



Beyond the glass ceiling: a gendered and cultural hospitality management discourse on the advancement of women based on integrated research paradigms

Para além do tecto de vidro: um discurso da gestão hoteleira centrado no género e na cultura sobre o avanço das mulheres com base em paradigmas integrados de investigação

Faith Samkange¹, Sihle Dingani

Swiss Hotel Management School, Montreux, Switzerland; ¹fsamkange@shms.com

ABSTRACT

The advancement of women into the high echelons of leadership is no longer a luxury but an urgent challenge. Educational, sociological, cultural and legal barriers continue to marginalise women in this respect (Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2008). However, the applicability of these factors in the hospitality industry remains inadequately explored. This research paper articulates the extent to which Zimbabwean women are breaking through the hospitality management glass ceiling. It examines the advancement barriers and their impact on policy implementation. Critical gender theory (Marx, 1994) blends with cultural theory (Hofstede, 2001) to inform the study. Development research recognizes the complexity and sensitivity surrounding gender discourse in Africa. Consequently, integrated and contextualised research paradigms are used in this study which rejects the rigid prescriptive approaches often responsible for failed interventions in African development politics (Samkange 2011; Pretorius & Roux, 2011). Findings indicate robust gender legislation alongside significant political in-roads towards advancement into government leadership, a development not replicated in hotels. Policy implementation gaps expose socio-cultural barriers, which could be addressed through integrated intervention strategies (Manyoni, 2010).

Keywords: Gender equality, culture, glass ceiling.

RESUMO

O avanço das mulheres nos altos escalões da liderança deixou de ser um luxo e passou a ser um desafio urgente. Barreiras sociológicas, culturais e educacionais e legais continuam a marginalizar as mulheres a este respeito (Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2008). No entanto, a aplicabilidade desses fatores na indústria hoteleira permanece insuficientemente explorada. Este trabalho de pesquisa articula em que medida as mulheres do Zimbábue estão rompendo o teto de vidro da gestão hoteleira. O artigo examina as barreiras de progressão e seu impacto na implementação de políticas. A teoria crítica do género (Marx, 1994) é combinada com a teoria cultural (Hofstede, 2001) para complementar o estudo. Pesquisa de desenvolvimento reconhece a complexidade e a sensibilidade em torno do discurso de género em África. Consequentemente, os paradigmas de investigação integrados e contextualizados são utilizados neste estudo, que rejeita as abordagens prescritivas rígidas, muitas vezes responsáveis por intervenções falhadas na política de desenvolvimento africana (Samkange 2011; Pretorius & Roux, 2011). Os resultados indicam forte legislação de género paralelamente a significativas intrusões políticas para o avanço na liderança do governo, um desenvolvimento não replicado em hotéis. Lacunas de implementação de políticas expõem as barreiras socioculturais, que poderiam ser abordadas por meio de estratégias de intervenção integradas (Manyoni, 2010).

Palavras-chave: Igualdade de género, cultura, tecto de vidro.

Introduction

This paper examines gender equality initiatives based on cultural values from a Zimbabwean perspective. It argues that cultural traditions keep women in the margins of leadership especially at work. The marginalization of women is an unjustifiable luxury no longer affordable in Africa, a continent largely and continuously struggling for an economic breakthrough. The history of development economics and leadership in Africa is littered with failures (Pretorius & Roux, 2011). Leadership failure is costly and puts developing economies at a global disadvantage as competition becomes fierce and increasingly intensive. Globalisation as a process assumes the playing field is level but the reality demonstrates the economic vulnerability of developing economies. Maintaining a competitive advantage in this environment demands visionary, innovative and competent leadership otherwise many African states risk nurturing the "third world" status label for eternity. Engaging competent leadership has therefore never been more urgent. The challenges implied in this respect should transcend beyond gender boundaries. Consequently this paper seeks to determine the extent to which powerful leadership positions are transcending gender boundaries. Research though negatively skewed against developing economies laments gender imbalances in the higher echelons of power (Linge, Van Rensburg, & Sikalieh, 2010). In Zimbabwe, women left indelible marks in the annals of history competently fighting alongside men to replace colonialism with egalitarian socio-economic systems. In this case the continued marginalization of women, where it matters most...the higher echelons of power is unjustifiable. Although global efforts to redress these imbalances are evident (Dumont, Stojanovska, & Cuyvers, 2011; Smith, 2006) studies have yet to fully explore gender imbalances in the

hospitality industry with a convincing cultural focus. In Zimbabwe, given the much-publicised turbulent economic, social and political backdrop, dismantling the rudiments of gender discrimination in the private sector should be prioritised to leverage the polarised economy. And yet gender equality discourse has never been so sensitive, challenging and complex. The arguments articulated in this paper are designed to provoke and intensify gender equality discourse at the work place. The paper assesses the extent to which women are breaking through the hospitality management glass ceiling ... or are they? Emerging historical, cultural, political and legal influences and their impact on policy implementation are explored.

Literature review

This literature review section explores the concept culture and puts it into proper research perspective. Culture is the key thread that runs across the arguments presented in this paper. Current gender debates are established to ascertain the direction and content of gender discourse. The theoretical framework guiding the conduct of this research is developed. Critical and cultural theories explaining the advancement trends, the socio-cultural, political and legal influences and related issues are examined.

