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JOB PERFORMANCE AS THE BASIS FOR GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF SECRETARIES IN AN ORGANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine whether or not there is gender discrimination in the employment of secretaries and whether or not this discrimination is based on job performance. The objectives are to determine the percentage of male and female secretaries employed in organisations and the level of performance of secretaries duties by the two genders. A survey involving a sample of forty (40) secretaries selected by stratified random sampling technique was conducted. Data on the gender type of secretaries and their job performance were collected using structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using percentage, mean and t- test. The result of the study confirms that there is gender discrimination in the employment of secretaries. The paper suggests that both men and women should be given equal consideration in the employment of secretaries.

Key Words: Female secretary, gender discrimination, male secretary and secretarial duties.

INTRODUCTION

Every organization is set up with certain goals and objectives. For these goals, and objectives to be achieved, there is always the need for an organization to have an office where the activities of all the workers are coordinated. Many clients also transact their businesses with organizations by contacting their offices. Hence, the way an office is run plays a big role in the success or otherwise of the organizations concerned. Emphasizing the importance of the office

Ogungbemi (2001) describes an organization as a vehicle towards achieving set goals. He also describes the office as the engine component while the secretary is the driver.

Purpose of the Study.

The aim of the study is to determine whether or not there is gender discrimination in the employment of secretaries and whether this discrimination is based on the level of performance of secretarial Duties. The objectives are to determine the percentage of male and female secretaries employed by organizations and the level of performance of secretarial duties by the two gender types.

Hypothesis of the Study:

To achieve the objectives of this study, a research hypothesis was postulated.

The hypothesis states that there is no significant difference in the level of performance of secretarial duties between male and female secretaries.

The Secretaryship and the Gender Issue

Different authors have described the term 'Secretary in different ways. Eni (1988) describes her as the life-wire of her office. The secretary is her boss' alter-ego that is his second self. This study is not concerned with the different definitions of the term secretary of earlier researchers and authors because most of them are no longer in line with the current trend in secretarial training and practice. Most of the definitions stressed on typewriting and shorthand writing which are almost no longer in vogue. However, Hannah's (1978) definition, although also stale, appears to be still somehow relevant. He describes the secretary as 'an assistant to an executive, possessing mastery of office skills and ability to assume responsibility without direct supervision, who displays initiative, exercise judgement and makes decision within her scope of authority. Right from time immemorial, secretaryship had been associated with the female gender. For the purpose of this paper, the researches hereby define gender discrimination as strong preference for a particular gender of secretary to the detriment of the other gender. It is sad to note that this state of development still prevails nowadays when gender equality (non discrimination) is the order of the day.

Stating the disadvantage of gender discrimination, Ajei (2002) argues that gender pay gap is underpinned by other aspect o women inequality in the labour market such as occupational segregation and discrimination. To walby opportunity between men and women will Benefit from a combination of cost minimisation and profit maximisation.



Duties of Secretary

The Professional secretary acts as a link between the company and board of directors, stakeholders, regulators (e.g. Financial institutions etc. As a result of this, he /s he is responsible for a variety of administrative and clerical duties necessary to run an organization efficiently. Professional secretaries serve as information and communication managers for an office, plan and schedule meetings and appointments, organize and maintain paper and electronic files, disseminate information by using the telephone, mail services, web sites, e-mail etc.

They also handle travel and boss' arrangements, performing and coordinating office's administrative activities, storing and retrieving of information, integrating information for dissemination to staff and clients etc. Due to the different responsibilities handled by professional secretaries, they are aided in these tasks by a variety of office equipment, such as fax machines, photocopiers, scanners, video conferencing and telephone systems.

According to Durowaiye (2003) the duties of secretary are to receive dictation in shorthand and transcribe on the computer, to receive and assist visitors and to handle telephone calls, to keep the diary of her boss and arrange his appointments and engagements, to attend meetings and record minutes, to make her employer's travel arrangement and prepare his itineraries, to file and index her employer's correspondence, to supervise junior staff, to initiate correspondence on all routine matters and draft letters for the approval of the memoranda business letters, correspondence of various kinds, to act / stand in for boss in his absence, to perform any other duties that may be assigned by superior officers.

