Organizational Culture and Women Leadership Advancement: Empirical Evidence from South-East Nigeria

Amah, Cletus Okey[1], Kalu, Nkemjika Uduma[2]
[1]*PhD, FNIM, FCPA, FCNA, FCFIA, FMSSRN University of Port Harcourt Business School, Nigeria*
[2]*BSc, MSc, University of Port Harcourt Business School, Nigeria*

Abstract*—The female population plays a vital role in the human resources necessary for good organizational leadership and development. Although women in Nigeria have the necessary qualifications and experience and have become more involved in the economy, they still face challenges in leadership positions. The findings of recent studies in Nigeria suggest that there are cultural expectations and gender stereotypes, male dominance, lack of access to influential networks, family responsibilities, and discriminatory practices within organizations that hold women back from advancing to leadership positions. Hence, this study investigates the influence of organizational culture on women's leadership advancement in Abia State, South-East Nigeria. The study used a descriptive survey design. The population of the respondents is 120 selected female staff of the Abia State Civil Service and Bank of Industry, Abia Operations. Total Enumeration of the population was considered as the sample size. Data obtained were analyzed both descriptively and inferentially to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses. The study observed that organizational culture had a positive influence on women's leadership advancement in Abia, Nigeria (Adj. R^2 = 0.410). The paper concludes that a positive and participatory organizational culture creates a favorable environment for women to build their leadership potential, be included in decision-making, have more responsibilities to achieve and reach higher leadership positions. The study also recommended that Organizations should proactively and purposefully support women's leadership development by embedding gender inclusive practice in recruitment, promotion, succession planning and leadership development. Organizational culture should be regularly evaluated to determine practices that impede the progress of women and implement interventions that address this, including gender main-streaming, gender-sensitivity training, mentorship programs and clear promotion processes.

***Index Terms*—Organizational Culture, Organizational Leadership, Women Advancement, Gender-mainstreaming, Abia State**

I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is the collection of values, beliefs, norms, assumptions, and practices that influences the way that people see their role and behave with each other in an organization. It has an impact on organizational behavior, decision-making, communication, recruitment and promotion, recognition, and leadership opportunities (Philips, 2023). Organizational culture plays a significant role in the gender leadership context, as the norms embedded in the workplace can either help to foster an inclusive culture that promotes women's successful progress, or produce a culture that is more male than female. Many recent studies have shown that organizational culture can impact the experience and progress of women seeking leadership roles (Shia, 2026). Women's empowerment to lead has been a significant issue in the world, as women are still under-represented in senior management and decision-making positions. While the educational attainment, participation, and leadership capacity of women have significantly grown, their movement into influential leadership roles has not always been equal to that of their male counterparts. Evidence indicates that challenges to women's progress are not just based on their own skills or abilities but also in the systems, cultures and practices within organizations. Women's movement to senior leadership may be constrained by unequal access to development opportunities and male-dominated organizational structures, gendered

expectations and biased perceptions of leadership and limited networking opportunities.

While Nigerian women have been steadily involved in education, employment, entrepreneurship, public administration, and professional activities, their underrepresentation in key leadership positions is a cause for concern. Research on women in Nigeria has shown that women are often constrained by organizational discrimination, cultural attitudes towards women, social dominance, family responsibilities, and other structural issues in their efforts to take a step forward in their careers (Adeoti, 2024). Recent findings from public institutions in Nigeria also suggest that organizational and cultural factors can adversely affect women's leadership development, while mentorship, policies, and experience can have positive impacts (O'Brien, 2023). The situation is especially pertinent in Abia State, where women play an important role in the workforce as well as in public administration, education, business, politics, and other sectors. A study that focused on the study of women participation in key leadership positions in Abia State, however, uncovered the following factors that militate against women's effective participation in key leadership positions (Philips, 2023). It indicates that women's individual qualifications and aspirations should be analyzed, but also the organizational settings in which opportunities for women's leadership are developed, assigned, and maintained. Organizations in Abia State can have an organizational culture, which can be experienced as values of leadership, unofficial relationships at the workplace, attitudes towards women managers, mentoring, promotion structure, participation in decision-making, and perceptions of women's leadership. In situations where organization values and practices reflect and promote gender equality, women might also have more chances to gain leadership experience, expand professional networks and move to higher ranks. On the other hand, however, when informal practices are correlated with leadership, and when this leadership is seen as predominantly masculine, then women who are competent and experienced might find that they are disadvantaged in achieving promotion.

