

## **The Impact of Social Support and Corporate Culture on Women Career Advancement**

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### **Abstract**

*The ratio of women in managerial positions is still not satisfactory. However, little research has been pursued towards explaining the issues why they are not getting the top positions in any organizations. Researchers have identified the importance of the social support and corporate culture in the connection of the framework of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which remains unaddressed in the explicating the relationship between social support, corporate culture and women career advancement. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the issues that have effect on women career advancement. In addition, this paper is only a theoretical exploration, it is expected that this work lead towards an explanation of the relationship between social support, corporate culture and women career advancement, which may be studied further to determine the empirical finding about the other dynamic of the (SCCT).*

**Keywords:** Social Support, Corporate Culture, Women Career Advancement.

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### **I. Introduction**

All over the world, for a very long period of time, women have been traditionally responsible for rearing of children and keeping of the household, but men`s responsibilities are to engage themselves with employment and providing food and shelter for the family. Such gender division in connection with labor can be trace back to 1950s and 60s when the men were apportioned (rationality) ‘instrumental’. Owing to this trend, men were considered to be suitable more for managerial works than their women counterpart.

The latest statistical information provided by the catalyst report (2017) shows that the rate of participation of women in working force at the international level reduced to 49% in 2015 from 52.4% in 1995. Also, in 2015, an insignificant portion of 12% of the board seat

globally is occupied by women. Furthermore, more than 60% of women employed in the world are engaged and found in the service sector.

Moreover, women are seriously confronted with wages discrepancy when compared with their men counterparts by earning just 77% of the men counterpart earn. As at 2015, the average annual earnings of women accounted for \$11,000, which is far below \$21,000 for their men counterparts. Moreover, it obvious that thirty three percent (33%) forming one-third of the business organizations globally had no women in their as senior managers holding for them management positions (Thornton, 2016). Although, some changes have been surfacing since 2011, but women can still not make-up with men until 2060 (Thornton, 2016). In view of this, a study conducted by MSCI 4,218 companies, women were found to be occupying only 15% of the board seats (Lee, Marshall, Rallis, & Moscard, 2015), however in the analysis made by Deloitte on 49 countries, close to 6,000 companies in these sampled countries, women occupied just 12 percent of the board seats.

Moreover, there is still separation of women from top leadership positions, and men are by default holding the believe that they leaders when it comes to business, they are upholding the mentality of “think-manager-think-male”.The Grant Thornton International Business Report (2012) on women’s portion in top jobs globally revealed that, still women are under-represented and advancement in connection with their career advancement is still hindered owing to certain barriers they are confronting with. In-fact, this report indicated that there is decrease in the percentage of women in positions of management, as only 24% of women in the world all over are occupying various managerial positions as at 2009 but there is slight drop in the trend that is to, 21% in 2012. This signifies the draw-back that occurred to the progress of women`s assumption of positions of management in the different organizations.

However, some women are progressing, and it is thus important to understand what facilitates this process through a theoretical framework involving individual and organizational factors (Francis, 2017). Also, the dearth of women in leadership and management represents fertile ground for new theory and new research (Madsen, 2017), this is the field that is worthy of continuation of research (Airini et al., 2011). Problems highlighted within literature on career development for women relate to personal and organizational factors (e.g. corporate culture, personality) which inseparably intertwine (Gray, 2011). In addition, literature has identified societal and cultural practices (e.g. social support) (Benson & Yukongdi, 2006), anti-female nature of organizations (Eagly & Carli, 2007), and institutional discrimination such as limited development and training opportunities (Cordano, Scherer, & Owen, 2002) as determinants of

women career advancement. Thus, concerns about societal and organizational phenomenon in the development of management remain challenging and calling for additional research. Moreover, previously many researchers stressed the essence of understanding the militating factors against women in the attempt to ascend to the highest organization's cadres (Madsen, 2012; Coleman, 2011 etc.), but it is considered imperative to examine predictors and determinants of women career advancement (Yean, 2010).

In addition, some researches have been conducted in different cultural contexts. For example, Celikten (2005) investigated the phenomenon women being faced by principals who are women in Turkey, Fuller (2013) and Cubillo & Brown, (2003) have explored the problems women are facing while seeking attaining educational leadership in the UK; Lumby and Cristina (2014) explored how factors like religion, gender, language, ethnicity, and culture influenced positively or negatively the participation or access of women to the position of leadership in South Africa. Thus, different cultural and social contexts would have varied implications for women career advancement (Oplatka, 2006).

