impact International Journals and Publications

© IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 3, pp. 1763-1774 | ISSN: 2636-4484

GENDER IMBALANCE IN CAREER ADVANCEMENT OF STAFF IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

Daniel, Ka'amani Paul, PhD
Department of Sociology, Distance Learning Centre, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, Nigeria
danpk45@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO
Article No.: 0547
Accepted Date: 17/08/2026
Published Date: 10/09/2026
Type: Research

ABSTRACT
Career advancement is one of the paramount conditions for employee satisfaction and retention in any organization/institution. Indeed, every organization seeks to manage career development issues and how they affect organizational growth. This paper therefore, examined the nature of gender imbalance in career advancement of staff in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, through a survey of 317 Academic and Non-teaching Staff stratified by sex. Data were analyzed using simple percentages. The findings indicated that there are more men (57.9%) than women (42.1%) with master's degree and more men (63.1%) than women (36.9%) with PhD in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. There were more Men (64.1%) than women (35.9%) at the higher academic ranks and men were discovered to occupy most of the post in the department and faculty which include Head of Department, Faculty Dean, Faculty Officer, departmental PG Coordinator, and Department Exam Officer among others. However, it is recommended that conscious, deliberate and definite policy of affirmative action and quota system be adopted to address the paucity of women in senior positions and all forms of gender discrimination and inequality should be challenged consistently and systematic approach of gender relations that include gender mainstreaming should be entrenched.

Keywords: Gender, Career Advancement, Equity, Imbalance, Staff, Ahmadu Bello University.

Introduction

Gender is a basic social category which society uses to assign roles, obligations, possibilities and relations between men and women. While there are natural differences between the two sexes, gender mainly refers to socially created expectations and obligations linked to being a man or a woman. The expectations are developed through socialization processes and institutionalized in such social institutions as the family, education, religion, the labour market and the workplace. As such, gender shapes access to education, work, decision-making, organizational hierarchy and possibilities for career advancement. Present day debates about gender equality go far beyond numbers to encompass equality of opportunity and participation, recognition, pay and access to positions of power.

Career advancement involves the development of an individual within an occupation or organisation as a result of increasing responsibility, professional development, promotion, reward, status and access to leadership roles (Ivanovic, 2023). In academic and administrative institutions, career advancement could take the form of appointment into higher cadres, promotion, training and development, involvement in decision-making, research and holding senior leadership roles. Career advancement is thus not only about getting jobs but also about how well employees are able to advance through organizational hierarchies on an equal basis. When there are organizational practices, cultures and societal expectations that systematically favor one gender over another, gender inequality becomes part of career development and organizational outcomes. Issues related to gender equality in career advancement are still important globally. Current research shows that women are still underrepresented in senior leadership roles despite increased participation in education and employment. UNESCO (2025) indicates that women represent no more than 30 percent of leaders in higher education worldwide, indicating that higher involvement of women in higher education does not guarantee their presence in higher education management proportionately. It is especially important to differentiate between participation and progress in higher education institutions, since women may increase their involvement in academic and managerial careers, yet at the same time remain underrepresented at upper management positions. It is thus becoming a question of both access and progress within organizational hierarchies.

Nigeria is an important backdrop within which gender inequality in career development should be explored. Whereas the participation of women in terms of education and workforce participation has grown over time, there are still major gender gaps in decision-making processes both economically and politically. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report of 2025, Nigeria ranks 124th on the list of all countries studied with respect to gender gap, having closed around 64.9 percent of its total gender gap. There were improvements in the economic participation of women with their ratio in the workforce rising from 89.9 percent to 95.6 percent. On the other hand, political participation in terms of leadership was still lower with the share of women among the ministers falling from 17.6 percent in 2024 to 8.8 percent in 2025. It is important to note that the statistics show an irony as improvement in participation in economic activities does not necessarily mean the same in leadership. Similarly, UN Women (2024) reports that women occupied only about 3.9 percent of seats in Nigeria's national parliament as of February 2024. Although political representation is not identical to career advancement within universities, it reflects the broader institutional environment in which women's access to authority and decision-making positions occurs. The continued underrepresentation of women in positions of authority suggests that structural and institutional barriers remain relevant to understanding women's career progression in Nigeria. Consequently, examining gender differences in career advancement within specific organisations is necessary because national statistics alone may conceal variations between institutions and occupational categories.