This, therefore, places this study in a context that seeks to examine the influence of organizational culture on the promotion of women leaders in Abia State, Nigeria. The study is anticipated to yield valuable information for organizational managers, practitioners in the area of Human Resources, as well as for policy makers and women's development activists that will assist in determining the cultural conditions conducive to better women's access to leadership opportunities. The study could also make a modest contribution to the existing body of knowledge on gender and organizational behavior by providing information that is specific to the context of Abia State and insights into practices in the organization that can create a more inclusive route to senior leadership for women.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The female population plays a vital role in the human resources necessary for good organizational leadership and development. Although women in Nigeria have the necessary qualifications and experience and have become more involved in the economy, they still face challenges in leadership positions. The findings of recent studies in Nigeria suggest that there are cultural expectations and gender stereotypes, male dominance, lack of access to influential networks, family responsibilities and discriminatory practices within organizations that hold women back from advancing to leadership positions. These barriers can restrict women’s opportunities for promotion, participation in decision-making and access to strategic leadership positions. The issue is especially pertinent in Abia State because of the findings of earlier studies which identified culture, religion, marriage and family responsibilities, gender difference, male domination and negative perception of women in key leadership as some of the factors militating against women's participation in key leadership (Bajdo, 2001). A study carried out in Abia State revealed that women have potential and awareness to be effective leaders but their effective participation in leadership positions was still hampered by these socio-cultural and institutional factors. Likewise, earlier research which was targeted at women in management level in Abia State revealed that the challenges confronting women in management level is still a fact of life in the state.

Organizational culture is one area of the issue that has received less attention but is an important one. Organizational culture relates to the beliefs, values, norms, practices, and expectations regarding behavior shared between people within an organization and which shape how they act, make decisions, and

develop. A culture that honors merit, is inclusive and offers opportunities for equal opportunity, mentoring, and honest promotion systems may be conducive to women's progress into leadership. On the other hand, a culture with informal networks that are dominated by men, gender stereotypes, a lack of representation in decision-making processes and unequal access to opportunities may exacerbate inequalities and hinder the pathway to leadership for women. Nigerian evidence indicates that supportive institutional practices like mentorship and policy support are negatively related to women's advancement, while organizational and cultural barriers have a negative relationship with women's advancement.

Thus, the problem of this study is that although women's involvement in organizations and their capacity to participate effectively in leadership is on the ascendancy, their progress in leadership positions in Abia State seems to be hindered by the norms, values, practices and gendered expectations of the organizations. Therefore, it is important to find out the extent to which and if there is any effect of organizational culture on the advancement of women leadership in Abia state, Nigeria. This relationship may be used to evidence the development of more inclusive organizational practices, to increase women's leadership opportunities and to encourage equitable career progression.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to determine the impact of Organizational Culture on Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to

i. Examine the level of Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria.
ii. Ascertain the level of Organizational Culture in Abia State, Nigeria
iii. Investigate the impact of Organizational Culture on Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria

IV. RESEARCH QUESTION

The linchpin of this study is given by the research questions thus presented.

- What is the level of Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria?
- What is the level of level of Organizational Culture in Abia State, Nigeria?

V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

$H_0$1: There is no significant influence of Organizational Culture on Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria.

VI. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Conceptual Review

5.1.1 Women Leadership Advancement

Advancement of women leaders is the journey that women make from lower or middle level positions of responsibility within an organization to higher positions of authority, influence, decision making power, and strategic responsibility. It includes not only the progress of women up the formal leadership ladder, but also the acquisition of the skills, experiences, professional relationships, exposure, and organization recognition necessary for women to make further steps in their leadership progression. Women's leadership advancement can then be considered a multidimensional process of career climb up, promotion, leadership involvement, access to decision-making positions and continued progression into senior and executive positions. Women's underrepresentation in many high-level leadership roles despite the rise in educational attainment, women's participation in the labour force and their professional experience is a concept that has been attracting a lot of scholarly attention. Buss, Andler and Tiberius (2024) found that individual characteristics, perceptions, leadership behaviors and contextual factors impact women's leadership emergence and effectiveness. This indicates that it is not enough to consider individual qualities in determining the advancement of women; the organizational and social factors which facilitate leadership progression also matter.

