

GENDER DIVERSITY AND MAJOR ISSUES FACED BY WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE: A CASE OF CAMEROON

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Abstract- This paper identifies the most significant issues faced by women in the workplace in Cameroon and the effects of those issues on female employees' performance. In an attempt to eliminate these issues in the workplace and to create a workplace where fairness and equality are reality, this journal suggests how HR professionals can effectively handle issues faced by women in the workplace, as well as some effective guidelines companies could follow in order to reduce/eliminate these issues. By addressing these issues, it will increase women participation and productivity in the workplace with an impact on the country overall economy.

Keywords: Gender diversity, workplace, women, unfair treatments, glass ceiling, harassment, job performance, job satisfaction, Human Resources, Cameroonian culture.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, women were not allowed to go to school; instead, they were prepared to be house's wives at an early teenage age. Once married, women were the one to take care of the family's hygiene, nutrition and wellbeing (Levesque, 1992). Over the time, things had changed and women nowadays go to school, they are graduated and they can even have a job.

However, things are not that simple as they seems, in the workplace, women face barriers because of their gender, they are put at disadvantage compare to men and many bias are still surrounding women employability in Cameroon (CIDA-INC, 2002).

With an increase diversity in the workplace as more women join the workforce, these women encounter major issues as glass ceiling phenomenon, gender inequality where they are overshadowed by men, sexual harassment, advancement impairment between men and women and family work life balance; as well as insufficient law to protect them, just to name few.

2- Literature review

2.1- Gender diversity increased in the Cameroonian workforce

The total female labour participation rate (including formal and informal sector) was at 67% in 2009 compare to 65.9% in 1980 (World Bank, 2011) with a population of 19,522,000 in 2009 compare to 8653million in 1980. Nowadays, employment rate for women aged 16 to 64 is 65.6% from April to June 2011 compare to men at 75.8% (World Bank, 2011). These statistics clearly show that there are an increase number of women in the Cameroonian workforce and that's where the problem originates. These women enter a world dominated by men for centuries and are therefore put at disadvantage.

2.2- Issues arising from the increasing diversity in the workplace in Cameroon

2.2.1-Lack of adequate laws to protects working women

Cameroon's Constitution upholds the principle of gender equality. However, the country has a complex legal system made of a mix of Napoleonic Code and common law, as well as customary and written law. This structure is often an obstacle to gender equality. Actually, the country has no legal definition of discrimination and some points of the civil law remain prejudicial against women (Arrey, 2009).

As for example, the 1981 civil code allows a husband to oppose his wife's right to work (Regulation 81-02). While the law gives a woman the freedom to organize her own business, the commercial code allows a husband to end his wife's commercial activity by notifying the clerk of the commerce tribunal of his opposition based upon the family's interest.

Moreover, Local traditions remain very strong and have negative effects on the condition of Cameroonian women.

In the local traditions in Cameroon, it is generally believed that men are superior to women. So, from the childhood, house tasks are specifically reserved to girls while boys can relax, play and particularly focus on their studies; few families only are able to overlook this principle.

In addition, each head of family choose his successor between his male children. Women traditionally are not allowed to speak when men are sited all together except for third age women, out of respect (Linda, 2009). The traditional say is “someone who sits before passing urine should not open her mouth in front of those who stand when doing the same”.

2.2.2-Glass ceiling phenomenon

Glass ceiling phenomenon can be defined as an upper limit to professional advancement, especially as imposed upon women and minorities that is not readily perceived or openly acknowledged. In other word it is a discriminatory barrier to the advancement of women and minorities into the upper echelons of business, the professions, and government (U.S. Department of Labour, 1991).

Most women aspiring to senior management positions believe the glass ceiling to career progression still exists, according to a report by a leading UK management organization.

The word glass ceiling is not yet widely spray and used in Cameroon, principally due to the lack of awareness. However, figures clearly show that women face many barriers that impede them to rise hierarchically and they are therefore under-represented at top level management.