The Nigerian university system is one of the best examples to analyze gender inequality, not just because universities serve as centers of teaching and learning, but also because they are major employers and sites of professional development and decision-making. It can be noted on the example of Nigerian universities that the representation of women becomes lower depending on the academic ranks. According to Nigerian university statistics provided by Dataphyte (2022), women make up about 23.7 percent of academic employees; however, their representation is reduced from 26.8 percent for Lecturer I and below to 15.2 percent for Professors. The reason why it is significant to mention this case is that it proves the fact that the problem of gender within higher education cannot be considered as a matter of representation of women in the workforce, but also the career progression of women.

Recent studies in Nigeria provide further evidence that women's career development in tertiary education institutions is shaped by both institutional and socio-cultural factors. Ogunode and Hassan (2023) identified cultural expectations, poorly implemented gender policies, career pressures, economic challenges, patriarchy and institutional deficiencies as major barriers to women's engagement and advancement in Nigerian tertiary institutions, while Bello and Bello (2023) found that the academic careers of women at Federal University Gusau and Umaru Musa Yar'adua University were constrained by institutional and socio-cultural obstacles. These findings are relevant to the present study because Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is situated within the same broader North-Western Nigerian socio-cultural context and employs both academic and non-teaching staff. Career development in the university requires academic staff to have access to postgraduate education, research grants, publications, conferences, networking, mentoring and other professional activities, while non-teaching staff require opportunities for training, appropriate job assignments, performance assessment, promotion, professional development and participation in decision-making. Where access to these opportunities varies systematically between men and women, gender disparities in career progression may persist despite apparently gender-neutral recruitment and promotion policies. At Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, the establishment of a Gender Policy Unit demonstrates institutional recognition of the importance of gender equality in university management and development. According to the Gender Policy Unit Document (2025), the unit seeks to strengthen gender-sensitive policies relating to research, training and development of staff and students without discrimination or bias. However, the existence of such a policy structure does not necessarily mean that gender disparities in career advancement have been eliminated; rather, its effectiveness should be assessed against actual patterns of promotion, professional development, research opportunities, leadership appointments and participation in decision-making. Thus, gender balance should be assessed not only through the numerical representation of male and female staff but also through their relative access to opportunities and positions that facilitate career advancement.

Gender imbalance in career advancement is therefore, consequently both an organisational and sociological issues. Persistent differences in access to promotion, professional development, leadership positions, research opportunities, institutional responsibilities and decision-making may affect individual career outcomes as well as staff morale, organisational effectiveness and the achievement of institutional gender-equity objectives. Furthermore, when women remain concentrated in lower organisational positions despite having the required qualifications and experience for advancement, the institution may fail to fully utilise its human resources. Against this background, the study examines gender imbalance in career advancement among staff of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Statement of the Problem

Despite growing attention to gender equality in higher education, there remains limited institution-specific empirical evidence on whether male and female staff have equal opportunities for career advancement within Nigerian universities, particularly across academic and non-teaching career pathways. Existing studies have identified barriers to women's advancement in Nigerian higher education, but less is known about how these imbalances are manifested in promotion, educational attainment, income, occupational position and access to senior academic and administrative positions within the Nigerian university. At Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, it is therefore unclear whether the university's commitment to gender-sensitive policies is reflected in the actual distribution of career opportunities and positions between male and female staff. This study addresses this gap by examining the nature and extent of gender imbalance in career advancement among academic and non-teaching staff of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, with particular attention to differences in qualifications, income, promotion and occupational positions.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine gender differences in the educational qualifications of academic and non-teaching staff of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
2. To assess gender differences in career progression and promotion among academic and non-teaching staff of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
3. To examine gender differences in access to academic, administrative, and leadership positions among staff of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by the Glass Ceiling Theory, propounded Marilyn Loden (1978) and further developed by Morrison, White, Van Velsor, and the Center for Creative Leadership (1987). The theory explains the invisible organisational, institutional and socio-cultural barriers that may prevent qualified women from progressing to the highest levels of an organisation. Its major contribution is the distinction between women's participation in employment and their actual advancement into senior and leadership positions. The theory assumes that gender inequality may persist even where women possess the necessary qualifications and experience, and that informal organisational practices, stereotypes, workplace cultures, unequal opportunities and promotion processes may contribute to women limited upward mobility.

