

Social Predictors of Female Academics' Career Growth and Leadership Position in South-West Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This study examined the efficacy of social predictors of female academics' career growth and leadership position in Nigerian universities. Results show that the composite effect of the social predictors are significant ($F = 37.888$; $p < .05$). Parental influence ($\beta = .197$; $p < .05$) and spousal support ($\beta = .183$; $p < .05$) made significant contributions to career growth, while academic men attitude toward women ($\beta = .428$; $p > .05$), academic men collegial support ($\beta = .419$; $p < .05$), parental influence ($\beta = .368$; $p < .05$), and spousal support ($\beta = .250$; $p < .05$) contributed to leadership position. Parental influence ($B = -.12$; $t = -4.89$; $p < .05$) and spousal support ($B = .13$; $t = 4.26$; $p < .05$) predicted career growth, while academic men attitude toward women ($B = .947$; $t = 3.755$; $p < .05$), academic men collegial support ($B = -1.080$; $t = -3.648$; $p < .05$), parental influence ($B = -.220$; $t = -9.050$; $p < .05$), and spousal support ($B = .191$; $t = 6.343$; $p < .05$) predicted leadership position. The implications are that parental influence and spousal supports are essential for career growth, while all four factors are crucial for female academics' leadership attainment.

Keywords

race/gender, media and society, mass communication, communication, social sciences, careers, education, higher education, leadership, organizational behavior, management, sociology of education, sociology

Introduction

Nigerian women especially from the south-west had been involved in activities outside the home as traders, farmers, and merchants (Anugwom, 2009) before colonization. They were also a force to reckon with in community activities; hence, they were addressed as *Iya Loja* (important woman in the market place), *Iya laje* (astute business woman), *Iya lode* (a female public figure), *Erelu* (a female chief in Egba land), which are female chieftaincy titles to eulogize and recognize the various achievements and hard work of women (Ekejiuba, 1991; Lebeuf, 1963; Okonjo, 1976, 1991; Pereira, 2007; Sator, 1992). In the pre-colonial era, women in the south-western region of Nigeria and some other parts had their share of social responsibilities and leadership roles (Uwaezuoke & Ezech, 2008). During colonization, women became disadvantaged because they were predominantly not-lettered and ill equipped for white- or blue-collar jobs. According to Uwaezuoke and Ezech (2008),

... The overall feeble position of female education in comparison to the male counterpart did not augur well for the social, economic and political development of women in Nigeria. At a time when literary education was becoming the master key to a successful life in modern society, the different agencies responsible for the instruction of the Nigerian youth invested in upgrading the formation of boys to the detriment of girls. (p.11)

This means that many women were unemployable during the colonial era (McIntosh, 2009). Hence, the foundation of the workplace, professions, and leadership offered unequal opportunities (Uwaezuoke & Ezech, 2008).

The access of women to occupations and leadership positions became constrained not only by level of education but also by gender roles as defined by the British culture (Olojede, 2009; Olowe, 2001). Therefore, the traditional structures that gave room for women's visibility outside the home and in leadership were disrupted (Okonjo, 1975; Olojede, 1986). This is evident in the past and present gender structures of political office holders, the Civil Service, and the organized private sector (William, 1989). In the Nigerian Federal Civil Service, which is the largest single-entity employer in Nigeria, 76% of civil servants are men, while 24% are women (CIDA Nigeria GSAA, 2006). Furthermore, in spite of the appointment of women as Permanent Secretaries, they hold less than 14% of the total management-level positions in the Nigerian public sector. In Lagos state Nigeria, private-sector involvement of women as

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directors and top management were 13.87% and 13.84%, respectively, in 2005, while 8.14% and 13.11% were recorded for women directors and top managers, respectively, in 2006, representing a slight decline of their involvement in the succeeding year (Goldstar Directories, 2006, 2007).

In governance, Nigerian women marginally participate; they remain almost invisible in the party system. While the parties claim to encourage women participation in elective positions through free nomination, in practice they are discriminated against. Although Nigerian governments have scored well on adopting and or formulating measures to address gender justice, they have however failed to allocate resources critical to the implementation of these measures (Umeha, 2010). An analysis of Nigerian electoral system shows that the 2003, 2007, and 2011 elections witnessed unprecedented increase in the number of female aspirants and heightened local mobilization of the generality of women, yet only a handful made it to the end. In the last 2011 election, women candidates constituted 9.1% of the total number of candidates who contested in the April 2011 polls, leaving 90.9% as male candidates across political parties (Akiyode-Afolabi, 2011).