Women leadership advancement is thus not just women in leadership positions. Advancement means going forward or moving on in the organizational structure. A woman can be employed at a professional level in an organization and then be there for several years without having access to supervisory, managerial, or executive positions. Progress means eliminating obstacles that block women from working

their way up the leadership ladder. Das and Jha (2022) mentioned that career advancement literature of women involves gender diversity, organizational structures, opportunities for women in the workplace and factors that affect women's career progression in organizations. There are various interrelated dimensions in which women's leadership advancement can be conceptualized.

One of the most apparent dimensions is promotion and/or upward career mobility. This is about the movement of women from the lower levels of organizations to the supervisory, managerial and senior levels of organizations. The advancement is realized when women are given chances to hold roles of higher authority, responsibility and compensation. But evidence shows gender gaps can develop at multiple points along the organizational career path. For instance, according to O'Neil's 2024 report, the promotion from the entry level to management is one stage where women's advancement can fall behind men's. Another aspect of advancement is access to leadership roles. It relates to the opportunities for women to compete for and hold leadership positions. Women's leadership development is missing when women are confined to junior or support roles, and men are overrepresented in strategic and executive roles. Despite slight improvements in women's representation in senior leadership positions, Mah et al. (2023) noted that women continue to be underrepresented in executive roles.

It's also crucial to be involved in the decision-making of organizations. Leadership progression empowers women with increased opportunities to engage in strategic planning, policy making, resource allocation, and decisions that impact on the direction of the organization. Thus, it is important to look at the problem of women's advancement not only in terms of having formal titles, but also in terms of having real authority and influence. Leadership responsibility and authority are another dimension. Advancement should be defined as a progression of responsibility for individuals, resources, programmes and organizational results. A woman might have a managerial position but be devoid of influence over key decisions if they are made by others. Thus, leadership development involves the realization of women's leadership position in organizations.

The role of women leaders in society is influenced by the following factors:

A mixture of individual, organizational, and societal factors affect women's advancement in leadership. Personal attributes: Education; professional competency; leadership; experience; aspirations and confidence. Though, women's abilities can only be manifested in women's leadership if the ability is recognized in the organizational environment and the ability is translated into leadership opportunities. Organizational policies and practices are particularly important. Recruitment, promotion, performance appraisal, succession planning and leadership development systems that are transparent can provide opportunities for qualified women. On the other hand, women are at a disadvantage due to subjective promotion systems, gender biased evaluation and informal selection systems. Research has therefore focused on systemic organizational processes, and not just on promoting women's acquisition of more skills. Advancement can be impacted by gender stereotypes and discrimination. The female and male expected behaviors and roles may be evaluated differently, with different standards applied to competence in leadership. One of the key issues in understanding women's leadership were the barriers noted by Eke & Firth (2022) such as gender discrimination, organizational conditions, etc.

5.1.2 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is the values, beliefs, assumptions, norms, attitudes and patterns of behavior that are shared by the members of an organization and that influence the way they think, behave and complete their tasks. It is the unique way that an organization carries out its work and offers employees a sense of what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior in the work place. Organizational culture represents a way of thinking, perceiving and feeling that groups have learned in response to problems of external adaptation and internal integration that this way of thinking has proven to be a successful solution and is thus transmitted to newcomers as the right method. (Schein and Schein 2017). This definition highlights the fact that culture is formed through common experiences within the organization, and is ingrained in the actions and expectations of workers. The definition of organizational culture can also be interpreted as the collective programming of the mind that differentiates

members of one organization from another. Hofstede et al. (2010) explained culture as the collective mental programming that differentiates one group or category of people from another. In relation to organizations this view proposes that the members of the organization share interpretations of the situation, communication, problem solution and responses to the expectations of the organization. Therefore, organization culture is a sense of identity and a differentiator between organizations, even in the same industry.

Robbins and Judge (2019) explain that organizational culture is a system of shared meaning that members of an organization have to differentiate it from other organizations. Some of the key aspects of the system of shared meaning are innovation, risk taking, attention to detail, outcome orientation, people orientation, team orientation, aggressiveness and stability. The above qualities are important to note because they are what make it possible for members of the same company to act and make decisions in a similar fashion. A good organizational culture thus gives employees shared aims as to the way work should be done and how their colleagues, supervisors and stakeholders should be treated. Organizational culture manifests itself in tangible and intangible ways. Schein and Schein (2017) identified three aspects of culture: artefacts, espoused values and basic underlying assumptions. Artefacts are the cultural components that are tangible, like the way employees interact, communication styles, dress codes, office setup, ceremonies and symbols. Values that an organization says it has, for example, teamwork, integrity, innovation, excellence and respect for employees, are referred to as espoused values. Basic underlying assumptions are beliefs that employees might have that they assume to be true and that affect their perceptions and actions. The underlying assumptions are not readily observable but have a great impact on organizational behavior.

