

“Exploring for Gender Based Discriminations in Public Sector Work Settings in Botswana: A Study of Employee Perceptions.”

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Abstract

*A sample of employees serving in varied Ministries in the public sector is analysed to assess the perceived nature and extent of gender discrimination in the public service in Botswana. Four categories of workplace conditions, namely, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, workplace support, and workplace stressors, are focused on. Because the basis for perceived differential treatment in the workplace for females and males could be the differential values attached to the various categories of workplace conditions by the two sexes, gender differences in the importance attached to the various categories of workplace conditions are also examined. Results from t-tests and for gender mean differences in perceived gender discrimination in general and in workplace conditions reveal that perceived levels in gender discrimination are low for both female and male employees. The means for the two sexes do not differ significantly. In addition, women are shown **not** to perceive inferior workplace experiences. Based on the lack of substantial discrimination in workplace rewards and conditions, it is concluded that de facto gender discrimination may exist but women do not perceive themselves to suffer or experience discrimination in the public sector.*

INTRODUCTION

As evident from the number of global conferences that have been held to deliberate on it, the subject of gender¹ equality has assumed global prominence (Bradshaw and Wallace, 1996). The first World Conference on Women was held in Mexico in 1975 and set the stage for the United Nations Women's Decade (1975-1985). Since then four other conferences have been held in Copenhagen, 1980, Nairobi - 1985, Beijing - 1995 and New York - 2000. While the Nairobi conference was a culmination of the United Nations Women's Decade, the New York meeting reviewed the progress in the implementation of the resolutions of the Beijing conference. Another key pointer to the global recognition of the persistent gender inequalities in the world and the need to stem them down is the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on December 18, 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly. Through the convention member states, among others, agreed to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on the basis of equality of men and women, the same rights.

In the developing countries as a whole the subject of gender discrimination is now receiving much attention relative to the period predating the Nairobi and the Beijing Conferences. At the heart of the gender equality issue have been several concerns that include access to and ownership/control of economic resources such as land, the distribution of household duties and participation in decision making at home and in other important policy making institutions. Other areas of concern are labour force participation and justice in the workplace once women join the labour market, access to education, political involvement, and access to positions of authority. Concerning the workplace, existing evidence reveal that the problem of gender discrimination spans both private sector and public sector labour markets (see e.g. Blunt and Popoola (1985). African Civil services, for example, are characterised by corruption that could bring about gender insensitivity. While the ideal public service is supposed to eschew ethics governed by the principles of rationality, neutrality, equity, justice and accountability, in reality the public service often falls short of meeting these ideals in many respects.

¹ Conventionally, the term gender is used to refer to the social meanings given to being either a man or a woman in a given society [see Frable, D.E.S. ‘Gender, Racial, Ethnic, Sexual and Class Identities’, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48 (1997), pp. 139 – 162]. However, for the purpose of this study the term is used virtually synonymously with the word sex, which is biologically inclined.

The gender inequality problem in the developing countries is compounded further by the existence of very limited legal structures that support equality between the sexes (see e.g., Kibwana, 1995; Miller and Yeager, 1994). In Botswana in particular, gender inequality has received increased attention during the last two or so decades. The subject has been on the agenda of many development discourses in the country since the Nairobi Conference of 1985 (Selolwane, 1995) and has become the preoccupation of many organisations, both governmental and non-governmental. These have organised workshops, seminars, and conferences with the objective to articulate the problems confronting women and to identify specific areas of inequality and the strategies required for eliminating them. Non-governmental Organisations such as Emang Basadi, Botswana Caucus of Women in Politics (BCWP), Botswana National Council on Women (BNCW), Women and the Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) Research and Education Trust, and the Women's Affairs Department (WAD) have expended considerable resources to diagnose the various components of gender inequalities in Botswana and to prescribe remedies.

Through their research reports, these have presented detailed depictions of some of the areas of gender inequality in the country. Not to forget the contributions of labour related organisations, including the Botswana Federation of Trade Unions (BFTU) and the National Amalgamated Local, Central Government and Parastatal Manual Workers Union (NALCGPMWU). These organisations have prioritized the pursuit of gender-sensitive policies and programmes as one way of maximizing the full potential of the Botswana people (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Botswana Federation of Trade Unions, 2004). Both the BFTU and the NALCGPMWU, for example, aim to empower and educate women on issues that affect them in and outside the workplace, including gender issues.

The efforts of organisations such as those listed above have produced outcomes such as government commitment in the area of gender. The government is a signatory to international conventions especially the Convention on the Elimination of ALL Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, among others. In this regard, it promulgated the National Policy on Women in Development whose major areas of focus included the elimination of all forms of inequalities and inequities among men and women in 1996 and as well as set up the Women's Affairs Unit in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs to deal with gender issues. Attempts have also been made at legal restructuring involving the review of laws affecting the status of women in Botswana including the Employment Act. Such progress, however, has not been able to eliminate the gender gap.

The existing literature shows that women are yet to become equal partners with men (Bhusumane 1993; Selolwane, 1995; Sharma 1993; The Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women, 1995). They still have less access to educational opportunities and to positions of political power. Major gender inequalities also persist in the labour market in terms of participation rates, earnings power, mobility (or advancement) chances, and further training. In the public service in particular, considerations other than those of merit are said to influence recruitment, placement and promotions, among others. While such studies are valuable to the understanding of gender inequalities in the labour market in Botswana, most of them only present macro-level data. In addition, these are both sparse and incomplete and focus mainly on objective as opposed to subjective inequalities. There is thus a need for a more comprehensive micro-level social science research that would facilitate a more complete understanding of the perceived nature and extent of gender inequalities and the processes producing them in the modern (formal) workplace in Botswana as opposed to just showing aggregate societal patterns. It is against this backdrop that this study was initiated.

This study focuses on the problem of gender discrimination in the public sector employment setting in Botswana. Its main aim is to examine employees' perceived awareness of discrimination due to situational factors (workplace conditions) in the public sector work setting. The study seeks to answer the question; does public sector employment give advantages to males over females? That is, do male employees enjoy undue advantages, relative to their female counterparts, in terms of recruitment to the public service, participation in decision making, promotions, training opportunities, pay, fringe benefits assignment of tasks, and co-operation of supervisors, among others? To do so, descriptive data on the perceptions of women and men in the public service are collected and analysed to understand whether men and women experience the same treatment in the workplace. The study's guiding assumption is that where the fight against gender inequalities in the different spheres of life has been elevated to greater heights, like has happened in Botswana, women will be more sensitive to discriminatory practices that may occur in different organizations and environments, the workplace included.

