

The Absence of Females in Executive Chef Position in Zimbabwean Hotels: Case of Rainbow Tourism Group (RTG)

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ABSTRACT

The Zimbabwe hospitality environment is recognised for its importance to Zimbabwe economy. It is a booming industry, yet there is very little research that focuses on the specific issues affecting those working in the kitchen. Based on employees perspective this case study looks at the issue of the absence of females in the Executive Chef Position. The case study focuses on the kitchen department of R.T.G hotels. The lack of research into the kitchen, and more specifically the Hospitality in Zimbabwe environment is perplexing because it is predominately female, yet at Executive Chef Levels these females are not equally represented. Purposeful sampling was used in coming up with a sample of thirty respondents. Data from this study was analysed using tables, bar graphs, pie charts and the findings were categorised under themes according to the major areas of investigation and followed by discussion. The findings revealed that marital status (work family conflict), lack of experience, negative attitude of females, and the harsh conditions in the kitchen are the major contributing variables to the absence of females in the Executive Chef Position in the commercial kitchens. The research recommended that females should market their selves by being employed in other sections other than the pastry section. The research recommended that chefs must be employed and promoted by merit, equal salaries /wages and opportunities to kitchen job in any position in Hospitality Industry irrespective of sex. There is need for more research in the kitchen on the nature and conditions of the kitchen job hence the National Gender Policy Implementers must not generalised with other industries.

Keywords: *Absent, Female chef, executive chef, position, and kitchen*

INTRODUCTION

The Tourism and Hospitality industry contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment in many countries. Globally, it is one of the fastest growing sectors. The total contribution of Gross Domestic Product including its impacts was 6.3% to 7.2 %pa in 2011 and is expected to be 7.9% by 2021. Total Employment Contribution is forecasted to rise by 3.1%pa from 5.6%pa in 2011 to 4.2% by 2021. Direct employment contribution is 2.6% of total employment and is expected to rise by 2.5% to 5.6% pa by 2021(<http://www.wttc.org/eng/Tourism.Research/Economic./Zimbabwe>). Zimbabwe has many fascinating tourist attractions and enormous resources for tourism. The availability of these tourist attractions areas require hotels which offer quality food dishes that appeal and meet all tastes and food preferences. The need for quality and competitive food on the other hand requires trained and qualified chefs, waiters and others. (<http://www.zimbabwetourism.net>).

However, it is the need of trained cooking, waiting and other staff that training institutions enrolled both males and females in various hospitality courses that include professional cookery. The enrolment of students in professional cookery has more female students than males but they fail to grow up the kitchen brigade to take up the highest position of the Executive Chef. (<http://www.squidoo.com/womenchefs>). The situation of male dominations remains.

Professional kitchens in hotels and other catering institutions are organised differently from our mother kitchens (home based kitchen). This resulted in a number of researches being conducted on how to run and manage a commercial production kitchen. A kitchen brigade was then developed and each position was justified by Auguste Escoffier (France) who was King of Chefs and Chefs of the Kings. Professional kitchens are, and have,

historically been male dominated. This is explained by military history in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. During times of war, members of the army were expected to cook. This developed into a military style hierarchical structure in the professional kitchen.

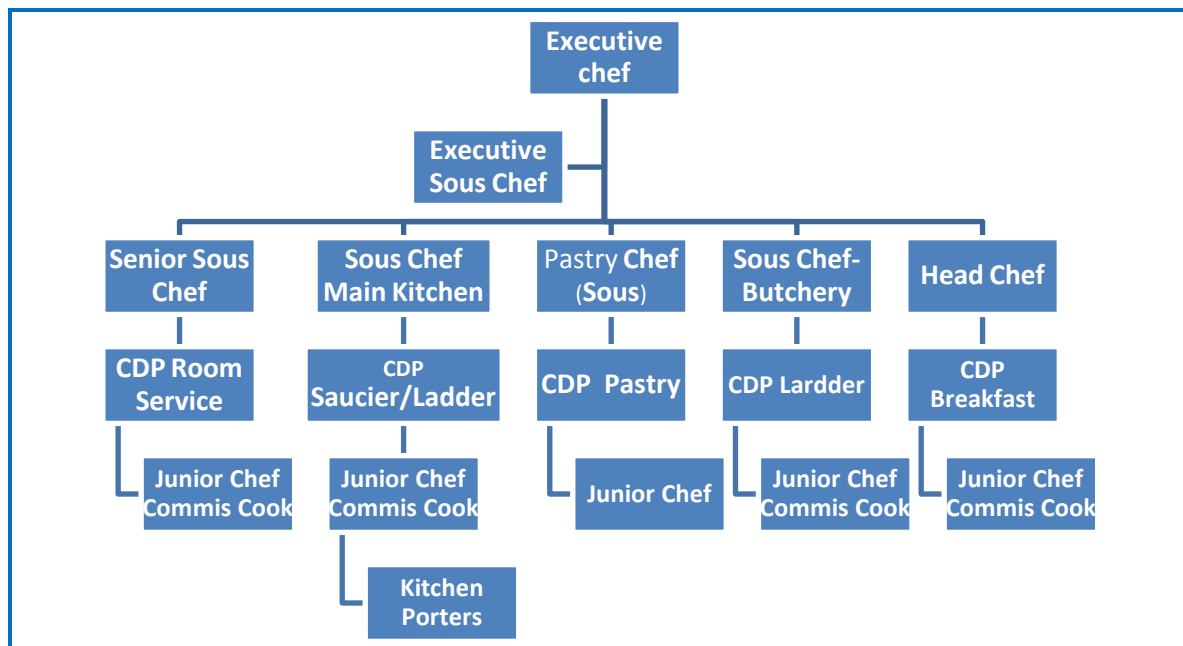
Fig1 and 2 represents international commercial kitchens and the Rainbow Towers representing Zimbabwean kitchens showing the positions of the kitchen personnel. The international organisational structure has many positions which resemble a five star commercial kitchen in a hotel Campbell, (2010). The Rainbow Towers Kitchen, however, has few positions.

The Rainbow Towers Kitchen brigade represents most of the kitchen brigades of Zimbabwe’s hotels. It is from this diagram that the lower positions where females are usually employed are shown. These positions are junior chefs, breakfast chefs, pastry chefs and a few others like Sous chefs. This also applies to the International kitchen brigade where females occupy positions like assistants cooks, Hors d’oeuvre cook, pastry cooks, ice cream cooks and a few in the position of Sous chefs and Executive chefs.

Fig 1: The Kitchen Staff (La Brigade De Cuisine)



Figure1: The Organisation Structure of a Large International Hotel Kitchen
The Kitchen Staff (La Brigade De Cuisine)

Figure 2: Rainbow Towers Hotel Kitchen Organisational Structure

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The history of women in the position of Chef (Executive Chef) is a long and complicated one. Women have had a long and hard road to being recognized as chefs or even allowed to work in the Culinary Industry. Traditionally, women have been responsible for making simple meals in the home, but no often was “cuisine” applied to female cookery. This has been the issue since hunter gatherer period. (<http://www.squidoo.com/womenchefs>).

