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**Higher Educational Acquisition And Women Career Advancement In The Kwara State  
Civil Service**

**by**

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**Abstract**

The study examined the main influence of higher educational attainment on the achievement of career advancement for women in the Kwara State Civil Service of North Central, Nigeria. Although women's career advancement in formal sectors has improved over the last one decade Ajede, (2023) there is however, paucity of studies on how the acquisition of higher degrees by female civil servants have impacted on their professional advancement. The study was anchored on the Theory of bureaucracy, Labour Market Segmentation and Human Capital theory. The three theories explained the problem and nature of the bureaucratic structure and its inevitability in government administrative systems, how it leads to sexual division of labour, problem of labour market segmentation and the importance of investing in education and training to bridge gender gaps at work. Cross –sectional survey design was utilized while Simple random, purposive and stratified sampling techniques were used to select permanent staff of six ministries within the Kwara State civil service in Ilorin, North Central, in Nigeria consisting of 158 females. Eight in depth interview (IDIs) and case studies were conducted on female directors and permanent secretaries of the ministries. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and Chi-square test statistics at 0.05 level of significance while qualitative data were content analyzed.

Results showed that higher educational attainment remains a key factor for the career advancement of women to management positions in addition to performance and hard work while cultural stereotypes, glass-ceiling and domestics responsibilities remain challenges to women advancement in the civil service.

Word Count: 250

**Key words:** Higher education\* Women career\* Civil service\* Bureaucracy\* Advancement

**Introduction**

Opportunities for women career progression in most formal sectors have increased over the last one and half decade in Nigeria particularly from the period after the National Gender Policy was implemented in Nigeria Ajede (2023). Most industries and government ministries as well as

parastatals are no longer mostly male dominated. This positive trend is assumed to likely have a good impact on improved competitive advantage for most organizations and government establishment particularly in Nigeria where female workers face some level of challenges and barriers to career advancement, therefore, the average female business executive and worker, compared to her male counterpart has to work almost twice more to be recognized and rewarded.

The National Gender Policy was promulgated in December 2006 in Nigeria to modify the gaps inherent in the erstwhile national policy on women which was as a result of its inability to tackle and respond to the challenges of gender inequalities and its attendant low socio-economic indicators. The main thrust of the National Gender Policy (NGP) is to promote a gender-sensitive and a gender-responsive culture in policy planning and national development.

A major challenge of the policy was how to move from the prescriptions specified in the policy document to the implementation of the policy framework in a highly patriarchal setting as Nigeria. One of the means of combating the above challenge was the involvement of all stakeholders and the prescription by the federal government that all sectors in both the private and public sphere should have a gender policy in line with the framework of the National Gender Policy. It was anticipated that such a move will enhance productivity and sustainable development especially that which will address the needs of women and other vulnerable groups in the society. In the same vein, it is anticipated that higher educational acquisition by women in the government civil service and other government establishments in Nigeria is also supposed to serve as a factor that is likely to enhance their opportunity to aspire to top leadership positions and invariably become members of boards, directors, permanent secretaries and other decision making portfolios. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of study to interrogate the role that higher educational acquisition by women in the Kwara State Civil Service has played to advance their career prospects into top leadership positions and get to the peak of their careers as permanent secretaries and directors etc. where they had lagged behind in the past. It is against the above background that the study examined how higher educational acquisition has impacted on career advancement of women civil servants and also discovered other inherent factors impinging on women aspirations to the top leadership levels in the Kwara State Civil Service in Nigeria.

### **Kwara State Civil Service**

Kwara State was created in May 1967 as one of the first 12 states to replace the Nation's four regions. The state was initially named as the West Central state and later changed to Kwara, a