The theory is applied to the present study because it provides a basis for assessing differences in educational qualifications, income, promotion, academic ranks, administrative positions and access to departmental and faculty leadership. The presence of women within the university workforce alongside their lower representation in some senior academic and leadership positions can therefore be examined as a possible manifestation of the glass ceiling. The strength of the theory lies in its ability to shift attention from whether women have entered an organisation to whether they are able to progress equally within its hierarchy. It is particularly suitable for this study because it directly addresses barriers to women's advancement and explains why numerical representation alone may not constitute gender equality. However, the limitation of the Glass Ceiling Theory is that it can place considerable emphasis on organisational barriers while giving less attention to other factors that may influence career advancement, such as individual career choices, family responsibilities, educational differences and wider socio-economic conditions. In addition, the theory does not by itself establish that observed gender differences are caused by discriminatory organisational practices. This limitation is important in the present study because its descriptive, cross-sectional design can identify patterns of gender imbalance but cannot

establish direct causal relationships. Nevertheless, the theory remains appropriate as an interpretive framework for examining the structural and institutional dimensions of gender imbalance in career advancement at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Methodology

The study was conducted at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria, using a survey research design. Primary data was utilised and were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to three hundred and seventeen (317) male and female academic and non-teaching staff selected from five (5) academic faculties. The respondents were stratified by sex and job category to ensure the inclusion of both male and female academic and non-teaching staff. Availability (convenience) sampling was adopted because respondents were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate during the data collection period, given the practical difficulty of accessing all staff categories within their work schedules. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by experts, while a pilot test was conducted among staff who were not included in the final study to assess the clarity and consistency of the instrument. The instrument demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.84. Ethical clearance was obtained from the appropriate institutional authority before data collection, and respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, with participation being voluntary and confidentiality and anonymity assured. Data collected were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with frequencies and percentages used for descriptive analysis and selected variables cross-tabulated by sex to examine differences in career advancement indicators between male and female staff.

Results

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
26 - 35 years	74	23.3
36 - 45 years	79	24.9
46 - 55 years	132	41.6
56 years and above	32	10.2
Total	**317**	**100.0**
Sex		
Male	171	53.9
Female	146	46.1
Total	**317**	**100.0**
Marital status		
Single	60	18.9
Married	243	76.7
Divorced	9	2.8
Separated	3	0.9
Widowed	2	0.6
Total	**317**	**100.0**
Religion		
Christianity	128	40.4
Islam	187	59.0
Traditional believer	2	0.6
Total	**317**	**100.0**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents. It was gathered that 74(23.3%) of the respondents fall between the ages of 26 – 35 years which constituted the younger age Staff, 79(24.9%) belongs to the middle age Staff category with age ranges between 36 – 45 years and 132(41.6%) and 32(10.2%) fall between the ages of 46 – 55 years and 56 years and above, these categories of Staff constituted the older Staff. Majority 171(53.9%) were males and 146(46.1%) were females. A significant proportion 243(76.7%) were married, 60(18.9%) single, 9(2.8%) divorced, 3(0.9%) separated and only 2(0.6%) were widowed. It was discovered that majority 187(59%) are Muslims and 128(40.4%) are Christians, as such their religious background may influence their choice of response especially when socio-cultural factors that prescribed gender roles are put into consideration.

