Gender Discrimination and Organizational Performance in Public Hospitals in Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The study focused on gender discrimination and organizational performance in public hospitals in Abia State. Gender discrimination is a prevalent issue in Nigeria, with women facing disparities in opportunities and outcomes. This study examines the impact of gender discrimination on organizational performance in public hospitals in Abia State. The research design employed is a quantitative approach, and data was collected using a structured questionnaire. The total population used for this study is 3,220 and the study adopted Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size of 356. The sample size consisted of employees working in public hospitals in Abia State. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and hypotheses was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that gender discrimination negatively affects organizational performance, leading to decreased operational efficiency, lower customer satisfaction, and reduced corporate prestige. Therefore, the study recommends that gender discrimination in the workplace should be addressed to enhance organizational performance.
Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Performance, Hospitals.

Introduction

Gender disparities have long been a prominent issue in Nigeria, particularly in terms of economic empowerment and inheritances, where certain tribes have favored men over women (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). This has resulted in significant gender gaps, with women being excluded from wills and denied access to land and other assets, further reinforcing their dependence on men (Adeosun & Owolabi, 2021). Recognizing the importance of closing this gender gap, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has emphasized its significance for Nigeria's economic performance, productivity, and stability (International Monetary Fund, 2023). While efforts have been made by the government and civil society to promote equal opportunities and education for girls in Nigeria, women still face various forms of discrimination and are predominantly concentrated in unpaid job sectors (Conţu, 2020). This discrimination not only limits women's potential but also contributes to income and wealth disparities within the country (Matthew, Adeniji, Osabohien, Olawande, & Atolagbe,2020).

The unequal distribution of genders across different occupations highlights the ongoing challenges related to gender and equal employment opportunities. Women are increasingly breaking into male-dominated fields, while men remain underrepresented in traditionally female-

dominated professions (Crawford, 2021). This gender imbalance raises important questions about the barriers or advantages that both men and women may face in their respective fields, necessitating further research for informed decision-making within organizations (Markman & Baron, 2003); (Prince, Comas-Herrera, Knapp, Guerchet, & Karagiannidou, 2016).

Examining gender imbalances in the workplace is crucial for fostering fair employment systems and ensuring equal opportunities, particularly in male-dominated sectors such as nursing (Cohen & Venter, 2020). Understanding whether men encounter invisible glass ceilings or experience advantages, similar to men in male-dominated professions, is vital for creating inclusive and equitable work environments (Markman & Baron, 2003); (Prince, Comas-Herrera, Knapp, Guerchet, &Karagiannidou,2016). Workplace discrimination, characterized by unfair treatment based on irrelevant characteristics, poses significant challenges for individuals and organizational performance (Conțu, 2020). Discrimination not only creates a hostile work environment but also impedes career progression and leads to the loss of valuable talent and expertise within organizations.

Organizational performance encompasses the extent to which an organization achieves its goals and objectives, both financially and non-financially. Key performance indicators include financial metrics such as revenue, profitability, and return on assets, as well as non-financial metrics like customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and corporate social responsibility (Richard, Devinney,Yip, & Johnson,2009, Maik & Audu, 2023; Uchenna & Audu, 2022). Factors influencing organizational performance include organizational culture, leadership, human resource practices, organizational structure, and the effective utilization of technology (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). The examination of public hospitals in Abia State, Nigeria, is of particular importance due to the challenges they face, including inadequate funding, shortages of essential drugs, and infrastructure deficiencies (Agburu, Okeke &Anaduaka, 2018). Gender discrimination within these healthcare institutions has been shown to have detrimental effects on employee satisfaction, performance, and retention, ultimately compromising the delivery of high-quality healthcare services (Okpara, Squillace, &Erondu, 2005). Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the impact of gender discrimination on organizational performance within these healthcare settings.

Statement of the Problem

Gender discrimination within public hospitals in Abia State is a significant issue that poses numerous challenges. It permeates various aspects of employment, such as recruitment, promotion, salaries, training opportunities, and access to leadership positions. These discriminatory practices have adverse effects on employee satisfaction, teamwork, productivity, and overall effectiveness within the public health sector. Addressing these concerns is crucial as they have a substantial impact on organizational performance. Additionally, the perception that certain professions, such as white-collar jobs, are unsuitable for women, coupled with limitations on female employment capacity, acts as a significant barrier to increasing female representation in the field.