## **II. Literature Review**

### **A. Corporate Culture**

Several definitions and perspectives regarding the concept of corporate culture are in existence, there is also a great deal of research into how to measure it. These definitions include the one that describes corporate culture as the norms that members of an organizational describes and experience as their work settings (Schneider et al., 2013). The norms shape members' behavior and adaptation to achieve results in the organization. Corporate culture is how the employees of an organization interact with each other and other stakeholders in the organization (Simoneaux & Stroud, 2014). Corporate culture is also referred to as a set of beliefs, behavioral patterns and values that distinguishes one organization from another (Ortega-Parra & Sastre-Castillo, 2013).

### **B. Corporate Culture and Women Career Advancement**

There is an existence of nexus between corporate culture with gender and the managerial roles. Most 20th century organizations have been under the control of men, while women are in low-key positions with little freedom. Hence, the corporate culture has been structured by men, there is a commonplace associate in the minds of individuals between men's traits and managerial ability. Men-dominated companies also lead to the notion that males are the appropriate spokesperson decision-maker. Funston et al. (2008), state that there are still an

existence of 'men's club' in some organizations. Men have a high tendency of having are a mentor and have more chances for promotion.

Thus, there is high level of isolation for women who are promoted into managerial position in many organizations. Unfortunately, men-denominated companies are not are interested and ready to closer the wage in favour of women and diversify their labour force by moving women from low-wage jobs into higher level occupations. Because of greater application of informal interaction and networking, men tend to gain faster promoted than their women counterparts, while women only depend on formal procedure of promotion. The opportunity of training is also skewed to favour men than women in respect of managerial development.

Also, Vianen and Fischer (2002) posit that unlike men, women appears to be less ambitious to move to management level, hence, the organizations should change their culture encouraging and motivating women with higher remuneration and recognition. The authors concluded that two factors comprising the selection procedures and lack of female role models are the main factors responsible for the slow advancement of women to top management level. Aside that, there is a problem for women to develop their career in a 'men's club' orientation and culture. This is because women experience resistance in development of relationships and information sharing.

### **C. Social Support**

Social support is related with direct impacts of others in providing solution to a problem or provision of moral support in the management of emotional parts of problematic issues (Shaffer et al., 2005). It also comprises: caring, empathy, and sympathetic listening. In most cases, the family is a key support mechanism in the development of women leadership characteristics (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). Social support involves support given by family and friends to women in their career life and with respect to opportunities available for them. It is important for women to look elsewhere for advice and guidance on the available opportunities that can be embraced by them. In most cases, the parents, guidance counsellors and peers fill this gap by providing information about careers, giving support and encouragement.

### **D. Social Support and Women Career Advancement**

Social support has been reported and acknowledged to have significant contribution to career progression of women. Despite several obstacles some women had been appointed to positions of senior management. In view of this kind of support, they were able acquire sound education and taken opportunity of career development opportunities which would support

progression to senior levels. The findings emanating from the past studies, such as Flores and O'Brien (2002) showed that women that have strong social support have better chances of achieving greater career success. Some families made frantic efforts in providing their daughters with sound education, despite financial challenges. Parents had more concerned for their daughters' education than their brothers. This might explain the reason why brothers were not much enthusiastic in progressing to higher education concentration more on business. The support of the parental was obviously consistent across geographical areas. Rural women who have their backgrounds from local or rural communities received the same level of parental support as urban people, despite the fact that their parents were not usually well educated. Also, the participants had freedom in making choices about their profession. All these were supported by their parents.

However, contrary to some prior studies (e.g. Tharenou, 2001), in the many of the cases, the support of the husband was high in terms of moral support, financial assistance, and emotional support when there were issues of career difficulties. This is consistent with the literature regarding the importance of the spouse's support for the career progression of women (Poelmans, et al., 2005). Members of the family gave care and contributed to domestic household activities. Specifically, the important of the support given by mothers-in-law cannot be underestimated. This was identified and recognized as very exceptional. As part of the task normally done, the mothers-in-law took care of children when the participants were at university, contrary to the universal assumptions that mothers-in-law are not usually sympathetic (Rubenberg, 2001). The support of the organizational was also recognized to some extent (33.4% especially in the areas of institutional financial assistance for professional development and provision of other enabling facilities. This was regarded as an essential contributor to career development as also indicated by Ismail and Rasdi (2007). Unlike it is in many developing nations, there were equal scales of payment for men and women employees.