Compared to fifty or even twenty years ago, the success of women chefs today is staggering. However, there are still obstacles for aspiring young women even now. According to a recent poll, 91% of all Executive chefs worldwide are men. (<http://www.squidoo.com/womenchefs>).

The professional work of Chefs, for which they are paid, recognised and publicly acclaimed, has long been dominated by men. However, few females have managed to break through the barriers of custom and tradition and deviated from the usual professions that females are engaged in. Internationally, we have the first female Executive Chef IyanthiGunewardene (1998) at Grand Oriental Hotel in Australia, Susan Wolfla at Mandalay Bay (2005) in Las Vegas, CristetaComerford at White House (2005) in Washington, and Suzanne Storms (2006) the first female Executive Chef in the Middle East Region. If Executive Chefs from all over the world are considered, it is found that the majority of them are males and females make up a very small proportion. Some of these females have, however, contributed greatly to cuisine that they have proved themselves to be legendary in this field. (<http://www.articlesbase.com/food-and-beverage-articles/culinary-arts-and-the-famous>).

Zimbabwe’s hospitality industry has gone through many phases, where it requires more employees. Again, due to the National Gender Policy, women are now flocking to the position of junior chefs. Unfortunately for females, males continue to dominate in the positions of Executive chef. A renowned author Wagen (1995), supported male domination due to gendered labour force.

Zimbabwe now has institutions offering components and full courses in Culinary Arts, Professional Cookery, and Catering Studies. These include Bulawayo Hotel School, Harare Polytechnic, Masvingo Polytechnic, Belvedere Technical Teachers College, Rainbow Hospitality Business School and other private colleges. Reley (1997), observes that there was low female participation in the top management in the hospitality industry where as they are enrolled in large numbers in institutions internationally. But surprisingly, Zimbabwe does not have a single female Executive Chef in its hotels. Most of the institutions above offer hospitality courses, including culinary arts at managerial level with the assumption that these graduates will be easily absorbed in the hospitality industry but, the problem of gender disparity remains. Again, it is surprising that the lecturers who teach professional cookery, bakery studies, catering studies, 90% of them are females, and when it comes to

training, females take up 99% and males just 1%. The situation becomes opposite when it comes to employment, where we have males dominating the Executive Chef Position.

Females are natured to be kitchen managers for the whole of their life at home; they have vast experience in handling and preparing food and are enrolled in large numbers in culinary courses. Though in Zimbabwe the National Gender Policy is in place, females are nowhere to be found in Executive Chef Positions.

HISTORY OF FEMALE CHEFS

In the 18th century, Louis XV opposed the idea that women could cook. He loved fine foods and would only trust his menu to males, whom he believed to be superior in every way. This attitude upset one of Louis' mistresses, Madame de Barry, so she invited him to a supper made by the best 'cuisiniere' (female cook). Louis was delighted by the fare, and asked "Who is this cuisinier of yours? He must join the Royal household." Madame du Barry replied "It is not a cuisinier but acuisiniere and I demand a worth of recompense both of her and your majesty. I cannot accept less than a Cordon Bleu for her." At this point, The Cordon Bleu was an honour bestowed upon anyone who excelled in their field, but usually applied to their cookery. Sadly, the cheeky mistress went to the guillotine in 1793, but fortunately her ideas about women as great chefs did not die with her. In 1895, acuisiniere named Mar the Distell began publishing a newsletter under the title Le Cordon Bleu ou Nouvelle Bourgeoisie. She began offering cooking classes in the year, and the school of Le Cordon Bleu was for women. This is how females started to realise that they are capable of working in the kitchen. (<http://www.squido.com/womenchefs>.)

CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALE CHEFS

1. Sexual harassment

A noted critic, Scott (1995), noted that sexual harassment is considered to be an illegal form of sexual discrimination under equal employment opportunity commission guidelines. John (2009), revealed that women employed in most interactive service jobs are expected to package and present themselves in gender – appropriate ways, where their sexuality is an implicit – sometimes explicit – aspect of their work role. Both refer to the requirement to take sexually explicit teasing and flirtation from male customers (and sometimes colleagues) as part of the job.

Unfortunately, all forms of sexual harassment have become reportedly with increasing frequency in kitchen. Hayes and Ninemeier (2008), another renowned authority on the subject once remarked that, sexual harassment can take risqué of joke, a complement about someone's attire or physique. It can take a more violent form such as repeated inappropriate touching of another's body. This also includes aggression against another person's body or psyche. Any sexual behaviour that threatens the comfort, safety or security of an individual may be interpreted as sexual harassment.

Indeed, due to many reports published on sexual harassment, a lot of females tend to shun jobs which have a high population of males. These jobs include kitchen department, transport, maintenance and managerial positions. This results in high margin of gender disparity in Hospitality Industry. It is worse to those who are married, as their spouses observed that some women did in fact enjoy some of it. Spouses tend to be jealous and feel it will be the end of their marriages. No men would want their wives involved in any form of sexual harassment, thus forbid them to work in this industry (Hicks 1990).

Equally important, the majority of females respect their bodies. It is also a taboo in Zimbabwe for them to openly discuss about sex or show actions about sex openly. Now that in the Hospitality Industry with specific reference to those sectors which are male dominated, they discuss, comment and joke on sex related issues, this will be hell to females. This is the reason why more females are enrolled in various institutions and when it comes to real life, they shun jobs offered. Research has shown that most females working in this industry (hospitality) are single parents and widows, who do not have husbands as well as control over them (Adkins 1995). Sexual harassment is one of the major contributing factors to gender disparity leaving more males than females in the industry.

2. Working conditions

Tanke (2000) argued that Hospitality Industry is a notoriously 'greedy occupation' which requires long working hours, willingness to be geographically mobile and where the boundaries between work and non-work are difficult to draw. It is often referred to by managers, including women themselves, as a disincentive for women. This includes working during weekends with one day off, public holidays; hours of employment vary greatly with the volume of business within the industry. There is also overtime work, shift work and casual work. This shows that Hospitality Industry is a high pressure work sector of the economy.

Schmitt and Gautie (2010) have called these formal aspects of male exclusionary practice. The way that jobs and working hours are constructed, are reinforced by informal aspects – the ‘old boy’ network of informal recruitment practices circumscribed by prejudice and stereotyped thinking. This discourse discourages women while encouraging men to apply for career advancement. This means gender disparity has been created already from an early stage, thus difficult to control.

Riley (2008), argues that the majority of females prefer jobs which are considered often to have normal routines. Thus working from eight o’clock to four o’clock where break and lunch hours are included. They also prefer to enjoy their weekends, public holidays and probably school holidays and shun careers which exert a lot of pressure on them. This results in hospitality industry, being dominated by men.

Most importantly, females are cultured in a manner that they should have time to socialize, give greater attention to their sibling and their spouses, if any. (Hartmann 1999). This is not possible in this industry, where employees work twenty four hours, are called up on emergencies and there is unpredictable work patterns. It means that females have to forgo work and have more time with the family or vice versa. In reality, we find that most females shun such types of jobs and go for routine ones, than straining their relationships with their spouses.