5.2 Theoretical Review

5.2.1 Social Role Theory

Eagly (1987) developed Social Role Theory to explain how social expectations of women and men of their behaviors and characteristics affect their role, opportunities and interactions in society. The theory suggests that gender differences in behavior and social outcomes are largely determined by division of labor and expectations related to the social roles that are assigned to them. The theory proposes (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012) that society tends to link nurturing, cooperative, empathetic and sensitive interpersonal traits with women, and assertive, dominant, independent and competitive traits with men. Social Role Theory suggests that these expectations can become ingrained and can affect how people are judged in organizations. Leadership roles, which are typically linked with assertiveness, authority, decisiveness and competitiveness, therefore, may be seen as more in line with masculine stereotypes. This means that women who want to be leaders can find themselves subject to expectations of behavior in accordance with traditional feminine roles. Women's assertive leadership behaviors can also be met with negative responses sometimes because the behaviors are not aligned with women's traditional role expectations. This conflict can lead to obstacles for women's promotion to leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Organizational culture is relevant to Social Role Theory because organizational culture is a shared value, belief, norms, assumptions and behavioral expectation that guide the behaviors of the members of the organization. Unstated beliefs about who is appropriate to do certain jobs, and what leadership looks like can be embedded in organizational cultures. Organizational culture is one of the factors that can impact the promotion of women into leadership positions, particularly within organizations in Abia State, Nigeria, such as through recruitment processes, promotion requirements, leadership expectations, mentoring opportunities, communication norms, and informal leadership norms within the workplace. Organizations that encourage meritocracy, equal opportunity, inclusive participation and gender-neutral leader assessment can lead to a lessening of traditional gender-role expectations and a positive culture for women's progress.

The theory has proven to be especially helpful in accounting for women's advancement into positions of organizational authority and decision making, referred to as women's advancement in leadership. Organizational membership can impact women's advancement when they have a stereotypical belief of the qualities of women as organizational leaders. For example, women are less likely to be considered suitable for high-pressure leadership roles due to

presumptions about their lack of assertiveness, decisiveness or desire for leadership. Meanwhile women who assert themselves and exhibit authority may be considered to be breaking the rules of female behavior.

5.3 Empirical Review

Organizational Culture and Women Leadership

Bajdo and Dickson (2001) explored the connection between organizational culture and women's promotion in organizations with female middle managers from organizations in three industries and across various cultural contexts. The study revealed that there were some gender equity organizational practices that were much more salient in explaining the advancement of women. Gender equality was linked to the higher presence of women in management level in the organizational cultures that facilitated gender equality. Hence, the study concluded: Organizational culture as an organizational level factor was significant in women's advancement to management. This study by O'Brien (2023). looked at the organizational cultural factors that are preventing women from gaining promotion to top management positions in public universities in Kenya with Moyale University as a case study. This study used a semi-structured questionnaire and document review, and a total of 114 individuals were targeted and 34 sampled. Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, t-tests) was used to analyse data in SPSS. The results indicated that the organizational culture was negatively affecting women's promotion to high level managerial positions. Gender discrimination was also found to be a significant obstacle in women's upward mobility. The researchers therefore recommended gender sensitive policies with regard to staff appointments and promotions. Adisa & Mordi (2021) explored organizational culture and challenges for women STEM leaders in Africa. The study was qualitative in nature, and received 42 responses from 12 African countries. The results showed that supportive organizational structures, education, commitment, hard work and perseverance facilitated the development of women's leadership. The study also revealed that the acceptance of female leaders in STEM professions was also low compared to their male counterparts due to the continued devaluation of women in leadership roles in some African countries.