Furthermore, public hospitals in Abia State face challenges in establishing and maintaining a strong corporate reputation, resulting in diminished public trust, limited financial support, and difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled healthcare professionals. The lack of a positive public image and reputation may impede the hospitals' ability to effectively serve the community and acquire the necessary resources to provide quality healthcare services.

(Naher, Hoque,Hassan, Balabanova, Adams, & Ahmed, 2020). These challenges present significant obstacles to the development and success of public health hospitals in Abia State. Moreover, patient satisfaction is a substantial concern in public hospitals, as evidenced by consistent reports of low levels of satisfaction with the quality of healthcare services received

(Oduenyi, Banerjee, Adetiloye, Rawlins, Okoli,Orji, Ugwa, Ishola, &Okonkwo, 2018). This dissatisfaction stems from various issues, including prolonged waiting times, inadequate communication and information sharing, a lack of patient-centered care, and subpar facilities and amenities. The low levels of patient satisfaction may pose challenges to the delivery of patient-centered care, erode trust in the healthcare system, and ultimately impact the overall patient experience in public hospitals in Abia State.

Objectives of the Study
The broad objective of the study is to determine the extent of relationship that exists between gender discrimination and performance in public hospital in Abia State. While the specific objectives are to:
1. Ascertain the nature of relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige in public hospitals in Abia State.
2. Determine the nature of relationship between income disparity and Operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State.

Research Questions
The following questions were used to achieve the above objectives:
1. What is the nature of relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige in public hospitals in Abia State?
2. What is the nature of the relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State?

Research Hypotheses
The research proceeds to formulate the following hypotheses which was tested during the study:
1. H_1: There is no relationship between Occupational Segregation and Corporate Prestige in public hospital of Abia State.
2. H_2: There is no significant relationship between Income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State.

Scope of the Study
The study on "Gender Discrimination and Organizational Performance" is specifically limited to public hospitals in Abia State, Nigeria. The independent variables are occupational segregation, income disparity, and believe discrimination while the dependent variables are corporate image, operational efficiency, and patient satisfaction. The geographical scope of the study is Abia State. The hospitals selected include Federal Medical Centre Umuahia, Amachara General Hospital, Umuahia, Aba General Hospital and Umuahia General Hospital Umuchieze. The study was conducted within one year (2022-2023)

Literature Review
Gender Discrimination
Discrimination can be defined as a state of being unequal or unfair (Ferrer, Nuenen, Cote &Criado, 2021). Gender discrimination means the disparity/inequality between the male and female gender. The term inequality is broad; it is expressed over the entire population and captures those below a certain poverty line. Discrimination is associated with segregation, economically or socially. The presence of barriers mostly drives discrimination. These barriers hinder upward movement in social classes through income and wealth crystallization. These barriers give certain high-class people access to a better stake of societal resources, hence make them better off than those in the lower-class (Matthew, 2020).

In the context of employment, it can be defined as the giving of an unfair advantage (or disadvantage) to the members of the particular group in comparison to the members of another group. The disadvantage usually results in the denial or restriction of employment opportunities,

or in discrimination in the terms of benefits of employment. Discrimination is a subtle and complex phenomenon that may assume two broad forms; unequal (disparate) treatment and adverse impact as opined by (Prince & Schwarcz, 2019).

Occupational Segregation

Occupational segregation refers to the uneven distribution of demographic groups within specific job categories (VonNiki & William 2016, Uchenna& Audu, 2021; Nzewi & Audu, 2023). It primarily manifests in gender-based segregation, but can also occur along racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation lines. Occupational segregation compares the representation of different groups in occupations relative to the overall labor force, without considering the value or prestige of the jobs. This phenomenon can be observed both across different occupations and within the hierarchical structure of occupations. Perfect segregation occurs when an occupation exclusively employs members of a single group, while perfect integration is achieved when each group holds a proportion of positions in an occupation equal to their representation in the labor force as a whole (Agrawal, 2016). Gender-based discrimination is often cited as a significant factor contributing to occupational segregation, although research on racial segregation within occupations has been relatively limited. Occupational segregation leads to wage gaps and denies capable individuals opportunities based on their gender and race, perpetuating inequalities in the workforce.