Women in Cameroon are mainly concentrated in the “feminized” professions such as nursing and teaching, this constitute an horizontal occupational segregation¹, where at the same time they remain in lower job categories than men (vertical occupational segregation²).

However, women who choose non-traditional jobs also face barriers like isolation, limited access to mentoring and female role models, lack of acceptance by male supervisors or/and colleagues, lack of proper training, and sexual harassment (CIDA-INC, 2002). Even in jobs dominated by women, there is also a “vertical occupational segregation” where men are more likely to hold the better-remunerated and the more senior positions.

For example, in the health sector men predominate as doctors and administrators while women are mostly nurses. On recruitment, qualified women tend to be placed in jobs that have a lower value in terms of skill requirements and remuneration. They find themselves in what are considered “non-strategic” jobs, rather than in line and management jobs leading to higher positions (CEDAW, 2010). Men are mainly among managers, top executives, and higher levels of professional workers.

Both visible and invisible rules have been constructed around the “male” norm, which women sometimes find difficult to accommodate: the Cameroonian society does not see women as equal to men, women tend to have to work much harder than men to prove themselves, and sometimes they have to adapt to “male” working styles and attitudes more than necessary. Furthermore, women tend to be excluded from the informal networks dominated by men at the workplace, which are vital for career development (ILO, 2004).

Moreover, employers assume that women, unlike men, are not able to devote their full time and energy to paid work because of their family responsibilities (Baber, 1990).

Consequently, women are not given as many opportunities as men to do the more demanding responsible jobs, which would advance their careers.

Additionally, there are still significant earnings gaps between women and men, which plague not only managers and workers with the same qualifications but also the labour market in general. Women earn on average only two thirds of men’s pay. Differences in fringe benefits and bonuses offered to men and women managers are among the factors contributing to earnings gaps (ILO, 2004).

2.2.3-Men dominance

Conflicting legal systems largely affect women’s ability to participate in the workforce.

In Cameroon, men do not tolerate a woman to be ahead of them or to be their superior. Husbands do not admit the fact that their wives might earn more than what they do, as they don’t want to feel inferior to their wives.

¹ Horizontal occupational segregation occurs when at least 80% of one gender is represented in similar position.

² Vertical occupational segregation occurs when at least 80% of a gender is represented hierarchically.

This is related to the bias surrounding the Cameroonian's society as it is widely spread and admitted that men are superior to women (IWRAP, 2009).

Women constitute 50.2% of the Cameroonian population (according to the last population registration in 2010) and they account for only 13.5% of the structured sector workforce in Cameroon. In the informal sector, 18% of enterprises are run by women; concentrated in food trade where they account for 81% of food sellers, and 9% of wholesalers (NIS, 2011).

If we take for example the case of Cameroonian's politicians, there are only 25 women members of parliament (MPs) out of a total of 180, and 37 women mayors out of a nationwide total of 360. There are only 4 women ministers in the 50-member Cabinet (FM, 2011). All are in departments that traditionally have been deemed appropriate for women, such as the women's and social affairs ministries. It clearly shows that women are underrepresented at high level of the society.

2.2.4- Sexual harassment

Sex discrimination can be defined as the act of treating less favourably a person because of his/her sex (Tyson & York, 1996). While sexual harassment represents any form of unwelcome sexual behaviour that makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or/and embarrassed.

In Cameroon there is no specific law against sexual harassment and victims are most of the time blame to have caused the harassment through their way of dressing for example; as the law does not restrict women's freedom when come to dressing. Victims are put at disadvantage and threatened to be fired if they reveal the truth. Under such conditions victims most of the times decide to remain silent (CEDAW, 2010).

Sexual harassment is about male dominance over women and is used to remind women that they are weaker than man (Anshularbaz, 2011). It is a serious infringement on the rights of employees within an organization and victims are forced to deal with humiliating and unpleasant experiences, which often result in emotional and psychological trauma.

Furthermore, sexual harassment creates an offensive, intimidating and hostile working environment for the victim, which ultimately impedes productivity and social interactions within the organization (Ramsaroop and Parumasur, 2007).