Nigerian women have no doubt made in-road in almost all sectors of the Nigerian economy and their visibility in professions like Medicine, Pharmacy, Law, and Academics can no longer be ignored. Notwithstanding, they are yet to form critical mass at the top; therefore, the social predictors of female academics' career growth and leadership position in the oldest six south-west Nigerian Universities are examined in this study. Studies have indicated that several factors militate against the careers of women and their attainment of leadership in academia, some of which are sex-harassment (African Association of Political Science, 1994; Aina & Odebiyi, 2002; Denga & Denga, 2004), low self-esteem, low self-efficacy (Chovwen, 2004; Oti, 2011), work/home conflicts (Oti & Oyelude, 2006), the challenges of being female in highly gendered academic institutions (Gaidzanwa 2001; Morley, Sorhaindo, & Burke, 2005; Odejide, Akanji, & Odekunle, 2005; Pereira, 2007), and leadership (Chesterman, 2004; Odejide, 2006; Oti, 2011). However, social predictors of female academics' career growth and leadership position are yet to be explored, especially in Nigerian Universities.

In the past two decades, participation of women in higher education has improved (Mabawonku, 2006; Odejide, 2006; Singh, 2002), but despite this improvement, women still lag behind as academic staff and have slow career advancement compared with that of men (Chesterman, 2004; De la Rey, 1998; Morley, 2005; Tower, Plummer, & Ridgewell, 2007). Women make up about half of the workforce in most developed countries (United States, Australia, and Canada), yet they occupy less than 5% of senior executive seats (Morley, 2005; Ragins, Townsend, & Mattis, 1998; Tharenou, 1999). This implies that while the women are flooding the managerial pipeline, their efforts to attain the most senior levels are

being blocked (Rindfleish, 2002). Rindfleish argued that women's participation in paid workforce has been one of the most remarkable social changes over the past 40 years, yet women are excluded from the most senior positions within organizations and executive boards; Chovwen (2004) and Kamau (2004) also drew similar conclusions. According to Singh (2002), women make up less than three quarters of the academic staff of Universities, and are less than 10% among the very top position. This study however examines the predictive nature of social support variables: attitudes toward women; spousal, parental, and collegial support to the career growth; and leadership of female academics in Nigerian Universities.

Literature Review

The literature reviews past studies on social support and its influence on the careers of women in general and academic women to be specific.

Social Support and Women's Career

Social support has been defined as the "actions of others that are either helpful or intended to be helpful" (Deelstra et al., 2003, p. 324). It includes a variety of interpersonal behaviors among workers that enhance individuals' psychological or behavioral functioning. These may include mentoring, providing emotional support, assisting others with assigned tasks, and teaching about social power structures (Hill, Bahniuk, Dobos, & Rouner, 1989). Beginning with the earliest need-fulfillment theories of job satisfaction, social support has been identified as a predictor of job satisfaction (Orpen & Pinshaw, 1975; Smither, 1988; Stamps, 1997; Vroom, 1964).

Social support also predicts a variety of negative outcomes, including absenteeism and turnover (Winstead, Derlega, Montgomery, & Pilkington, 1995), burnout (Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998), and depression and anxiety (El-Bassel, Guterman, Bargal, & Su, 1998; Olson & Shultz, 1994). Findings may be mixed because the construct of social support is multifaceted (Bahniuk, Dobos, & Hill, 1990). The source of support may be a supervisor, mentor, or colleague, spouse, and parents or parent figure. The content of the support may include information, appraisal, assistance with tasks, or emotional support (Bahniuk et al., 1990; Deelstra et al., 2003).

Spousal and Parental Support

Harris, Winskowski, and Engdahl (2007) found perceived spousal support and workplace social support to predict job satisfaction and job tenure. Scott and King (1985) found that spousal support is a predictor of whether women college students will return to school, while Cutrona and Suhr (1994)

and Derlega, Barbee, and Winstead (1994) found that lack of social support is a predictor of negative outcomes, including absenteeism, burnout, depression, and anxiety.