The concept culture put into research perspective

Culture, a critical element of the gender discourse, refers to the socialisation of human beings. According to Hofstede (2001) culture collectively programmes the mind implanting values systems that distinguish members of one group from another. It can therefore be argued these value systems constitute the basis of cultural differentiation. Is there any gender balance in determining these values systems? The nature and composition of leadership is critical in this respect.



Research (Connell, 2006; Dumont *et al.*, 2011) indicates men dominate leadership with a few exceptions. They, in reality, determine which value systems are handed down from one generation to another. Schwartz (1992 cited in Yeganeh & May, 2011) concurs describing culture as a rich complex of meanings, beliefs, practices, symbols, norms and values that people live by. Clearly, tradition detects everybody lives by their cultural values. Cultural values therefore institutionalise and perpetuate the traditions associated with gender differentiation. They make it difficult for men to relinquish their leadership role. These cultural arguments inform the gender discourse pursued in paper. The study sought to determine if such cultural arguments could explain the leadership dynamics in the hospitality boardrooms.

Blended theory: A critical and cultural theoretical framework:

Critical gender theory (Marx, 1994) and cultural theory (Hofstede, 2001) were blended with indigenous knowledge systems to inform the research process and interpret the findings.

Cultural theory

Cultural theory explains gender differentiation as a phenomenon entrenched in cultural value belief systems (Schalkwyk, 2000; Hofstede, 2001; Schein & Mueller, 1992). The Cultural Orientation theory (Schwartz, 1992) the Corporate Cultural theory (Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003) and Think Management Think Male theory (Schein & Mueller, 1992) explain societal, organisational and individual values. While these theories provide an insight into cultural issues and perceptions they are not as universal and easy to apply hence this study relies more on the Cultural Variability theory (Hofstede, 2001).

Cultural variability theory Hofstede (2001) assumes "people carry 'mental programs' developed in early childhood. These mental programs contain components of national culture expressed in predominant values. Among these values Power Distance and Masculinity are significant in this study. Power Distance emphasises the distribution of power between top leadership and subordinates. Masculinity describes strength of personality and attributes usually associated with men. The choice of Hofstede's theory is based on the significance of these dimensions and its universality, which facilitates application. However, McSweeney (2002) challenges the underlying universal assumption that every micro-location is typical of national culture. Furthermore, a major philosophical weakness of this theory is that it perceives culture subjectively and yet reduces it objectively to numerical values empirically. What a contradiction! The relevance and accuracy of value measurement has also been challenged given the dynamism and complexity of culture as a research variable. However proponents of this theory argue Hofstede's work is comprehensive and has passed the rigours of empirical scrutiny (Jones, 2007). This persuasive argument justifies the application of the Cultural Variability theory in this study. However the study acknowledges Hofstede's theory only identifies and classifies cultural values but does not explain and rationalize the origins of cultural gender differentiation and impact on leadership. Critical theory (Marx, 1994) is therefore applied to complement it.

Critical Gender theory (Marx, 1994) underscores the significance of power distribution and concurs with the high power distance dimension in Hofstede's theory (2001). Critical theory recognises power is derived from wealth emanating from ownership of the economic means of production. This theory subscribes to the equitable distribution of wealth and power to achieve a classless society. It argues a social system with class distinction discriminates

and exploits the poor masses (the proletariat). Most women fall into this class since they are devoid of power because of limited participation in the social economy. They rarely own land and other means of production. Marxism therefore condemns the exploitation of women by the privileged few (bourgeoisie... in this case mostly men). Although Marxism is criticised for its weak articulation of sexism and race as forms of exploitation (Gimenez, 2001) this theory adequately explains the bases of gender inequality.

Good leaders exhibit tough and shrewd socio-cultural traits associated with men (Williams & Martin 2010). Kaufmann and Isaksen (2008) collaborates this logic suggesting in his personality theory that leaders must possess specific qualities such as high drive, dominance, toughness, withstanding pressure and ability to take risks. A further barrier based on the stereotype theory asserts cultural leadership is synonymous with men. Consistency is evident between these theories and the notion of masculinity and a high power distance, (Hofstede, 2001). Legislative attempts to address these socio-cultural issues are evident in Zimbabwe.

The participation of women in the workplace

Research demonstrates continuous legal and political efforts to dismantle male dominance at global level (Dumont *et al.*, 2011). Progressive nations particularly Scandinavian countries have since adopted gender equality laws which have induced a "women's employment increase from 56% in 1971 to 70% in 2005 in the United Kingdom for instance. Similarly efforts in America, Australia, and Botswana have transformed the employment landscape reflecting women participation rates of 8%, 14% and 31% respectively (World Economic Forum, 2010). A critical analysis of current leadership in government indicates a global increase of from 2005 of 14.2% to 16.7% in 2012. Consequently women now occupy 44% of cabinet seats in government globally. However the statistics indicate Sub-Saharan Africa only occupies 20.4 % of these positions while Scandinavian countries reflect 48.4 % visibility in this respect (Bachelet, 2012) Based on these developments, it can be argued the right laws coupled with appropriate political intervention yield results. This view is collaborated by Cann (2012) who emphasises the need for right policies. This could raise question though regarding what constitutes the right policies. It can be argued in the case that Scandinavian countries have developed the right policies because that the relevance of the glass ceiling phenomenon becoming irrelevant. Although countries such as France enjoy as much as 50% representation in the cabinet (The Telegraph 14 November 2012) there is concern participation rates have started plummeting as the world contemplates a double deep recession in the face of the Euro crisis. This is likely to negatively impact the advancement of women into leadership.