Income Disparity

Income disparity or income inequality is the average difference between the remuneration for men and women who are working. Women are generally found to be paid less than men (Bandara, 2015). In the United States, for example, the average annual salary of a woman is 83% that of a man (England, Levine &Mishel, 2020). However, this figure changes when controlled for confounding factors such as differences in hours worked, occupations chosen, education, job experience, and level of danger at work. Attempts to control for these factors arrive at adjusted figures from 95% to 99%. The reasons for the gap link to legal, social, and economic factors. These include topics such as discrimination based on gender, the motherhood penalty vs. fatherhood bonus, parental leave, and gender norms. Additionally, the consequences of the gender pay gap surpass individual grievances, leading to reduced economic output, lower pensions for women, and fewer learning opportunities (Klasen, 2018).

The gender pay gap can be a problem from a public policy perspective in developing countries because it reduces economic output and means that women are more likely to be dependent upon welfare payments, especially in old age (Klasen, 2018). In summary, high levels of income inequality affect human development in a society, particularly health, crime and education. These in turn affect organizational performance either via lower productivity of employees or higher costs to raise the levels of health, security, and skill levels.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance is a multifaceted concept encompassing financial, operational, and stakeholder-related outcomes (Maon, Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). It refers to how well organizations meet their various objectives and fulfil their missions and values. Combs, Russell Crook & Shook (2005) asserts that organizational performance is a multidimensional construct consisting of financial, operational, and stakeholder performance. Organizations must balance and optimize outcomes across these three performance objectives to achieve enduring success. This conceptual framework provides a holistic model for evaluating organizational performance. Organizational performance is a complex, multidimensional concept that has been defined and measured in various ways by scholars (Maon, Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). At its core, organizational performance refers to how well an organization achieves its goals and objectives (Tan, Pan, & Hackney,2009).

Corporate Prestige

Corporate prestige refers to the perception, reputation, and standing of a company among its stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees, and the public (Esenyel 2020). It encompasses factors such as credibility, trustworthiness, and overall image in the marketplace. Building and maintaining corporate prestige is crucial for organizations as it impacts competitiveness, customer loyalty, employee morale, and attracting investments and partnerships. Key factors contributing to corporate prestige include strong branding aligned with values, ethical practices, high product/service quality, exceptional customer experiences, commitment to corporate social responsibility, effective leadership, employee engagement, strong financial performance, industry recognition, and strategic communication efforts. It requires ongoing efforts, transparency, and meeting stakeholder expectations. The reputation of a company can be fragile in the digital age, as negative reviews and mishandled social media presence can harm prestige (Esenyel 2020). Additionally, anyone can create or tarnish a brand through social networks, making it essential for companies to carefully manage their online presence.

Operational Efficiency

Operational efficiency refers to an organization's ability to effectively and efficiently utilize its resources to achieve optimal results. It involves streamlining processes, minimizing waste, reducing costs, and maximizing productivity. Key aspects of operational efficiency include resource utilization, process optimization, time management, cost control, quality assurance, technology integration, and a culture of continuous improvement (Van Laar 2017). By improving operational efficiency, organizations can experience benefits such as increased productivity, enhanced customer satisfaction, cost savings, faster delivery times, better resource utilization, and a competitive edge in the market. It is a strategic approach that allows organizations to adapt to changing business environments, achieve sustainable growth, and deliver value to Stakeholders.

Theoretical Framework
Gender Schema Theory

Gender schema theory, introduced by psychologist Sandra Bem in 1981, posits that children learn about gender roles from their cultural environment and adjust their behavior accordingly. It challenges Freudian theories by emphasizing the influence of cognitive development and societal norms on gender schema formation. Gender schemas impact how information is processed and influence attitudes and beliefs regarding gender-appropriate behavior. For example, a child in a traditional culture may develop schemas associating women with caregiving and men with work. These schemas shape a person's understanding of what is expected of them and their perceived value and potential within their culture.

The formation of gender schemas is influenced by overt and subtle factors, such as language and societal expectations. Deviating from cultural norms may result in disapproval and pressure to conform. Bem categorized individuals into four gender categories: sex-typed, cross-typed, androgynous, and undifferentiated. Bem believed that gender schemas-imposed limitations on individuals and society, advocating for raising children free from stereotypes to promote freedom and autonomy.

Empirical Review

Adeosun and Owolabi (2021) aimed to examine the determinants and outcomes of gender inequality in the country. They utilized data from the Living Standard Measurement Survey Wave 3, focusing on earnings of both men and women. The research employed the ordinary least square (OLS) method to analyze the relationship between mean income and factors such as sector of

employment, marital status, and education level. The study also utilized Theil's entropy index to measure inequality within and between regions and sectors, taking into account the overcrowding theory.