Table 2: Level of Educational Attainment of Respondents

Level of Educational Attainment	Sex		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
NCE/ND	13(40.0%)	29(60.0%)	42(100.0%)
B.Sc/HND	55(53.4%)	48(46.6%)	103(100.0%)
M.Sc	62(57.9%)	45(42.1%)	107(100.0%)
PhD	41(63.1%)	24(36.9%)	65(100.0%)
Total	**171(53.9%)**	**146(46.1%)**	**317(100.0%)**

Table 2 shows that of all respondents, the least qualification was NCE/ND. While those with M.Sc formed the bulk of the respondents with 62 (57.9%) males and 45(42.1%) females, 55(53.4%) males and 48(46.6%) female are B.Sc/HND holders, those with PhD are 41 (63.1%) males and 24(36.9%) females, the NCE/ND holders comprise 13 (40%) males and 29(60%) females. The findings indicated that there are more men than women with higher educational qualification. It can also be seen that the bulk of the respondents are educated and can be attributed to the fact that only those who meet the minimum qualification can be employed. The Masters and PhD Certificate holders are also adequately represented.

© IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 3, pp. 1763-1774 | ISSN: 2636-4484

Table 3: Income Level of Respondents

Income Level (₦)	Sex		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
50,000-99,000	14(29.2%)	34(70.8%)	48(100.0%)
100,000-149,000	30(41.7%)	42(58.3%)	72(100.0%)
150,000-199,000	36(57.1%)	27(42.9%)	63(100.0%)
200,000-249,000	39(61.9%)	24(38.1%)	63(100.0%)
250,000-299,000	20(76.9%)	6(23.1%)	26(100.0%)
300,000-349,000	14(63.6%)	8(36.4%)	22(100.0%)
350,000-399,000	17(77.3%)	5(22.7%)	22(100.0%)
400,000-449,000	1(100.0%)	----------	1(100.0%)
Total	**171(53.9%)**	**146(46.1%)**	**317(100.0%)**

Table 3 shows the income level of the respondents. Significant gender differences were observed. Based on the distribution, there were more women 34(70.8%) than men 14(29.2%), 42(58.3%) women than men 30(41.7%) at an income level of ₦50,000 – ₦99,000 and ₦100,000 – ₦149,000. But as the income level increases from ₦150,000 – ₦199,000 and above, men tend to outnumber women. This shows the level of disparity along income of the staff which means that women tend to earn less than men as the income level increases as discovered in the study. This discovery is tied to the fact that more men occupy higher employment levels than women.

Table 4: Last Promotion of Respondents

Last Promotion	Sex		
	Male	**Female**	**Total**
2002-2004	19(61.3%)	12(38.7%)	31(100.0%)
2005-2007	29(65.9%)	15(34.1%)	44(100.0%)
2008-2010	17(40.5%)	25(59.5%)	42(100.0%)
2011-2013	39(62.9%)	23(37.1%)	62(100.0%)
2014-2016	37(52.1%)	34(47.9%)	71(100.0%)
No response	30(44.8%)	37(55.2%)	67(100.0%)
Total	**171(53.9%)**	**146(46.1%)**	**317(100.0%)**

Table 4 presents the last promotion of respondents. The study gathered that 19(61.3%) males and 12(38.7%) females had their last promotion between 2002 – 2004, 29(65.9%) males and 15(34.1%) females from 2005 – 2007, 17(40.5%) males and 25(59.5%) females between 2008 – 2010. Also, majority 39(62.9%) of the male respondents and 23(37.1%) female had their last promotion from 2011 – 2013, 37(52.1%) male and majority 34(47.9%) females from 2014 – 2016. However, it can be seen that there is a little difference in promotion between the male and female Staff. Despite the differences in promotion, there is equity in timing of promotion (3years), what might differ is how many males and females got promoted in record time. This is where gender inequality lays i.e. more males get promoted in record time than women.

© IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 3, pp. 1763-1774 | ISSN: 2636-4484

Table 5: Job Description of Respondents

Job Description	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Academic Staff	103(56.0%)	81(44.0%)	184(100.0%)
Non-Teaching Staff	68(51.1%)	65(48.9%)	133(100.0%)
Total	**171(53.9%)**	**146(46.1%)**	**317(100.0%)**

The finding on Table 5 shows that a total of 184 respondents are Academic Staff while 133 of them were Non-teaching Staff. Of the 184 Academic Staff, 103(56%) were male Academic Staff while 81(44%) were female. Also, of the 133 Non-teaching Staff, 68(51.1%) were males while 65(48.9%) were females. From the findings, it can be seen that men are more in numbers than women in both the Academic and Non-teaching job.

