



GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN WILDLIFE TOURISM SERVICES IN BUEA, SOUTHWEST REGION, CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT

In wildlife tourism industry women are being accepted on the surface as part of the work-force, but their reception into senior management level is stifled due to subtle forms of discrimination that present themselves in compensation, training and socialization networks. However, the expansion of wildlife tourism industry needs the proper integration and involvement of women. The main objective of this study was to explore the discrimination of women working in wildlife tourism industry in Buea. A total of two hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered to a randomly selected population of women working in wildlife tourism industry in Buea. The results have shown a significant association between tourism service and the frequent bullying of female workers ($X^2 = 23.822$ df=3, $P < 0.05$). The survey also revealed a significant relationship between gender discrimination and reasons for low women employment ($X^2 = 23.867$ df=6, $P < 0.05$). Moreover, a significant association was shown between challenges faced by women and the reasons for low women employment ($X^2 = 11.429$ df=6, $P < 0.05$). A respondent score of 66.93%, 21.91%, and 11.16% was recorded on the lack of physical ability, women marginalization, and poor training respectively as key reasons for low employment rate for women in the tourism industry in Buea. In addition, the study has recorded a respondent score of 33.86%, 32.67%, 19.12%, and 14.34% on communication, hotel management, transportation, and department of tourism respectively on the female work-force in this industry. In Cameroon, the proportion of women reaching top management positions in wildlife tourism industry has remained relatively insignificant due to the existence of discriminatory barriers.

Keywords: Wildlife tourism, Women employment, Women marginalization, Hotel management, and Poor training

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INTRODUCTION

Women's Employment and Participation in Tourism aims at bringing gender aspects of tourism to the attention of policy makers, especially the issues of women's employment in tourism industry and women's local participation in tourism planning and management.

World tourism has demonstrated dynamic growth over the last century and shows a promising future in the decades to come (UNWTO, 2007). Global tourism reached an all-time high in 2006 as international tourist arrivals totalled 846 million, generating US\$733 billion in international tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2007). The tourism industry transcends political, economic, cultural, and environmental boundaries, and as such, it has significant implications for destination communities, particularly those more dependent on tourism as a primary source of revenue and economic stability. Shopping is a favourite tourist activity and an increasingly important component of the leisure travel experience (Kim & Littrell, 1999). Shopping provides a source of entertainment, adventure, and discovery of unusual objects (Anderson & Littrell, 1995) and "tourists not only invest time toward shopping during their travels, but they also spend approximately one-third of their total tourism expenditures on retail purchases" (Yu & Littrell, 2003). Shopping opportunity is also accredited as a major attraction that draws tourists to travel abroad, particularly to lower-income or developing countries, where the prices of goods are generally low (Kim & Littrell, 1999) and where the selection of goods is often different from that at home.

The UNDP Global report (2014) on public administration on gender equality capitalized on the international law on human development which gives everyone the right to participate in public life. However, the report indicated that, only 30% (which was the lowest targeted percentage by Economic and Social Council ECOSOC, 1990) of women was represented in many countries except in some countries like Ukraine with 75%, and in India which is 12%. This is an indication that women have not fully been engaged. The overall percentage of women participation in public administration in

African countries, such as Benin (2011) was 19%, Botswana (2012) 52%, Cameroon (2010) 25%, Nigeria (2006) 24%, and Uganda (2011) 33%. Asia and Pacific: Afghanistan (2009-10) 20%, Bangladesh (2008-9) 21%, Indonesia (2011) 47% and India (2006) 12%. Latin America: Mexico (2010) 50%, Colombia (2011) 49%, Chile (2007-2009) 41%. Europe and common wealth of independent state: Romania (2011) 64%, Ukraine (2008) 75%, Croatia (2011) 45% .

It has been recognized in some areas of work that women seem to have less employment opportunities than men. These has been proven by authors in past years even before September, 2000 when the Millennium third goal was set to promote gender equality and empowering women among its goals. Heads of states and governments, since then, have committed their countries to meet a set of time bound and measurable goals by 2015, (ILO 2004) explains the constraints faced by women in politics and decision making bodies while in leadership and shows the gap of gender inequality between women and men that, women are underrepresented. The statistics indicated that 50% of Kenyan population are women but they only occupy an average of less than 10% of leadership and power positions. In Tanzania women outnumbered men by 51% yet occupy only 15% of positions and in Uganda they form 52% of population but occupy only 18% of the leadership positions. Kwara in Chachage and Mbilinyi (2003) asserts that most of domestic works are conducted by women who form world's official labour force but are the lowest paid occupations; they are more vulnerable and last to be hired but are first to be fired.