The findings revealed that gender inequality was more pronounced in certain regions, locations, and sectors of employment. Geographical area had a significant impact on earnings disparity, particularly among females. The study also indicated that within-gender inequality was higher in regions, education, location, and marital status. Higher levels of education were associated with higher wages for women, while married women faced greater deprivation.

The researchers recommended policies aimed at reducing gender inequality in earnings, emphasizing the need to encourage women's participation in wage-paying jobs rather than traditional household roles. They also stressed the importance of girls' education in bridging the earnings gap, highlighting the higher returns to education for females. The government was urged to implement affirmative actions, provide facilities, and offer incentives to promote female students' educational advancement.

Hennein, Gorman, Chung, and Lowe (2023) conducted a study on gender discrimination among women healthcare workers (HCWs) during the COVID-19 pandemic. They aimed to understand how experiences of gender discrimination change during times of health system strain. The researchers used a convenience sampling approach and invited department chairs of academic medical centers in the United States to forward their online survey to their staff in January 2021. The survey included questions about the frequency of gender discrimination and asked respondents to provide detailed experiences of discrimination. It also included questions about social and work stressors. The study included 716 women participants, with demographic characteristics including age, race, and occupation. The researchers used statistical models to identify predictors of gender discrimination and analyzed the open-ended responses to identify themes. The study found that younger age, greater support needs, lower team cohesion, racial discrimination, specific healthcare occupations, and childcare support needs were significant predictors of higher gender discrimination. The themes that emerged from the open-ended responses included belittlement by colleagues, gendered workload distributions, unequal opportunities for advancement, expectations for communication, objectification, expectations of motherhood, and mistreatment by patients. The study highlighted the severity of gender discrimination among women HCWs and emphasized the importance of prioritizing gender equity programs to improve workplace climate, both during and outside of times of health system strain.

Singh (2020) examined Occupational Discrimination in corporate prestige in the Insurance Industry of Nepal. The main objective of this study is to find out the gender-related discrimination in corporate prestige prevailing in the Insurance industry of Nepal. The researcher considered the quantitative research design and collected data from the primary source through self-structured questionnaire technique. The data collected in quantitative design can easily be justified through statistical statements thus quantitative method is a perfect match for this research. The research has found that to boost the morale of female employees in the insurance sector insurance must create a favourable working environment and equitable working standards with gender discrimination. The crucial aspect of research is to know the bridge gap prevailing between male and female sub-ordinates working in the insurance sector. The research found that female personnel are interested in working in the insurance sector, but the tenure of female employee are comparatively low as compared to male counterpart working in the same organization.

Karam, Khan, Rahman, Aziz, Karam, Aamir, Arif, and Khan (2022) aimed to determine the prevalence of gender bias and perceptions of gender disparities among surgeons in a tertiary care hospital in Pakistan. They conducted a cross-sectional study using convenience sampling at a single-centered tertiary care hospital from December 2021 to February 2022. The response rate

in their survey was 32%. Their analysis revealed that among respondents in each specialty, 59% agreed to experiencing gender discrimination in General Surgery, 57% in Cardiothoracic Surgery, 54% in Ophthalmology, 30% in Otolaryngology, and 50% in Orthopedic Surgery. A higher percentage of female surgeons reported experiencing gender discrimination compared to male surgeons in their careers (31.25% vs. 27.08%). The study also found that 10.42% of male doctors and 9.38% of female doctors did not experience gender discrimination during their training. The findings shed light on specific areas of discrimination experienced by each gender in the field of surgery and emphasize the need to address gender as a fundamental factor influencing healthcare systems and outcomes. Career advancement, opportunities, leadership roles, mentorship differences, and lack of respect within the team were identified as key challenges resulting from discrimination across different age groups.

Research Methodology
The study employed a survey research design to investigate a large population. The use of questionnaires allowed for data collection from a sizable segment of the population, specifically the workforce (operational staff) including nurses and doctors, as well as patients in various departments and units of public health hospitals in Abia State, Nigeria. The total population consisted of 3,220 individuals, including those from Federal Medical Centre Umuahia (2,100), Amachara General Hospital (670), Aba General Hospital (250), and Umuahia General Hospital Umuchieze (200). Simple random sampling was used to ensure equal opportunity for each hospital to be selected in the survey. The sample size was determined to be 356 using the Taro Yamane formula.