Table 6: Job Position of Respondents

Job Position	Sex		
	Male	Female	Total
Graduate Assistant	9(47.4%)	10(52.6%)	19(100.0%)
Assistant Lecturer	7(43.8%)	9(56.2%)	16(100.0%)
Lecturer II	7(41.2%)	10(58.8%)	17(100.0%)
Lecturer I	12(42.9%)	16(57.1%)	28(100.0%)
Senior lecturer	41(64.1%)	23(35.9%)	64(100.0%)
Reader	7(70.0%)	3(30.0%)	10(100.0%)
Professor	11(100.0%)	0(0.0%)	11(100.0%)
Junior Administrative Officer	26(59.1%)	18(40.9%)	44(100.0%)
Senior Administrative Officer	34(41.0%)	49(59.0%)	83(100.0%)
Others: (Technical Staff, Project Staff, Clinical Staff, Laboratory Officer)	17(68.0%)	8(32.0%)	25(100.0%)
Total	**171(53.9%)**	**146(46.1%)**	**317(100.0%)**

Table 6 shows the analysis of job positions of the Academic and Non-teaching professions in ABU, Zaria which revealed that over the years, both male and female Staff have improved on their Academic and Non- teaching rank, even though men dominate at all ranks. It was discovered that there is a slight number of women 10(52.6%), 9(56.2%), 10(58.8%) and 16(57.1%) above men 9(47.4%), 7(43.8%), 9(41.2%) and 12(42.9%) at the lower Academic Cadre (Graduate Assistant, Assistant Lecturer, Lecturer II and Lecturer I) and higher number of men 41(64.1%), 7(70%) and 11(100%) above women 23(35.9%) and 3(30%) in the senior Academic Cadre (Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor). While women 49(59.0%) were more than men 34(41.0%) in the Senior Administrative position, men 26(59.1%) were more than women 18(40.9%) in Junior Administrative position. There was no woman Professor as 11(100%) of the respondents were male Professor. Also, there were 17(68%) males and 9(32%) females' Technical Staff, Project Staff, Clinical and Laboratory Officers that participated in the study. The outcome of the study shows that women are fewer in the Senior Academic Cadre and are more in Non-teaching Profession. This may be related to the fact

that women's position in the workplace has been stereotypically confine to administrative positions and it is also apparent in higher education where female faculty are rare in full professorial rank.

Table 7: Views of Respondents on the Sex that occupies most of the Posts in their Departments and Faculties

Posts	Male	Female	No response	Total
Faculty Dean	241(76.0%)	50(15.8%)	26(8.2%)	317(100.0%)
Faculty Assistant Dean PG	224(70.7%)	41(12.9%)	52(16.4%)	317(100.0%)
Head of Department	262(82.6%)	55(17.4%)	----------	317(100.0%)
Department PG Coordinator	231(72.9%)	54(17.0%)	32(10.1%)	317(100.0%)
Departmental Exam Officer	235(74.1%)	51(16.1%)	31(9.8%)	317(100.0%)
Faculty Officer	253(79.8%)	42(13.2%)	22(7.0%)	317(100.0%)