Though family issues have been found to interfere in the careers of men and women, Colletti, Mulholland, and Sonnad (2000) found social and family issues to be a major concern for both male and female academic surgeons. However, both men and women report differences in the conflict between family and career responsibilities and perceptions of balancing those responsibilities for men and women. Two thirds of men and women reported that the demands of their surgical faculty position adversely affect their relationships with spouses. Men reported a slightly higher tendency to miss family activities because of job demands (35 [77%] vs. 6 [67%]), while women were significantly more likely to miss work activities because of family responsibilities (5 [56%] vs. 9 [20%]).

In addition, women have been known to be caregivers (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Oti, 2001). This may explain why they have excelled in careers like Nursing, secretarial profession, and teaching at lower levels. Studies have also affirmed that they give support to their spouses, children, and significant others (Aremu, 1999; Aryee, 1992; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; James, 2002; Okonweze, 2005; Oluwole, Hammed, & Awaebe, 2010), but women themselves lack the necessary support that may be required to foster the growth they need in their different careers and life's endeavors (Biernat & Wortman, 1991; Chovwen, 2004; Oti & Oyelude, 2006). Oti and Oyelude (2006) find work/home conflict to be strong determinant of career progression of female academics in a university in Nigeria, the career mobility of these academic women is slower; they begin to have full concentration and career mobility as their children become more mature and able to take care of themselves.

A study found that mothers are the most critical influence for developing leadership qualities and readiness in their daughters during their upbringing (Matz, 2002). Contrary to Matz's finding, fathers are also influential for girls and young women in the development of leadership competencies (Madsen, 2006).

Women's Career and Collegiality

Significant among the factors influencing women's career are workplace and collegial supports, which have been identified as important factors in job satisfaction (Harris et al., 2007). A small but growing body of literature has identified that supportive work environments are important factors that influence tenure achievement for faculty (Young & Wright, 2001). Specifically, support (or lack thereof) from colleagues and deans or departments heads has been identified as an influential piece of the tenure process (Ifedi, 2008; Olson & Shultz, 1994; Tharenou, 1999). In a recent study of new geography professors, findings indicated that all faculty members benefit significantly from supportive collegial

environments and supportive department chairpersons (Solem & Foote, 2006).

The role of collegial support specifically relating to parenting academics who are seeking tenure has been investigated (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; Young & Wright, 2001). Recent qualitative and quantitative work has examined how departmental support for balancing dual roles is differently experienced by men and women on the tenure track (O'Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005; Grant, Kennelly, & Ward, 2000; Young & Wright, 2001). In their study of mothers on the tenure track, Young and Wright found that mothers perceived their experiences in the tenure-making process to be very different from their non-mother colleagues. In this qualitative study of 22 mothers, respondents reported feeling as though their colleagues questioned their abilities to be productive or competitive when compared with non-parenting colleagues, while respondents also reported feeling that parenting and non-parenting men were not subjected to the same degree of judgment or scrutiny. One third of the respondents also reported that they lacked support from colleagues.

Some findings validate the claim that universities in which female academics achieve senior positions are those in which some supportive practices toward women exist. For instance, Chesterman (2004) sought to verify if five Australian universities where women achieved promotion, and remained in senior positions, had particular cultural characteristics that supported and sustained women. Universities around Australia had been encouraged by government equity legislation to adopt a proactive measure toward the promotion of women into senior management. Across all five universities, there was unanimity about the factors that encouraged women to apply for senior positions and that sustained and supported them in those positions.

These were clear supports from organizational leaders, a critical mass of other women in senior positions, opportunities to network, and strong statements on values. Those interviewed indicated that the most significant support was that from the chief executive or the direct superior to the woman. Executives had to go beyond rhetoric, and demonstrate their support of women and equity through endorsement of women's performance, encouragement of women to apply for promotion, and commitment of resources to development, such as training courses.

Collegial support includes sharing friendships, personal problems, and confidences. Bahniuk et al. (1990) found that, among business managers, instrumental support from colleagues and mentoring predicted higher levels of job satisfaction, along with perceived success, managerial level, and income. The relationship between workplace social support and the length of time an employee chooses to remain at the same job (job tenure) has recently been explored. Positive relationships with supervisors have been reported to strongly predict job tenure (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Van Breukelen, Van Der Vlist, & Steensma, 2004; Vecchio &

Boatwright, 2002). Collegial support, mentoring, and career shadowing have also been found to be rewarding, and determinants of job satisfaction and leadership especially for junior female academics (Eliason, Berggren, & Bondestam, 2000; Oti & Oyelude, 2006). Apart from parental, spousal, and collegial support, another factor that influences women's career is societal attitude toward their career life and leadership influence.