local name for the Niger River. The size of the state has been reduced over the years as new states have been created by the federal government. Total Square Kilometer land Mass for the state presently is 36, 825km (14.218sq m). The state is presently one of the 36 states that make up the federating states of Nigeria. It is bordered to the east by Kogi State, to the north by Niger State, and to the south by Ekiti, Osun and Oyo States while its Western border makes up part of the International border with Benin Republic. The Capital of the state is the ancient city of Ilorin. There are 16 local government areas in the state with the state ministries recently increased to twenty by the incumbent executive governor, Abdulrazaq Abdulrahman, the fourth democratically elected governor and 20<sup>th</sup> governor of the state. The twenty ministries as well as some agencies in the Kwara State civil service includes the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Works and Transport, Ministry of Tertiary Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of finance and planning, Ministry of Youth and Development, Ministry of Special Duties, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of solid minerals, ministry of housing and urban development, ministry of water resources and ministry of business, innovation and technology etc. The States has 9 Universities, 8 polytechnics and 15 colleges of education in addition to the Nigerian Army School of education, Nigerian Navy School of Health Sciences and the International Aviation College. There is doubt that the state is richly endowed with large number of tertiary institutions that can positively enhance and enrich people s knowledge and competencies regardless of sex or creed. Presently, there are 9 (45percent) Female Permanent Secretaries among the 20 Permanent secretaries in the state. The ministries with female permanent secretaries includes: Political and Cabinet, office of the secretary to the state government, ministry of solid minerals, ministry of energy, ministry of housing and urban development, ministry of education, bureau of statistics, ministry of business, innovation and technology, ministry of tertiary education and the ministry of water resources. It is therefore worth mentioning that unlike what operated in the past and still obtains in some other states, the Kwara State Civil Service has reasonable number of women at the top of their careers as public officers.

## Statement of the Problem

Women career advancement is still negatively impacted in many industries and government ministries in Nigeria as are the case in so many other countries of the world that are highly patriarchal. Women still have to contend with several challenges which make advancement painstakingly slow for them in spite of the promulgation and implementation of the NGP in some industries and organizations in Nigeria. Larger numbers of women are visibly represented at the lower levels of most organizations and government ministries but as one moves to upper management, they become increasingly invisible especially at the boards (Akande, 2006; Ajede, 2008; Ibru, 2008; Mordi et al., 2011, Knorr, 2011 and Ajede, 2017). Compared to their male counterparts women take on the major responsibilities of home and child rearing, have lower level of educational attainment and lower literacy rates. Hence, while men maintain and expand their careers by remaining on their jobs, large numbers of women sometimes breaks off work due to child bearing and child rearing demands. There is therefore a marked absence of women at top senior executive levels of most government ministries, establishment and even private organizations prior to the promulgation of the national gender policy in Nigeria. This is likely to be why women still hold a relatively small percentage of influential positions in most ministries and other public service (Urhibo, 2022; Lewis-Enright, Crafford and Crous, 2009) except in the last decade.

Gender inequality has remained persistent in all employment areas including the Nigerian civil service. Othman *et al* (2024) observed that in Nigeria women are not specifically employed in the Nigerian civil service on the principle of gender equality or because the government intended to explore from their potential, and this accounts for some of the disparities between men and women in the civil service in favor of men. Although the disparity between male and female progression into decision making organ of the civil service has reduced, Othman *et al* (2024) noted further that factors which negatively affect women and encourages the disparity included the deficit of women in education, religion, the civil service administration; sex appeal as a criterion, marriage and childbearing demands and culture. This may explain why the preference for men in executive position still remains a major threat to women career advancement as earlier observed (Folorunsho, 2011; Aina, 2012 and Ajede, 2017). Another area where women stand at disadvantaged is their level of education and literacy rate compared to their male counterparts. Literatures abound to show the low literacy level of women compared

to their male counterparts. (Aina 2012 Sirleaf,2020 and Guterres, 2020) disclosed that although more than any other time in the Nigerian history and other parts of Africa, women education, is now considered a priority because it has become a major factor in the development equation and key to gender equality, yet the challenges of gender issues in education still remain mostly unabated. (Aina 2012 Sirleaf,2020, Othman *et all*, 2024) disclosed further that the cultural barriers which the girl child faces concerning her roles at home and in the society still inhibit her ability to go to school. Whereas educational acquisition Folorunsho, (2013) as earlier noted remains a fundamental prerequisite to higher placement in many work organization as well as a central tenet to career advancement in the civil service. There is however, very limited empirical research on women in the civil service and their co- workers to see how the acquisition of higher degrees has impacted on women career advancement in Nigeria civil service. There is also a lack of empirical study to ascertain the percentage of women in top hierarchy of the Nigerian civil service compared to their male counterparts.

### **Study Objectives**

The main objective of the study was to examine how the acquisition of higher degrees by women civil servants in the Kwara state civil service affects their career advancement and challenges to their aspiration.

