh perspective on the roles of organizational policy and sexual harassment on career advancement among female bankers. In addition, the finding of this study would provide bank management, employees and other stakeholders the

Organizational Policy and Sexual Harassment as Predictors of Career Advancement among Female Bankers

opportunities to design and implement policies that would reduce gender discrimination in work environment.

Literature Review

The study was explained using feminist theory proposed by Henry (2017). The theory posits that sexual harassment is a sexist act (rather than sexual act) that aims to subjugate and disempower women, and punish their efforts to compete with men over jobs and status (Henry, 2017). In other words, the theory challenges the idea that sexual harassment is not a sexual act and that scholars should see it from a gender-based angle that reflects male dominance and women's subordination which are constantly condoned by society.

The study tested the hypothesis that organizational policy and sexual harassment would jointly and independently predict career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis.

Research Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design while data were collected using validated questionnaires. The independent variables investigated were organizational policy and sexual harassment while the dependent variable was career advancement among female bankers.

The study was conducted among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. The Population studied were all female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis. The study adopted purposive sampling technique to select five banks: Union Bank, Wema Bank, Zenith Bank, Fidelity Bank and Eco Bank in Port Harcourt metropolis while convenience sampling technique was used to distribute questionnaires to the potential participants, Three research instruments were used for data collections.

The Organizational Practices and Policies Questionnaire (OPPQ, Amick et al., 2017) was used to assess participants' perception of the policies and practices of their organizations. It consisted of 22 items with four subscales of people-oriented culture, safety climate, disability management, and ergonomics practices. It is presented in a 5-point Likert's response format ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Sample items include: "The employer consults employees during decisions to be made or during planning" and "When the injured employee cannot return to work, the employer monitors and adjusts the work situation to the employee's needs". A highly supportive organization was identified by a mean score above 3.2 (Amick et al., 2017). Authors obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 while in the current study, Cronbach's alpha for this study was 0.78.

Next was Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ-DoD, Fitzgerald et al., 1995) used to evaluate sexual and gender harassment among study participants. It is a 16-item scale that evaluated sexual harassment on 4-subscale presented on 6-point Likert's format that ranges

from never, once, twice, sometimes, often, and many times. Sample items include: "Made unwanted and uncomfortable attempts to touch, stroke, or fondle you (eg, touching your arm or hand, stroking your leg or neck, etc)?" and "Made unwanted attempts to draw you into a discussion of personal or sexual matters (eg, attempted to discuss or comment on your sex life)?" Authors obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.81 and in the present study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 was obtained

Finally, Career Growth Questionnaire (Weng & Xi, 2011) was used to assess career advancement of study participants. It is a 15-item scale presented on a 5-point Likert's format ranges from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The scale includes four sub dimensions: "career goal", "career capacity", "promotion speed", and "salary increase". Examples of items include: "My current job takes me one step closer to my career goals", "I feel my career ability enhanced and improved" and "Compared with my colleagues, my salary raises faster". Authors reported Cronbach's alpha of 0.96; in this current study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 was obtained.

Procedurally, a letter of introduction from the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Science, Rivers State University, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo was used to identify the researchers by the banking management selected for the study. When the bank management granted permission, researchers met the female potential participants during lunch hours in their cafeteria and briefly explained the purpose of the study to them. Those who agreed to participate in the study were assured of confidentiality of their responses and that they can opt out at any point they feel uncomfortable. The researchers ensured that no personal data that revealed the identity of the participants and the banks were collected. Questionnaires were distributed to those who agreed to participate in the study, and the questionnaires took less than 16 minutes to complete. However, some potential participants collected some questionnaires to be picked up the next day. A total of 261 questionnaires were distributed across the five selected banks, of which 257 were retrieved (that is, 98% response rate). During screening and coding, seven questionnaires were found improperly filled out and removed, leaving 250 questionnaires to be used for the analysis.

Data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS version 23. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and accepted at $p = .001$ significance level.