3. Remuneration

Women have thus been increasingly recruited into jobs which are classified as unskilled such as in cafes, shop work, cleaning, bed making and washing dishes among others Baum (2006). Wages/salaries for employees who are unskilled are very low in the Hospitality Industry. Remuneration in any particular labour market will be determined by the demand and supply of labour. The supply of labour to some sectors of Hospitality and Tourism Industry is largely unskilled and as such lowly remunerated. Most females are employed in jobs which are largely unskilled hence are the victims of low wages/salaries.

Females in hospitality industry are passive participants. This is done to add numbers to fulfil stereotype gender roles. According to Forrest (1990), employees in Hospitality Industry are paid according to their contribution to production. Even an increase in wages or salaries is done through recommendations given by the respective manager or the sector. The Hospitality Industry mostly values experience and the input one is contributing towards production. Since females are not actively involved in the core function, they do not benefit much from core business in terms of decision making, rewards and control. This clearly explains gender disparities which exist in the hospitality industry.

4. Social cultural factor

There is a conflict between work and family. The profound challenge is the effort to balance work and family. The personal cost to highly successful female managers in forfeiting a wider life outside work is evidently high, if of course, a more routine home life is desirable for them. It has been suggested that society’s expectations of women may be causing or exacerbating this problem. Societal expectations of women have not kept pace with reality. Females find it more difficult to combine and balance career goals and family needs in the kitchen. Success in the industry usually involves long hours and frequent geographical moves, and still satisfies family needs (Mann: 2003). Most of those who get to top are either single (no family) or divorced, and some females in the hospitality (kitchen) see this life style decision as necessary evil. It has been recognised, however, that this is an issue that requires much more attention, considering factors like “is the glass ceiling effect... greater for married women with children than for single women”? Cotter (2001).

Interest of females in Executive chef position

Whatever the job, there is a challenge if one wants to excel in it and being a chef is no exception. They say a lot of females do not take up a hotel employment due to lack of understanding. Only what females have to do is to know the recipes very well and maintain discipline in the kitchen and be very patient. These two Executive Chefs pointed out that cooking has always been their hobbies and decided to focus on it as a career. One informant, on another note pointed out that the sacrifices in terms of lifestyle and family could not make it. She even says that there are too many hats in the Executive Chef Position. The job of an Executive Chef is not just cooking as is commonly perceived. One has to learn all the aspects of food and beverage business. In the restaurant kitchen, apart from cooking high volume soups, salads and sauces one also has to know the art of vegetables and fruits sculptures and presentations. The chef has to be up to date with the managerial and administrative aspects of running the kitchen –from shopping menu preparation and planning to nutrition analysis and inventory management. In this field, the career path is largely a function of the person’s individual merit and progress. (<http://www.business.otago.ac.nz/mgmt/research/omgr/03dowling.pdf>)

Rational for the national gender policy;

The National Gender Policy recognises the fact that women constitute more than 52 per cent of the population of Zimbabwe. It is therefore important that their representation and participation in the development process should commensurate with this numerical reality. Based on the national ethos of democracy, unity, equity, development and self-sufficiency, and in line with the need for economic growth, sustainable development, social justice and recognition and respect of human rights, the Government set out to enhance equal participation of women and men in national development. However, it is critical to recognise that gender discrimination has its basis on cultural values, beliefs and practices. In this regard, the National Gender Policy is premised on the following principles;

- Recognition that issues of development, human development in particular, are concerned with equity, equality, participation, association, social justice and human rights.
- Gender discrimination is a serious impediment to development that affects the whole country and thus needs to be eliminated through appropriate individual and collective strategies.
- A participatory approach that entails broad consultation and involvement of both women and men in all spheres of development guarantees success of the transformation of society to promote democracy, equality and equity between women and men.
- All Government policies must acknowledge women and men as equal important human resources for development. This equality and equity of women and men is anchored on the protection and respect of the rights of individual.
- All Government policies, the private sector, parastatals, non-governmental organisations, traditional structures and practices must recognise that women and men are guaranteed equality before the law and protected from discrimination through the Constitution.
- There is need to promote and support equal and equitable access, control and ownership of resources, information, opportunities and decision-making positions for women and men. In this regard, it is imperative to address the imbalances with respect to women's access, control and ownership of resources and decision-making positions. (The National Gender Policy:2008).

METHODOLOGY

The research undertook qualitative research due to the nature of the problem. This enabled the researcher to tell how and why we have few females in the kitchen as well as their absence in the position of Executive Chef in Zimbabwe. It was a holistic investigation that was executed in a natural set up. Qualitative research in this study was interesting in the understanding of issues being researched from the perspectives of participant, and man was the primary – data collecting instrument. Qualitative research enabled the researcher to explore a social phenomenon and got to understand better. Qualitative research was appropriate due to the fact that the researcher was trying to get to the heart and soul of the issue in order to understand it (McMillan and Schumacher: 2010).

Rainbow Tourism Group hotels was chosen since it is one of the major groups in Zimbabwe with many hotels; it was easier to get statistics of their employees in terms of gender since their head office is in Harare. Again there was an opportunity for the researchers to observe the challenges/obstacles females encountered in the kitchen as she patronised the hotels regularly.

Responses came from thirty (30) informants who included 5 male Executive chefs, 5 Sous chefs, 5 female chefs from other sections like larder/sauce/roast/soup and vegetables sections in the kitchen, 5 students on industrial attachment, 5 pastry chefs, 5 lecturers taking/teaching Culinary Arts courses. Respondents were drawn from Rainbow Towers, Victoria Falls Rainbow, Bulawayo Rainbow, 'A' zambezi River Lodge, and New Ambassador Hotel. It is from these hotels that the researchers chose one Executive chef from each hotel, one Sous chef, one pastry chef, one female chef from the larder section/sauce /roast/soups/vegetables. Students and Lectures were from Rainbow Hospitality Business School located at New Ambassador Hotel. The School belongs to Rainbow Tourism Group and it is a unit on its own. The rationale for taking respondents from these five hotels was to get opinions from a wide geographical area and had town and resort experiences with also different views.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

There was 100% response from respondents, all thirty questionnaires were returned. Executive Chefs answered the questionnaires and were interviewed as they occupy the position in the research problem. Executive chefs were made to answer questions in questionnaires and interviews because it is the position of the problem in this study. Again, the researcher checked on the consistence of the Executive chefs on their opinions pertaining to the problem under study. This was done to compare the information which the Executive chefs gave during interviews and answered on the questionnaire. The reason for the positive response was that the researchers moved from hotel to hotel, respondents were made to respond whilst the researchers were waiting; hence

managed to collect all questionnaires from the respondents. As for the interviews all 5 Executive Chefs were interviewed. The criterion, purposeful sampling also contributed to hundred percent of questionnaire return and turn up for interviews was also 100% as the researcher chose the respondents by level of positions in the kitchen.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

This section was meant to gather data on personal characteristics of the respondents. The data was from all instruments used in this research. It was presumed that such data is crucial for yielding reliable and valid data from respondents. Respondents were asked about their gender. Such information was meant to make accurate inference about responses given in this study. Table.1 indicates that selected respondents comprised of fourteen (47%) females and sixteen (53%) males. This implies that females are now in the kitchen but still not in the executive chef position.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender N = 30

Group	Males	%	Females	%
Executive Chefs	5	16.6	-	-
Sous Chefs	3	10	2	6.6
Pastry Chefs	1	3.3	4	13.3
Female Chefs	-	-	5	16.6
Students	2	2	3	10
Lecturers	3	3	2	6.6
Total	14	47%	16	54%

From the table above we find that there are more females in the kitchen though occupying lower positions and males are still dominating top positions in the kitchen, males are lagging behind by 6%. It is from this table that one would know the composition of chefs in the kitchen and get views about absence of females in the position of Executive chef position from different sex.