Heath (2014) explains that women's equality is undermined by historical imbalances in decision-making power and access to resources, rights, and entitlements for women. In employment in general, women earn substantially less than their male counterparts. In the UK, women earn on average less than 80% of men's annual salary. This is for the same work and time as men. Top firms who employ almost a quarter of finance sector workers were questioned. The sector's age profile was 25-39, when women have childcare responsibilities. Women earned on average of

£2,875 annually in contrast to £14,554 for men. Women's education in Middle Eastern countries is rising rapidly but these women do not work for salaries. It is estimated that household incomes could rise by 25% if women in these countries worked. In middle income countries like Mexico, women with high levels of education are largely unemployed. This leads to a negative impact on growth as the economy does not use half its resources. In Mexico, women earn 15-20% less than men. By introducing schemes to help women in the workplace, the economy grows as more women are able to work. Women are also encouraged to work by the introduction of family-orientated work schemes such as part-time or job-sharing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the study area

Buea municipality is situated between longitude 9° 16' E and latitude 4° 9' N (Fitton *et al* 1983). The municipality is bounded to the north by tropical forest on the slope of mount Cameroon (4100m above sea level). The mountain range extends to the beautiful sandy beaches of Atlantic Ocean. The town also shares boundary with other major towns like Limbe to the Southwest, Tiko to the Southeast, Muyuka to the East and Idenau to the West. With an equatorial climate, temperature is moderate with a slight seasonal variation in the wet and dry season. Buea has a moderate economy with agricultural, administrative, business, tourism and the financial sector taking the central stage of the town. The area is composed of undulating high and

low lands with many rocks and gravels due to volcanic eruptions. The soil type consists of basalts and is as a result of the first volcanic activity in the Fako Mountain area, which occurred in the cretaceous system. These soils have been weathered and partly covered by more recent deposits, thus the soils are black and in these areas are well drained due to the hilly nature of the terrain and the fact that they are free-draining (Melle *et al* 2016).

The population is estimated at about 300,000 people of whom two-thirds live in urban and semi-urban areas, while the rest in villages. The settlement pattern forms a closed ring around the foot of the mountain with no permanent settlements on altitudes above 1500m. The indigenous people in the area are Bakweri, Bomboko, Balondo and Bakolle (Ekane, 2000). In all the villages, the population is expanding from both natural increase and immigration. These people are predominantly farmers, hunters, fishermen and traders. The region is also very diverse in fauna with over 370 species recorded. The sub-montane and montane habitats are part of the Cameroon Mountain Endemic Bird Area (EBA). So far, 210 species of birds have been record out of which 8 are threatened and 2 strictly endemic (Mt. Cameroon Francolin (*Francolinus camerunensis*) and the Mt. Cameroon Speirops (*Speirops melanocephalus*). This area is also rich African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), many species of primates and duikers, Ekane (2000).