Table 7 shows that the males occupy the majority of all the management positions in their departments, units and faculties as confirmed by 262(82.6%), 241(76%), 253(79.8%), 235(74.1%), 224(70.7%) and 231(72.9%) of the respondents. This corroborated an earlier finding during the pilot study carried out in five faculties. There were only 3 female Heads of Department (Department of Crop Protection, French Department and Department of Gynaecology and Paediatrics), one female Faculty Officer (Faculty of Medicine), no female Dean, no female PG Coordinator, no female Assistant Dean among others. Also, data from the Establishment Officer, Registry Department also indicated that of the 93 Departments in the University, only seven Departments were headed by women and there was no female Dean. This shows that women are underrepresented across Departmental and Faculty committees.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate that gender imbalance in career advancement among staff of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Zaria is evident in the distribution of educational attainment, income and occupational position. Although both male and female respondents had attained tertiary education, male staff were more represented at the higher levels of educational attainment. This finding is important because advanced qualifications constitute an important requirement for promotion, particularly in academic careers. The result agrees with Taylor-Abdulai, Sintim-Adasi, and Baafa (2014), who studied 142 faculty members at the University of Ghana, comprising 109 men and 33 women, and found that male academics entered with higher qualifications and progressed through the academic ranks more rapidly than women. Similarly, Ejike, Igwe and Ukpere (2025), in a study of 134 women academics at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, found that inadequate mentoring, unequal workloads, limited research funding and institutional barriers were associated with women's research productivity and career advancement. These findings suggest that differences in educational attainment may be associated with gender disparities in career progression, although the present study does not establish a causal relationship.

The study further revealed a gender difference in income, with male respondents more strongly represented in the ₦150,000 and above categories, while female respondents were more concentrated within the ₦50,000–₦149,000 categories. This pattern suggests that gender disparities in career advancement may extend to economic outcomes. The higher representation of men in the upper income categories is also consistent with their stronger

presence in senior academic positions, since income within the university structure is generally associated with rank, qualifications and promotion. Agbo et al. (2026), in their study of women academics in Nigerian higher-education institutions, found that mentoring and perceived organisational support were associated with career advancement, while family responsibilities were also related to women's career outcomes. These findings suggest that observed income differences may be related to differences in professional development and promotion opportunities, rather than necessarily reflecting unequal remuneration for staff performing identical roles.

A major finding of the study was that men were more numerous than women at the Senior Lecturer, Reader and Professor levels, while women were more concentrated at lower academic ranks. Particularly striking was the finding that no female respondent occupied the rank of Professor. This suggests the presence of vertical gender segregation within the academic structure of ABU, with female representation declining at higher academic ranks and levels of institutional authority. The finding is consistent with UNESCO (2021), which reported that women in South African universities constituted 53.3% of lecturers but only 27.5% of professors, representing a decline of 25.8 percentage points between the two levels. It is also consistent with Taylor-Abdulai et al. (2014), whose study of the University of Ghana found that male academics advanced through the academic ladder more rapidly than female academics. The similarity between these findings and the ABU result suggests that the underrepresentation of women at the highest academic levels may reflect a broader pattern within African higher education, rather than being unique to ABU.

The study also found that women were more strongly represented in the senior administrative cadre, while men dominated the senior academic ranks. This finding suggests that gender differences may occur across distinct career pathways within the university. Women's representation in senior administrative positions indicates that women do attain positions of organisational authority; however, their limited representation in senior academic positions suggests that patterns of advancement may vary according to occupational pathway. This distinction is consistent with UNESCO and IESALC's (2024) study of 38 higher-education institutions across nine Southern African countries, which found that although women were well represented at lower levels of higher education, they remained underrepresented in doctoral education, STEM and senior academic leadership. Muleya (2025), examining women's advancement to senior academic positions in a South African university, similarly reported that limited mentoring, funding constraints and implicit gender biases were associated with barriers to women's advancement. Thus, the concentration of women in administrative positions alongside the stronger representation of men in senior academic ranks may indicate both horizontal and vertical patterns of gender segregation within higher education. However, because the present study employed a descriptive, cross-sectional design, these findings should be interpreted as patterns rather than evidence of causal relationships.