Results

Study Participants

The descriptive statistics of the study participants indicated that 55(24%) of the participants were below 30 years of age, 110(48%) were between 31 and 40 years age bracket, 39(17%) were between 41 and 50 years age bracket, while 26(11%) were 51 years and above. In terms of their marital status, 56(24%) of the participants were singles, 113(49%) were married, 61(27%) did not indicate their marital status. Finally, the result revealed that 79(34%) of the participants had less than 10 years work experience, 97(42%) have between 11 and 20

Organizational Policy and Sexual Harassment as Predictors of Career Advancement among Female Bankers

years work experience, 29(13%) had between 21 and 30 years work experience while 25(11%) had 31 years and above work experience.

The study hypothesis was that organizational policy and sexual harassment would jointly and independently predict career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis. The hypothesis was tested using multiple regression and the results are presented in Tables 2a-c

Table 2a. Joint and independent Predictors of career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.731	.534	.530		4.90339

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sexual Experience, Organizational Policy & Practice

Table 2b: ANOVA Associated with Regression Summary of Organizational Policy and Sexual Harassment on Career Advancement

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6251.512	2	3125.756	130.006	.000
	Residual	5457.810	227	24.043		
	Total	11709.322	229			

Table 2c: Coefficients Associated with Regression Summary of Organizational Policy and Sexual Harassment on Career Advancement

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	β		
1 (Constant)	52.431	2.435		21.528	.000
Organizational Policy	.198	.029	.306	6.743	.000
Sexual harassment	-.626	.044	-.642	-14.127	.000

Tables 2a-c show the results of the multiple regression analysis of organizational policy and sexual harassment on career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis. The result showed that organizational policy and sexual harassment jointly predicted career advancement among study participants [$R^2 = .534$, $F(2, 227) = 130.006$, $p = .001$]. This means that the independent variable accounted for 53.4% of variance in career advancement among study participants. Further analysis revealed that organizational policy ($\beta = .306$, $p = .001$) and sexual harassment ($\beta = -.642$, $p = .001$) independently predicted career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis. Therefore, the hypothesis was supported.

Discussion

The hypothesis that organizational policy and sexual harassment would jointly predict career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis was supported. The interaction of organizational policy with sexual harassment accounted for 53.4% variance in career advancement among study participants. A well designed and implemented organizational policies such as gender equality initiatives, diversity and inclusion programs, mentoring and sponsorship programs, flexible work arrangements, and career development opportunities and reduction in sexual harassment would pave way for career advancement of female bankers. This finding corroborated previous findings by Yousef (2017) that organizations with fair policy that reduces gender discrimination allow for career advancement of all including their female participants. Moreover, it was corroborated by Burke (2018) and Olowookere (2010) that sexual harassment lead to decline in performance, stagnation, stigmatization, resignation, defamation of character and reputation.

In addition, organizational policy and sexual harassment independently predicted career advancement among female bankers in the study population. This means that lack of organizational policies that protect and encourage female workers and prevalence of sexual harassment in diverse forms independently contributed to career advancement among female bankers. This finding supported the result of Orbih and Imhonopi (2019) that organizational policy significantly predicts career advancement among different workers, including bankers. Furthermore, other findings (Milon et al., 2022; Afande, 2015; Bello, 2020) lent credence to the current study that sexual harassment significantly predict career advancement among study participants.

Conclusion

The study has empirically confirmed the hypothesis that organizational policy and sexual harassment jointly and independently predicted career advancement among female bankers in Port Harcourt metropolis. This finding implies that improving career advancement of female bankers rest heavily on the types of organizational policy and the prevalence of sexual harassment in such organization.

Recommendation

The study proffers the following recommendations. First, banks should continuously review and strengthen their policies that promote gender equality, zero tolerance for harassment, and equal opportunities for career advancement. Second, the human resource unit should establish confidential channels for employees to report incidents of harassment as it happens. Open communication that ensures anonymity would facilitate reporting inappropriate behavior without fear of reprisal. Finally, banks should encourage diverse leadership styles and hold managers accountable for discriminatory behaviour to women in the organization.