Specifically, the study:

1. Ascertained that the aspiration level of female civil servants to top management position in the ministries is on the increase
2. Discovered other factors such as performance and hard work that also significantly affect opportunity for career advancement in the Kwara state civil service.
3. Find out the career pathway of women at top level position of their career in the Kwara State civil service
4. Determined the challenges confronting female civil servants in their aspiration to top leadership positions in their career.

### **Literatures**

This section reviews the pathway of female executives and directors/ permanent secretaries who have been able to overcome the glass-ceilings to achieve upward career advancement in their

organizations/ ministries as well as establishment and the influence of the acquisition of higher educational degrees on their career advancement. It has been observed that the few female executives who have been able to break glass-ceiling at work have certain qualities in common globally. Most of them are from middle class background, had been in a stable personal relationship and have children. They are most likely to have completed professional training or hold a degree, most often in business studies or other related fields. They are confident. They believe in their professional competence and have appetite for continuous learning. (Byko,2008). In buttressing the importance of further learning and its inherent impact at improving opportunities for women progression at work Aina (2012) noted that the development of female human capital would not only help to reduce poverty at the household level, increase their career advancement opportunities but will also radically enhance national growth and development while their lack of the necessary educational qualification will continue to undermine their opportunity as recently observed by Othman *et all* (2024) disclosed that in their study, 87.88percent of the participants noted that female education deficits constitute one factor that influences women's employment advancement.

It has also been observed that most female executives are younger compared to their male counterpart. They have also been seen to advance in their career more rapidly, although compared to men, they are by far fewer in leadership positions due to family commitments and persisting male networking in the corporate world. Stevens (2000) in an earlier study highlights and examined the pathway that many women managers used to climb to the top of their career. She observed that although most of the women started their career as part-time workers in industries which require less formal qualifications, they gradually climb to the top of their career through dent of hard-work which involves training, higher learning, commitment and dedication. Linehan (2008) had also highlighted the importance of organizational networking on the career development of female managers in organizations. She emphasized the need for training and continued professional career development opportunities coupled with adequate childcare arrangements. These have been found to be fundamental to the career success of most executive women. In the same vein Sir leaf (2020) noted that it is time for action to invest in women empowerment through investment in female education that will foster gender equality and bring about the full utilization of women s potential which will prevent them from being victims of violence and abuse from men at the slightest provocation. Okeagu (2024) observed that the

gender gap in the Nigerian civil service has been a significant barrier to achieving gender equity and equality and noted further that although efforts have been made to develop a National Gender Policy aimed at addressing and promoting equal opportunities in the country unfortunately, the Nigerian civil service has witnessed more formidable barriers which originate from powerful gender role stereotypes where narrow-minded beliefs about the kinds of tasks for which women are most appropriately suited persist. Okeagu (2024) collaborating Othman et al (2024) noted that despite creating the Ministry of Women Affairs over 29 years ago, there is no doubt that the government shapes and limits women's role in the civil service. Hence, why Nigerian women are still struggling to break the glass ceiling imposed on them. Okeagu (2024) noted further that even Well-educated women in the Nigerian civil service continue to face numerous contradictions between what they need to survive and what is possible under current administrative laws, religious and traditional social structures in the country. As such, women are underrepresented in the public sector due to historical, religious and cultural patterns of development in Nigeria. In the same vein, Urhibo(2022) had earlier addresses the concern of women not hired in senior public management positions and argues that in offering women the opportunity to access economic resources as well as to disentangle their identities from those of their families, diversity management programs will provide space for women in Nigeria to clearly define their roles as equal partners in the sustainable development process of the nation. Urhibo (2022) discloses further that this is because in spite of the increasing number of women in the Nigerian civil service, yet, female senior public administrators are still relatively rare. Although, equality for women in the civil service is improving, upward mobility is however, still very low. Prejudice continues to exist as well as glass ceiling that limits women from enjoying truly equal opportunities in the Nigerian public service. She noted further that women are still struggling to find ways to break the glass ceiling impose on them in the civil service. Urhibo (2022) disclosed further that even well -educated women in the civil service in Nigeria continues to face numerous contradiction between what they need to survive and what is possible under current administrative laws, religious, and traditional social structures in the country. Similarly, the slow progress of women aspiration to top decision making portfolios of the civil service has remain a major source of concern to most stakeholders. This is because civil servants are the custodians of gender policies, it is therefore important to look inward and review how well this gap has been bridged within the civil service Okeagu (2024). It is also noteworthy to examine the