Distribution of respondents by academic qualifications

The researchers wanted to know the level of academic and professional qualifications of respondents working in the kitchen in relation to the post they held in the kitchen.

Table 2: Distribution by Academic Qualification N = 30

Academic Qualifications	Frequency (N)	Percentage %
ZJC	1	3.3
O' Level	19	63.3
A Level	10	33.3
Total	30	100

The table above indicates that 1 (3.3) Chef is the holder of ZJC, 19 (63.3) are holders of O' level and 10 (33.3) Chefs acquired their A' Levels. It is from this sample that one executive chef is the holder of ZJC; three of them are holders of 'O' Levels and one is the holder of both 'A' and 'O' levels. Four of the Sous chefs are holders of 'O' Levels and one of the Sous is the holder of both 'O' and 'A' Level. As for Pastry chefs four of them are holders of 'O' Level and one Pastry chef is the holder of both 'O' and 'A' Level. All female chefs are holders of 'O' Levels. As for Students three of them are holders of 'O' Levels and two are holders of both O and 'A' Levels. Lastly all five Lecturers are holders of both O and A Levels.

Distribution of respondents by professional Qualifications

As for their professional qualifications, ten (33.3%) respondents are holders of diplomas in Professional Cookery / Culinary Arts. Whereas six (20%) are holders of class 1 journey man, five (16.6%) of respondents are holders of National Certificates, two (6.6%) of the respondents hold National Foundation certificates, two (6.6%) of respondents do not have any professional qualification, one (3.3%) is a holder of Higher National Diploma, two (6.6%) hold degrees in Tourism and Hospitality Management and two (6.6%) are holders of Masters Degrees.

Respondents by marital status

Respondents were asked about their marital status. It was expected that the more participants being married the higher the chances that one would give adequate and useful information for the problem being studied. The husbands normally take precedence over their wives due to traditional beliefs that say husband makes all the

money while his wife attends to home and this goes unquestioned as if it is natural in Zimbabwe. If one is married, there is an additional responsibility of taking care of the family and the years that it takes a chef to work their way up to the executive level are often the years that men and women begin having children. This revealed real life situation as Zimbabwean culture believe that a normal female should be married and bear children despite being working. Most of married females with children find the kitchen environment too inflexible. The issue of marital status is very relevant to the research questions as most of married respondents revealed out that it is the most challenge faced by a married female chef.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by their Marital Status

Group	Married	%	Single	%
Executive Chefs	5	16.6	-	-
Sous Chefs	2	6.6	3	10
Pastry	4	13.3	1	3.3
Female Chefs	2	6.6	3	10
Lecturers	5	16.6	-	-
Students	2	6.6	3	10
Total	20	67%	10	33%

The table shows that two (6.6%) of students are married while three (10%) of students are not married, Four (13.3%) of pastry chefs are married and one of pastry chefs (3.3%) is not married. Two (6.6) of Sous chefs are married and three (10%) are not married, as for female chefs two (6.6%) are married and three (10%) are not married. As for Executive Chefs all are married (16.6%) and all lecturers (16.6%) are married from Table 4. We have a total of twenty (20) married respondents and ten (10) single respondents. This would be quite useful to ascertain responses coming from married and single respondents, thus depicting real life in the kitchen and both status are represented in the study.

Participants' views on choosing to become professional chefs.

1. *Passion*

Findings from both interviews and questionnaires indicated that 16 (53.3%) of respondents joined the kitchen due to passion they have about food. Majority of these respondents were from students, Sous chefs and Pastry chefs. One respondent was quoted to have said:

"I have always wanted to be in the Hospitality Sector. I have a passion for this Industry".

2. *Acquiring vocational training*

On the other hand six (20%) of respondents chose the Industry as the route into acquiring vocational and technical qualifications for entrepreneurship.

3. *by Accident*

Four (13.3%) of respondents argued that they chose the Industry by accident and passion developed whilst they were already in the Industry. Three quarters ($\frac{3}{4}$) of this response was from lecturers and Executive chefs.

4. *Inheritance from the family*

One (3.3%) of the respondent postulated that it was through inheritance from the family. One interviewee responded that:

"I grew up in a family of Hospitality Industry, that's why I had to take it as my profession; to be whom I am it comes from it."

5. *Socialisation*

Three (10%) of respondents believed that it is due to socialisation. Visitors eat, drink and have fun. They come from all places of the world, there is socialisation between workers and visitors and visitors themselves

Table 4: Views on choosing Hospitality (kitchen) Job

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Passion	16	53.3
Acquiring vocational and technical skills	6	20
By accident	4	13.3
Inheritance from the family	1	3.3
Socialisation	3	10
Total	30	100%

From the responses above we find that majority of respondents entered the Industry due to passion, this also includes females. From the interviewees quotation the researchers concurs that most of females are send to study Culinary Arts with future of being directors of their own restaurants, takeaways and catering weddings and birthdays. This is done for inheritance sake. Respondents like those in this study want self-employment or be employers. It is argued that conditions are slightly different when one is running his/her own business as compared when being employed. Self-employment is flexible; hence acquisition of skills and experience will enable them to be entrepreneurs.

Opinions of respondents on absence of females in the executive chef positions in the hotel kitchens of Zimbabwe.

This section was meant to gather data about the opinions of respondents concerning absence of females in the Executive chef position. Issues which were raised included attitude, females are not supported by management, lack of confidence, and females are a weaker sex and lack of experience. Table 6 overleaf illustrates these opinions.