Organizational Policy and Sexual Harassment as Predictors of Career Advancement among Female Bankers

Limitations of study

The study has some limitations that need to be addressed in further study. To begin with, a self-reported questionnaire was for data collection which was not free of response bias. Further study should include key informant interviews and documentary evidence from the human resource unit to triangulate data collected from self-reported questionnaires. Moreover, a sample size of 250 from one local government area hindered generalization of the study findings. Further study would benefit by increasing sample size and number of local government areas to allow for wider generalization of the study findings. Finally, the two independent variables investigated were not exhaustive; further study should include learned helplessness, self-esteem and social support to explore career advancement among female bankers.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest in this work.

References

- Afande, F. O. (2015). Factors affecting women career advancement in the banking industry in Kenya: A case study of Kenya commercial bank branches in Nairobi county, Kenya. *Journal of Marketing & Consumer Research*, 9, 69-94
- Amick, B.C. 111, Lee, H., Hogg-Johnson, S., Katz, J.N., Brouwer, S., Franche, R.L., & Bultmann, U. (2017). How do organizational policies and practices affect return to work and work role functioning following a musculoskeletal injury? *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 27, 393-404.
- Bello, P.O. (2020). Combating sexual harassment in an ivory tower in Nigeria: Mixed feelings. *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*, 17(1): 173-189
- Bonnie, L. (2009). Sexual harassment definition and resource guide. The Office of Associate Counsel & Equal Opportunity Compliance, 319 Piggy Ryan Williams Centre 607-2d74-3909.
- Burke, R. J. (2018). Reducing sexual harassment at workplace. *Effective Executive*, 21(2): 51-56.
- Fitzgerald, L.F., Gelfand, M.J. & Drasgow, F. (1995). Measuring sexual harassment: Theoretical and psychometric advances. *Basic & Applied Social Psychology*, 17(4), 425-445 https://doi.org/10.1207/s15324834baspp1704_2
- Henry, H.M. (2017). Sexual harassment in the Egyptian streets: Feminist theory revisited. *Sexuality & Culture*, 21(1), 270-286 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-016-9393-7>
- International Labour Organization (ILO, 2010). Guide on prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace. Geneva, Switzerland.
- Khan, D. (2024). Harassment of women in work place and their empowerment: A preventive approach. *The Social Science Review: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, 2(4), 53-61.

- Maran, D.A., Varetto, A., & Civilotti, C. (2022). Sexual harassment in the workplace: Consequences and perceived self-efficacy in women and men witnesses and non-witnesses. *Behavioural Sciences*, 12(9):326 <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs12090326>
- Milon, M., Al-Amin, M., & Saha, S. (2022). Workplace bullying, sexual harassment, discrimination: A bane for female employees' career in the private banking industry of Bangladesh. *Journal of Human Resources & Sustainability Studies*, 10(4), 689-704 <https://doi.org/10.4236/jhrss.2022.104040>
- Odungweru, D.H. (2023). *The influence of organizational policy and sexual harassment on the career advancement of female bankers in Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, Rivers State*. BSc project submitted to the Department of Psychology, Rivers State University, Nkpolu–Oroworukwo, Rivers State, Pp i + viii, 1-50.
- Olowookere, F. (2010). Violence against women in Nigeria: Implications for family life. *The Social & Management Scientist*, 1(1), 109-129.
- Orbih, M.U. & Imhonopi, D. (2019). Women in banking: Career choice and advancement. In 1st International Conference on Sustainable Infrastructural Development., 640 012127 <https://doi.org/10.1088/1757-899X/640/1/012127>
- Street, A. E., Gradus J. L., Stafford, J., & Kelly, K. (2007). Gender differences in sexual harassment: Data from a male –dominated environment. *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 75(3), 464-474
- Taiwo, M.O., Omole, O.C., & Omole, O.E. (2014). Sexual harassment and psychological consequence among students in higher education institution in Osun State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Applied Psychology*, 4(1), 13-18
- Worke, M.D., Koricha, Z.B. & Debelew, G.T. (2021). Perception and experiences of sexual harassment among women working in hospitality workplaces of Bahir Dar city, Northwest Ethiopia: A qualitative study. *BMC Public Health* 21,1119 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-021-11173-1>
- Yousef, D.A. (2017). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction and attitudes toward organizational change: A study in the local government. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 40 (1), 77-88 <https://doi.org/10.1080/01900692.2015.1072217>