aspiration of women in the civil service to reach top leadership positions. Kline and Sausner (2010) had earlier observed that women orientation to work has a role to play in the choices they make with regard to their aspirations. Their orientation to work reduces their level of aspirations which invariably explains their relatively disadvantaged position in the labor market. In the same vein, Kline and Sausner (2010) observed further that a good example of the above can be seen in the banking sector where as a result of the that turbulent times in the banking world, an unprecedented number of senior executives have taken a hit for their banks and the industry's fallings including a number of high profile women globally. They observed that 19 percent of senior women executives surveyed by catalyst said that they lost their positions and are not aspiring to regain them compared to only 6 percent of men who had also lost out. They concluded that during hard times, when decisions are made about laying off staff, more women staff suffers as against their male counterparts. They also observed that more women are willing to be laid off rather than fight back. Tlaiss and Kauser (2010) also argue that women's expression of relatively low aspiration may not be unrelated to the actual barriers to their advancement. In her study of Korean women in the private and public sectors, Kim (2010) showed that female aspiration tends to focus on balance and security rather than on getting ahead. Similarly, Granlese (2004) had earlier showed that compared to men, female managers in the UK experience greater occupational pressures, which hinders their level of aspiration. Building on the above studies, Lewis-Enright (2009) observes that poor self-esteem, personal inadequacy, reticence, the imposter syndrome and fear of rejection are all factors that contribute to women not aspiring to advance to their full career potential. In the same vein, Afande, (2015) discovered that individual factors such as age, gender issues, individual's skills; tenure, hard work, reputation, and performance all affect women career advancement. He further noted that women's lack of self- confidence and their tendency to be more self- critical than men also hinder their advancement in both the private and public sectors in Kenya. He however, concluded that women's lack of self confidence in themselves as well as their tendency to be self -critical ranked higher than even their educational attainment as a factor affecting women career advancement while gender issues came fourth following educational attainment for the case of Kenya. Hence, for Afande, (2015) gender issues is not a strong factor affecting the path to advancement of female workers any more unlike what obtained in the past.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study was anchored on the bureaucratic theory, labour market segmentation theory and the human capital theory. These three theories are chosen due to their detailed discussions and utility for explaining the emergence, implication and the effect of investing in education and its attendant impact on reducing the problem of gender inequalities in institutions, government ministries; organizations and the society at large.

### **Max Weber Theory of Bureaucracy**

Weber who was one of the foremost founders of Sociology was the first scholar to have developed the bureaucratic model for the administration and running of modern day organizations and government agencies. Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy is an approach that proposes a specific way to manage an organization or large scale ministries. The theory proposes that the most appropriate way to manage and run an organization is to structure it into a rigid hierarchy of individuals governed by strict rules and regulations which must be strictly obeyed. Weber described the bureaucratic structure within an organization as highly organized formalized and also impersonal. Weber proposes that the most appropriate way to run an organization is to structure it into a rigid hierarchy which depends on qualification, specialization, expertise and experience of individuals governed by strict rules and regulations. He thereafter identified five main characteristics of the bureaucratic structure namely: Specialization, division of labor, formal written records, competencies for job appointments, as well as standard operating procedure and impersonality. Weber emphasized further that all work responsibilities must be delegated based on competences and functional specialization which should also serve as foundation for task division. It is only through these means that work place efficiencies and economic efficacy can be achieved. Weber's perspective therefore emphasizes the importance of education and training, most especially higher educational training that will lead to specialization, with the achievement of necessary skills and specialization, women employees should be able to have desired opportunities for career advancement and growth in the civil services and as envisaged by Weber, since the bureaucratic structure is strictly impersonal nothing should stop a woman from getting to the top once they have acquired the necessary qualification, specialization and required competences. Weber's explanation of the bureaucratic structure does not give room for gender inequality or any other such barriers for women from getting to the peak of their career once they have the desired competences and qualification. It can therefore be

assumed that when women invest in higher education with the prerequisite qualifications and competencies in the civil service, they are likely to advance steadily in their career and get to the very top decision making bodies.