Table 1: Increase in female participation at the work place and ability to advance into leadership

Country	Increase in female participation at the work place %	Ability of women to advance into leadership
United States	8	4.97
Australia	14	4.89
China	5	4.92
South Africa	5	4.64
Botswana	31	5.58
Zimbabwe	3	4.81

Adapted from The World Economic Forum (2010)

Statistical analysis demonstrates potential, even in developing economies, for the advancement of women into leadership (Table 1). While USA, Australia and China enjoy high female leadership potential with index rates of 4.97, 4.89 4.92 respectively, Botswana a developing economy and Zimbabwe's neighbour is doing even better at a rate of 5.58.



These statistics suggests, at a rate of 4.81, there is hope for Zimbabwe. However, IIO (2010) and Kjeldal *et al.* (2008) advise caution when interpreting these statistics noting that, "little has actually changed in organisations as we know them". This study seeks to establish the applicability of this argument to the Zimbabwean hospitality industry

Discourse on the glass ceiling phenomenon

"The metaphors 'barrier', 'glass ceiling', and 'glass wall' arise from a particular way of thinking about gender inequality in the public realm" (Connell, 2006: 837.) Conceptually glass ceiling phenomenon describes the barriers blocking women advancement into leadership. Although several factors explain this phenomenon the most significant influences are socio-cultural.

Current discourse on the glass-ceiling phenomenon in developed countries is shifting focus from general advancement of women and economic participation into visibility of women in the highest echelons of power. Women are calling for full integration into all facets of national and global development to facilitate economic growth and more efficient utilisation of resources particularly human talent (Verveer, 2012). This argument suggests there is correlation between gender equity and economic growth a position collaborated by UN (Bachelet, 2012). This could explain why in contrast developing countries are still lamenting the lack of meaningful participation almost 2 decades after the milestone Beijing women's conference in 1995. According to Cann (2012) closing the gender gap has been a slow process.

Although gender development discourse in western democracies is celebrating the retraction of gender imposed constraints and exclusions and the enthusiastic endorsement of individual choice true emancipation is far from reality. A few but significant voices of discontent assert women's advancement statements are a distortion of reality because they disguise socially generated inequality inclusive of domestic violence, unequal parenting and housework. Baker (2008) laments the invigorated conservative, masculinist agenda disguised in a women's rights discourse, which are doing more damage with negative implications at the work place. Bachelet (2012) joins this debate asking for intensified but focused discourse on gender equality. These concerns cannot be ignored given some high profile cases of gender inequality surfacing now in countries like the United Kingdom where a protracted legal wrangle over equal pay between Birmingham City Council and its female employees is topical (Huffington Post 13 November 2012). These viewpoints are also endorsed in a report by *PricewaterhouseCoopers* (2012) who assert the continued existence of cultural stereotypes and negative perceptions on the advancement of women into leadership positions remains contentious. Consequently Cann (2012) advocates addressing the stereotypical marriage and motherhood issues, which are critical barriers towards the advancement of women.

Laws, customs, and values remain the greatest barriers impeding the full inclusion of women in economic development. Verveer (2012) is critical of the role of cultural systems and practices that prevent women from occupying the highest leadership posts. In her discourse she laments the negative perceptions of institutions including banks responsible for imposing customary, structural and legal systems that are not supportive of full participation and integration of women into society and the workplace. Wag 2012, Ministry of Women's affairs 2012 articulate these barriers from a Zimbabwean perspective but with an emphasis on the general inclusions of women. However given the statistics on the advancement of women in Africa South of the Sahara (Bachelet, 2012) these voices have not been vibrant enough to emancipate women towards the highest

levels of power and leadership. The Zimbabwean Hospitality industry situation is yet to be understood.

Culture and gender equality

Gender equality exists when power and influence are equitably distributed between men and women. Equal opportunities for financial independence, equal access to education and opportunities for personal development, equal responsibility for the home and children, freedom from coercion, intimidation and gender-based violence are critical traits of gender equity (United Nations Population Fund, 2004). Critical gender and cultural theories (Kaufmann & Isaksen, 2008; Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992) collaborate these ideological gender underpinnings, which characterise this study.

Southern Africa including Zimbabwe is generally masculine with high power distance (Hofstede, 2001). Masculinity and femininity as cultural dimensions relate to the "division of emotional roles between men and women" (Hofstede, 2001:29). Gender role differentiation is arguably a consequence of socialisation implying boys and girls learn their roles at a tender age. Culturally, this socialisation is consistent with a high power distance value system. It can thus be argued the socialisation process has institutionalised and legitimised unequal distribution of power in Zimbabwe. In this case leadership and authority belong to the privileged and elite men. Cultural engineering, in this case, designs men for leadership while socialising women into obedience and subservience (Schwartz, 1992; Schein & Mueller, 1992). Consensus exists among scholars (Mwana, 2002; Kaufmann & Isaksen, 2008; Yeganeh & May (2011) such culturally engineered traits are indicative of hierarchical, conservative, economically less developed and less democratic societies with significant gender gaps. Justifying such gender gaps given the emancipatory role women played in dismantling the shackles of colonialism in Zimbabwe is difficult both historically and politically. Women abandoned cultural traditions in exchange for an armed struggle. Consequently, they fought alongside men with the hope of achieving an egalitarian society. To what extent has this development propelled the socio-economic, political, cultural and legal change that should emancipate women from gender discrimination at the work place? This burning question remains the contentious subject of this gender discourse.