Table 5: Opinions on absence of females in Executive chef position N = 30

Name	Attitude	Lack of support	Lack of confidence	Weaker sex	Lack of experience
Percentage	33%	10%	17%	7%	33%

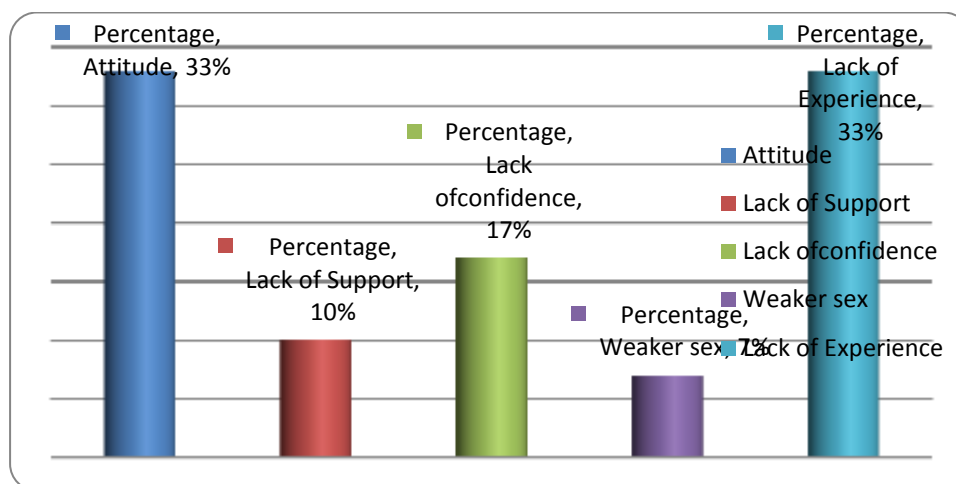


Figure1: Opinions on absence of females in Executive chef position.

1. Attitude

From the respondents 10 (33%) said female chefs’negative attitude have influenced the absence of female Executive Chefs and the responses were mostly from male chefs. This attitude is in two ways, females have negative attitude towards kitchen job, and they still believed that kitchen job is meant for males. Females looked down upon themselves, as they thought cannot endure kitchen conditions. Males also have negative attitude towards females, they believed females are not good enough to provide excellent services or come up with best dishes. It is from this attitude that they tend to leave the kitchen job and opt for other jobs which they are comfortable with, such as catering for weddings and parties.

2. Lack of support

The respondents felt that, females are not there (Executive Chef) because management is not supportive especially to female chefs. Kitchen job needs team spirit, males feel uneasy to be led by female chefs hence they are not co-operative. When these male chefs accomplish their courses, they are easily appointed to an Executive chef position. It is rare for females to be offered such type of support. Majority of females believe that if they had support from management and their counterparts (males), it was going to be easier for them to stay in the kitchen. This would assist them to gain wide experience since vast experience is one of the criteria for one to be appointed to the Executive Chef position. Some Hotels are gender sensitive and worse if this management is still holding onto old boys views. In this scenario the researchers concurs with the respondents in that it is the management which recommends other chefs to higher positions like Executive Chefs. If females are not supported it means they will continue to be a rare figure in kitchen top position.

3. Lack of confidence

Five (17%) respondents believed that females themselves lack confidence. If one is not confident there is no way one can effectively perform in the Executive chef position. This position requires one to plan menus, do costing, ordering and purchasing the requirements used in the kitchen. Lots of females do not take up Executive Chef Position due to lack of confidence in the kitchen job. One needs to know his / her own recipes well and maintain discipline in the kitchen.

4. Gender Stereotype

Two (7%) of respondents said females are considered to be a weaker sex. One interviewee responded that:
“Females are viewed generally as the weaker sex, hence are not recommended socially to enter such fields”

The result of believing females are a weaker sex is still dominating in the kitchen. Majority of females are employed as Pastry chefs and Larder chefs. These findings are consistent with those of Fine (1987) who argued that male executive chefs often had preconceived ideas that females were not physically and emotionally strong enough to work in the kitchens and would give them fewer high status jobs. However even up to date females are associated with what they do at home, hence employed to what they think is an easy task.

5. Lack of Experience

Ten (33.3%) said females lack experience in the kitchen. To gain experience one has to work in each and every section in the kitchen. This takes almost ten years for one to be appointed to an Executive Chef Position. One respondent echoes that:

“To be a good Executive Chef, you have to go through all the sections in the kitchen preferably saucier section and since there is no sophisticated tools of trade in the kitchens, most ladies find it difficult to go up the larder because they would have preferred easy sections of the kitchen for example pastry and garde manger”

This means there are several positions an aspiring chef must go through to make it to the Executive chef level. Every skill a chef may pick up along the way will help, each position build off the previous one, requires more experience and know-how, as well as new roles.

It is discovered that lack of experience, attitude and lack of confidence are the major barriers to Executive Chef Position for females. Experience requires one to stay for a certain time approximately 5 to 10 years. Chefs in the kitchen are always on transit and this is for both sexes. For male chefs, it is easier for them to get their jobs and they extensively market themselves.

Challenges and obstacles faced by females in the kitchen

After analysing responses from interviews and questionnaires the researchers categorized the challenges into social, physiological, infrastructural, technological and economic. A table has been used to show the number of participants and their approximate percentage in each category so as to explain impacts of these challenges and obstacles to the absence of females in the position of executive chefs. Every participant was free to respond to questionnaires and interview items without limit; hence in each and every category they managed to respond.

Table 6: Category of challenges leading to absence of females in Executive chef Position

Challenges	No. of participants	Percentage
Social	10	33
Physiological	8	27
Infrastructural	5	17
Technological	4	13
Economic	3	10
Total	30	100%

1. Social challenges

It is of interest that the table above shows that 10 (33%) of respondents said under social challenges marital status, sexual harassment, nepotism and immoral behaviour are among the challenges faced by females in the kitchen.

1.1 Marital Status

Fifty-per cent (50%) of respondents said that work-family conflict (marital status) had an impact in absence of females in Executive chef position. They argued that long hours of work put enormous strain on their marriages. One respondent echoes that:

“Not exactly, little attention is given to family and social life. Most of the time is spent at work, hence denying my husband his conjugal rights. This would mean a break up of a family. Married women do not stand a chance in this”.

From the comment above the researcher deduced that married females are the most affected by social life, hence they cannot stand a chance in the industry.

1.2 Nepotism

Twenty seven per cent (27%) of respondents felt that nepotism is a very big challenge faced in the kitchen. Some managers tend to recommend their relatives and friends to higher positions. This is typical in the kitchen where other chefs tend to miss executive chef positions because of nepotism.

1.3 Loose Morals

Thirteen per cent (13%) said that loose morals are a challenge in the kitchen. They further argue that conditions of work promote extra marital affairs, hence majority of men are against their wives to work in the kitchen. This is consistent with Dickey and Stratford (1997; 75) who argue that it is problematic to have men and women working alongside each other for long and unusual hours. There is a likelihood of sexual and emotional liaisons developing among staff or extra marital affairs may result. Males dominate the kitchen, as they rigidly forbid their spouses to work in the kitchen.

1.4 Sexual Harassment

Ten percent (10%) of responses pointed out that sexual harassment had an impact in discriminating females in executive chef positions. This was also observed by Scott (1995) who indicated that social factors such as sexual harassment are considered as illegal form of sexual discrimination, whom the researcher also agrees with. This promotes a wide gap of gender disparity in the executive chef position.

The social factors affect females who are married at most. However, this is the reason why most of them quit the industry and start their own catering establishments or go for lectureship. Again, it has been observed that Zimbabwean females do value their marriages than work.