### **Labor Market Segmentation Theory**

The labor market segmentation theory is similar to the dual labor market theory. Although, unlike the dual labor market theory which stresses the existence of two parallel markets, segmentation in its broadest sense may involve the existence of several labor markets. The theory was advanced as an alternative to the human capital theory by several authors in the early 1970's. The labor market segmentation theory posits that there are differences on the demand side of labor which brings about the splitting of the labor market into two main key sectors, the primary and secondary sectors. In a primary sector market, the workforce as a whole is motivated to serve their employer because of wages, health benefits, and pension / job security. This job market consists of a majority of blue collar jobs and a few white collar jobs. Jobs here are usually high grade, high status and better paid with employers who offer the best terms and condition of services. The jobs available in this market are usually considered to be occupational labor- markets jobs. In the primary labor market, labor relations are formalized either by a union or in an employment relation hand book. Whereas in the secondary labor markets, job management is entitled to complete control because there is a larger turn- out of labor here. Many workers in this market either leave or are easily replaced. The job at this level gives low emphasis on job morale and workers lack motivation. The secondary jobs are mostly low- skilled, require relatively little training and can be learned quickly on the job. There are few incentives to remain on the job because the jobs are unattractive; hence there is little motivation to stay. For the above reasons, there is little incentive to stay; hence there are high levels of turnover, with workers moving on to other jobs. Wages are low in this sector while the terms and conditions of the work are poor. Studies have shown that it is in this sector that women are mostly found in their large numbers. In buttressing this view, Onyeonoru (2008) submits that one of the essential and interesting elements of the segmentation theory is that job characteristics and workers social class location tend to match each other and this therefore explains why majority of women in the labor market are a part of the secondary sector with little or no opportunity for career progression and while fewer women are at the top management level of most ministries and other formal

organizations. In a similar vein, Kendell (2007) observes that in the industrialized countries, most jobs are segregated by gender, race and ethnicity. She stressed further that women are severely underrepresented at the top of U.S. Corporations and other parts of the world due in part to segregation as well as lack of prerequisite educational skill and knowledge. Hence, similar to Weber's view above, women are likely segregated from jobs with high prospects that can take them to top management levels due to lack of the prerequisite qualification and competencies that can be derived from the acquisition of higher education.

### **Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theory can be associated with the resource based view of the firm as developed by Barney (1991). This proposes that sustainable competitive advantage is attained when the firms has a human resource pool that cannot be imitated or substituted by its rivals. Boxal (1996) refers to this situation as one that confers 'human capital advantage'. But he also notes that a distinction should be made between 'human capital advantage' and human process advantage'. The added value that people can contribute to their potential is emphasised by human capital theory. It regards people as assets and stressed that investment in people through education and training will generate worthwhile returns. The theory therefore underpins the philosophy of human resource management which, as developed in the 1980's stated that employees should be treated as assets rather than costs. Generally people's effectiveness depends upon making good use of knowledge, which needs to be developed, captured and exchanged (knowledge management) in order to bring about the best potentials in them. From a financial reward point of view, the implication of human capital theory is that the investment people make on themselves goes a long way to improve their potentials. Human capital theory encourages the use of skill or competence based pay as a method of reward. It also underpins the concept of individual market worth. This indicates that individuals have their own value in the marketplace which they acquire and increase through investments in themselves either in vocational training or formal educational development and experience. The market worth of individuals may be considerably higher than the market rate of their jobs, and if they are not rewarded accordingly, they may market their talents elsewhere. The above theory explains the importance of human capital development as it provides a framework for self - development, training programmes which can foster the acquisition of innovative skills that are likely to improve one's potentials

and competencies at work and within the larger society. It is therefore envisaged that when women in the civil service acquire higher degrees to improve their human capital potentials, they are likely to achieve career advancement