Current Gender discourse emphasises discrepancies in the advancement of women between developed and developing countries. Global rates of advancement have improved through gender legislative efforts with Scandinavian countries enjoying significant development at the highest echelons of power. In contrast developing economies have yet to establish gender equality to such levels. Although the significance of the glass-ceiling phenomenon is diminishing in western progressive countries some socio cultural barriers remain. The role of cultural and critical theory in explaining these barriers is fundamental. However, the applicability of these theories on the Zimbabwean hospitality management situation remains unexplored and hence the significance of this study.

Research methodology

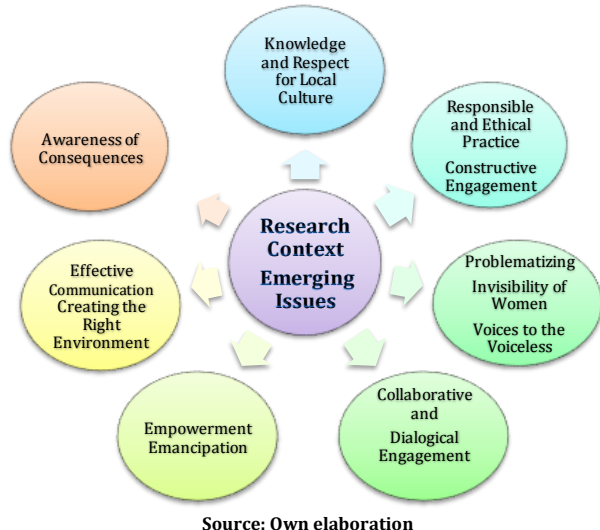
Personal experiences in community development and gender empowerment research in Zimbabwe and indeed elsewhere in Africa, acknowledges the cultural and political sensitivity of pursuing gender discourse. Is there a research methodology equally sensitive? It is clear one method cannot embrace such sensitivity and cultural complexity at the same time. Gender discourse is sensitive because it is emotional and exposes the cultural vulnerability of individuals. Coupled with this, Zimbabwe has been in the spotlight for the wrong reasons and hence media sensitivity is an issue. Consequently the media is



often accused of blowing issues out of proportion. In this respect, any research agenda should be perceived as genuine and not designed to create reputational risk though bad publicity. Research practice in these circumstances demands sensitive methodological choices, which prioritise effective articulation of the research context and related indigenous knowledge systems (Samkange, 2011). Integrated and contextualised research paradigms were therefore considered appropriate in this case to encourage responsible and accurate research practice. Critical gender theory (Marx, 1994) and cultural theory (Hofstede, 2001) were blended with indigenous knowledge systems to inform the research process. Collaborative engagement was fundamental in this case to facilitate an accurate interpretation of the research environment and manage the emerging political and cultural sensitivity characterising the research issues at stake. Research partnerships with other professionals were therefore created for this purpose. Collaborative research practice resonates with development research (Desai & Porter, 2006).

A field study was undertaken using a purposive sample of 6 luxury hotels in Harare stratified according to ownership, star rating and location. A total of 30 subjects including executive managers, human resource managers, female managers, key informants in commerce and industry and specific government departments participated in this study. Integrated use of research method was prioritised. A feasibility study was conducted to determine the nature of the research environment and the circumstances under which specific research methods, processes, procedures, tools and techniques would be most useful. The focus was therefore on what works best, and how the process could be managed to maximise the data generation. The issues emerging from this feasibility study are summarised in figure 1. The conduct of the research was therefore guided by these findings.

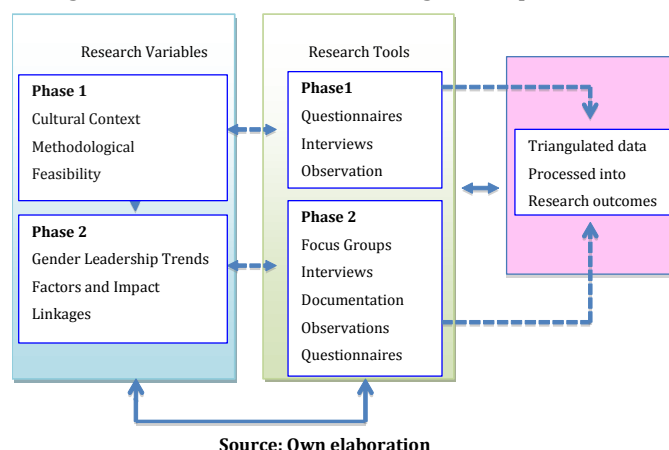
Figure1: Research Context Issues Emerging From The Feasibility Study



Integrated application of quantitative and qualitative methods was applied to explore the research context, establish levels of women advancement and articulate the socio-cultural and legal issues associated with gender development. Triangulation of administrative approaches including telephony, web-based procedures, personal face to face interaction were used to maximise data generation. Questionnaires, formal and informal interviews and focus group discussions were conducted while hotel websites were consulted to compliment the data generation process (See figure 2). According to (Gray, 2009) triangulation is necessary to check and manage biases and navigate the political and cultural minefields of data collection. Triangulation therefore highlights the significance of flexibility

and open mindedness while objectively managing research biases (Desai & Porter, 2006).