2. Physiological challenges

From the thirty (30) participants each individual was free to respond to each of the challenges. Out of 30, 10 respondents which is 33% argued that long work hours is the major challenge, 7 respondents which is 23% heat stress, 8 respondents which is 27% too much pressure and 5 respondents which is 17%, dehydration.

Table 7: Physiological Challenges

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Long working hours	10	33
Heat stress	7	23
Too much pressure	8	27
Dehydration	5	17
Total	30	100%

2.1 Long working hours

The table shows that long work hour is the major factor / challenge for female chefs in the kitchen, which at the end, a lot of chefs, despite gender end up having leg problems such as fungi and swollen legs as they stand for a longer time, putting on safety shoes which are closed almost every day. Females tend to suffer most especially when they are pregnant

2.2 Heat Stress

The major equipment in the kitchen is stoves and grillers. A kitchen is an ever hot place. One respondent echoes that:

“Chefs are exposed to heat all the times and some of the heat being from open appliances such as grillers”.

Too much exposure to heat causes a lot of ailments. This becomes an obstacle especially to females as they have bodied processes such as menstruation and pregnancies.

2.3 Too much pressure

There is a lot of pressure in the kitchen hence chefs have to be addicted to the pressure. It is through that pressure that chefs are also expected to come up with excellent dishes for the guest. There is need for chefs to concentrate on many dishes at once within a specific time; Chefs have two managers, namely the customer and the section manager

2.4 Dehydration

Five (17%) of respondents states that there is a challenge of dehydration since kitchen is a hot working environment. A lot of chefs sweat a lot these results in them losing a lot of liquids hence causes fatigue which is very dangerous to ones' health.

3 Infrastructural challenges

Responses revealed that their kitchens are badly planned (designed) and poor ventilation, thus categorised as infrastructural obstacle.

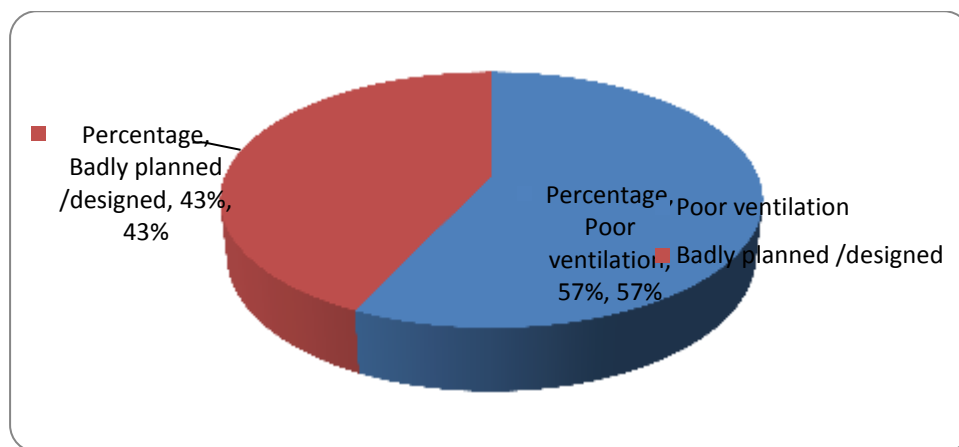


Figure 2: Infrastructural challenges in the kitchen.

3.1 Poor Ventilation

Seventeen (57%) respondents said poor ventilation in kitchens is a big challenge. The smoke from fats, burned food staffs normally results in problem associated with lungs. Hence most females tend to shun the kitchen, it is worse when one is pregnant.

3.2: Badly Planned/Designed

Thirteen (43%) of respondents argued that the kitchens are badly planned / designed, hence becomes a dangerous place to work in. Majority of females tend to shun such working environments and in most cases males are adventurous hence they persevere.

4 Technological

Ten (33%) of respondents argued that unavailability of modern equipment is one of the challenges nowadays. There is a lot of manual work in the kitchen; hence it becomes very difficult for females to lift hot saucepans with contents in them. If the hospitality industry could have advanced technology in the kitchen it makes the task easier and even females can easily operate, without causing fatigue and there will be a lot of efficiency and effectiveness in the kitchen. One respondent argues that:

“Non-availability of modern equipment, the kitchen job is more of manual work which I do not like”.

5 Economic

Twenty three (77%) of respondents indicated that low salaries and wages are a de-motivating factor especially to females.

However social, physiological and infrastructural factors are the most challenges, which females have in the kitchen. These are observed as obstacles which hinder females from reaching executive chef positions.

Interest of females in the executive chef position

Out of 30 respondents, 22 (73%) respondents said that they are very interested and really want the position. On the other hand 8 (27%) respondents said they are not interested at all.

Table: 8 Interest of females in the executive chef position

Response	No. of participants	Percentage
Interested	22	73
Not interested	8	27
Total	30	100%

Majority (73%) of respondents said, they are really interested in the executive chef position and they gave reasons such as, they have great aspiration, believe have good qualities to be a good leader, it gives them space to be more creative. It is also a position of accomplishment, for better package reasons and gains much exposure in terms of experience. One respondent argues that:

“Yes, because I believe I have the qualities to be a good leader”.

This shows that, females, like anyone else, have a passion for the executive chef position. On the other hand 8 (27%) of respondents echoed that they are not interested due to the following reasons: the conditions of the kitchen job, they are afraid of their marriages; there is no support by management and fellow chefs. One respondent argues that;

“Initially I wanted to be up there before knowing the real industry, but now I know what is in there, I no longer have interest”.

The researchers discovered that; females tend to create their own glass ceiling, caused by their negative attitude towards kitchen jobs. However majority of the responses were from married respondents, hence married females are the most affected.

What would stop one to be an executive chef?

Ten per cent (10%) of respondents felt that family needs hinder them to be on the executive Chef position, whilst seven (7%) said it is because of bodied processes, seventeen per cent (17%) is finance whilst ten per cent (10%) is because of nepotism. Seven per cent (7%) of respondents pointed out that it is because of professional qualification. The majority of respondents fifty per cent (50%) believe that is because of experience.

Table: 9 Views on what would stop one to be an Executive Chef

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Family needs	3	10
Experience	15	50
Nepotism	3	10
Finance	5	17
Bodied processes	2	7
Professional qualifications	2	7
Total	30	100%

1. Family Needs

Of those who felt that family needs will deny them to be executive Chefs, the researchers found that they are married and have siblings. However, there are three ways to resolve this conflict, which are either delaying or choosing not to have children to succeed professionally, to leave the professional kitchen for another career in the culinary field, or to adapt the two roles to make them more compatible. Gender is a less pressing issue; it is not about being a man or woman, but about having the confidence and personality.

2 Experience

Experience is the major factor. From the responses, experience is the major factor considered for one to be an Executive Chef despite educational / professional qualifications.

3 Nepotism

However, some respondents argued that nepotism also play a role, but is effective when one has experience and professional qualifications, as it will be an added advantage.