The study distinguishes between what we refer to as "objective" and "subject" gender discrimination and emphasises the latter in its analysis. While the former refers *de facto* discrimination; that is, discrimination that exists as a fact regardless of whether workers recognise it or not. Where such discrimination exists, employees may not experience it (or suffer it psychologically) and thus the feelings of injustice and deprivation that are the supposed outcome of discrimination may be lacking. Also consequences such as frustration, discouragement, demoralisation and lowered productivity that are often associated with those who experience discrimination in the workplace may not be evident. In sum, the discrimination may be there but remains unreal to the would-be victims. On the contrary, subjective discrimination refers to discrimination that has been recognised by those affected. These experience or perceive the discrimination and it has become an object of concern to them. It is this perception that makes the discrimination real in the mind of the victim thus causing him or her to suffer deprivation and feelings of injustice. At this level, the victim is likely to favour and support any interventions, policy or otherwise that are tailored to alleviate the problem.

Focusing on workplace gender discrimination in general and on subjective gender discrimination in particular is important for two reasons. First, it will contribute to the stock of theoretical knowledge in area where the level of available micro-level data is low. An impediment to the understanding of the magnitude of gender inequality in developing countries is the lack of "... valid, reliable, timely, culturally relevant and internationally comparable data" (Adhiambo-Odul, 1995; Nzomo, 1995). Through the proposed study, the body of cross-cultural knowledge about gender discrimination in the workplace will be increased. In particular, the study will facilitate the assessment of whether the nationwide gender awareness building efforts at grass root and district levels that followed the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women has had an impact on the public's perception of gender inequality and the advancement of women in Botswana.

Second, the study will generate knowledge that can form the basis for the formulation of and, above all, the effective implementation of future labour market policies for the eradication of gender based discriminations in the public sector in Botswana. Such policies are imperative to the creation of more friendlier and hospitable work environments for both men and women. Any form of gender discrimination in the workplace, whether it affects men or women, is problematic and needs to be attended to. Gender discrimination denies officers who qualify the opportunities for training, promotion and career development. This, in turn, affects the work environment adversely. It leads to frustration, discouragement, marginalisation (Civil, 1998), lack of motivation and low productivity. This undermines the very goal of the employing firm; to enhance productivity and delivery of services. In some cases the demoralisation associated with discrimination pushes female employees to exchange sexual favour for promotion or opportunities for further training, among others. A clear understanding of the perceived nature and extent of such discrimination is thus essential for its eradication. By examining perception about gender discrimination in terms of various structural elements of the workplace, it will be possible to identify those aspects of the public sector for which change might be expected to improve working conditions for females. It is hoped that this, in turn, might boost worker satisfaction and commitment and thereby induce more effective delivery of public services in a country where the goal of raising productivity has become a major preoccupation in all sectors of the economy.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN BOTSWANA: AN OVERVIEW

Gender based discrimination in the workplace is not a new or an emerging problem. Basically, it dates back to the entry of women into the formal labour market. Based on the Beijing Conference Report (United Nations, 1996), women continue to experience direct and indirect discrimination in the workplace. In today's labour markets, women face a number of disadvantages that include unequal pay and benefits relative to men even where they have comparable education (skills) and experience. Women also have less promotional chances, limited access to positions of authority and are concentrated in particular types of jobs, usually lower status unskilled or semiskilled service jobs. According to the 1995 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, for example, in developing countries, women still constitute less than a seventh of administrative and managerial personnel (UNDP, 1196).

Concerning Botswana in particular, the available evidence, though limited, reveal that women in Botswana still experience various forms of discrimination in several spheres of life despite the relenting campaigns by various organisations to combat gender inequalities.

As such, gender inequality debates have continued to dominate many development discourses in the country since the 1985 Nairobi Conference on the Women's Decade. Various conferences, workshops and seminars have been organised by both governmental departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to deliberate over this subject with the view to identifying the major areas of discrimination and the strategies that can be employed to alleviate the situation. Based on the existing evidence, some of the areas characterised by gender discrimination in Botswana include education and employment.

Generally speaking, women in Botswana are said to have less access to education, employment opportunities in general and to managerial (or authority) positions (Selolwane, 1995; Women's Affairs Division, 1995; The Fourth U.N. World Conference on Women, 1995). Concerning employment in general, gender gaps in employment opportunities narrowed down between 1981 and 1991 but they still remain a major concern in the labour market. Not only do women occupy mainly lower level managerial positions, they also have fewer opportunities for entry into professional jobs. They are said to occupy only a third of the professional positions across all industries including the civil service. A more pervasive presence of women within a particular occupation does not guarantee a greater presence in higher level/ managerial positions (Grint, 1991). For instance, both the education and health sectors in Botswana have been major sources of employment for women but only a minor source of managerial opportunities for them. This is a clear manifestation of a lack of access to promotional opportunities for female employees. According to Reskin and Padavic (1994), promotion barriers reduce women's opportunities to exercise authority on the job and to have autonomy from close supervision. This, in turn, reduces their job satisfaction and pushes them to quit the workplace because of frustration.

In Botswana, the occupational segregation of women that locates women in lower paying jobs has created wage differences between male and female workers with females earning less than males. A study conducted by Obuseng and Siphambe (1999) revealed overall large earnings differentials between male and female workers mainly due to occupational segregation. The differences however, tend to converge as the levels of education among workers rise. The study showed that while there is little discrimination in the public sector, in the private sector discrimination against women appears to be a major factor in accounting for the differences in earnings.