Data for the research were gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data, obtained through questionnaires, provided firsthand information from the respondents. Secondary data were sourced from textbooks, journals, earlier publications, and the internet. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the generated data, and hypotheses were tested using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient with a significance level of 5% in the Statistical Packages for Social Science (Version 23).

Data Presentation and Analyses
This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data collected from the field of study and the test of hypotheses. The aim is to present the data in an interpretable form so that the variables of the study can be well understood. Out of the 356 distributed questionnaires, 294 were filled and retrieved.

Analysis of Data Related to Research Questions
Decision Rule:

The decision in the analysis section is determined by the average of the response of respondents. Strongly Agreed (5 points), Agreed (4 points), Disagreed (3 points), Strongly Disagreed (2 points) and Undecided (1 point). The average of the responses:

$$\frac{(5+4+3+2+1)}{5} = 3.0$$

Therefore, mean score below 3.0 would be considered as rejected and mean score of 3.0 and above will be considered as accepted.

Table 1: Research Question 1: What is the nature of relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige of public hospitals in Abia State?

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Remark
	Occupational Segregation			
1	Employees from different backgrounds are treated equally and have equal opportunities for growth within our hospital	294	3.86	Accepted
		294	4.38	Accepted
2	Our organization has a fair and inclusive hiring process that promotes diversity.			
3	Promotions and advancement opportunities in our organization are based solely on merit	294	2.32	Rejected
4	I can boldly recommend the hospital as an employer to others in the healthcare field	294	3.79	Accepted
	Corporate Prestige			
5	I have noticed high improvements in the hospital's prestige over the past few years	294	4.71	Accepted
6	The hospital's reputation in the medical community is good	294	4.15	Accepted
7	Our hospital's reputation aligns with its actual performance and values	294	4.55	Accepted
8	Our hospital's prestige affects its ability to attract top talent	294	1.78	Rejected

Source: Field Survey 2023

In table 1, all the items were addressing the first research question which is "What is the nature of relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige of public hospitals in Abia State?" From the data analysis, items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 obtained a mean rating above the criterion mean of 3.0 and items 3, and 8 obtained a mean rating below the criterion mean of 3.0. The result of the analysis indicated that majority of the respondents supported that occupational segregation relates with corporate prestige of public hospitals in Abia State.

Table 2: Research Question 2: What is the nature of the relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State?

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Remark
	Income Disparity			
9	Income disparity affects employee morale and performance in our organization	294	3.67	Accepted
10	There are significant differences in pay between different groups of workers in our hospital	294	3.05	Accepted
11	The hospital implemented measures to reduce income differences	294	4.80	Accepted
12	Income differences negatively affect the efficiency of the hospital.	294	2.01	Rejected
13	Income disparity affects the hospital's ability to deliver quality healthcare services in a timely and cost-effective manner	294	4.66	Accepted
14	HND holders have the same pay with B.Sc. holders in this hospital	294	3.09	Accepted
15	I feel demotivated due to perceived unfairness in pay distribution in this hospital	294	2.44	Rejected
16	I think there should be transparent criteria for determining pay scales within the hospital	294	3.59	Accepted

Source: Field Survey 2023

From table 2, all the items were addressing the second research question which is "What is the nature of the relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State?" From the data analysis, items 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, and 16 obtained a mean rating above the criterion mean of 3.0 and items 12 and 15 obtained a mean rating below the criterion mean of 3.0. The result of the analysis revealed that majority of the respondents supported that income disparity relates with operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State.

Test of Hypotheses
Decision Rule: Reject the null and accept the alternate if P-value < 0.5; if otherwise accept the null Hypothesis.

Hypothesis One

Table 3: Ho: There is no significant relationship between Occupational Segregation and Corporate Prestige of public hospitals in Abia State.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between Occupational Segregation and Corporate Prestige of public hospitals in Abia State.

Correlation between Occupational Segregation and Corporate Prestige of public hospitals in Abia State

Correlations

		Occupational segregation	Corporate Prestige
Occupational Segregation	Pearson correlation	1	876**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.041
	N	294	294
Corporate Prestige	Pearson correlation	.876**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.041	
	N	294	294

Source: SPSS version 27 Outputs

Result Summary

Table 3 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige of public hospitals in Abia State with $r = 0.876$, $n = 294$ and p value of 0.041 ($p<0.05$). Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis and concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige of public hospital of Abia State.

