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Relationship between gender and proactive work behaviour in the Kenya's hotel industry

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Abstract

According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics report, (2016), wage employment by industry and sex statistics indicate a majority of males employed in the modern sector than female with accommodation and food service industry registering 71 percent males and 29 percent female employees. This disparity extended to women in national decision-making category, with slight improvement from previous years. Participation of men and women in key decision making positions in the national assembly was at 19.8 per cent of total legislators. The share of female cabinet secretaries declined from 33.3 per cent in 2014 to 25.5 per cent in 2015. The disparities could be attributed to many other factors, among them the employers' perceptions on proactive behaviour between gender and gender role expectations. The purpose of this research paper was to test the difference in proactive work behaviour between the male and female employees working in Nairobi business hotels. The study employed a co-relational research design. From a target population of 190 front line employees, 127 formed the sample size for the study. Primary data was gathered from employees by use of self-administered questionnaires while secondary data was gathered from relevant books, hotel records, journals, publications and the internet. Reliability of data was tested using Cronbach's Alpha resulting in a value 0.804. One way ANOVA test was conducted to test the differences in proactive work behavior between male employees and their female counterparts. The findings of this study do not show a difference in proactive work behaviour between male and female employees ($F 1.312; p > 0.05$). Based on the combination of literature review with the results of this study, it is clear that gender does not restrain proactive behaviour at work. Adoption of work practices which support gender parity can offer a good first step towards innovation and being proactive at work place. Being "nice" to women by opening doors and offering to pay their bills, does not make women feel included. There is need to do more by reflecting on work patterns and policies so as to entrench measures which provide in-depth support of gender parity at work places. The researcher recommends that tourism and hospitality policy makers and regulators should develop national policies on employment which encourage flagship initiatives on gender equality as a key priority.

Key words: *Innovation; Proactive Work behaviour*

1.0 Introduction

According to previous studies (Grant, Parker, and Collins 2008), proactive behaviour is self-directed and future-focused action in an

organization, in which the individual aims to bring about change, including change to the situation (e.g. introducing new work methods; influencing organizational strategy) and/or

change within oneself (e.g., learning new skills to cope with future demands).

Proactive work behaviours like personal initiative has been positively linked with innovation and entrepreneurial orientation, it is particularly important in the idea implementation phase of the innovation process. Rank, Pace & Frese, (2004) affirm that voice behaviour involves challenging the status quo to implement creative ideas. Information and ideas withholding can undermine organizational decision-making, error correction and development and innovation processes (Beer and Eisenstat, 2000). Employees who can take charge challenge the status quo so as to bring about constructive change functional change with respect to how work is executed within the context of their jobs, work units or organizations. Besides, employees who sell issues influence the strategy formulation process in an organization. (Dutton and Ashford, 2001).

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics report, (2016) there are more male employees in accommodation and food sector than there are female. There are many factors that may have led to the occurrence of this phenomenon for instance, odd working hours, working in shifts and the social stigma of working in the hotels curtailing many females from joining the industry (Taylor, 2002), as a result, hotels jobs tend to be more favourable for male employees than their female counterparts. On the other hand, gender diversity is a contemporary issue associated with innovation process. Until today, social science research has shown that gender discrimination is an institutional problem.

Without exploring their own biases, managers tend to see men as being more competent at some types of work relative to women, especially when it comes to leadership and management roles. When this is related to issue selling propensity, women feel as if their ideas are not heard at work. Men don't see this because their ideas are always heard, even if their ideas are not always adopted (Zevallos, 2013).

Bindl (in press) and LePine and Dyne (1998) studies assert that men have also been found to be more likely to voice concerns about issues at the workplace. They dispute Griffin, Neal, and Parker (2007) study that showed inconsistent results with regards to the

relationship between gender and proactive behaviour.

Besides, the findings of Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, (1998) and Kanfer, Wanberg, and Kantrowitz (2001) study suggest that men are more proactive than women both in terms of their willingness to engage in proactive job search and in networking behaviors. This study narrows down on the scenario in the Kenyan hotel industry.

Given the robust constitution and a new system of devolved government that seeks to achieve equal gender representation in all positions, the Kenyan public and private employment sector is still male dominated.

This disparity extends to women in national decision-making category like in the national assemblies. This problem is embedded into the systemic and retrogressive cultural practices. For instance at an early stage of career development, few women are enrolled in schools and eventually institutions of higher learning since some cultures still view women as care givers who need informal education.

This systemic vice constrains women career growth and progression to higher levels of decision making in the society. Besides, of the few that manage to rise above these entanglements, most often the system denies them a legitimate chance to access professional support and equal opportunities for career advancement. Especially in the hotel industry, the nature of manual tasks seems to play a major role in hiring decisions of male and female employees. There seems to be a tendency of hiring more men than women both in managerial and frontline jobs. It is upon this foundation that this study is conducted to explore the relationship between gender and proactive behavior in the Kenyan hotel industry.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

According to role theory as propounded by Katz and Kahn (1978), each individual acts out socially defined categories of work in a predictable manner based on expectations and social norms. This account implies that employees' proactive behaviour is motivated by society role expectations. Women have been thought to be more risk averse than men (Brun-Gulbrandson and As, 1973) and therefore, the society expect women to be less proactive and innovative because proactive behaviours like innovation are construed as risky (Lynne and Freeman 2002). From this

assertion, it is clear that different role expectations can influence the extent to which male and female employees can be proactive at work place.