4 Finance

Other respondents believe that finance is a factor in the sense that it facilitates employees to further their studies, hence achieve the required qualification. The researcher argues that from responses, one could easily deduce

that experience is a major factor being considered for one to be an executive chef and education will be added advantage.

5 Bodied processes

Very few respondents pointed out bodied processes, which involve menstruation and pregnancy. One interviewee said:

“There are situations such as pregnancy, which is a condition one cannot control. Too much heat and long standing hours cannot be overcome thereby leading to seek some rest, leaving the males in the kitchen.

From this response, it seems females believe that their biological mechanism deter them to be executive chefs. However, the researcher argues that this is not an everyday issue; hence nothing in terms of biological factor should deter them. They should learn to control themselves whenever there are at such situations, because it applies to all female in any type of the job.

6 Professional Qualifications

Other respondents said that professional qualifications deter females /males to make it to the position of executive chef. The professional qualifications suitable for one to be Executive chef are Apprenticeship (class 1 journey man in professional cookery) National Diploma in Professional cookery, Higher National Diploma in Professional cookery.

Handling of kitchen conditions between males and females

These involve long working hours often into the late hours of the night and on weekends. There is too much of shift work and predominately party time / temporary and casual labour force. A commercial kitchen is usually a hot place, often unclean filled with strong smells and intense pressure. There is also carrying of heavy stock pots and cooking is very routine and repetitive. There are spills, wet floors and flames and burns.

The research shows that 13 (43%) of respondents pointed out that the work is physically challenging hence men are strong. Majority of these responses were from male chefs. It is from these responses that stereotype is still existing in the kitchen. Whereas 10 (33%) said that all people are the same only what it needs is passion towards work. When one has passion he/she can endure whatever condition. It must be acknowledged that the kitchen is a hard place for anyone to succeed. In any profession where one wants to advance, it requires hard work, determination, practice and so forth. Seven (23%) postulated that females and males cannot handle the conditions at the same level due to bodied processes. The bodied processes of women are used to regulate and even eliminate or reject women from the kitchen. Below is the graph showing the difference in how females/males handle the conditions in the kitchen.

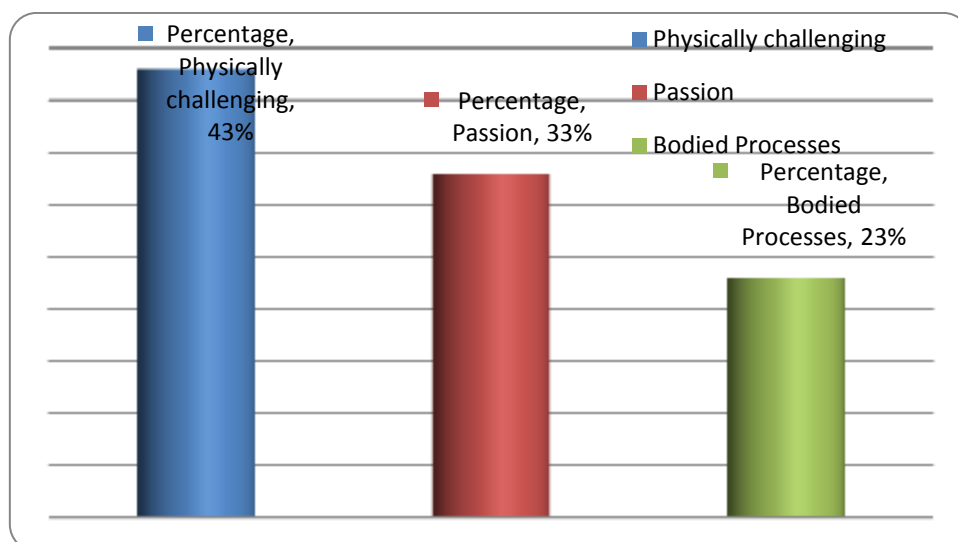


Figure 3: Handling of kitchen conditions between males and females.

From the above graph it can be strongly agreed that man are stronger and can handle the condition better than females. Bodied processes are not an everyday occasion hence females can handle samely with males but they need to have passion on the job.

Criteria used for one to be an Executive chef

The research shows that 12 (40%) echoed that, experience is the major factor used to appoint a chef to an executive chef position. It is obtained by working in all departments in the kitchen. Thirty three per cent (10) argued that for someone to be an executive chef one has to be well experienced and professional qualifications is the added advantage for promotion to an executive chef position. Thirteen per cent (13%) of respondents said professional qualifications are one of the criteria used. Seven per cent (7%) pointed out that work performance is another factor.

Table 9: Criteria used for one to be an Executive chef

Response	Experience	Experience+ professional qualifications	Professional qualifications alone	Nepotism	Work perform
Percentage	40%	33%	13%	7%	7%

1: Experience

Twelve (40%) of the responses echoed that experience is the major factor used to appoint an executive chef position. It is obtained by working in all departments in the kitchen. Experience is the major factor in determining one to be the executive chef in Zimbabwean Hotels. One responded said:

“Experience is the best criteria used to choose an executive chef. An executive chef should have practical knowledge no matter how educated he/she may be”

These findings are consistent with those of Platzer (2011) who believes that training in kitchen is mostly informal as chefs do hands on (apprenticeship).

2: Experience and Professional qualifications

Thirty three per cent (33%) argued that for someone to be an executive chef, one has to be well experienced and professional qualifications is the added advantage for promotion to an executive chef position. Experience plus professional qualifications is believed to be more effective for one to be an executive chef.

3: Professional qualifications

A reasonable number of respondents argued that professional qualification is one of the criteria used for the selection of executive chef. It is argued that education alone is not enough for one to be an executive chef.

4: Nepotism

Nepotism and work performance had 7% each. This explains why most of chefs in the kitchen are relatives and know each other. The moment one chef is employed by one company he/she tends to recommend his colleagues to where one is employed.

5: Work Performance

However, work performance supports experience and really kitchen jobs needs one to perform exceptionally by being very efficient, artistic in dishes prepared, innovative without consulting the executive chef all the time. Just like in any other job if one portrays these qualities, the chances of being promoted to executive chef position are very high.

It is from these findings that experience in kitchen counts a lot, professional qualifications cannot produce a dish but, one need to be hands on, that’s the best training one would get to the executive chef position. However, for one to be an executive chef, it takes years, hence contributing to the absence of females in executive chef position as they leave the kitchen before reaching the position. This concurs with Harris and Giuffre (2010).

Effectiveness of national gender policy in the kitchen

1 Effective

Out of 30 respondents, seventeen (57%) said National Gender Policy is effective as most of the females are now training in the kitchen. One respondent argues that:

“The National Gender Policy implemented is effective in the sense that even the ladies can be chefs, but then it is all up to individual to go a step further”

From the statement above, females are now in the kitchen and it depends with one’s opinion whether to climb the ladder or not.

4.14.2: Not Effective

Thirteen (43%) of respondents said National Gender Policy is not effective especially on the Executive Chef Position. One interviewee argues that:

“Effectiveness is measured against results. So the absences of females in Executive chef positions mean the Policy has not been very effective”.