Attitudes Toward Women in Career and Leadership

Research has reiterated that general attitudes of superiors and subordinates to women in career and leadership position are most of the time unwelcoming (Odejide, 2006; Oti, 2011). Therefore, many women in male-dominated careers suffer isolation, rejection, and opposition (Chovwen, 2004; Kamau, 2004). Those who have sufficient social support are more likely to progress faster and succeed than those who do not (Eliason et al., 2000; Oti, 2011).

Some studies affirmed that academic women face overt and covert discriminatory practices and micro-politics in the university system (De la Rey, 1998; Odejide, Akanji, & Odekunle, 2006), which undermines their career growth, visibility, and space in decision-making positions. Is this attitude cultural or universal?

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the Role Congruity Theory advanced by Eagly and Karau (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders proposes that perceived incongruity between the female gender and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: (a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman. One consequence is that attitudes are less positive toward female than male leaders and potential leaders. Other consequences are that it is more difficult for women to become leaders and achieve success in leadership roles. Evidence from varied research paradigms substantiates that these consequences occur, especially in situations that heighten perceptions of incongruity between the female gender and leadership roles.

Research has shown that women who attain success in typically male occupations are less liked and more derogated than equally successful men (Chovwen, 2004; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004). This disfavor can have negative effects on females' career outcomes, as women at the upper levels of management receive fewer promotions than comparable men (Heilman et al., 2004). Research shows that "a woman's success can create new problems for her by instigating her social rejection" (Chovwen, 2004; Heilman

et al., 2004; p. 416; Kamau, 2004). This theory gives credence to why women do not gain social support in careers and leadership; parents may be scared that success will bring their daughters social rejection, husbands' perception of insecurity, and fear of role reversal and colleagues' fear of competition from the "weaker sex" (Kamau, 2004).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design of the *ex-post facto* type. Close-ended questionnaires were constructed to elicit responses from respondents.

Population

The population of study included 511 female academics from graduate assistant to professor and 300 male academics in the senior cadre in six universities in south-west Nigeria.

Research Instruments

Three research instruments were used to collect data for the study. They were as follows:

1. *Social Factors Instruments: Comprising four questionnaires:* (a) Spousal support questionnaire (developed by the researcher). Respondents were female academics; questions were 17 close-ended items. Questions centered on the kind of support female academics receive from their husbands, for example, "my husband baby sits, does school run, takes care of the children when I'm away, goes to the market, supports me financially, and so on." (b) Parental influence questionnaire was developed by the researcher. Respondents were female academics; questions were 18 close-ended items, which elicited the kind of rapport/relationship female academics had with their parents or locus parentis in retrospect and the influence it has on their career, for example, "my father/mother had high expectation of me," "my father/mother instilled in me a love for learning," "my father/mother believed that having a career for a woman was very important." (c) Academic men collegial support (developed by the researcher). These were 16 close-ended items. It elicited responses from male academics on their working relationship with their female colleagues, some of the statements were "I have excellent working relations with my female colleagues," "I like my female superiors," and so on (d) Academic men attitude toward women (adapted from Spence & Helmrich, 1978) scales. It comprised 19 close-ended statements. This was meant to measure the general attitude of male academics toward

women, which is either egalitarian or traditional, such as women should take increasing responsibility for leadership in solving intellectual and social problems, husband and wife should be allowed the same grounds for divorce, a woman should not expect to have quite the same freedom as a man, and so on.

2. *Academic Women's Career Growth Questionnaire (Developed by the Researcher)*: This comprises 13 statements such as "my university encourages the use of personal initiative on the job," "my personal career growth is stunted because I have not met the demand of publishing scholarly articles," "career growth in the university system favors men more than women, and so on."
3. *Academic Women's Perception of Leadership Position Questionnaire (Developed by the Researcher)*: These are 16-item statements which elicited responses from female academics. Some of which are "leadership takes one away from research and publication, so I would rather not lead"; "I prefer leadership in teaching to administrative leadership"; and "leadership requires too much politics which I am not prepared for."