## **Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey design in order to capture the broad and specific objectives of the study. The study utilized the quantitative, qualitative techniques as well as published and unpublished records kept by the selected ministries for the study. This was supplemented by other journals and publication that have bearing with civil service organizational policies, in addition to other management reviews and journals within and outside Nigeria. The study location is Ilorin, the Kwara State Capital. The study population consisted of 158 female employees (Permanent Staff) of the six ministries that were chosen for the study within Ilorin, the Kwara state Capital. In addition to the above, in-depth interview were conducted for 12 female Management staff. The respondents for the in-depth interviews were purposively selected consisting of 6 female Directors and 6 permanent Secretaries from the head offices of the six ministries selected for the study on the basis of two respondents (1 Permanent secretary and 1 Director) in other to seek their views and perception on the main influence of higher educational acquisition on their career advancement as well as challenges to their career advancement. Case Studies were also held for the 6 permanent secretaries and 6 directors from the ministries that were chosen for the study. Simple Random, Stratified, convenient and purposive sampling techniques were jointly utilized to select representative samples who are mainly female civil servants and permanent female staff of the six ministries that were selected for the study. The respondents were stratified along senior and junior staff while respondents for interview and case studies were purposively and conveniently selected in order to be able to get senior female civil servants who will be to explain to us their career pathway and challenges to their career advancement. The study utilized the questionnaire and the in-depth interview as well as case studies as main sources of data collection. Questionnaire consisting mostly of close-ended questions were administered to respondents in each of the selected ministries within Ilorin in addition to the conduct of a total of 12 in-depth interviews and 6 case studies for permanent secretaries and directors of the ministries.

## **Results and Discussion of Findings**

A survey was conducted on 158 female civil servants from the selected Six Ministries. In addition to the above, 12 participants who were mainly Directors and Permanent Secretaries were purposively selected from the head offices of the six State Ministries for an in-depth interview to determine their level of educational attainment vis a vis their position while 6 Case Studies were held among the 12 participants to discover their pathway to top leadership positions in their Ministries

### **Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Report from the study indicates that while 64.6% of the respondents were within the age brackets of 21- 30 and 31-40 years. This reflects that the Kwara State Civil Service in North/Central Nigeria has a large number of vibrant young employees in the ministries that are likely to have the zeal and energy to withstand the rigor and the challenging nature of the activities in the State Ministries. Report shows that 22percent of the respondents had Ordinary level certificates while 54.4percent of the respondents had first Tertiary/University degrees and 15.6% had Post had higher degrees while 8percent of the respondents had PhDs. It can therefore be affirmed that the Kwara State civil Service has a large literate female workforce who are likely to contribute positively to the development of the state as well as have opportunities for career progression in their various ministries.

A female Director in one of the Ministries who took part in the IDI had this to say to buttress the view above. She explained that:

*“There is a large literate and highly educated workforce in the Kwara State Civil Service.” (Permanent Secretary/Ministry of Solid Minerals/Female/IDI/2024)*

Similarly a Female Permanent Secretary who took part in the IDIs also disclosed that a large number of females in her Ministry are highly educated thus:

*Yes, there are quite a large number of my female colleagues who are highly educated. In fact some women in employment here are already aspiring to pursue their*

*doctorate degrees. This might be connected to the fact that this is the ministry of tertiary education.” (Permanent Secretary /Female/IDI/2024)*

Results on the challenges to female career advancement in the civil service shows that the challenges to women aspirations in the ministries are domestic/ family responsibilities, religious and traditional social structures which remain the greatest challenges to women aspiration with 48.3%, followed by unseen barriers/glass ceiling with 25.7%, then 14. 4% for gender discrimination as a challenge to women while in adequate educational qualification as a challenge to women aspiration was 11.6%. Specifically in the ministry of solid minerals, majority of the aspiring women are facing the challenge of family responsibilities, religious and traditional Social structures (44.4%), gender discrimination (30.6%), and unseen barriers (18.1%).The result revealed that the major challenge to the aspirations of aspiring women are family responsibilities, religious and traditional Social structures. It was also observed that, apart from family responsibilities, gender discrimination and unseen barriers tend to be slightly higher for almost all the categories of women who participated in both the quantitative and qualitative study.

It was generally disclosed by the Female directors and permanent secretaries interviewed that the home front, glass ceiling and the work requirements are great challenges to women aspirations in the Kwara State Civil Service. This was confirmed by one of the respondents for IDI as explained below:

*“Yes, family responsibilities, traditional stereo types of the role of a woman as well as glass ceiling are major challenges, but this can be overcome with the cooperation of ones spouse for domestic requirements as well as determination and hard work on the part of the woman”*

**Table 1.0 Career Pathway of women Directors/ Permanent Secretaries in Kwara Civil Service**

Cases	Factors of Influence					
State Ministries	Continued Investment	Self-Development	Performance and meeting	Hard-work	Element of	Zeal, Ambition,

	in Formal Education	through administrative trainings, conferences and Workshops	targets etc.		Politics and God father's influence	Confidence and Self worth
Cases 1- Education	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Cases 2- Tertiary Education	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cases 3- Water Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Cases 4- Solid Minerals	✓		✓	✓		
Cases 5- Energy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Cases 6- Business, Innovation and Technology	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