Figure 2: The contextualised triangulation process



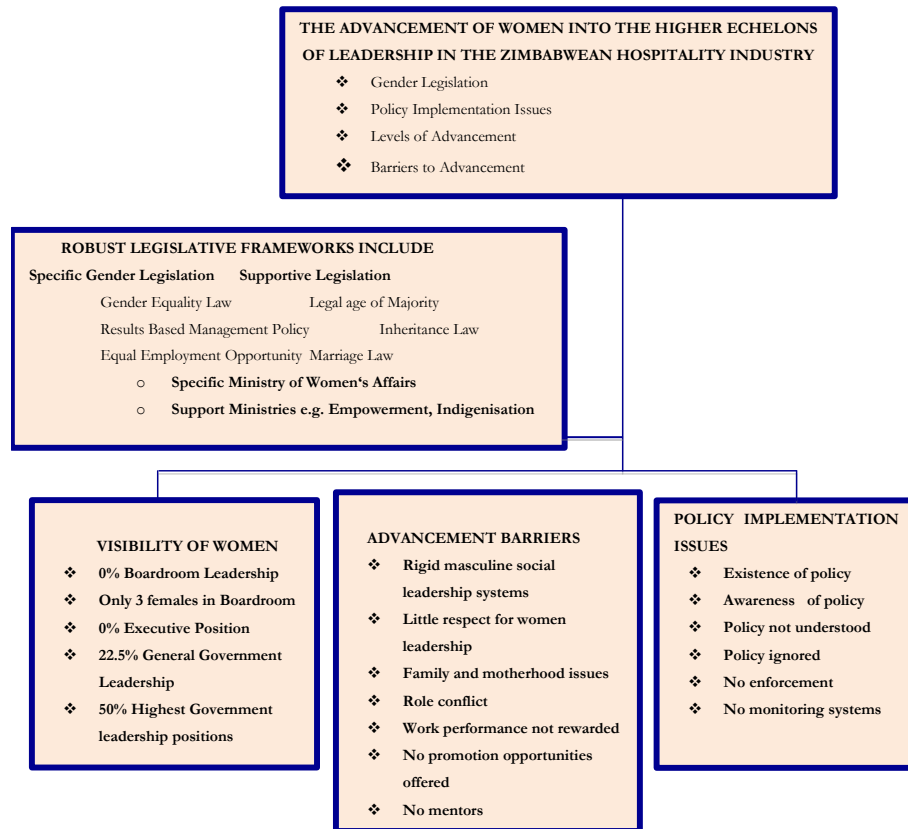
An evaluation of the research process reflects that participants were more forthcoming when the gender equality discourse was conducted in relaxed and informal environments. It was discovered interacting over lunch in local meat and sadza (traditional staple dish) outlet (kwaMereki) for instance was more productive than a formal video tapped conversation in the office. Participants were comfortable in the company of others and in familiar environments where food is used as a social currency. This is not surprising given that the Zimbabwean culture resonates with collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992). The major challenges of this methodology hinge around the high resource input needs and advanced research skills, which could not be taken for granted. Furthermore, the research process had to blend with the local cultural systems to be effective and this was no mean task.

The Zimbabwean gender discourse: research findings

The triangulated findings of the study are summarised in figure 3.

The Zimbabwean postcolonial gender legislation history is colourful. Constitutionally, gender discrimination is illegal (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). A diversity of legal statutes and policies inclusive of National Gender Policy, Inheritance Rights of Women, Legal Age of Majority, Equal Opportunity in Employment, and Marriage have since been developed. In addition, the Results Based Management (RBM) policy has recently been incorporated to leapfrog the advancement of women (Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs, 2012). The establishment of complementary Ministries of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development, Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment including The Women's Action Group (WAG) is commendable (Manyoni, 2010). Current inroads towards the advancement of women in government and politics can be attributed to these efforts WAG (2011). The Zimbabwean government boasts of female vice president and vice prime minister but women still play second fiddle to men even in this case. However, overall participation in government leadership shows 9 out of 40 ministers are female representing 22.5% of leadership (WAG, 2011). This implies some significant positive development. This study sought to establish the extent to which this development is replicated in the highest echelons of power in the hospitality Industry.

Figure 3: Triangulated summary of findings



Source: Own elaboration

The Zimbabwean postcolonial gender legislation history is colourful. Constitutionally, gender discrimination is illegal (Government of Zimbabwe, 2005). A diversity of legal statutes and policies inclusive of National Gender Policy, Inheritance Rights of Women, Legal Age of Majority, Equal Opportunity in Employment, and Marriage have since been developed. In addition, the Results Based Management (RBM) policy has recently been incorporated to leapfrog the advancement of women (Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs, 2012). The establishment of complementary Ministries of Small and Medium Enterprises and Cooperative Development, Youth Development, Indigenization and Empowerment including The Women's Action Group (WAG) is commendable (Manyoni, 2010). Current in-roads towards the advancement of women in government and politics can be attributed to these efforts WAG (2011). The Zimbabwean government boasts of female vice president and vice prime minister but women still play second fiddle to men even in this case. However, overall participation in government leadership shows 9 out of 40 ministers are female representing 22.5% of leadership (WAG, 2011). This implies some significant positive development. This study sought to establish the extent to which this development is replicated in the highest echelons of power in the hospitality Industry.