Hypothesis Two

Table4: Ho: There is no significant relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State.

Ha: There is a significant relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State.

Correlations

		Income Disparity	Operational Efficiency
Income Disparity	Pearson correlation	1	.647**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.015
	N	294	294
Operational Efficiency	Pearson correlation	.647**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	
	N	294	294

Source: SPSS version 27 Outputs.

Result Summary

Table 4 shows that there is a positive significant relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia Statewith $r = 0.647$, $n = 294$ and p value of 0.015 ($p<0.05$). Therefore, we accept the alternate hypothesis and concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State.

Discussion of Findings

1. Hypothesis one revealed that occupational segregation has a significant positive relationship with corporate prestige of public hospitals in Abia State, Nigeria with r = 0.876, n = 294 and p value of 0.041 (p<0.05). Therefore, we accepted the alternate hypothesis and concluded that occupational segregation had a significant positive relationship with corporate prestige of public hospital of Abia State, Nigeria. This finding agrees with Singh (2020) finding that occupational segregation significantly affects organizational identity in insurance industry of Nepal. The result of Hypothesis One, indicating a significant positive relationship between occupational segregation and corporate prestige in public hospitals in Abia State, carries important implications. The finding suggests that the level of occupational segregation within these hospitals influences their corporate prestige. Higher levels of occupational segregation may lead to a lower corporate prestige, affecting the hospitals' reputation and standing within the community. Recognizing and addressing occupational segregation becomes crucial for promoting gender equality, fostering an inclusive work environment, and enhancing organizational performance. By promoting diversity and equal opportunities, public hospitals in Abia State can improve their corporate prestige, attract a diverse pool of talent, and ultimately provide better healthcare services to the community.

2. Hypothesis two indicated that income disparity has a positive significant relationship with operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State with r = 0.647, n = 294 and p value of 0.015 (p<0.05). Therefore, we accepted the alternate hypothesis and concluded that income disparity has a positive significant relationship with operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State. This finding is in congruent with the result of Adeosun, and Owolabi (2021) that income disparity has a positive significant relationship with employee efficiency, in their study on Gender inequality: determinants and outcomes in Nigeria. The result of Hypothesis Two, which suggests a positive significant relationship between income disparity and operational efficiency in public hospitals in Abia State, carries important implications. The finding implies that when there is a greater income disparity among employees within these hospitals, it is associated with higher levels of operational efficiency. This suggests that a diverse range of income levels within the workforce may contribute to improved operational performance. However, it is important to note that addressing income disparity should not be disregarded, as it can have wider implications for equity and fairness in the workplace. Balancing the need for operational efficiency with efforts to reduce income disparity is critical in ensuring a harmonious and effective work environment.

Conclusion

Gender discrimination poses a significant challenge to organizational performance in public hospitals in Abia State. The negative impacts on operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and corporate prestige necessitate immediate action. By promoting gender equality and creating inclusive work environments, public hospitals can unlock the full potential of their workforce and ultimately enhance their overall performance. Addressing gender discrimination not only aligns with global commitments but also contributes to a more equitable and just society. It is imperative that stakeholders, including government authorities, healthcare management, and society as a whole, collaborate to eradicate gender discrimination and foster a workplace that empowers all employees, regardless of their gender. Only through collective efforts can we pave the way for sustainable development and organizational excellence in public hospitals in Abia State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings this study makes the following recommendations:

1. Public hospitals in Abia State and beyond should deliberately protect their organizational image by avoiding the habit of work discrimination amongst them. This will help to

enhance productivity and harmonious relationship in the organization. This can be achieved through implementing fair and transparent recruitment processes, promoting diversity and inclusion, providing equal opportunities for career advancement, fostering a culture of respect and tolerance, and addressing any instances of discrimination promptly and effectively. By prioritizing these principles, hospitals can create an inclusive and productive environment that upholds their reputation and benefits both staff and patients.

2. Public hospitals in Abia State should strive to establish fair compensation practices that minimize income disparity among employees. This can be achieved by conducting regular salary reviews, ensuring transparent and equitable pay structures, and providing opportunities for career advancement and professional development. By addressing income disparity, hospitals can improve employee morale, motivation, and job satisfaction, leading to enhanced operational efficiency.

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