A comparative look at the career pathway of the twelve women showed that continued investment in education is a major factor responsible for their advancement in the Civil Service and same goes for performance which is also a major factor of influence for the advancement of the women, followed by hard work. Zeal/ Ambition, Element of politics and self –development are also factors of influence but not as strong as the first three factors as can be observed above. To support the above, a female director interviewed in one of the Ministries had this to say

*“Their pathway and requirement to get to the top is similar. However, they have risen to the top of their careers through their higher educational qualification, hard work, zeal as well as performance and commitment.”* Similarly, another female Permanent Secretary in her own words explained that:

*“We have a **good** appraisal system in the Kwara State Civil Service, even when sometimes delayed; we will surely get what we are due for. Those at the top have earned it. They have to earn it. It is earned as a result of their educational qualification, performance and hard work as well as their experience on the job.”*

It was observed that in all the twelve cases studied, performance, higher formal educational degrees and hard work remained major pathways to career progression and sustainability. Similarly, reports also show the rate of discrimination against female civil services on the basis of their sex still remain slightly high.

## **Conclusion**

Issues emanating from the results from the study show that higher educational degrees play very a major determining and significant role for career advancement, without higher degrees, women can- not move to decision making positions in the civil service of their states. However, to maintain career advancement sustainability, female civil servants need to excel in their performances in each of their core ministries and area of assignment. The above was confirmed by almost all the female respondents that participated in the quantitative survey as well as during the IDIs. Major challenges and obstacle to career advancement in the civil service for women are family responsibilities, social and traditional stereo types as well as religious factors. It is therefore important, that government addresses the nature of their operations to make it more flexible for women to be able to progress in their careers as well as remain good home makers/builders.

The important of training and further training through renewed investment in education for career advancement is also important particularly for states where literacy rate is still very low for women. Unfortunately only 21% of people who wants education are getting it in Nigeria. Tertiary education for women remains slightly over 32% while for men it is over 67% in Nigeria

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following actions are recommended.

More effort must be made by government to improve the education gaps between men and women in the Nigerian society so that more women can have opportunities for gainful employment and career advancement.

Female civil servants should also intensify more efforts towards increasing their level of aspiration as well as thrive to acquire higher degree so that they can advance more rapidly in their career. This can be achieved through hard work, more qualifications, increasing performance and zeal.

Policy makers and decision making groups should address the nature of activities of the Nigerian public sector to suit female civil servants family commitment in order to reduce the challenge of family responsibilities.

Management should also address the problem of stereo types and cultural prejudice about the place of women and glass ceiling of women from advancing to higher levels in their careers simply because of their sex.

It is also recommended that management addresses the challenge of discriminations and unseen barriers against women in the civil service as observed in literature Urhibo (2022) disclosed that in spite of the increasing number of women in the Nigerian civil service, yet, female senior public administrators are still relatively rare. Although, equality for women in the civil service is improving, upward mobility is however, still very low. Prejudice continues to exist as well as glass ceiling that limits women from enjoying truly equal opportunities in the Nigerian public service. She noted further that women are still struggling to find ways to break the glass ceiling impose on them in the civil service. Urhibo (2022) disclosed further that even well -educated women in the civil service in Nigeria continues to face numerous contradiction between what they need to survive and what is possible under current administrative laws, religious, and traditional social structures in the country. The above view and perception were also confirmed by participants from both the quantitative component and qualitative components of the study. A Female participant among the directors and permanent secretaries interviewed disclosed that the

home front, glass ceiling and the work requirements are great challenges to women aspirations in the Kwara State Civil Service.

*“Yes, family responsibilities, traditional stereo types of the role of a woman as well as glass ceiling are major challenges, but this can be overcome with the cooperation of one’s spouse for domestic requirements as well as determination and hard work on the part of the woman”*

In line with the above, it is also recommended that men should be re oriented towards the need to support their wives and spouses to build up their career and have career advancement opportunities, this is because apart from been self -actualized on the part of the woman, it will go a long way into improving the income and earning of the family.

Women at the top should also inculcate the habit of mentoring other women. It is advised that more women at the top also mentor their junior female colleagues so that they can also have more opportunities to get to the top of their careers too.

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