Conclusion

The study concludes that although there has been considerable progress in expanding women's access to education and employment in Nigeria, gender imbalance remains evident in career advancement, particularly within tertiary institutions. The underrepresentation of women becomes more pronounced at higher levels of the career ladder, with relatively few women attaining senior academic and managerial positions. The situation at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, suggests that increasing the number of women in academic and non-teaching positions has not automatically translated into equal representation in senior and

leadership positions. This suggests that existing public and organisational policies may not have sufficiently addressed the institutional and socio-cultural factors associated with women's career progression. The study therefore concludes that achieving meaningful gender equity requires deliberate institutional action, effective gender-sensitive policies, affirmative measures, and sustained investment in the professional development and advancement of women. The study is, however, limited by its focus on a single university and a relatively small sample of respondents, which may limit the generalisability of the findings. The use of convenience (availability) sampling may also have introduced selection bias, while the reliance on descriptive analysis and cross-tabulation without inferential statistical tests means that the observed gender imbalance should be interpreted as patterns rather than statistically established relationships or causal effects. Future research should therefore employ larger, probability-based samples across multiple universities and appropriate inferential methods to provide stronger evidence on gender imbalance in career advancement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. University Management should establish clear and measurable targets for improving women's representation in senior academic and leadership positions, particularly in view of the finding that women are underrepresented at the higher academic ranks and in key leadership positions.
2. Promotion and leadership selection processes should be regularly reviewed to ensure equal opportunities for male and female staff, given the observed gender differences in income levels and career positions.
3. The University should strengthen gender-sensitive monitoring of appointments to departmental and faculty leadership positions, as the findings indicate that men occupy most of the key leadership positions across departments, faculties and units.
4. University Management should improve women's access to opportunities for acquiring higher academic qualifications and professional development, given the finding that women are less represented among staff with higher academic qualifications.
5. Gender mainstreaming should be incorporated into promotion, appointment, training, career development and leadership processes for both academic and non-teaching staff, particularly because the findings indicate different patterns of male and female representation across academic and administrative career pathways.
6. The University should regularly assess gender representation across academic ranks, administrative positions, income levels, qualifications and leadership roles, so that emerging disparities in career advancement can be identified and addressed through evidence-based institutional measures.

References

Agbo, N. M., Ezekekwu, C. V., Chukwuedo, S. O., Ufondu, C., Onwubuya, U. N., Ede, C. G., & Nwike, U. (2026). Perceived career success and career advancement of women: Challenges in Nigerian higher education institutions. *Cogent Education, 13*(1), Article 2646807. https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2026.2646807

Bello, S., & Bello, M. B. (2023). Women academics in Nigerian universities: Challenges and prospects. *SAGE Open, 13*(2), 1–13.

Dataphyte. (2022). *Numbers painting a portrait of women in the Nigerian society*. Dataphyte.

Ejike, I. J., Igwe, A. A., & Ukpere, W. I. (2025). Determinants of gender inequality in research productivity and career advancement of women academics in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Ecohumanism, 4*(2), 2676–2691. https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v4i2.6708

Gender Policy Unit (2025). *ABU Gender Policy Unit holds maiden symposium to create awareness on breast cancer and women empowerment*. Ahmadu Bello University.

Ivanovic, A. (2023). *Career Advancement Barriers Faced by LGBTQ Employees: An Exploration of Discrimination, Bias, and Inclusion in the Workplace*. https://core.ac.uk/download/568392992.pdf

Muleya, A. (2025). Shattering the glass ceiling: Actionable strategies for women's advancement to senior academic positions at a semi-metropolitan South African University. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Education Research, 7*(2), a18. https://doi.org/10.38140/ijer-2025.vol7.2.18

Ogunode, N. J., & Hassan, A. M. (2023). Women participation in tertiary education in Nigeria: Problems and prospects. *Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 9*(1), 1–12.

Taylor-Abdulai, H. B., Sintim-Adasi, G., & Baafa, J. (2014). A gendered analysis of promotional issues in higher education: A case study of University of Ghana, Legon. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, 4*(18), 69–77.

UN Women. (2024). *Country fact sheet: Nigeria*. UN Women Data Hub. UN Women Data Hub – Nigeria

UNESCO. (2021). *Women in higher education: Has the female advantage put an end to gender inequalities?* UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2024). *What you need to know about higher education in Africa*. UNESCO. UNESCO – Higher education in Africa

UNESCO. (2025). *Education: UNESCO report calls for more women at the top*. UNESCO.

World Economic Forum. (2025). *Global gender gap report 2025*. World Economic Forum. Global Gender Gap Report 2025