2.0 Methodology.

The research was carried out in selected hotel establishments located in Nairobi city. This study employed co-relational research design to establish the difference in proactive work behavior between male and female employees. Self-administered questionnaires were considered the main instruments to allow for collection and analysis of standardized information from frontline employees.

According to hotels' statistics, the total number of permanent employees in the selected star rated hotels study stood at 190. The study employed purposive, stratified and systematic sampling methods. Purposive sampling technique was used to identify the establishments since the researcher highly believed the establishments would provide information the researcher intended to collect. Stratified sampling was used to stratify the hotels according to the presence of primary and support departments thereafter, respondents were sampled systematically.

2.1 Data analysis.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze data. One-way analysis of variance was performed to test the difference in proactive work behavior between male and female employees since it is an appropriate test for judging the significance of a sample mean or for judging the significance of difference between the means of two samples. Reliability test was captured through statements on a 5-point Likert scale. The reliability test results in table 2.1 below showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.804 which was considered acceptable, (Hair et al., 2006).

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Proactive Work Behaviour between Male and Female Employees

As shown in the table 3.1 below; the sample mean of male employees was 4.26 while the sample mean for female employees was 4.42. At 95% confidence interval, the mean ranged between a total of 4.19 and 4.41 for the lower and upper bound respectively. The standard error difference of the sample stood at 0.56.

Table 3.1: Proactive Work Behaviour (Y)

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	58	4.26	.480	.063	4.13	4.38
Female	19	4.42	.507	.116	4.18	4.67
Total	77	4.30	.488	.056	4.19	4.41

Source: Data analysis, (2015)

ANOVA test was done to explore the difference in proactive work behavior between male and female gender to test the hypothesis; **H₀1**. *There is no significant difference in proactive work behavior between the male and female employees.*

As indicated from table 1.3 below, ANOVA results indicate $F(1, 75) = 1.595$; $p > 0.05$ showing a mean difference of 0.378 between groups. Hence the assumption that samples variances were equal. This results support the Null hypothesis.

Table 3.2: ANOVA Test

Proactive Work Behaviour					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.378	1	.378	1.595	.210
Within Groups	17.752	75	.237		
Total	18.130	76			

Source: Data analysis, (2015)

4.0 Discussion

From the descriptive results, there women employees seem to be more proactive than male counterparts. However, the mean generated by the statistical test dispute this analogy. There is no significant difference in proactive work behaviour between men and female employees. Both genders have an equal ability to take charge, take initiative, voice their opinions and sell issues at the work place and change their work environment. No specific gender is associated with proactive work behaviour.

These results support the Null hypothesis that stated; *there is no difference in proactive work behaviour between the male and female employees.* This implies that no specific gender is associated with proactive work behaviour. These finding correspond to Griffin *et al*, (2007) study which pointed out that there is no relationship between gender and proactive work behaviour.

Since no specific gender is associated with proactive work behaviour, this study asserts

that it is vital to embrace gender diversity at workplace in order to expand the search base for proactive work behaviour. This findings are also consistent with Inger and Jennie, (2011) findings stated that; enterprises with a balanced workforce (50-60% of same gender) are almost twice as likely to bring about change in their work environment compared to those with the most segregated workforce (90-100% of same gender). A balanced gender distribution may have a strong effect on the likelihood to innovate. Employee diversity is often considered positive since it might create a broader search base for proactive and innovative behaviour and make the firm more creative and more open towards new ideas.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the combination of literature review with the results of this study, it is clear that gender does not restrain proactive behaviour at work. Adoption of work practices which support gender parity can offer a good first step towards innovation and proactivity at work place.

Gender diversity at workplace can create a broader search base for a creative and proactive workforce, which may promote new ideas. There is need to do more by reflecting on workplace patterns and policies and entrenching measures which provide in-depth support of gender parity at work places. Women need to be offered a legitimate chance to access professional support and equal opportunities for career advancement.

The government has a major role of mainstreaming gender parity in private and public bodies. This may be achieved through coordination with tourism and hospitality regulators to develop national policies on sectorial employment which encourage flagship initiatives on gender equality as a key priority in the themes of smart growth, sustainable growth or inclusive growth. This may be done by incorporating gender parity criterion in the grading of hospitality facilities.

Besides, decision makers should encourage activities, including awareness campaigns, to promote work life balance, balancing the participation of women and men in family and working life, sharing the caring responsibilities, challenging stereotyping in employment, education, leadership and decision making positions.

While the findings of this study may provide a model to most players in the Kenyan hotel industry, especially in Nairobi and other bigger cities, it may present results that may be unique to other parts of the country and as well as different types of hospitality establishments like fast foods, motels, food courts, pubs and restaurants. More research is needed in this area to determine this relationship in different sectors of hospitality industry as well as in geographic locations.

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