Advancement of women into the higher echelons of power

The reality of gender development in the hotels is captured in table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of gender participation in hotels

Gender	Overall Participation %	Managerial Positions %	Promotion in last year %	Executive positions %	Board of Directors Chairperson positions %
Male	73	71	70	100	100
Female	27	29	30	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Own elaboration

Research findings in this study reveal women are generally under represented at the work place in hotels as reflected in an overall participation rate of 27 %. In an industry where the expressive feminine values such as empathy, care etc. (Schein & Mueller 1992; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003) constitutes the core of service delivery this trend is difficult to explain. Surprisingly, only 29% of the managers are female. Current promotion trends are sluggish at a rate of 30% implying change is difficult. The situation in the highest echelons of power is dismal showing no visibility of women at executive level. Further investigation however is indicative of a slight change in gender development trends in the boardrooms. Out of 6 hotel conglomerates only 2 embrace corporate female leadership. One of these organisations is government owned and the other is indigenous suggesting appointments could be politically driven. There was no female representation among board chairpersons emphasizing the lack of visibility at the highest echelons of power. Out of all board members in these hotel organisations only 3 are female further confirming the existence of the glass-ceiling phenomenon (Dumont *et al.*, 2011; Connell, 2006). These findings are consistent with the national culture emphasizing men are designed for leadership and women are socialised for obedience and subservience (Mwana, 2002; Schein & Mueller, 1992). Clearly, the leadership situation in government is comparably better than in the hotels given a top leadership participation rate of 22.5% suggesting some politically driven progress. However even in this respect Zimbabwe still lags behind other countries progressive countries such as the Scandinavian countries where the average rate is 48:4 %.

Although women are invisible in the highest echelons of power, gender career mobility is evident suggesting current political and legislative efforts are making a difference. According to Bachelet (2012) and Cann (2012) the right policies can make a difference. These findings collaborate developments in the USA and Australia (World Economic



Forum, 2010). However given the need to accelerate economic development these efforts are inadequate. A correlation between economic development and gender advancement has since been established (Verveer, 2012). Results suggest there is significant leadership potential remaining idle. The absence of the integration and full inclusion of women in meaningful in the economy economic means development will continue to elude Zimbabwe. This position is not affordable given the delicate socio-economic position of Zimbabwe and the significant role tourism and hospitality play in sustaining the economy. The Zimbabwean economy is growing at a rate of 6% based on its Gross Domestic Product but it is still ranked 132 out of 142 on the Global Completion index (Zimtrade, 2012). Efforts to boost this economy will rely heavily on increasing productivity in key sectors such as agriculture, mining, tourism and hospitality. Maximising leadership potential is critical in this respect.

Gender development trends and the cultural traits are explained in (Schein & Mueller, 1992). Hotels are masculine contradicting the demands and nature of the service delivered which is culturally feminine (Hofstede, 2001). The traits and the contradictions emerging are reflective of cultural conservatism synonymous with high levels of power distance. This trend is gender discriminative and not justifiable according to Kaufmann & Isaksen (2008) and Schwartz (1992). Critical theory collaborates this argument in principle based on its critique of social stratification and how class distinction is exploitative of the most vulnerable (Mark, 1884; Webber cited in Gane, 2005). The cultural conservatism and hierarchy evident in the hotels challenge the levels of democratic leadership in the hospitality industry. According to Trompenaars and Woolliams (2003) this is reflective of corporate and national cultures, less egalitarian. This notion is consistent with Verveer (2012) and Baker (2008) who assert masculine conservatism is a key impediment to both gender and economic development.

Although levels of democracy are questionable in the selected Zimbabwean hotels, progress at government level with 33.33% visibility at the highest echelons of power (2 female out 6 highest government executive leadership positions) demonstrates some political will to change. In this respect it is comparatively doing better than many developed countries labelled egalitarian (World Economic Forum, 2010; Trompenaars & Woolliams, 2003). And yet this progress is not replicated in the hotels. The gender gap report suggests a leadership potential of 4.81 representing a 70% chance. At 0% in the highest echelons of power hotels have nothing to show for their efforts. Women have yet to make significant in-roads breaking through the hospitality management glass ceiling. (Linge *et al.*, 2010) lament this invisibility of women in leadership in their Kenyan case study.

The implementation and impact of gender legislation

The legal implementation issues are summarised in figure 3. Currently the Zimbabwean situation reflects a robust gender equality legislative framework. Hotel managers admitted awareness of gender legislation and policies. However, when probed to articulate policies and assess implementation it emerged hotels were not doing much as shown in lack female representation at hotel chief executive level let alone board chairperson level. Although the government political will to establish gender equity at work is evident given the robust efforts at legislation (WAG 2011), this political will has not achieved much and is certainly absent in the hotels. This implies legislation per se is not enough to facilitate advancement of women in the highest echelons of power. This seems to challenge the notion that the right policies can work to emancipate and advance women into leadership (Cann, 2012; Bachelet, 2012). While policy changes have worked in Scandinavian countries for instance they do not seem to work

effectively in Zimbabwe. A lot more still needs to be done to push more women into work and significant managerial and leadership positions.