5.3.1 Gaps in Literature

One significant impasse is the lack of empirical evidence in particular from Abia State in Nigeria. Most Nigerian literature has been on national level experiences, experiences in Lagos, experiences in banking or experiences in specific institutions, whereas studies in other countries in Africa have been conducted in the context of higher education or other types of organizations. Thus, it is not possible to conclude if the relationship between organizational culture and women's leadership development found elsewhere is applicable in organizations in Abia State or not. Some studies explore obstacles to women's leadership without considering organizational culture as a well-defined, independent variable and women's promotion to leadership as a dependent variable. For example, Nigerian research has investigated discrimination, role of family responsibilities and cultural perceptions and male dominance as a single topic. This leaves space for a study that specifically tackles the influence and/or prediction of women's promotion to leadership positions by organizational culture. Previous studies have concentrated on particular sectors such as banking, universities, STEM and public institutions. It is therefore pertinent to consider if organizational culture has different impacts on the promotion of women to leadership positions within organizations in Abia State, where formal policies may be gender neutral, but informal norms and practices continue to favour male leadership style.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study was a correlational type of descriptive research survey study to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variable of the study. The study population is 120 female staff from two sectors that have few women at their leadership position (Abia State Civil Service and Bank of Industry, Abia Operations). The limited number of the population size made it possible that total enumeration of the women was utilized. The data collection tool was Likert-scale questionnaire. The instrument was deemed suitable due to the high number of the respondents in question. Data were collected from respondents and analyze using the descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics (frequency distribution, simple percentage and mean) was used to analyzed data to answer

research questions one and two. Inferential analysis of linear regression was used to analyze null hypotheses one. The hypothesis in the study was tested at level of 0.05 significance. The data collected for the study will be analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26.

VIII. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Research Question One: What is the level of Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria?

Table 1: Descriptive Responses on the level of level of Women Leadership Advancement in Abia, Nigeria.

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Women have adequate opportunities to progress from lower-level to higher-level leadership positions	33 (27.5)	52 (43.5)	3 (27.5)	-	3.23
Women receive promotions based primarily on competence and performance rather than gender.	36 (29.6)	50 (41.8)	34 (28.6)		3.20
Women have access to career development opportunities that prepare them for leadership roles	33 (27.8)	50 (41.4)	34 (28.6)	3 (2.2)	3.27
Women participate actively in major organizational decision-making processes.	34 (28.2)	48 (40.3)	35 (29.3)	3 (2.2)	3.23
Women in my organization have equal opportunities to compete for leadership positions.	27 (22.3)	44 (37.0)	46 (38.7)	3 (2.2)	3.33
Average Mean for level of Women Leadership Advancement					3.25

Decision Rule: 1.00 - 1.74 (very low), 1.75– 2.49 (low), 2.50 – 3.24 (High), 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High)

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The table shows the status of women leadership promotion in Abia State, Nigeria using five indicators. The overall mean average is 3.25 which shows a relatively high advancement in women leadership. This indicates that there were broad consensus that there was opportunity for women to advance to leadership roles and engage in leadership processes. In particular, women's access to career development opportunities that prepare them for leadership roles had the highest mean score (3.27), with 33 respondents (27.8%) strongly agreeing and 50 (41.4%) agreeing. This reflects that a significant number of respondents saw career development opportunities as a means of preparing women for leadership roles.

The mean score of the statement that women had equal opportunities to compete for leadership positions was 3.33, with a large number of respondents (27, 22.3%) strongly agreeing, 44 (37.0%) agreeing, and 46 (38.7%) disagreeing. The mean suggested that that respondents generally saw the opportunity for leadership as good, but the relatively high percentage of disagreement indicated that some respondents continued to see to leadership opportunities as unequal. The statement "women had good opportunities to move up to higher levels of leadership" also had a mean of 3.23. Most respondents (33, 27.5%) strongly agreed and 52 (43.5%) agreed that women were afforded opportunities to move up in leadership. The mean score for the item on women's active participation in major organizational decision making processes was 3.23 with 34 respondents (28.2%) strongly agreeing and 48 respondents (40.3%) agreeing. This implies that women were perceived to have a reasonable level of involvement in important organizational decisions. In addition, the mean of the item "Women were promoted mainly on their ability and not their sex" was 3.20. Of those who responded, 36 people (29.6%) strongly agreed, 50 (41.8%) agreed, and five (4.4%) neither agreed nor disagreed. This implies that respondents had a general idea that promotion is fairly meritocratic, but that some respondents felt some disagreement, which could indicate that some promotion may be based on gender issues.