It is because of disparities like those listed above that the 1995 Botswana Policy on Women and Development emerged. The policy, which was authored by the Women's Affairs Division, Department of Culture and social services, Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, appealed for the streamlining of the staffing processes in the public service by the DPSM to make them gender sensitive. In addition, it appealed to the Ministry of Education to adopt specific measures to redress the gender imbalance in staffing observable in schools and other affiliated institutions so as to guarantee equity in the distribution of male and female staff. Here, existing evidence, for example, shows that factors such as age and gender act as barriers to women's entry into education administration (Bhusumane, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

In this study employment relationships in the public sector are treated as a form of exchange taking place between the employer and the employees. To analyse these relationships, the broad social exchange perspective (See e.g., Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961) is utilised. Based on this perspective, individuals enter social relations in anticipation of rewards or benefits in exchange for their inputs (or investments) in the relationship. The rewards could be both intrinsic and extrinsic factors while inputs include factors such as effort, status, skill, education, experience, seniority and productivity. As applied to work organisations exchange theory argues that individuals perform for, or make contributions to, an organisation in exchange for certain rewards or inducements (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1982; Farrell and Rusbult, 1981). Prospective members to an organisation bring needs and goals and agree to supply their skills and energies in exchange for organisational resources (such as rewards or payments from the organisation) capable of satisfying those needs and goals. To the extent that there is a favourable balance or match between what the organisation provides and the members' expectations (or between inducements and contributions), the members' satisfaction is said to be maximised and performance is maintained. Central to the broad exchange perspective are three theories, namely, equity theory (Adams, 1965; Anderson, 1976; Lawler, 1973; Vroom 1964), expectancy theory (Lawler, 1973; Vroom 1964) and investment theory. All three theories rely on rewards, costs and/or investments to explain membership and performance in an organisation.

It is the equity branch of the exchange perspective that is considered applicable to this study. Also termed justice theory (Jasso, 1983a, 1983b; Markovsky, 1985), the theory posits that individuals compare their inputs (or contributions) - such as status, seniority skills, experience, task performance, education and effort - and outcomes (or inducements) with those of comparable others within or outside the work organisation, to determine what their equitable return and, consequently, the fairness of the exchange should be. The rewards are usually valued goods (Markovsky, 1985) such as pay and related monetary benefits, social goods and social opportunities like promotion opportunities in a work organisation, or other working conditions such as autonomy and job variety. In situations of inequity the individual experiences a feeling of injustice relative to individuals in equitable situations (Blau, 1964; Adams, 1963). Applied to the study of gender discrimination in the workplace, this argument suggests that, using their male counterparts as comparison others, female employees will perceive injustice or discrimination if they consider their rewards to be lower than those of males who have comparable inputs in the organisation. In such a case, the ratio of investments to outcomes for female is considered unequal to that of the comparison persons (males).

However, given the gendered nature of socialisation (Lips, 2001) in which women are taught not to necessarily perceive and/or expect the same entitlements as their male counterparts, the above argument may not hold true. In such cases, women would not perceive differential treatment relative to men as necessarily discriminatory. Furthermore, based on the so termed differential entitlement hypothesis, male and female employees tend to bring different personal expectations to the workplace (Phelan, 1994; Hodson, 1985; Major and Konar, 1984; Major, McFarlin and Gagnon, 1984). Women, it is argued, expect and consider fair a smaller job reward for the same job input relative to men. Female employees, for instance, are said to have lower pay expectations even when their job inputs are not lower than those of male employees. Because of this male and female employees are likely to evaluate their jobs differently, with women considering fair a lower return (rewards) for their inputs than do men.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature review presented earlier the following hypotheses will be tested by this study:

- H₁. Relative to male employees, female employees perceive the public sector in Botswana to be characterised by gender based discrimination.
- H₂. Relative to males, females in public sector employment in Botswana perceive gender based discrimination in hiring/recruitment practices.
- H₃. Relative to male employees, female employees in the public sector perceive their jobs to have inferior intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards and workplace support, and to have high workplace stress.

DELINEATION OF STUDY VARIABLES

To present a comprehensive overview of the perceived nature and extent of gender discrimination in the public service, this study focuses on a broad range of workplace conditions experienced by employees. For ease of reference these are grouped into four categories, namely, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, workplace support and workplace stressors (see Appendix II: Table 4 for the definition of the specific conditions that were analysed under each category). In light of the rationale presented earlier for an emphasis on subjective as opposed to objective discrimination, the variables, with the exception of pay and promotional rate, capture perceptions rather than an objective reality. Furthermore, it would have been impossible to quantify most of the forms of discrimination studied using objective standards.

Intrinsic rewards, variously termed task rewards, are benefits inherent to the work itself and fulfil human goals related to the individual workers' internal sense of fulfilment (Kalleberg, 1977; Greenberg, 1980). These include the freedom to plan work (or self-direction and responsibility), the chance to learn new skills and abilities, opportunities to use one's skills and abilities (challenging work), being informed about the job, creativity, the ability to do the job well, sufficient feedback regarding the effectiveness of one's effort, being fairly rewarded for work accomplished, the chance to see the results of work done, and the chance for self expression through work (Price and Mueller, 1986a; Mottaz, 1985; Greenberg, 1980). This study analyses four work conditions - participation in decision making, autonomy, task significance and training opportunity - as intrinsic rewards.

Extrinsic rewards are benefits that are not inherent to the work itself but instead are the by-products of doing the work (Greenberg 1980; Kalleberg, 1977). They are provided by the organisation for the sake of motivating the workers to perform their tasks and maintain membership in the organisation. For the purpose of this study the following work conditions are analysed as extrinsic rewards: Pay, job security, promotional opportunity, promotional rate, and access to managerial positions. Workplace support represents work conditions that satisfy the employee needs for assistance in job-related problems (or role-related matters). They include friendly, helpful, and supportive supervisors/management and a cohesive work group (Randall and Cote, 1991; Rothman, 1987; Price and Mueller, 1986a, 1986b). The support conditions analysed in this study are supervisory support, upward communication, grievance procedures, socialisation practices, and work group cohesion. An employee could receive social support from members of his/her work group, supervisors and/or managers (Ganster, Fusilier and Mayes, 1986; Mottaz, 1985).