Accurately estimating the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence in the developing world (including Cameroon) is difficult due to the limited amount of research done on the subject. Cultural mores against reporting abuse make it difficult to assess accurately the victims (Delano, 1998).

However, findings from a case study in South Africa conducted by the Sexual Harassment Education Project (SHEP) in 2003 revealed that 77% of the women and 20 % of the men in the country had experienced sexual harassment at some point during their working lives. According to the report 67% of all sexual harassment was committed by men against women (United Nations and ILO in South Africa, 2011).

According to UN Women, 125 countries have specific laws that penalize domestic violence, and equality between women and men is guaranteed in 139 countries and territories. But women continue to be subjected to violence, with estimates indicating that up to six in 10 women have suffered physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, a majority from their husbands or partners (Bachelet, 2011).

The following show the extent of violence against women in sub-Saharan Africa:

- ✓ In **Zambia**, DHS data indicate that 27% of ever-married women reported being beaten by their spouse/partner in the past years; this rate reaches 33% of 15-19 year-olds and 35% of 20-24 year-olds. 59% of Zambian women claimed to have ever experienced any violence by anyone since the age of 15 years (Kishor & Johnson, 2004).
- ✓ In **South Africa**, 7% of 15-19 year-old had been assaulted in the past 12 months by a current or ex-partner; and 10% of 15-19 year-olds were forced or persuaded to have sex against their will (South Africa DHS, 1998).
- ✓ In **Kenya**, 43% of 15-49 year old women reported having experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, with 29% reporting an experience in the previous year; 16% of women reported having ever been sexually abused and for 13%, this had happened in the past year (Kenya DHS, 2003).
- ✓ In rural **Ethiopia**, 49% of ever-partnered women have ever experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, rising to 59% ever experiencing sexual violence (WHO, 2005).
- ✓ In rural **Tanzania**, 47% of ever-partnered women have ever experienced physical violence by an intimate partner, while 31% have ever experienced sexual violence (WHO, 2005).
- ✓ In a **Nigerian** survey, 81% of married women report being verbally or physically abused by their husbands and 46% report being abused in the presence of their children.

Men being the main perpetrators of such violence at home continue with the same behaviour in the workplace whereby they sexually harass their female colleagues. Violence or/and the fear of violence, and sexual harassment therefore severely limits women's contribution to social and economic development and performance, thereby hindering achievement of the **Millennium Development Goals** and other national and international development goals that have been set in order to empower women in the society (Population Council, 2008; Delano, 1998).

The **Millennium Development Goals** was initiated in 2005 and represent eight international development goals that all 193 United Nations member states (including Cameroon) and at least 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. It includes the eradication of extreme poverty, reduction of child mortality rate, fight against epidemic diseases such as AIDS, and developing a global partnership for development (UN, 2011).

Cameroon had ratified almost all international conventions for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. The challenge now for Cameroon government is to ensure the full implementation and the enforcement of those legal instruments. Budgeting gender while lifting the constraints mentioned above, would enable Cameroon to achieve sustainable effective and equitable development (Ondoa, 2011).

2.2.5- Family work life balance

With many controversial laws regarding women rights and access to work, women often face difficulties dealing with family and working life altogether. In Cameroon, most men generally do not contribute or help their wife (ves) in domestic's tasks' because of their 'believed' social superiority position compare to women.

With a GDP of US\$ 1,196.22 per capital (IMF, 2011) which is relatively low and a poverty rate of 39.90% in 2005, not all families are able to hire a maid who can assist in the house's task (Cf appendix 1), thus married women are the one to take care of the hygiene of the family and if they are working, they still have to go to work after the completion of the entire house's task.

Moreover, they have to deal sometime with the involuntary will of the family in law and/or husband, as well as with the intimidation of their male colleagues. Such conditions push many Cameroonian women to abandon the workplace and just stay at home as house wives (Mebengo, 2008).