Lastly, in a few circumstances (27.1%) Heads of the Institutions and senior teachers were reported to highly be of assistance. They had motivated participants to put up application for higher degrees, and irrespective of their gender, seemed to act as mentors and supported them in getting over associated problem in accessing professional advancement further facilitating their career ambitions and aspirations. Remarkably, this study supported the findings of Hoigarrd and Mathisen (2009) who reveal that there is no significant difference between male and female mentors among female leaders enrolled in a formal female mentoring project in Norway. The study of White (1995) also revealed that successful women credited

open-minded superiors for giving them the chance to show their capabilities and competence. Such role models, according to Coleman (2011), act as positive significant influences regarding career aspiration for other females and motivate them to have aspiration for higher accomplishment and achievement.

### **III. Conceptual Framework**

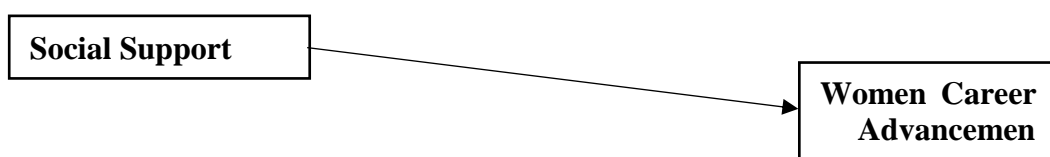
#### **Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) in Women Career Advancement**

The SCCT is a theory that relates to social cognitive theory, its assumptions revolve around attainment of career satisfaction and advancement (Lent & Brown, 2006). The career advancement of women is more complex than men career advancement because of some internal and external constraints such as family commitment, culture of organizational and level of education of women which serves as hindrance for the choice of career for women (Coogan & Chen, 2007).

According to Morris, Shoffner and Newsome (2009), SCCT is a model designed for career advancement by Lent, Brown and Hackett in 1994. In their theory, the combination of personal determinants (self-efficacy) and perceived environmental determinants (support and barriers) lead to behavioural determinants (goal, interest and career behaviour). Past scholars have used SCCT theory in the study of women career advancement. Coogan et al. (2007) conducted a review of some study from SCCT theory to arrive at some recommendations to address the specific needs of women regarding their life career. The finding of the researchers also revealed that the career advancement of women is influenced by personal, social and environment factors which caused impediments for women to develop their career. Wright, et al. (2012) argued that barrier and career supports play an important role in influencing self-efficacy of women, the women perceived career barriers are negatively associated in career decision making.

Based on the review of the previous literature which was explained in the earlier sections, the conceptual framework for this study was developed. Many research gaps were discovered between constructs that motivate for more examination about the relationships between the proposed constructs. This study's conceptual framework is formed based on the prior review of literature that contains the relationships between variables under examination.

**Figure 1:**



**Corporate Culture** 

*Source: The authors*

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The current study therefore proposes that social support and corporate culture can be acute importance partially for predicting the women career advancement. The paper has outlined that there is a lack of research and the handful past studies have also indicated towards its importance and significance. More importantly, taking the recommendations of past researchers (Rand, 2014; Francis, 2017; Madsen, 2017; Gray, 2011; Yean, 2010) forward, the paper encourages future researchers to investigate and highlight the importance of social support and corporate culture in the women career advancement literatures in order to help scholars as well as corporate leaders to better understand the issue of women career advancement and respond to it in an effective manner as well.

Consequently, the work of Gray, (2011) has proposed it as an important area for HR practitioners to consider in order enhancing women career advancement in their respective organizations. Rand, (2014) has also thoroughly explained the importance of women career advancement in corporate sector. He suggests that organizations should ensure development and career advancement of women.

Thus, the career advancement is important for women and as well as our economy. And the social support and corporate culture have the important impact on women career advancement. When women receive the positive support and good corporate culture then they feel that their career is going up. It will be significant for women and as well as organizations.

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