Female respondents unanimously agreed the laws have yet to make a significant impact advancing women into powerful leadership positions. Consensus indicates laws "were not enforced" and had no impact on achievement. These responses say it all "... I had to overwork myself to prove I was worthy, laws did not help me". Clearly legislation "seems to persuade rather than enforce" implementation. Government needs to make laws "more strict or implement quotas". These sentiments endorse earlier observations that gender legislation is not enough to facilitate advancement. It can therefore be argued legislation can only work with other influences to advance women into leadership. Cultural and critical theory (Hofstede, 2001; Schwartz, 1992; Webber cited in Gane, 2005; Marx, 1994) collaborate this view suggesting complex socio-cultural factors are at the heart of inequality impeding the attainment of an egalitarian socio-economic system. Apparently, current mechanisms are inadequate to facilitate and monitor policy implementation. Studies on gender development elsewhere in Kenya indicate similar problems (Linge *et al.*, 2010).

Barriers to advancement

True emancipation starts with the individual. The extent to which an individual feels empowered to change their destiny is more critical than any other external influence. It is therefore important to establish the perceptions of women in leadership and ascertain the extent of difficulty to advance and establish feelings regarding their accomplishment. Findings reflect that women felt their advancement into leadership was an extraordinary happening implying this was a departure from the norm because generally women found it difficult to advance in the organisation. Some of their voices were captured thus: "I am qualified... and possess relevant experience and yet it was difficult for me to get promoted into leadership" and "I have found it difficult... I have to put in a lot more hours and effort than men"; "I constantly have to prove I am as capable as my male counterparts by doing twice as well as them" The voices reflect strong perceptions on gender discrimination. According to Verveer (2012) such perceptions are an impediment to the advancement of women. Previous studies conducted in Kenya and Zimbabwe confirm similar experiences (Linge *et al.*, 2010; Mwana, 2002).

When asked if they felt they were given equal opportunities as the males who applied for the same job all women disagreed. The discourse that ensued suggests women had to play "the right politics" at the work to get promotion thus: "as a female it is difficult to get a mentor who will vouch for you" and "...you have to work much harder to be noticed as a woman". What was intriguing is the fact women were aware "the labour act forbids discrimination" and yet they still suffered. This confirms the notion that discrimination is deeply embedded in values, customs and structural systems that are conservatively masculine (Baker, 2008). The voices reflect the hospitality industry is still masculine with a very high power distance confirming Hofstede's theory (2001). Evidently, national cultural values work against women (Schwartz, 1992; Schein & Mueller, 1992; Kaufmann & Isaksen, 2008). Women are not perceived to possess the masculine qualities needed to assume leadership positions. Women in management agreed cultural perceptions about their role as women have hindered their progression. Their gender discourse raised these sentiments "your husband wants you home at a certain time but this industry does not allow for ordinary working hours". It is clear there is a cultural role conflict that makes it difficult for the women to maintain a reasonable work life balance. While they suffer gender discrimination at work their feminine cultural



responsibilities at home further disadvantages them. Cann 2012 concurs and advocates for an intensified gender discourse while addressing the family and motherhood issues that impede progress. Critical gender theory regards this as exploitation (Marx, 1994; Webber cited in Gane, 2005)

When asked what needs to be done to facilitate advancement respondents were unanimous. "Laws need to be enforced more actively". "Introduce affirmative action". This has worked in Australia for example (World Economic Forum, 2010). Bachelet (2012) and Verveer (2012) are staunch supporters of affirmative action and hence call for the establishment of quotas "Culturally negative perceptions of women demonstrated by men and related role definitions need to change". Perhaps this explains the disparities in women visibility in leadership between progressive the culturally feminine Scandinavia countries (Hofstede, 2001) and the culturally masculine Zimbabwe. There is no illusion here regarding what needs to change. "Men need training to stop thinking in the backward manner that women are not capable leaders..." Businesses need to realise the value of having women in leadership". These sentiments further reflect the significance of culturally engineered negative perceptions. Mwana (2002) in a previous Zimbabwean study highlights the negative impact of cultural perceptions on leadership. These findings endorse Schein and Mueller (1992) "Think Manager, Think Male" maxim.

Advancement of Women: A Triangulated Synthesis of Findings

Generally, the research findings are reflective of little significant in-roads regarding the advancement of women into leadership within the selected hotels. Although legislation is robust, a wide range of other factors particularly cultural and social barriers continue to perpetuate gender discrimination creating barriers for the advancement of women through the glass ceiling and beyond. The higher echelons of power are still male dominated hence the visibility of women leadership remains contentious. The gender discourse pursued suggests historical and legal influences alone cannot emancipate women at the work place. The interconnected socio-cultural factors and emerging issues impeding progress should be tackled.

Conclusion

A gender discourse was pursued to determine levels of women advancement into the high echelons of leadership in selected hotels. Related socio-cultural determinants were examined based on cultural theory and critical gender theory (Hofstede 2001; Marx, 1994). The study concludes Zimbabwe has developed a robust set of legislation and related policies to enhance the position of women in leadership. The impact of these efforts is more visible in government. However this development is not replicated in the hospitality industry. Socio-cultural values including the masculinity, high power distance and related retrogressive perceptions institutionalise, legitimise and perpetuate gender inequality. Gender discourse should focus on addressing the retrogressive cultural values and perceptions that nurture the exploitation of women and nourishes their absence in the higher echelons of leadership. The think management think male mentality (Schein & Mueller, 1992) is out of sync with the gender inclusive Zimbabwean liberation history. Greater political cohesion, and better coordination of socio-economic and gender equality development efforts can help dismantle the cultural barriers working against women. Zimbabwe needs visionary and innovative leadership to boost the currently delicate economic recovery process. Marginalising women in leadership is certainly a luxury no longer affordable.