Finally, workplace stressors (Ganster, Fusilier and Mayes, 1986; Hamel and Bracken, 1986) are those work conditions that undermine the employee's ability to perform his/her tasks efficiently. They include those conditions that provide "creative comfort, i.e., a 'soft' job" such as convenient travel to and from work, good hours, freedom from ambiguous roles, pleasant surroundings, freedom from role overload (enough time to complete tasks), and freedom from conflicting job demands (Kalleberg, 1977). Their presence in the work environment brings pressure to bear on the employee thereby undermining his/her abilities to cope with the job requirements (House, 1981). The following stressors are examined by this study: Workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, resource inadequacy, and routinization.

DATA AND METHODS

This study targets employees serving in the Public Service in Botswana. The public service initially operated under the auspices of the Public Service Commission (PSC) which was established by Section 109 of the Botswana Constitution to oversee the employment of individuals into the public service. However, the introduction of the Constitution Amendment Act and the (revised) Public Service Act of 1979 created the post of Director of Personnel, currently Director of Public Service Management (DPSM). Since then most of the functions that were hitherto performed by the PSC were transferred to the DPSM and other officers as laid down by the Public Service Act.

The study analysed a sample of middle and high cadre employees stationed at the headquarters of the ministries of agriculture, education and the DPSM. The three were selected randomly from a sampling frame incorporating all government ministries that make up the Public Service in Botswana. Based on information obtained from the DPSM, the head offices of the ministries of agriculture, education and DPSM, respectively, were staffed by about 150, 105 and 75 employees within the category targeted by this study. Proportionate samples were randomly selected from the three ministries as follows: Ministry of agriculture, 120 respondents, Ministry of Education - 85 respondents and DPSM - 60 respondents. All 265 respondents were distributed with self-administered questionnaires designed to gather information about the employee job experiences, work attitudes and personal backgrounds. They were allowed time to complete the survey, which, it was expected, would not take more than forty-five minutes, then hand them over to the researcher or an assistant. Where it was not possible for employees to complete the questionnaires and hand them over to the researcher or an assistant immediately, a two-day duration was allowed. Where surveys had not been completed by the end of one week, the research issued written follow up reminders to the respondents who were affected. Where a respondent indicated that the questionnaire had been misplaced, a new one was supplied to him/her.

All workplace conditions in the study were measured using multiple item indices. To avoid response set bias, the items were distributed randomly throughout the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to rate each item on a likert-type scale with five response points coded from "strongly agree" [5] to "strongly disagree" [1]. Most of the scales have been used in previous studies (Mulinge and Mueller, 1998; Allen and Meyer, 1990) and have been judged to have acceptable validity and reliability. To strengthen item accuracy, clarity, and ease of respondent completion of the questionnaire, the researcher/ assistant explained the purpose of the study to the respondents before the surveys were distributed to them. Any concerns that the respondents might have were addressed before their co-operation was enlisted for the study.

To test for differential treatment in the workplace for men and women, mean levels in the various rewards and workplace conditions are examined. T-tests (one-tailed) are utilised to check for the possible existence of significant differences between group means.

RESULTS

Out of the 265 surveys distributed for the study, 206 were completed and returned to the researcher. Four questionnaires out of this total number, however, were poorly completed and judged unsuitable for the analysis. Thus the sample analysed for the study was composed of 202 employees distributed across the Ministries studied as follows: Ministry of Agriculture, 92 surveys, Ministry of Education - 66 surveys and DPSM - 40 surveys. These represented an overall response rate of 76.2 percent. The response rates for the various Ministries were as follows: Ministry of Agriculture, 76.7 percent, Ministry of Education 77.6 percent and DPSM, 66.7 percent. The sample comprised 53.5 percent (108) females and 46.5 percent (94) males. These ranged in seniority from job group B5 to job group D2. About 26.7 percent of those studied were in B category job groups, 36.1 percent were in C category job groups and the rest 37.2 percent were occupying D category job group positions. Further analysis utilizing the respondents' sex and job group revealed that women were over represented in lower jobs groups (B and C) while men dominated upper level (group D) jobs (see Table 1). As evident from Table 1, women comprised 75.9 percent and 58.9 percent of all respondents occupying groups B and C jobs, respectively, and only 32.0 percents of those occupying group D jobs.

Those studied were aged between 26 to 55 years; the mean age was 38.39 years. Educational attainment for the sample ranged between 9 and 20 years of schooling with a mean of 13.43 years. About 54.7 percent of them had completed Senior High School and above levels of education. The length of service (tenure) for the employees studied ranged between 1 and 33 years; the mean tenure for the total sample was 11.39 years. The length of service among females ranged from 1 to 33 years with the mean tenure being 10.6 years. That for males ranged from 1 and 26 years; the mean tenure was 12.15 years. Incomes for the total sample ranged from Pula 525.00 to 19,500.00 per month, the mean monthly income was Pula 2,890.15.

Table 1 about here

Perceived Gender Differences in Workplace Treatment

There are three possible outcomes when examining gender difference in work conditions: 1) The work conditions are the same for men and women, 2) men experience better work conditions, 3) women experience better work conditions. For a society like Botswana which is still strongly patriarchal, it is highly unlikely that women would experience better workplace conditions than men. Otherwise, even in developed societies that are characterised by less patriarchy and considerably stronger measures designed to check gender inequality, women still fare worse than men in the workplace. Table 2 presents the t-test results for gender discrimination (broadly defined), discrimination in recruitment to the public sector and for perceived gender differences in workplace experiences. As evident from the Table, although both women and men perceived high² levels off discrimination in the public sector, women reported slightly higher perceived general gender discrimination; the mean scores were 11.6 and 10.90 out of a possible 15 points for women and men, respectively. Also, both sexes reported moderate levels of discrimination in recruitment practices - the mean scores were 8.97 for females and 9.15 for males - but this time around the mean scores for males were slightly higher than those for females by 0.18 points. In both cases the mean scores were not statistically significant; meaning that there existed no true differences in perceived discrimination in general and in recruitment practices among female and male employees in the public sector.

Turning to workplace rewards, the study showed that women in the public sector in Botswana did not perceive themselves to be receiving inferior intrinsic rewards relative to men. An examination of the mean differences in intrinsic rewards showed that there existed no substantial sex differences in all variables analysed for this category of workplace rewards. The results also showed that the level of perceived employee participation in decision making was moderate for both women and men.

² For all items measured using scales of 1-15, the scores are rated as follows: 1 -5.0 = low, 5.1-10 = moderate and 10.1-15 = high.