Based on all these considerations; women's condition in Cameroon need to be addressed. Propositions in order to deal with the issues they faced in the workplace as well as in the society need to be stated out.

This will have a triple implication:

1. It will help women gaining more self-confidence and be empowered more than before.
2. Moreover, it will help companies enhancing their female workforce with a positive impact on the company overall productivity.
3. With an increase of women empowerment, self-esteem and production, the country itself will benefit from it through an increase of different companies productivity with an impact in the country overall productivity and economic situation.

2.3- Reasons why women are still stereotyped in the Cameroonian society

Many factors still encourage women stigmatisation in the Cameroonian society. Amongst those factors, we have:

- ✓ The persistence of customs and cultural constraints contributing to girls dropping out of schools; the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary education in 2009 was 85.60% and 78.90% at the tertiary level (World Bank, 2011); thus making a society whereby women are less educated than men.
- ✓ The lack of control of women's sexual life and body by themselves give way to sexual abuses
- ✓ The lack of interest in science subjects by families, communities and girls themselves give no choice to men/boys to occupy all the employment-related opportunities in the future as they are the only one actually capable of
- ✓ The inadequate supply of reproductive health services, early motherhood, unplanned and unwanted pregnancies lead young girls out of school and expose them to low level job. This put also pressure on women in the job search and they end up negotiating employment contract that expose them to different forms of abuses, thereby increasing their vulnerability to gender based violence
- ✓ Lastly but not least, poor social security system (Ondoa, 2011).

Research has shown that established social/cultural attitudes and gender inequality in education, training and recruitment cause vertical and horizontal occupational sex segregation, and that this is the principal reason for the persistent gaps between men and women's earnings (ILO, 2004).

3- RESEARCH METHOD

A questionnaire was distributed to Cameroonian working women, associated to face to face and telephone interviews with HR professionals in Cameroon.

The data obtained was computed using SPSS software.

4- KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1- Victims of unfair treatment

Finding 1: Victims of unfair treatment at the workplace have on average, a length of work experience

greater than those who have not been victims

Amongst our respondents, 83.95% claim to have been victims of unfair treatments in their workplace and 16.05% have not yet faced any form of unfair treatment at work.

• Time factor

If we take into consideration time as a factor, we can discover that the average working experience of women who have not yet faced any unfair treatment is 2.06 years while the average of those who have face unfair treatment is 10.1647 (Table 1).

Table 1- Group Statistics: working experience means of victims and non-victims

	Victim of unfair treatment in the workplace	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Work Experience (Years)	Yes	68	10.1647	6.24774	.75765
	No	13	2.0615	1.37510	.38138

This implicates that the more a women stay in the workplace, greater will be her chance to face unfair treatment.

4.2- Most significant issues faced by women in the workplace

Finding 2: Non-sexual harassment is the major issue faced by working women in Cameroon

Non sexual harassment accounts for 29.58% of all other type of issues and includes rudeness, discourteous verbal and non-verbal behaviours, persistent criticizing of employees' work, yelling, repeatedly reminding employees' mistakes; spreading gossip or lies; ignoring or excluding workers; insulting employees' habits, attitudes, religious believes or private life and angry exchanges.

Other issues like sexual harassment account for 26.76%, promotion discrimination 14.08%, salary discrepancy 12.60%, pregnancy 8.45% and the rest of others unfair treatments faced by women which according to our respondent include unfair bonuses distribution and inconsistency in labour law account for 8.45%.

However, HR managers who were interviewed believed that their workers are treated fairly and they don't complaint about any issues; we can understand that they are trying to save their corporate image but the data actually speak by themselves.

4.3- Issue of glass ceiling

Finding 3: Glass ceiling heavily exists in the Cameroonian workplace

55.6% of our respondents are at the clerical level, only 3.7% are in middle management and 4.9% in top management. This clearly illustrates the phenomenon of glass ceiling whereas few women only reach the top management.