Procedure and Sampling Techniques of the Study

A multi-stage sampling technique was used for the study. The first stage involved the listing of all-approved federal and state-funded universities in Nigeria and the extraction and stratification of Universities in south west of the country, six oldest universities in each state of the south-western Nigeria were purposively selected. This was under the assumption that they will have adequate number of academic women needed for the sample, as critical mass of female population as academics is still difficult to come by. Incidentally, the oldest universities in the region are four federal and two state universities out of five federal and nine state universities in the southwest as at the time of data collection; this represents 45% of the university population at the time of data collection. Questionnaires were administered to 600 female academics from assistant lecturer to professor. They were purposively selected because they were the major focus of the study. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used in their selection from each of the Universities. However, 511 questionnaires were returned and analyzed for the female academics. Three hundred male academics from senior lecturer to professor were disproportionately selected (50 from each university) under the assumption that they are colleagues of academic women. Two hundred and ninety-seven of these were returned and analyzed.

Reliability and Data Analysis

The reliability of the instruments was determined through a pilot study of 50 randomly selected respondents from two

privately owned universities. Reliability coefficient was obtained using Cronbach's alpha: social, $r = 0.87$; career growth, $r = 0.79$; and academic leadership questionnaires, $r = 0.84$. Data were analyzed using multiple regression.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the composite effects of social predictors (parental influence, spousal and academic men collegial support, and attitudes toward women) on female academics' (a) career growth and (b) leadership position?

Research Question 2: What are the relative contributions of social predictors (parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women) to female academics' (a) career growth and (b) leadership position?

Research Question 3: To what extent would social predictors (parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women) predict female academics' (a) career growth and (b) leadership position?

Results

Research Question 1a

What is the composite effect of the social variables (parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women) on female academics' career growth?

From Table 1, parental influence has a negative and weak relationship which is significant with career growth ($R = -.175$; $p < .05$). The table also shows that spousal support has a positive, weak, and significant relationship with the dependant measure ($R = .162$; $p < .05$). However, collegial support ($R = .028$; $p > .05$) and attitude toward women ($R = .054$; $p > .05$) have very weak positive relationship, which are not significant with career growth. To determine the composite effect of the four social variables on career growth, Table 2 is presented.

Table 2 shows that the four social factors parental influence, spousal support, collegial support, and attitude toward women jointly correlate positively with career growth ($R = .260$). The R^2 value of .068 also shows that 6.8% of the variance in career growth is due to the four social factors leaving the remaining 93.2% to other factors and residuals. The significance of the R value is determined using Table 3.

Table 3 shows that the composite effect of the social factors as indicated by the R value of .260 is significant ($F = 9.208$; $p < .05$) on career growth. Hence, the R value is not due to chance.

Research Question 1b

What is the composite effect of the social factors (parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women) on female academics' leadership position?

Table 1. Pearson Correlation of Social Variables and Career Growth ($N = 511$).

	Career growth	Parental influence	Spousal support	Collegial support	Attitude toward women
Pearson correlation					
Career growth	1.000	-.175	.162	.028	.054
Parental influence	-.175*	1.000	.110	.136	.050
Spousal support	.162*	.110	1.000	-.013	.005
Collegial support	.028	.136	-.013	1.000	.936
Attitude toward women	.054	.050	.005	.936	1.000
Significant (one-tailed)					
Career growth		.000	.000	.263	.111
Parental influence	.000		.006	.001	.129
Spousal support	.000	.006		.388	.452
Collegial support	.263	.001	.388		.000
Attitude toward women	.111	.129	.452	.000	

* $p < .05$.**Table 2.** Summary of Regression of Social Factors and Career Growth.

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
.260	.068	.060	7.7398

* $p < .05$.

From Table 4, parental influence has a negative, weak, significant relationship with female academics' career growth ($R = -.376$; $p < .05$); spousal support has a weak, positive relationship which is also significant ($R = .217$; $p < .05$); collegial support has a negative, weak, and not significant relationship ($R = -.072$; $p > .05$); and attitude toward women has a positive, weak, and not significant relationship with women's leadership position ($R = .081$; $p > .05$). The composite effect is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 shows that the four social factors parental influence, spousal support, collegial support, and attitudes toward women have positive multiple relationship with female academics' leadership position ($R = .480$). Also, the R^2 value of .230 indicates that they could explain 23.0% of the variance in leadership positions. The remaining 77.0% is due to other factors and residuals. This composite effect is tested for significance on Table 6.

Table 6 shows that the composite effect of the social factors as indicated by the R value of .830 is significant ($F = 37.888$; $p < .05$). Hence, the R value is not due to chance. Therefore, social factors have significant composite effect on female academics leadership positions.