Out of a possible score of 15 points, the mean participation in decision making was 7.22 points for females and 7.90 points for males. Similarly, both male and female employees perceived their jobs to offer moderate levels of autonomy, high levels of task significance and moderate levels of training opportunities. Despite the lack of statistically substantial mean differences in intrinsic rewards for females and males, the data showed that, consistent with expectations, women perceived slightly lower levels in participation in decision making and autonomy but, contrary to expectations, they perceived slightly higher levels of training opportunities. Both females and males perceived their jobs to be characterised by relatively equal levels of task significance.

Table 2 about here

With reference to extrinsic rewards, significant gender differences were observed in pay, job security and in access to management positions. Consistent with expectations, the mean monthly income for female employees was found to be substantially lower than that of their male counterparts. On average, women were earning Pula 1,119.06 less than men per month.

Further analyses showed that for females, monthly incomes ranged from Pula 525.00 to 5,500.00 with the mean income being Pula 2,259.19 compared to those for male employees which ranged from Pula 650.00 to 19,500.00 with a mean of Pula 3,574.58. In addition, female employees were over-represented in lower income brackets. About 66.5% of them earned Pula 2,500 and below per month compared to about 27.9 percent of males who fell within the same income bracket. The results for job security and access to managerial positions though significantly different for females and males were opposite to the expected direction. Women perceived substantially higher job security and access to promotional opportunities relative to men. Women's mean scores for these two rewards were higher by .81 and .94 points, respectively, than those of men. The results also showed that, although men and women did not differ significantly in promotional opportunities, contrary to expectations, women were slightly higher in within job mobility chances than men. However, the promotional rate was found to be relatively low but uniform for both sexes. The results indicated that, on average both female and male employees in the Public Sector were promoted 0.28 times per year.

The results revealed no substantial perceived gender differences in all workplace support conditions studied save supervisory support. As evident from Table 2, women, contrary to expectations, perceived their supervisors to be more supportive in job related matters than men did. Their reported mean supervisory support score of 11.45 points out of a possible score of 15 points was 1.72 points higher than that reported by males of 9.73 points. The difference was significant at .05 level or better (one-tailed test). Overall both women and men reported moderate scores in upward communication, grievance procedures and socialisation practices and high scores in work group cohesion but their scores in all cases did not differ significantly. However, as expected, the mean scores for perceived grievance procedures and work group cohesion were (slightly) lower for women relative to men. On the contrary, mean scores for upward communication and socialisation practices were slightly higher for females relative to males; the differences were in the expected direction.

Workplace stressors constituted the last category of variables analysed. Based on Table 2, females differed significantly from their male counterparts in their levels of perceived workload, resource inadequacy and routinization but not in the levels of role ambiguity and role conflict. As expected, women perceived themselves to be under worked relative to men. The mean workload (of 10.72 out of a possible total of 15 points) for male employees was higher by 1.03 points than that of female employees of 9.69 points; the difference was significant at the .05 or better level (one-tailed test). The results also indicated that women, as expected, perceived their jobs to be more routinized than those of male employees. Their mean routinization score of 8.06 (out of 15 possible points) was .21 points higher than that of men of 7.85 points and was significantly different at .05 or better level (one-tailed test). However, contrary to expectations, women perceived their jobs to offer them more resources with which to carry out their responsibilities than men did; their mean score of 8.06 points in resource inadequacy was 0.97 points lower than that reported by males. The two means were statistically different at the .05 or better level (one-tailed test). As alluded to earlier, no significant differences were found in perceived levels of role ambiguity and role conflict for female and male employees. Although, as expected, women perceived their jobs to be characterised by greater ambiguity than men's, the mean difference in perceptions was not statistically significant. Contrary to expectations, women perceived slightly lower but statistically insignificant role conflict in their jobs relative to men.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to assess the perceived nature and extent of gender discrimination in the public service in Botswana. More specifically, it aimed to establish whether there existed significant differences in perceived general gender discrimination, discrimination in recruitment and in workplace experiences for women and men. To do so the study tested three hypotheses. The study (t-tests) results failed to support the first and second hypotheses that, relative to males, female employees perceive the public sector to be characterised by gender based discrimination in general and that they (women) perceived gender based discrimination in hiring/recruitment practices. Although women were slightly higher in perceptions of general discrimination and in discrimination in recruitment, the results revealed no significant differences between males and females in both variables, meaning that women did not perceive greater gender discrimination in general and in recruitment practices. The results that women did not perceive greater gender discrimination in general and in recruitment practices tend to support those researchers who have argued that membership within a discriminated-against social group does not always result in increased awareness of discrimination (Crosby, Putfall, Snyder, O'Connell, and Whalen, 1989; Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, and Hemker, 1986).

There are a number of possible explanations that we can advance with respect to these findings. First, it could be attributable to the gains made by women as a whole in their struggle for gender equality. That is, it could be an indication that through the efforts of organisations and groups such as Emang Basadi, BNCW, and WLSA, women in Botswana have made considerable gains toward becoming equal partners with men in development in general and in the labour market in particular. However, this view has been belied by research conducted by Datta exploring the case for the inclusion of men in localised Gender and Development discourse, policies and programmes (Datta, 2004). Second, the results could be considered to be the consequence of the existence of clear terms of service in the public sector that stress qualification, experience and tenure as the basic conditions for recruitment and within the job mobility. Third, the situation could be explained in terms of what has been termed the "own-gender referents" argument (see e.g. Phelan, 1994; Hodson, 1989; Kessler and McRae, 1982).

This is the tendency for women in the workplace mainly to compare themselves to fellow women occupying similar positions and experiencing similar disadvantages rather than to men. This diminishes the experience/perception of discrimination that may accrue in the process of justice evaluation. This is likely to occur in situations where occupational segregation is pronounced (Major, 1994). The analysis of the distribution of the respondents by sex and job group appears to suggest this to be the case for this study. As indicated earlier, the bulk of the women interviewed for this study occupied lower level positions where they constituted the overwhelming majority.