4.4- Unfair treatment impact on wellbeing and satisfaction of victims

Finding 4: Unfair treatments extremely affect negatively its victims

We are all human. Whenever we face an unfair treatment, it affects us negatively most of the time as Herzberg had developed in its motivator and hygiene theory. It is exactly the case of Cameroonian working women whereas, out the 83.95% of women claiming to have been unfairly treated, 71.83% of them declared that their wellbeing and satisfaction at work had been affected negatively. This is most probable as unfair treatments lead to frustration, discomfort, intimidation, humiliation and stress; thus affecting victim's wellbeing and satisfaction. 23.94% of victims declared that the unfair treatment had had no impact on their satisfaction and wellbeing. The reasons they give is that they have been used to those treatment until it became a routine. Moreover, they say that they have an internal motivation from work as they feel privileged to have a job. Therefore, they are willing to face any thing as long as they keep their job.

The rest of 4.23% believe that their satisfaction and wellbeing had been impacted positively after the unfair treatment. As argument, they say that the more they are treated unfairly, the more they feel motivated to prove themselves. Moreover, they say that they don't want to be part of other women who complaint at any step. They want to remain strong and face the reality.

4.5- Equal treatment and performance improvement

Finding 5: Women will be better performers if they are treated equally with/by men in the workplace

67.61% of victims believed that if they are treated equally by men, their performance will improve because the workplace will be free of frustration, discrimination and relationship will be based on mutual respect; thus they will be more focus on their work and perform better.

21.13% said that their performance will somehow improve. According to them, they are unable to determine if there is a relationship between their performance and unfairness. This is probably because they haven't faced an unfair treatment that really interferes with their performance and some of them are not fully aware of their right.

The rest, 11.27% believed that their performance will not improved even if they are treated equally by men as they claimed to perform already at their best and they always try to give their best no matter the situation and an improved treatment will not have an impact on their performance.

4.6- Cameroonian culture and unfair treatment

Findings 6: The corporate culture in Cameroon is still strongly dependent on the tradition which gives more value to men and stimulates them to see women as inferior.

78.6% of our victims believed that Cameroonian culture encourages men to behave in underestimate women and 15.7% say that the culture somehow influence men behaviour. This is due to the fact that tradition and norms still have a heavy impact on Cameroonian citizen's behaviour.

However, 5.7% believed that blame shouldn't be put on culture but on men themselves. As men have too much of ego and self-esteem, thus like feeling superior as opposed to women.

4.7- Reporting cases

Finding 7: Women do not report when treated unfairly because they believe that reporting is useless

81.4% of the victims did not report to the management being unfairly treated. As reason they give, reporting will not change anything to the actual situation as no actions followed previously reported cases. Another group of respondents said that the person to whom they are supposed to report if treated unfairly is the same person treating them unfairly. This helps understanding why few cases only are actually reported and why there are lacking statistics on the subject matter.

5- RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to make this research useful, guidelines on how to deal with the issues mentioned in this paper have to be made. This has for purpose to make a contribution into the body of knowledge and to emphasize on the role of HR professionals in handling these issues as well as to propose some guidelines that companies could follow in order to reduce/eliminate these issues in the workplace.

5.1- The role of HR professional in handling issues of unfair treatment in the workplace

Human resource professionals have a crucial role in the workplace as they are in charge of everything concerning employees. Having in mind that workers' performance is impacted by their working environment, HR professionals have for role to ensure that workers are satisfied and well treated in the workplace. So, in term of unfair treatments inflicted to others, the HR should:

- ✓ Come out with rules and regulations in the workplace. Those rules should highlight the behaviour that all workers should share and respect in the workplace (further details are given in the recommendations section).
- ✓ Publish and inform workers about the steps to follow in order to denounce an unfair treatment and the sanction that the perpetrator can endure according to the degree of his/her action.
- ✓ Provide assistance to victims of unfair treatments at work; assistance in term of law enforcement, counselling and advices to workers when they believed to be unfairly treated.
- ✓ Ensure that the workplace is free of discrimination and the following recommendations can of great use for them.