METHODOLOGY

To achieve the objectives of the study a field survey involving five Organisations was conducted. The population of the study was made up of the secretaries in five organisations. From this population frame, a sample of forty (40) secretaries made up of eight secretaries from each the five organisations selected for the study by stratified random sampling. Data collected for the study consist of the gender type and secretaries' assignment of their level of performance in twenty (20) selected secretarial duties, namely: receiving dictation, typing it, composing correspondence and summarizing reports, receiving and preparing incoming mail and at the end of the day dealing with the employer's outgoing mail, reception duties including the receiving and entertaining of visitors and the handling

ed telephone calls, keeping employer's diary, arranging his appointments and engagements, assisting him in planning his day, making her employer's travel arrangements and preparing his itineraries, organizing and attending meetings, including the preparation of Agenda and minutes, filing and indexing her employer's personal and business correspondence, organising her employer's office i.e. Keeping his wall charts up to date and controlling his papers and files, generally relieving the employer of many of his routine business and private matters, supplying information i.e. Employer's petty cash and bank transactions, supervision of junior secretarial staff, controlling stationery and office materials for her employer's and her own use, organizing conferences and social activities.

Secretaries' assessment of their level of performance of secretarial duties was measured using five ranks namely, not at all, rarely, sometimes, usually and always. The ranks were weighted 1,2,3,4 and 5 respectively. The level of performance of secretarial duties was derived by dividing the total score on the frequencies of performing the duties selected by the number of duties which is twenty. The main instrument for the collection of the data for the study was structured questionnaire.

Data collected were analysed to determine the gender type of secretaries employed using percentage, the mean level of secretaries' assessment of their performance in selected secretarial duties using mean and the test of difference in secretaries' assessment of their performance of secretarial duties between male and female secretaries using t-test.

RESULTS

The result of the analysis of data collected are presented as follows:

Gender Type of Secretaries Employed

The sex of secretaries employed by the five organisations selected were analysed to determine the percentage of the gender type of secretaries being employed. The result is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Sex of secretaries employed by selected organizations.

Sex	Number	Percentage
Male	11	28%
Female	29	72%
Total	40	100

The result of the analysis in Table 1 shows twenty - eight percent (28%) of the study sample were male while seventy - two percentage (72%) of them were female. This result the percentage of female employed as secretaries is considerably higher than that of male. This is an indication that there is gender discrimination against male in the employment of the secretaries.

Level of Performance of Secretarial Duties by Male and Female Secretaries

From the result in Table 1, the study discovers that there is a gender discrimination against men in the employment of secretaries. The attempt to determine whether the discrimination is justified or not prompts the analysis of the level of performance of secretarial duties by male and female secretaries. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Level of Performance Secretarial Duties by Male and Female Secretaries

Sex	Number	Mean	Std.Deviation	Rank
Male	11	3.90	0.301	1
Female	29	3.63	0.451	2
Total	40	3.71	0.430	

The result in Table 2 shows that male secretaries rank first in the level of performance of secretarial duties while female secretaries rank second. The result indicates that the level of performance of secretarial duties by male secretaries (Mean = 3.90) is higher than that of female secretaries perform more secretarial duties than female secretaries. The result is an indication that the discrimination cannot be justified by the performance of secretarial duties.

Difference in the level of performance of Secretarial Duties between Male and Female Secretaries

From the result of the analysis in Table 2, the study discovers that male secretaries perform more secretarial duties than female secretaries. Further investigation was carried out to determine whether the difference is significant or not. The investigation involves the test of the hypothesis of the study which states that there is no significant difference in the level of performance of secretarial duties between male and female secretaries. The hypothesis is tested using t-test at p-value < 0.05. The result of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 2 Results of t-test of difference in the level of performance of secretarial duties between male and female secretaries.

Variable Compared	Number	F-Value	p-value	t-value	df	p-value	Decision
Male Secretaries	11	2.204	0.146	1.841	38	0.073	Accept
Female Secretaries	29						

The result in Table 3 show that the p-value (0.073) for the test of difference in the level of performance of secretarial duties between male and female secretaries is greater than the critical p-value (0.05) therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. The result indicates that the difference in the level of performance of secretarial duties between male and female secretaries is not significant that is the level of performance of secretarial duties by male and female secretaries is Significantly the same. This result still does not justify the discrimination against men in the employment of secretaries

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The Study has revealed that there is a discrimination against men in the employment of secretaries. This result tends to imply that employers favour women in the employment of secretaries, that is women are given greater consideration for the job of secretaries. However, the study also reveals that the level of performance of secretarial duties by both male and female secretaries is significantly the same. This result indicates that the discrimination against men in the employment of secretaries is not based on the performance of secretarial duties, that is , whether female secretaries perform more duties that male secretaries.

CONCLUSION

The study has established that employers favour women than men for job of secretaries. It has also established that the discrimination is not based on the level of performance of secretarial duties by the two gender types. The conclusion from these findings is that the discrimination against men in the employment of secretaries is not justified by performance but rather by some other reasons. Since the

performance of secretarial duties is supposed to be the major consideration in the employment of secretaries, the study suggests that both gender types should be given equal consideration in the employment of secretaries.

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