That women did not perceive greater overall discrimination in the public service in Botswana could also be a manifestation of the gendered nature of socialisation, in which women are taught not to necessarily perceive and/or expect the same entitlements as their male counterparts. Based on the 'differential entitlement standards' argument, women have been socialized in both family and the workplace to expect less for their inputs (McDuff, 2001; Hale, 1999; Mueller and Wallace, 1996; Hodson, 1985; Major and Konar, 1984; Major, McFarlin and Gagnon, 1984; Anderson, 1976). As such, male and female employees tend to bring different personal expectations to the workplace. Specifically, women employees tend to undervalue their contributions as well as their roles, including feeling that they are irrelevant within the organization. This, in turn could result in women employees not perceiving discrimination and other injustices that may affect them adversely. Finally, the lack of feelings of discrimination among women employees in Botswana could also be the consequence of national and communal attitudes towards them, which have pushed them to develop certain negative attitudes such as lack of confidence in themselves and in their abilities and lack of awareness of the value of acquired knowledge, experience and expertise (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Botswana Federation of Trade Unions, 2004).

The study results also failed to offer substantial support for the study's third hypothesis which stated that, relative to male employees, female employees in the public sector perceive their jobs to have inferior intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, to be low in workplace support and to have high workplace stressors. No clear strong pattern of disadvantages suffered by the female workforce in the Public Sector in Botswana emerged. Female and male employees did not differ significantly in 12 out of a total of 19 workplace rewards and conditions analysed.

Furthermore, of the seven rewards and conditions that women and men differed in substantially, only three of them (pay, workload and routinisation) had results in the hypothesised (discriminative) direction. That is, women only perceived discrimination in pay, workload (in terms of being assigned less work), and in routinisation (in terms of their jobs being more repetitious compared to those of their male counterparts). Results for the four rewards and conditions - job security, access to management positions, supervisory support and resource inadequacy - were contrary to expectations and pointed to women being the advantaged rather than disadvantaged group relative to their male counterparts.

A number of possible interpretations of the above findings can be advanced. First, it could be argued that the failure by this study to offer substantial evidence that, relative to male employees, women's jobs in the public sector are characterized by inferior intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, low levels of workplace support, and high workplace stressors does not demonstrate the absence of gender based discriminations in the workplace.

Rather it strengthens the possibility that women have internalized their 'inferior' status in society and consequently reduced their expectations. This is consistent with some of the possible explanations of the finding that women did not differ significantly from men in their perceived level of general discrimination advanced earlier by this study. Second, one can argue that the results reflect a lack of awareness on the part of female employees of their disadvantaged position in their job. Clearly, if female employees were not aware that they were being treated differently relative to their male counterparts (e.g., earning substantially less than men and being excluded from decision making), that may have influenced their responses to most of the categories of variables analysed by the study. A third alternative interpretation of the lack of substantial gender differences in perceived levels of rewards and workplace conditions is that it is a reflection of a female workforce that was playing political correctness; that is, trying not to cause trouble by crying foul. This view is best captured by the observation that, despite not differing significantly, both female and male employees recorded high scores in perceived general discrimination. The mean scores were 11.68 and 10.90 points out of a possible score of 15 points for females and males, respectively. The view is also bolstered by the finding that, contrary to expectations, women viewed their supervisors to be more supportive as well as reported greater access to managerial position than men did.

Finally, the lack of substantial levels of female disadvantages with regard to workplace rewards and conditions could be construed to suggest that women in the public sector in Botswana did not value the rewards and conditions analysed by this study greatly. However, results from further analyses focused on gender differences in the valuation of workplace rewards and conditions suggested the contrary (see Appendix I: Table 3). They revealed that the different categories of rewards and workplace conditions were considered to be quite important by both women and men. Generally speaking, mean scores for the importance attached to workplace rewards and conditions indicated that both sexes valued most of these highly. On a scale of 1 to 5, with a 5 indicating that a reward was "of great importance" to the employee, mean scores for female and male employees averaged 4 points and higher in all rewards, support condition (save work group cohesion) and workplace stressors (except role conflict). The means for females and males respectively in workgroup cohesion were 2.91 and 3.52 while those in role conflict were 3.43 and 3.77. However, some significant differences were found in the value women and men attached to the intrinsic rewards of participation in decision making, autonomy and training opportunities with males attaching greater value to these rewards. Men were also found to attach significantly higher value on the support conditions of supervisory support and workgroup cohesion.

At a more specific level, this study found that women suffered discrimination in the public sector in terms of pay. This finding is consistent with the results of previous studies (McDuff, 2001; Obuseng and Siphambe, 1999; Prichard, 1996). There are two ways one can interpret this finding. First, in light of the fact that pay was one of two variables measured objectively, significant gender differences in pay could be said to offer the best indication that gender based discrimination indeed existed in the public sector in Botswana. Second, while employer discrimination may have a role to play in our understanding of the observed gender differences in earnings, there exist a variety of other factors that cannot be ruled out with respect to the Botswana situation. One such factor is the age structure of the respondents. An examination of the age structure of the study sample revealed that the female respondents were relatively younger than the males. This means that most of them had lower tenure in the public service and the lower mean income for females could be a reflection of this situation.

Consistent with Obuseng and Siphambe (1999), this study considers occupational sex segregation (or the tendency for women to be concentrated in lower level, low-paying jobs) as a second possible explanation for the observed large earnings differentials between male and female workers. It has been argued that, despite their rising representation in the labor market, women are mainly concentrated in sex-typed, low-ranking/low-paying jobs (Baxter and Wright, 2000; Cassier and Reskin, 2000; Maume, Jr., 1999). Occupational segregation is often accompanied by lower and worse working conditions in occupations that are typically held by women. Maume Jr. (1999), for example, indicated that segregation affects pay and promotional opportunities; with respect to pay, 'it accounts for approximately one-half of the gender gap in wages'. Based on the results of this study, though not necessarily by design, the selection process into public sector jobs appears to result in a segregated workplace in which women dominate lower level jobs while men tended to dominate higher level positions. Whereas women comprised 75.9 percent of those holding group B jobs and 58.9 percent of those in category C jobs, only 32.0 percents of those occupying group D jobs were women.