Research question Two: What is the level of Organizational Culture in Abia State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Descriptive Responses on the Level of Organizational Culture in Abia State, Nigeria

Items	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean
Organizational Culture					
Employees in my organization understand the norms and standards expected of them	40 (33.7)	41 (34.4)	36 (29.7)	3 (2.2)	3.29
Organizational values are consistently communicated to employees	13 (24.5)	51 (42.9)	39 (32.6)	-	3.28
Leaders in my organization treat employees fairly irrespective of gender.	53 (35.5)	69 (57.5)	8 (6.6)	-	3.37
Management promotes merit when assigning responsibilities and leadership positions.	39 (32.2)	71 (59.0)	8 (6.6)	3 (2.2)	3.32
Employees are encouraged to work collaboratively to achieve organizational goals	59 (49.1)	31 (27.5)	17 (14.3)	11 (9.2)	3.34
Average Mean for Organizational Culture					3.32

Decision Rule: 1.00 - 1.74 (very low), 1.75– 2.49 (low), 2.50 – 3.24 (High), 3.25 – 4.00 (Very High)
Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The responses indicate the rating of the level of organizational culture for Abia State, Nigeria as presented in the table above. From the results, it can be seen that the scores of all the items obtained were of relatively high mean ranging from 3.28 to 3.37 and the overall average mean score was 3.32. The mean score on the four-point scale is greater than the acceptable midpoint of 2.50, which suggests that the organizational culture in the organizations studied was high. In particular, the highest mean score was found for the item "Leaders in my organization treat employees fairly regardless of gender" with a mean score of 3.37. This reflects a high level of fairness and gender-neutral treatment by organizational leaders. The distribution of responses further confirms this result with 53 respondents (35.5%) agreeing strongly, 69 (57.5%) agreeing and 8 (6.6%) disagreeing. This indicates that the majority of the workers felt that their organization leaders were treating employees fairly irrespective of gender. The second highest-rated item was ‘Employees are encouraged to work collaboratively to achieve organizational goals' with a mean of 3.34. In particular, 59 respondents (49.1%) strongly agreed, 31 (27.5%) agreed, 17 (14.3%) disagreed, and 11 (9.2%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that co-operation and team working was especially encouraged within the organizations. Likewise, “Management promotes merit by giving responsibilities and leadership” had a mean of 3.32. Thirty-two percent (39) strongly agreed, 59 percent (71) agreed, while 6.6 percent (8) disagreed and 2.2 percent (3) strongly disagreed. This indicates that the organizations' relative levels of the perception of the establishment of merit-based practices were relatively high.

The mean for the item ‘Employees in my organization understands the norms and standards expected of them' was 3.29. The majority of respondents (40, 33.7%) strongly agreed with the response, and 41 (34.4%) agreed. 36 (29.7%) disagreed, and 3 (2.2%) strongly disagreed. This suggests that a significant percentage of staff were aware of the norms and standards that were expected of them, but the higher percentage of disagreement means that there may still have been room for improvement in communicating organization expectations, particularly to their employees. Lastly, “Organizational values are consistently communicated

to employees" scored 3.28 (the lowest of the items) but still had a relatively high mean score. 24.5% strongly agreed, 42.9% agreed and 32.6% disagreed. This indicates that the values of the organization were mostly conveyed to the employees, but there could be better consistency in conveying the values. Overall, the average mean of 3.32 indicates that the level of organizational culture in Abia State, Nigeria was high. The results indicated that the organizations underwent fairness, merit-based practices, teamwork, awareness of organizational norms and communication of organizational values. More effort should be made to ensure that the values and expected standards of the organization are clearly passed on to all staff.

Test of Hypothesis

The null hypothesis which states that there will be no significant influence of Organizational Culture on Women Leadership in Abia State, Nigeria was tested using linear regression analysis.