5.2- Possible practical actions to be taken

5.2.1- How to deal with diversity in the workplace

Managing and valuing diversity is a key component to effective people management, which can improve workplace productivity (Black Enterprise, 2001).

In other to effectively manage gender diversity as well as general diversity; an employer should provide special training on diversity management to any of its employees just after they are hired, during the inducing process.

The training should be based on:

- ✓ The explanation of diversity. Diversity as a concept refers to human qualities that are different from our own and those of groups to which we belong. Dimensions of diversity include but are not limited to: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities / qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification.
- ✓ Why it is needed in a working environment. A diverse workplace embraced multiples person with different background, different way of doing things and different and unique character. So, by having a diverse workplace, workers can individually benefit from each other by combining their differences and coming out with unique way of doing things at the greater advantage of the company as well as employees' self development. So, in the Cameroonian context, men and women can collaborate, learn from each other and therefore become better performers.
- ✓ Employees should be taught tolerance and respect of others, as well as openness towards others. The company should include a range of family-friendly plans to enable both male and female employees to achieve a better equilibrium between their work and personal lives.
- ✓ Nevertheless, as culture still plays a big role in the Cameroonian society, it shouldn't be ignored into the diversity training program. Workers should be taught that all the characteristics which are attributed to women: softness, passiveness, emotional, reserve... are not unique to women as there are also men with these characteristics. However, even if it is true, they should try to perceive it in a positive way. Women

softness in a group can help solve tensions and issues easily. Their passiveness can help taking better decisions. Their emotional side can help build a work environment based on mutual respect, love and tenderness among all employees.

5.2.2- How to ensure that employment law is enforced in the workplace

5.2.2a- On the company's side

The company should know and review the law in order to be updated about any amendments in the labour law. It should compare what is being done in the company with what should be done according to the law and if things are not done in accordance to law, they should be adjusted in order to comply with the law and ensure fairness in the workplace and better working environment.

5.2.2b- On the workers' side

Workers should make sure that they know the law as well, at least their basic rights as worker. This includes also knowing and applying the company's policy and knowing the steps to follow if unfairly treated. As reporting an unfair treatment is the first step and the most crucial one in dealing with unfairness in the workplace.

5.2.3- How to deal with glass ceiling in the workplace

Glass ceiling in Cameroon is visible through the insignificant number of women at the managerial level, the prevalence of promotional discrimination and Variety of roadblocks they face in their career. In order to break this in the workplace,

- ✓ Employers should offer equal opportunity to men and women and put gender stereotyping aside. By offering equal opportunity to all employees, the competition will be fair and workers will be promoted based only on their performance, qualification, achievement and capability.

Therefore, if it happens that a woman best matches a promotion than a man, she should be given that opportunity regardless of her gender.

- ✓ Women should be encouraged to take the front sit. Women empowerment is an effective way to allow women to show what they are capable of and therefore help them in being more self-confident and better performer.
- ✓ Women should promote themselves in the workplace by initiating projects. For example, writing publications, completing their task on time, meticulously and well; and trying to serve as role models for other women.
- ✓ The employers should promote healthy "models of masculinity," in particular encourage men to become advocates for change.

5.2.4- How to ensure fairness in the workplace

For employers to be fair in the workplace, they should ensure that same treatment apply to everyone and all employees have equal opportunities regardless of their gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status and etc.

5.2.5- How to deal with sexual harassment in the workplace

Sexual harassment still has a big prevalence in the Cameroonian workplace. In order to deal effectively with it and eliminate or at least reduce it in the workplace, managers should establish Company's Policies on Sexual Harassment and Workplace Bullying. The policies should have strong opening statements regarding the company's attitude towards harassment. Awareness should be developed among staff as a key strategy in addressing harassment. A zero tolerance approach should be taken.

A maintenance of an on-going identification and review of the workplace environments where staff may be at risk should be carry on regularly and training should be provide to employees. This shouldn't be a one-time training but it should be reinforced at least twice a year to remind employees the good attitude which is beneficial for everyone in the workplace.