Research Question 2a

What are the relative contributions of parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women to female academics' career growth?

Table 7 shows that parental influence made the greatest contribution to female academics' career growth ($\beta = .197$;

Table 3. ANOVA Table for Regression of Social Variables and Career Growth.

Model	Sum of squares	df	M^2	F	Significance
Regression	2,206.333	4	551.583	9.208	.000*
Residual	30,311.636	506	59.904		
Total	32,517.969	510			

* $p < .05$.

$p < .05$). This is a significant contribution. Spousal support is next in decreasing magnitude ($\beta = .183$; $p < .05$). This is also a significant contribution. The third on the list in the order is the contribution of attitude toward women ($\beta = .078$; $p > .05$) while the lowest contribution is that made by collegial support ($\beta = .016$; $p > .05$). These two factors made no significant contributions to female academics' career growth.

Research Question 2b

What are the relative contributions of the social factors parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women to female academics' leadership position?

Table 8 shows that attitude toward women made the greatest contribution to leadership position ($\beta = .428$; $p > .05$). This is followed by collegial support ($\beta = .419$; $p < .05$), parental influence ($\beta = .368$; $p < .05$), and spousal support ($\beta = .250$; $p < .05$) in that order. All these contributions are significant.

Research Question 3a

To what extent would the social variables parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women predict female academics' career growth?

From Table 7, both parental influence ($B = -.112$; $t = -4.402$; $p < .05$) and spousal support ($B = .133$; $t = 4.216$;

Table 4. Pearson Correlation of Social Factors and Leadership Positions ($N = 511$).

	Career growth	Parental influence	Spousal support	Collegial support	Attitude toward women
Pearson correlation					
Leadership position	1.000	-.376	.217	-.072	.018
Parental influence	-.376*	1.000	.110	.136	.050
Spousal support	.217*	.110	1.000	-.013	.005
Collegial support	-.072	.136	-.013	1.000	.936
Attitude toward women	.018	.050	.005	.936	1.000
Significant (one-tailed)					
Leadership position		.000	.000	.053	.339
Parental influence	.000		.006	.001	.129
Spousal support	.000	.006		.388	.452
Collegial support	.053	.001	.388		.000
Attitude toward women	.339	.129	.452	.000	

* $p < .05$.**Table 5.** Summary of Regression of Social Variables and Academic Women's Leadership Positions.

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SE of the estimate
.480 ^a	.230	.224	7.4006

$p < .05$) could predict female academics leadership positions. On the other hand, attitude toward women ($B = .164$; $t = .623$; $p > .05$) and collegial support ($B = -3.92$ E-02; $t = 1.27$; $p > .05$) could not predict female academics' career growth.

Research Question 3b

To what extent would social variables parental influence, spousal and collegial support, and attitudes toward women predict female academics' leadership position?

Table 8 shows that all the four social factors could independently predict female academics' leadership position. These are attitude ($B = .947$; $t = 3.755$; $p < .05$), collegial support ($B = -1.080$; $t = -3.648$; $p < .05$), parental influence ($B = -.220$; $t = -9.050$; $p < .05$), and spousal support ($B = .191$; $t = 6.343$; $p < .05$).

Discussion

Social support has been found to predict job satisfaction by previous studies (Orpen & Pinshaw, 1975; Smither, 1988; Stamps, 1997; Vroom, 1964). It has also been established to predict negative outcomes, like absenteeism, staff turnover (Winstead et al., 1995), burnout (Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998), depression, and anxiety (El-Bassel et al., 1998; Olson & Shultz, 1994) in work environment. This study has gone further to show that apart from being a predictor of job satisfaction and other variables, social support is a predictor of career growth. It also predicts whether a woman will seek leadership position or not.

Table 6. ANOVA Table for Regression of Social Variables and Academic Women's Leadership Position.

Model	Sum of Squares	df	M^2	F	Significant
Regression	8,300.464	4	2,075.116	37.888	.000*
Residual	27,713.341	506	54.769		
Total	36,013.804	510			

* $p < .05$.

Contrary to the submission of Winstead et al. (1995), who found that social support predicted burnout (Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998), depression, and anxiety, (El-Bassel et al., 1998; Olson & Shultz, 1994), this study found that women who had spousal and parental support in retrospect have more confidence to perform leadership roles and advance better in their career than those who do not.