Table 3: Model Summary no significant Influence of Organizational Culture on Women Leadership in Abia State, Nigeria was tested using linear regression analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.404[a]	.18	.41	.35226

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Culture

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.314	1	.314	2.529	.114[b]
	Residual	17.124	138	.124		
	Total	17.438	139			

a. Dependent Variable: Women Leadership

b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational Culture

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.858	.154		18.587	.000
	Organizational Culture	-.096	.060	-.134	-1.590	.114

a. Dependent Variable: Women Leadership

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The null hypothesis of this study says "There is no significant influence of organizational culture on women leadership advancement in Abia State, Nigeria". The outcome of this null hypothesis has it that organizational culture significantly influenced women leadership advancement in Abia State, Nigeria going by the probability value in the above 0.05 level of significance. The probability value in the coefficient table above ANOVA shows a value of .114 ($F_{1.138} = 2.529$, $p = 0.114$) which is way higher than the level of significance (0.05) used in this study to determine the level of significance of an independent variable on a dependent variable. The R value in the model summary table is .404. This implies that there is a 40.4% level of relationship between organizational culture and women leadership advancement in Abia State, Nigeria. With this level of relationship, it can be said that the relationship is positive. The Adjusted R^2 value in the model summary table is .41. This means that organizational culture brought about 41% variance in women leadership advancement in Abia State, Nigeria, the remaining 59% will be brought about by other factors not studied in this model. In summary the null hypothesis was therefore rejected because the outcome of the null hypothesis shows that organizational culture significantly influenced women leadership advancement in Abia State, Nigeria.

This result of this study correlates with previous result. For example; a study of Nigeria's banking sector examined the glass ceiling from the perspectives of 43 senior male employees working in four Nigerian banks. The findings showed that senior male employees acknowledged challenges experienced by women in promotion and career progression. Although organizations may have gender-neutral performance and family-friendly policies, the study found that patriarchal societal and occupational cultures continued to influence perceptions of women and their progression. It concluded that organizational culture and leadership practices underpinning poor female career progression were embedded in the culture of the organizations studied. More recently, Omokhudu, Ogbodo and Iyiegbuniwe examined women's leadership advancement in Nigerian public institutions, focusing on the University of Benin and the University of Benin Teaching Hospital. The study collected data from 340 female staff through a survey and 12 semi-structured interviews. Regression results showed that organizational and cultural barriers had a significant negative effect on women's leadership advancement ($B = -0.25$, $p < .001$), whereas

mentorship and policy support had a significant positive effect (B = 0.22, p < .001), and professional experience also had a significant positive effect (B = 0.15, p = .003). These findings provide direct Nigerian evidence that organizational barriers can constrain women's leadership advancement while supportive organizational mechanisms can enhance it.

IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that the culture of an organization has a positive and significant influence on the advancement of women in leadership roles in the State of Abia in Nigeria. The results indicate that a positive and participatory organization culture creates a favorable environment for women to build their leadership potential, be included in decision-making, have more responsibilities to achieve and reach higher leadership positions. Fostering an environment of fairness, equal opportunities, merit-based promotion, teamwork, mentoring, and respect for diversity are likely to help women advance in their careers to leadership roles. The investigation also found that organizational values, norms, practices and management attitudes have the potential to have a significant impact on the progression of women in organizations. Women are better equipped to tackle institutional/cultural barriers to their progress when the organization's culture is designed to incorporate gender in a way that recognizes women's capabilities. Therefore, a positive organizational culture can help to boost women's confidence, professional growth, leadership engagement and career progression opportunities.

In general, the study found that building organizational culture is critical to enhancing women's representation in organizational leadership in Abia State. Having women supported, recognized, mentored and given equal opportunities in their workplace can help achieve a better ratio of male to female leaders and improve the effectiveness of the organization. Hence, the need of organizations in Abia State to keep fostering inclusive organizational practices and cultures which affirm leadership based on competence and performance instead of gender. This will not only empower women in leadership, but help to create more equitable, productive and sustainable organizations.

Based on the findings, and in line with the objective of the study, the following recommendations are hereby given:

- Opportunities for the promotion of women into leadership within organizations within Abia State should be enhanced by ensuring women access leadership positions, career development programmes, mentoring, training and promotion opportunities and decision-making roles. This would help to establish clear and transparent career ladder for women to move up to leadership roles.
- Abia State Management of organizations should foster a supportive and inclusive organizational culture through the creation of policies and practices that promote gender equality, fair work, collaboration, respect and involve staff in the running of the organization. Organizational values and practices should be discouraged to limit women's participation in leadership due to gender stereotypes, discrimination and other cultural barriers.
- Organizations should proactively and purposefully support women's leadership development by embedding gender inclusive practice in recruitment, promotion, succession planning and leadership development. Organizational culture should be regularly evaluated to determine practices that impede the progress of women and implement interventions that address this, including gender-sensitivity training, mentorship programs and clear promotion processes.

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