Closely allied to the segregation explanation is the human capital argument (Callinicos, 2001; Acemoglu and Pischke, 1999; Becker, 1964; Schultz, 1961), which utilizes differences in investments that individuals make in their education, training, and specialized knowledge to explain gender based differences in earnings. Those who support the human capital differentials argument posit that gender based pay inequalities should not to be blamed on employers but on human Capital differences between the sexes. They argue that inequality in the distribution of earnings and income is generally positively related to inequality in education and training. That is, the differential pay for women and men can be understood in terms of their education, training and experience. Specifically, women earn relatively less than men because they have less education, less training (skills) and limited experience (or seniority). Following the human capital argument, it may be concluded that the relatively low mean earnings obtained by this study for female employees relative to their male counterparts was a reflection of their relatively low educational attainment, low skills and limited experience. However, many studies have disputed the position advanced by human capital theorists by offering evidence of situations in which males and females are equally qualified but males earn more than females (Baxter and Wright, 2000; Maume, Jr. 1999).

The results for four of the seven workplace rewards and conditions for which significant gender differences were observed were not in the expected direction. Women perceived substantially greater job security, access to managerial positions, supervisory support and resources for performing work roles than did men. These results suggest the existence of what amounts to reverse discrimination in the public service with male employees considering themselves to be disadvantaged relative to their female counterparts. They could be interpreted variously. First, it could mean that women in Botswana consider themselves to have made significant gains in their struggle for gender equality and thus exude a more positive outlook. However, as pointed out earlier, existing research conducted by Datta (2004) suggested otherwise. Second, it could be a pointer that males are reeling from the effects of the little gains that females have made in a male dominated society and this causes them to experience heightened deprivation. Finally, as pointed out earlier, such findings could be also a reflection of a female workforce that is playing political correctness/ trying not to cause trouble in what still remains a male dominated sphere of society.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the results of this study reveal that women in the public service in Botswana did not perceive themselves to be discriminated against in general and in terms of hiring practices. Women too neither perceived their jobs to be offering them inferior intrinsic and extrinsic rewards nor to be lower in support conditions or higher in stress producing conditions. In fact, women even perceived some of the rewards and workplace conditions characteristic of their jobs to be superior to those perceived by their male counterparts. The lack of perceived gender discrimination in the public sector for women, however, does not necessarily suggest that *de facto* gender discrimination does not exist at all in the sector. Rather, it may suggest a lack of awareness of its presence on the part of female employees. That is, the objective inequalities that obtain in the public sector work setting are not experienced as thus by female employees. Alternatively, females may not construe discrimination in terms of the dimensions emphasised in this study. The success of the fight against gender discrimination is contingent upon the victims seeing themselves as victims and thus experiencing deprivation and injustice.

If those who champion the eradication of gender inequalities in the workplace are right in assuming that the female workforce is a disadvantaged group, then the results of this study have one lesson to offer. That is, rather than cry blanket discrimination, there is a need to sensitise female employees to the specific injustices that characterise the workplace if preventive policies are to be effective. Efforts must be made to elevate gender discrimination in the workplace from its objective status to the status of a subjective problem; one which the significant proportion of the would-be victims identify as an object of concern and are aware of. This requires an increase in the levels of awareness and knowledge about gender discrimination in the workplace through programmes that educate workers about the varied forms which discrimination can take. Otherwise policy makers may be reduced to belabouring a problem that does not exist in the minds and eyes of the victims; a fact that would render the course of championing gender equity irrelevant. The need for additional work seems suggested in several areas by the present studies. As emphasized through the title of this study, this was an exploratory study.

It has nevertheless laid the basis for further research in future, utilizing diverse work settings. To obtain a much clearer picture of the status of women in the Public Sector calls for further research that would address especially the major limitation of this study. The data presented here, for example, precluded the direct testing of some of the explanations for the lack of gender differences in perceived discrimination. Furthermore, future study that control for the effects of socio-economic and demographic characteristics of those studied would produce and compare the true means for males and females in both workplace rewards and conditions by comparing unadjusted and adjusted group means. For instance, in light of the alternative explanations of the significant difference in pay among females and males obtained by this study, it is imperative to control for variables such as age, tenure, job group and education before one can confidently conclude that such differences are indicative of gender discrimination in the public service.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Job Group and Sex

Sex	Job Group B		Job Group C		Job Group D		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	13	24.1	30	41.1	51	68.0	94	46.5
Female	41	75.9	43	58.9	24	32.0	108	53.5
Total	54	100.0	73	100.0	75	100.0	202	100.0

Table 2: Gender Means for Workplace Conditions

Variable	Females		Males		t-value	p-value ^b
	Mean ^a	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
<u>Intrinsic Rewards</u>						
Decision making	7.22	3.07	7.90	3.03	1.26	.105
Autonomy	9.49	2.11	9.93	2.40	1.10	.136
Task significance	12.15	1.56	12.16	1.96	0.03	.487
Training opportunity	9.94	2.88	9.13	3.27	-1.47	.072
<u>Extrinsic Rewards</u>						
Pay	2259.19	1140.31	3574.58	2491.73	3.71	.000
Job security	10.86	2.16	10.05	2.67	-1.88	.031 ^c
Promotional opportunity	12.45	3.14	12.11	3.16	-0.59	.278
Promotional rate	0.28	0.25	0.28	0.82	0.60	.274
Management positions	13.23	2.73	12.29	3.21	-1.76	.040 ^c
<u>Workplace Support</u>						
Supervisory support	11.45	3.06	9.73	3.82	-2.78	.003 ^c
Upward communication	9.35	2.02	9.13	2.72	-0.52	.302
Grievance procedures	9.48	2.09	9.75	5.58	0.36	.358
Socialisation practices	9.52	2.68	8.88	2.86	-1.29	.100
Work group cohesion	10.32	1.99	10.41	1.79	0.26	.399
<u>Workplace Stressors</u>						
Work load	9.69	2.15	10.72	4.29	1.72	.044
Role ambiguity	5.82	2.01	5.38	1.84	-1.27	.103
Role conflict	8.20	2.29	8.39	3.09	0.40	.346
Resource inadequacy	8.06	2.28	9.03	3.02	2.03	.022 ^c
Routinisation	8.06	2.48	7.85	2.14	-1.81	.036
<u>Others</u>						
Gender discrimination	11.68	3.42	10.90	3.95	-1.18	.120
Recruitment	8.97	2.39	9.15	2.80	0.38	.350

^a For all items measured using scales of 1-15, the scores are rated as follows: 1 -5.0 = low, 5.1-10 = moderate and 10.1-15 = high.