References

- Bachelet, M. (2012). *Acceleration Through Quotas*. Retrieved June 30, 2012, from <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?newsid=41445&cr=un#.UYdm7V9dYdU>
- Baker, J. (2008). The ideology of choice. Overstating progress and hiding injustice in the lives of young women: Findings from a study in North Queensland, Australia. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 31, 53-64.
- Cann, O. (2012). *Slow progress in closing global economic gender gap, new major study finds*. Retrieved June 30, 2012, <http://www.weforum.org/news/slow-progress-closing-global-economic-gender-gap-new-major-study-finds>
- Connell, R. (2006). Glass ceilings or gendered institutions? Mapping the gender regimes of public sector worksites. *Essays on Equity, Gender and Diversity*, 837-849. Retrieved from <http://www.library.eiu.edu/ersvdocs/4369.pdf>
- Desai, V., & Porter, R.B. (2006). *Doing development research*. London: Sage Publication.
- Dumont, M., Stojanovska, N., & Cuyvers, L. (2011). World inequality, globalization, technology and labour market institutions. *International Journal of Manpower*, 32, 257-272.
- Gane, N. (2005). Max Weber as social theorist: Class, Status, Party. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 8, 211-226.
- Jimenez, M. (2001). Marxism, and class, gender, and race: Rethinking the trilogy. *Race Gender & Class*, 8(2), 23-33.
- Gray, D. (2009). *Doing Research in the Real World of Work*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Government of Zimbabwe (2005). *Constitution of Zimbabwe*. Harare: Kubatana Constitution.
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organisations across nations* (2nd ed.). London: Sage Publications Inc.
- Jones, M. (2007). Hofstede - Culturally questionable. *Faculty of Commerce*, 1(1), 1-9.
- Kaufmann, G., & Isaksen, S. G. (2008). Testing the "glass ceiling" effect on gender differences in upper level management: The case of innovator orientation. *The Creative Problem Solving Group. Inc*. Retrieved from <http://www.cpsb.com/research/articles/problem-solving-style/Glass-Ceiling.html>
- Kjeldal, S., Rindfleisch, J., & Sheridan, A. (2008). Gender inequality in academia: The role of informal rules and practices. *Women in Management*, 39(1), 1-11.
- Linge, T. K., Van Rensburg, W., & Sikalieh, D. (2010). The role of visibility and career advancement of women in Kenya. *The Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*, 2(1), 351-359.
- Manyoni, F.S. (2010). *Women and Youth in Business*. Harare: Zimtrade.
- Marx, K. (1994). Theses on Feuerbach. In L. Simon (Ed.), *Karl Marx Selected Writings*, New York: Hackett.
- McSweeney, B. (2002). Hofstede's model of national cultural differences and their consequences: A triumph of faith - a failure of analysis. *Human Relations*, 55, 89-118.
- Mwana, H. A. (2002). *Think Manager Think Male: does it apply to Zimbabwe?*. Harare: University of Zimbabwe.
- Pretorius, M., & Le Roux, I. (2011). Successive failure, repeat entrepreneurship and no learning: A case study. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9, 237-249.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (2012). *Women economic participation, enablers, barriers and responses*. London: PricewaterhouseCoopers.
- Samkange, F. (2011). A conceptualised and contextualised methodology for interrogating complex technological development issues. *Proceedings of the 10th European Conference on Research Methodology in Business*. UK: Academic Publishing Ltd.
- Schalkwyk, J. (2000). *Culture, gender equality and development cooperation*. Toronto: Canadian International Development Agency.
- Schein, V., & Mueller, R. (1992). *Sex role stereotyping and requisite management characteristics: A cross cultural look*. *Journal of Organisational Behaviour*, 13, 439-447.



- Schwartz, S. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 25, 1-65.
- Smith, E. (Ed.). (2006). *Gender Inequalities in Kenya*. Paris: UNESCO.
- Trompenaars, F., & Woolliams, P. (2003). *Business Across Cultures*. Capstone: Chichester.
- WAG - Women Action Group (2011). *Annual Conference Report*. Harare: WAG.
- Williams, W., & Martin, L. (2010). What happened to the glass ceiling? *Gender Equity in the Workplace*, 1(1), 1-2.
- United Nations Population Fund (2004). *Gender equality: A cornerstone of development*. New York: UNFPA.
- Verveer, M. (2012). Women as economic drivers. *The Journal of AARP International*, 2012, 12-15.
- World Economic Forum (2010). *The global gender gap report 2010*. Geneva: World Economic Forum
- Yeganeh, H., & May, D. (2011). Cultural values and gender gap: A cross national analysis. *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 26, 106-121.
- Zimbabwe Ministry of Women Affairs (2012). *Gender and community development progress report of the Republic of Zimbabwe*. Addis Ababa: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.
- Zimtrade (2012). *Developing sustainable international trade*. Harare: Zimbabwe Government.

Article history

Received: 12 June 2012

Accepted: 08 November 2012