This study agrees with Harris et al. (2007) on spousal support predicting job satisfaction and tenure, but disagrees with workplace social support as predictors of job satisfaction and job tenure. This is because spousal support predicted career growth and leadership position, while collegial support and attitude toward women could not predict women's career growth, but predicted leadership position. This could be due to the fact that leadership position is more political and elective; therefore, women would need the physical support of the male majority, whereas they need more of individual hard work, resilience, and the spirit of competition to grow in their career, they also require understanding and the support of their husband at the home-front for them to have significant growth.

This study corroborate earlier findings which reiterate that general attitudes of superiors and subordinates to women in career and leadership position are most of the time unwelcoming (Chovwen, 2007; Odejide, 2006; Oti, 2011), this has been found to affect women negatively. This study found attitude toward women and academic men's collegial

Table 7. Relative Effects of Social Factors on Academic Women's Career Growth.

Social factors	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		Rank	t	Significance
	B	SE	β				
(Constant)	31.966	4.774				6.695	.000
Parental influence	-0.112	0.025	.197	1st		-4.402	.000*
Spousal support	0.133	0.032	.183	2nd		4.216	.000*
Collegial support	-3.92E-02	0.310	.016	4th		-0.127	.899
Attitude toward women	0.164	0.264	.078	3rd		0.623	.533

* $p < .05$.

Table 8. Relative Contributions of Social Factors on Academic Women's Leadership Positions.

Social factors	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		Rank	t	Significance
	B	SE	β				
(Constant)	42.747	4.565				9.364	.000
Parental influence	-0.220	0.024	.368	3rd		-9.050	.000*
Spousal support	0.191	0.030	.250	4th		6.343	.000*
Collegial support	-1.080	0.296	.419	2nd		-3.648	.000*
Attitude toward women	0.947	0.252	.428	1st		3.755	.000*

* $p < .05$.

support to predict female academics' leadership position. This finding is in congruence with Kanter's (1977) grounded theory which states that perceived incongruity between the female gender and leadership roles leads to prejudice. This research found the above to be true, as women could grow in their career as long as they are able to meet requirements for promotion through hard work; but negative attitudes and lack of support affect their reaching leadership position. On the other hand, they may attain leadership through their efforts but may not receive the necessary acceptance and respect the position demands (Kamau, 2004; Odejide, 2006). Moreover, negative attitudes and lack of spousal support might also count against their candidacy if they are seeking elective positions in a male-dominated career, because men as well as jealous women will not vote for them (Odejide, 2006; Oti, 2011).

Implications for Women in Career and Leadership

It is pertinent to note that though women are entering into academics in significant numbers, they are still a minority. Furthermore, the culture of academics is still very much dictated by male hegemony. Aside from these, the lives of female academics is also shaped and greatly influenced by culture and their experiences in the home. This can go a long way to determine how far they go in aspiring to lead or sustaining leadership position. Women's desire and aspiration to lead is shaped by the kind of relationship they have with their

parents, this goes a long way in building their self-confidence. Moreover, if women really desire to lead, especially in a male-dominated environment, they must learn the rules of the game. They must learn how to gain the support of their male colleagues who are in the majority, bearing in mind the patriarchal culture of Nigerian men wanting to dominate even when they are less qualified.

Conclusion

This research investigated whether social support which comprises four variables would predict female academics' career growth and leadership position. It was found that as a whole, social support predicted career growth and leadership position. However, when taken independently, two of the variables, spousal support and parental influence, were significant in the prediction of career growth and leadership position. Notwithstanding, all four independent variables (spousal support, parental influence, academic men collegial support, and attitude toward women) predicted leadership positions. This means that women academics were prepared for the odds the occupation offered, being in a male-dominated occupation, though their career is generally slower compared with their male academics due to the pressure from marriage, childbearing, and rearing. They are in no way inferior intellectually to their male colleagues. Academic women are reluctant leaders because they view leadership from a different perspective and nurse the fear of failure. It was concluded that academic women need to seek the

support of spouses. Parents need to encourage their female children to aspire against all social odds. Academic men need to change their stereotype behavior toward their female colleagues.

Fraught with limitations emanating from the small sample, the miniature geographical location of south-western Nigeria and the limitation of the universities to Federal and State alone, nonetheless, the results of this study is valid. They provide a significant insight into the predictive nature of social support variable to female academics' career growth and leadership positions. Future research can compare the career growth and leadership positions of never-married female academics and the married; this is with the view of finding out the influence of marital status on women's career.

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