^b All one-tailed

^c Indicates the difference was opposite to the predicted direction.

APPENDIX I: TABLE 3**Table 3: Gender Differences in Importance Attached to Workplace Conditions**

Variables	Females		Males		t-value	p-value ^a
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Mean	Std. Dev.		
<u>Intrinsic Rewards</u>						
Decision making	4.15	1.00	4.42	0.80	1.67	.098
Autonomy	4.17	0.98	4.56	0.70	2.58	.010
Task significance	4.28	1.02	4.54	0.74	1.66	.100
Training opportunity	4.52	0.69	4.74	0.57	1.91	.060
<u>Extrinsic Rewards</u>						
Pay	4.48	0.88	4.54	0.65	0.46	.646
Job security	4.46	0.92	4.56	0.67	0.66	.508
Promotional opportunity	4.37	0.94	4.59	0.74	1.37	.156
Management positions	4.62	0.65	4.55	0.78	0.51	.660
<u>Workplace Support</u>						
Supervisory support	4.17	0.96	4.55	0.59	2.75	.008
Upward Communication	4.59	0.81	4.55	1.00	1.59	.118
Grievance procedures	4.23	0.88	4.36	0.88	0.84	.404
Socialisation practices	4.52	0.64	4.66	0.54	1.26	.212
Work group cohesion	2.91	1.31	3.52	1.15	2.81	.006
<u>Workplace Stressors^b</u>						
Work load	4.49	0.71	4.36	0.71	-1.04	.300
Role ambiguity	4.49	0.90	4.66	0.51	1.26	.212
Role conflict	3.43	1.34	3.77	1.04	1.59	.114
Resource inadequacy	4.71	0.58	4.74	0.51	0.31	.760
Routinisation	4.05	0.96	4.15	0.77	0.65	.516

^a All two-tailed

^b The five workplace stressors were analysed in terms of adequate work load, role clarity, lack of conflicting job requests, adequate resources and the existence of job variety.

APPENDIX II: TABLE 4**Table 4: Definition of Study Variables**

Variables	Definition
Intrinsic Rewards:	
Participation in decision making	Refers to the extent of the employee involvement in the adoption of major policy decisions that affect the organisation and its employees (Mulinge and Mueller, 1998). It may take forms such as choosing between alternatives in new production or service delivery techniques, promotional procedures, staff promotions, terms of service for workers, and the hiring and firing of core personnel (Blunt and Jones, 1992).
Autonomy	Is the degree to which employees are offered the freedom, independence and discretion to make decisions pertaining to the substantive and procedural aspects of their job such as scheduling and determining the procedure to be used in executing the task (Mulinge and Mueller, 1998; Hackman and Oldham, 1975).
Task Significance	Is the degree to which an individual's role contributes significantly to the overall organisational process (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). It exists whenever the employee perceives the role(s) he/she performs to be important to the survival of the work organisation.
Training Opportunity	Refers to the degree to which the employer affords the employee the chance to increase work-related skills and knowledge (Mangelsdorff, 1989).
Extrinsic Rewards:	
Pay	Refers to the wages and salaries received by employees for services rendered. This definition excludes fringe benefits (which could be both monetary and non-monetary).
Promotional opportunity	Represents the degree of potential vertical mobility within the organisation (Price and Mueller, 1986a).
Promotional Rate	Refers to the frequency of upward mobility by the employee (or the employee's tenure divided by the number of times the employee has been promoted).
Access to Managerial Positions	Refers to the perceived chances for promotion to higher level positions that are associated with the exercise of authority.
Workplace Support:	
Supervisory Support	<i>Supervisory support</i> is the degree to which supervisors are friendly, helpful and supportive to their subordinates Mottaz, 1985; Michaels and Spector, 1982).
Upward Communication	Refers to the transmission of information up the hierarchy (Mulinge, 2001; Mulinge and Mueller, 1998); that is, the degree to which employees can transmit with ease their ideas, feelings, and feedback from their jobs to higher level administrators and/or managers. Upward communication is especially important in this study because it focuses on the public sector where bureaucratic control exists.
Grievance Procedures	Is the extent to which formal appeal procedures are available to employees to air their complaints (Freeman and Medoff, 1984).
Socialisation Practices	Refers to the degree to which employing organisations display institutionalised procedures for acquainting (new) employees with the workings of the organisation.

Table 4 (Continued)

Variables	Definition
Work Group Cohesion	Is the degree to which employees of an organisation form close informal relations in their immediate work units (Price and Mueller, 1986b). It may manifest itself through employee joint participation in social activities inside and outside of the work environment.
Workplace Stressors:	
Workload	Refers to the level of role performance responsibilities required of the employee. Employees can experience what may be regarded as adequate workload, role overload or role underload (Blunt and Jones, 1992). Role overload and role underload are likely to act as stressors for.
Role Ambiguity	Represents the degree to which there is a discrepancy between the amount of information a person receives and the amount necessary to perform the role adequately (Blunt and Jones, 1992; Kahn, Wolfe and Schoek, 1964). An ambiguous job is one in which the scope and nature of responsibilities and the expectations associated with a particular role, method for fulfilling role expectations and the consequences of role performance are not very clear.
Role Conflict	Is the degree to which incompatible demands are made upon an individual by two or more persons whose jobs are functionally interdependent with that of the individual (Kahn, Wolfe and Schoek, 1964). It may exist when two or more sets of role expectations, that are contradictory or incompatible, occur simultaneously such that compliance with one makes compliance with the other more difficult or impossible (Blunt and Jones, 1992).
Resource Inadequacy	Refers to the extent of insufficiency in the resources that are necessary for the employee to execute his/her duties with the minimum of discomfort (La-Anyane, 1985). Included here are supportive facilities such as adequate transportation, adequate housing, and sufficient funding.
Routinization	Refers to the degree to which job performance is repetitious (Hackman and Oldham, 1975). A job is said to be routinized (or to lack variety), if tasks are repetitious.