The researcher finds that the majority of respondents are in support of effectiveness of this National Gender Policy, but this applies to lower positions in the kitchen. The fact that females are absent in the executive chef position means the implementation is very slow hence few have rose to the Executive Chef position.

Measures put in place to attract more females in the kitchen

Twenty (67%) responses echoed that hospitality industry (kitchen) should improve working conditions, and seven (23%) of responses pointed out that should offer same amount of salaries / wages and quality of incentives whilst three (10%) said females should be given leading positions.

Table 10: Measures put in place to attract more females in the kitchen.

Response	No. of response	Percentage
Improve working conditions	20	67
Offer same amount salaries/wages	7	23
Women should be given leading positions	3	10

1 Improve working conditions

Sixty seven per cent (67%) said that the Hotel kitchens should improve working conditions so as to attract more females. However, technology can make work easier.

2 Offer same amount of salaries/wages

Twenty – three per cent (23%) of responses said that Hotels (kitchen) has to provide amount and quality of incentives and same salaries / wages regardless of sex to each and every position one has. This will encourage females to stay in the industry and feel they are part and parcel of the industry. This would encourage more females to join the industry from other sectors of the economy.

3 Women should be given leading positions

Ten per cent (10%) of responses said that females should be given leading positions and the opportunity to develop supervisory or management skills as part of their undergraduate industrial placements. It has also been revealed that some opportunity in obtaining suitable employment must be given to females just like males and promotions must be the same.

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

In trying to establish why Zimbabwe hotel kitchens do not have female Executive chef, attitude and lack of experience ranked number one, followed by lack of confidence, lack of support and the least is weaker sex. These findings remarkably agree with Cooper (2000) who argues that there is a notion from the start that women are not capable of being efficient workers in the commercial kitchens. It is already presumed that men are up for the task, but many women are put to the test before their male co-workers will accept them. Females are also said that they do not promote themselves.

The findings also revealed that females lack experience of which for one to be an Executive chef has to go through many sections and it takes years, usually at least ten years. It would be a very extraordinary case for someone to only walk into the commercial kitchen and take charge. Working in the kitchen is not easy, this is in agreement with Cooper (2000) who says that work in the kitchen may at times be rewarding, but it may more often than not be stressful and tolling on many levels, not just physical especially starting at junior cook position, one really has to put in the effort and consistent quality work to be considered for promotion to the next higher level. No matter one’s possible gender, the Executive chef position is a long and demanding career path to pursue. Females may quit the kitchen without much experience due to work family conflict, such as child bearing, taking care and raising a child, which is a demanding responsibility on top of the kitchen job. In Zimbabwe women are still culturally expected to raise children and have a time frame in which they can have children. Findings also revealed that females lack confidence. If females have confidence they can perform better in whatever they do in the kitchen. Lack of confidence result in poor performance.

Females are said to lack support from the management this concurs with Stone (2007), who reveals that men, varying by class have been allowed to, and fully encouraged to pursue advanced education and seek entry and promotion in the management positions. It is evident from the findings that Zimbabwean Hotels are still holding to the old ideas of military style hierarchical structure in the professional kitchen. This is when the commercial kitchens were dominated by male chefs as they had to prepare food during war.

Despite the implementation of National Gender Policy in Zimbabwe, stereotype still exists in the kitchen. The findings echoed that females are considered to be a weaker sex.

The study also showed that there are challenges/obstacles faced by females in climbing the Executive chef position. The challenges were previously categorised in to five groups earlier. The groups were social, physiological, infrastructural, technological, and economic challenges. The findings showed that social factors were the most challenges faced by females in the kitchen

However, findings revealed that work-family conflict (marital status), nepotism, loose morals, and sexual harassment were social challenges which deter females to the Executive chef Position. A lot of females face challenges to balance work and family, as work practices in the kitchen actively deter females from participating in the Executive chef position.

Findings also revealed that long working hours impacts a lot to females to make it to executive chef position. Females find it difficult to combine and balance career goals and family needs. It is also observed that most of those females who get to the top are either single (no family) or divorced, and some women in the industry see this 'lifestyle decision' as a necessary evil. Cotter, (2001). From the comment above it can be said that females who are married are the most affected.

Economically, the industry is well known for its low wages/salaries. Conditions in the kitchen and low remuneration discourage females to be chefs, thus look for other professions which seem to be better than being in the kitchen. They can also prefer not to work. This is worse if one is married. As wife, one tends to weigh the value of money earned by their wives and the time lost for them in taking care for them and nurturing their siblings.

In trying to investigate the interest of females in the Executive chef position, findings revealed that, majority of females had interest in the position of Executive chef. It is from this interest that the researchers hope to see females in the Executive chef position in future. From the findings those who are not interested were married females, this means that work- family conflict is the major challenge deterring females in the Executive chef position.

However, the findings showed that the implementation of National Gender Policy is improving the composition of gender composition in the kitchen, as shown by the increase of females in the kitchen. On the other hand findings also revealed that National Gender Policy is not yet effective since Zimbabwean hotels do not have the female executive chef. There is need to see female chefs and male chefs as equal (with a few biological differences), and hotels should realise that both sex have same capabilities if given the chance to perform.

Recommendations

In view of the findings and conclusions reached above, the researcher recommends the following;

There is need for Zimbabwe Chefs Association (ZCA) and Hospitality Association of Zimbabwe (HAZ) to be active and spearhead educational awareness campaigns in Schools, colleges, different work places, communities at large, educating Zimbabweans especially males about professions in the Hotel kitchens (Chefs) so as to remove stigma and discrimination thus reducing discrimination on married female in the Hotel kitchens.

Executive Chef does not have shifts; it is recommended that the position of Executive chef should also have rotational shifts just like other positions in the kitchen. This will allow them to rest and be with their families.

Zimbabwe Hotel kitchens should emulate the western kitchen standards such as modern and comfortable kitchen conditions, for example such as large absorber with a lamp, placed over a separate desktop, equipped with cooking appliances such as an oven, hobs, a grate and even a deep-fryer. Unlike in Zimbabwe, chefs work in cramped conditions near hot stoves and ovens. Zimbabwe hotel kitchens should buy modern equipment/move with technology, technology helps save time and labour of which in the end it reduces fatigue and promote positive attitude of females which in the end they can endure to work in the kitchen plus gain experience.

The Ministry of Labour and Manpower Development and National Employment Council (for hotel Workers) should revise the salary/wages and make them attractive so as to attract more females when they do their cost-benefit analysis between working as a chef with other professions and, take into consideration both academic and professional qualifications, nature of work and level of responsibility without being gender biased.

Female chefs need to be hardworking, dedicated, endurance, persevere and promote themselves so as to be visible, and should have confidence in their selves and personality just like what males do.

There is need to educate males in the Zimbabwean community that Executive chef position and other positions in the kitchen are for all. Gendered societal expectations of females need to change as well. Changing policies to reflect the lives of various employees is one, but for any policy reform to genuinely take hold, attitude needs to change as well.

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