The training should be focus on:

- ✓ What is considered harassment: any form of unwelcome sexual behaviour that makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or/and embarrassed. Different type of harassment include uninvited touching, sexual or suggestive comments, jokes or innuendo, unwelcome requests for sex, asking about a person's private life, display of sexually explicit material, repeated invitations to go out, staring, leering or stalking, sex based insults, taunts, teasing or name-calling, offensive communications and rape.
- ✓ What is not considered as sexual harassment: any interaction which is consensual, welcomed, reciprocated and the behaviour is based on mutual attraction, friendship and respect.
- ✓ The effect of sexual harassment on harasses' life should be a central point of the training as the harassed person usually suffer from loss of sleep, loss of appetite, low morale, feelings of anger, humiliation, frustration, depression, stress and powerlessness. Therefore, it reduces the person efficiency,

productivity and profitability for the company and increases absenteeism and staff turnover which bad for the company as well.

Moreover, harassment plays an adverse publicity on the company and erodes its image and reputation as workers who face it will be complaining about what they are experiencing in the company to their relatives and friends.

- ✓ The training should include the steps to follow by employees who feel being harassed.
 1. Tell the person to stop. If the person continues,
 2. Keep a record of the harassment: When, Where, Who Saw It. Then,
 3. Report it to your Supervisor/Manager, HR Manager or Field Officer/Trainer.
- ✓ The sanctions that the harasser can endure: from suspension to loss of job.
- ✓ The advantages of a work place free of harassment. Which include better performance, open minds, respect amongst workers, fearlessness and better working environment for everyone in the company.

5.2.6- How to ensure that employees have a work-life balance

In order to ensure that workers have a balance life, the company can take several steps, including:

- ✓ Opening a child care facility in the workplace whereby workers, especially mums would not worry about the wellbeing of their children during office hours. However, if the company is not able to afford such a service, it should encourage workers to send their kids in child care centre during office hours and motivate them to come to work by offering them attractive packages with family' benefits included, as well as informing them they are valuable for the company and the company need them. For example, the company can decide to offer child care allowance to parents who agree to take their kids to child care centres.
- ✓ Offering flexible working schedule for employees, especially parents. Parents will be more productive at work if their kids are in security, thus allowing parents (or some others employees who may have personal issues to solve) in case it is needed to come work at their desire time as long as they complete the require 8 (eight) working hours in the service will be beneficial for both employer and employee.
However, this technique will be difficult to implement in the public service sector as the working hour is fixed from 9am to 5pm.
- ✓ Offering employees counselling services for those who may have issues in their personal life and they help to solve it.

5.2.7- Possible government actions for a fairer workplace

Establishing a workplace free of unfairness should not only remain the responsibility of employers and employees. Government, being the connector of all the actors in the society should also take action in order to eliminate/reduce gender stereotyping in the workplace in particular in Cameroon and similar countries facing these issues.

Therefore, the government should:

- ✓ Undertake actions integrating the gender approach. Such actions include: educating parents, families and communities on the gender approach and help them in changing their mentality so as to ensure an environment that would be conducive to the development of women and girls.
- ✓ Gender training programs for policies makers, administrative, political, traditional, religious authorities and grassroots actors should also be undertaken
- ✓ Partnership with the donor's community for greater collaboration and increased support in gender promotion should be established
- ✓ Advocacy among leaders of political parties for the respect of quotas and a good representation of women in the governing bodies of their various parties
- ✓ The promotion of "healthy models of masculinity," and in particular encourage young men and boys to become advocates for change.
- ✓ Advocacy among parliamentarians for a greater consideration of the gender approach in voting the state budget.

6- CONCLUSION

Gender stereotyping is still heavily practice in the Cameroonian society. This is due to the fact that the country relies heavily on customs and traditions which promote males' superiority. A workplace free of any unfair treatments promotes a less frustrated and happier working environment; thus workers (especially women in this case) will perform better with an overall positive impact on the company's productivity which in turn will positively impact the country overall economic situation.

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