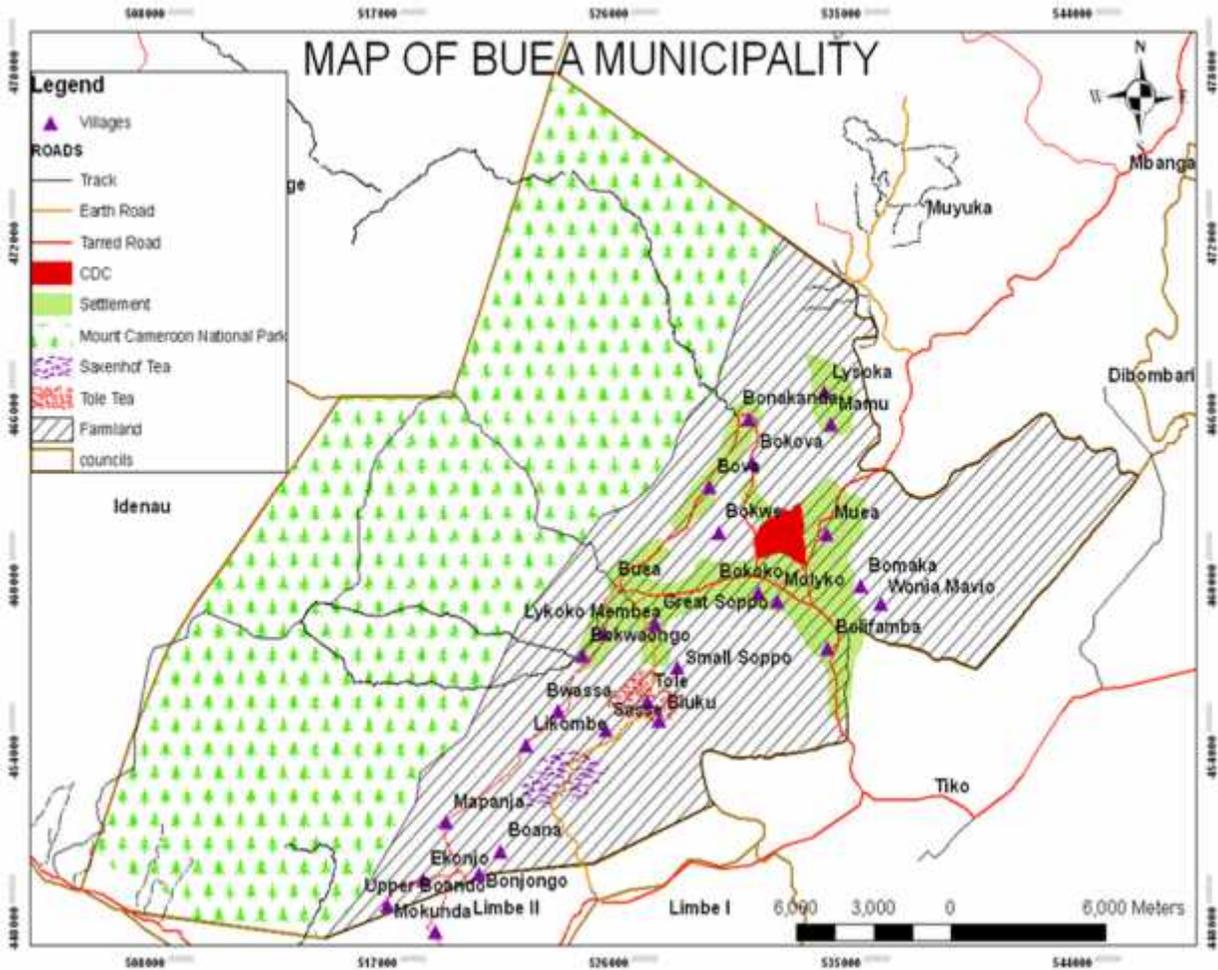


Figure 1: The map of Buea Municipality (Source: Melle et al, 2016)

Data collection and analysis

The research data collection for this study was done on two phases. The first phase involved the search for primary data used for the write-up; secondly the secondary data collection was launched just after the primary data was collected. The administration of two hundred and fifty questionnaires was done by randomly selecting a population of women involved in the wildlife tourism industry. Before questionnaires were administered to these women a research acknowledgement letter written by the University of Buea authority was handed to them. All the questionnaires handed to the respondents were returned barely a few days later.

Data analysis

After research field-work the researcher went through the raw data collected, summarized it and later analyzed it. Then the data was compiled and

compared accordingly. The qualitative variables like frequent bullying of women, tourism services, and the reasons for low female employment number were tested to know their association. The entire data was analyzed by using SPSS version 20.

RESULTS

The results of this survey revealed a significant association between the tourism service and the frequent bullying of women ($X^2 = 23.822$ $df=3$, $P<0.05$) fig. 2. In Cameroon and most other countries in the developing world women are exposed to a working social system characterized with harassment and bullying especially from their male bosses. In Cameroon, women are subjected to injustice in most offices where they work making them feel inferior to their male colleagues. In the wildlife tourism industry the gender discrimination is also witnessed and most of the tourism and

affiliated offices in Cameroon are dominated by men, a situation that makes women to experience more injustice in the social-working milieu. The wildlife tourism industry in Cameroon is still

underdeveloped due to lack of tourism programs in the universities, creating an atmosphere of lack of expertise knowledge in the profession.

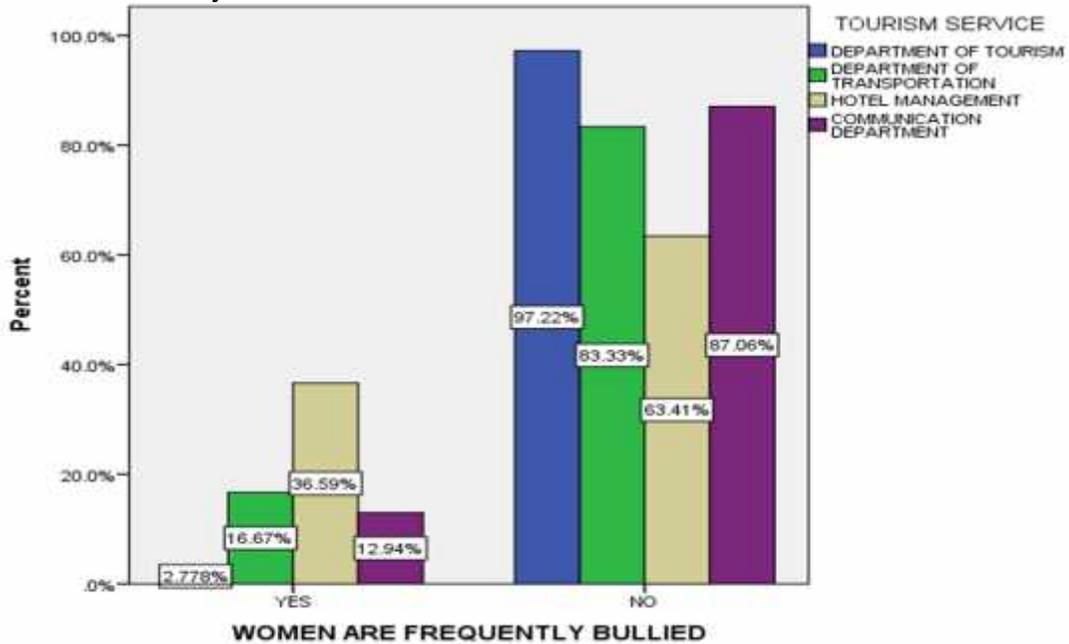


Figure 2: The tourism service and the frequent bullying of women in offices

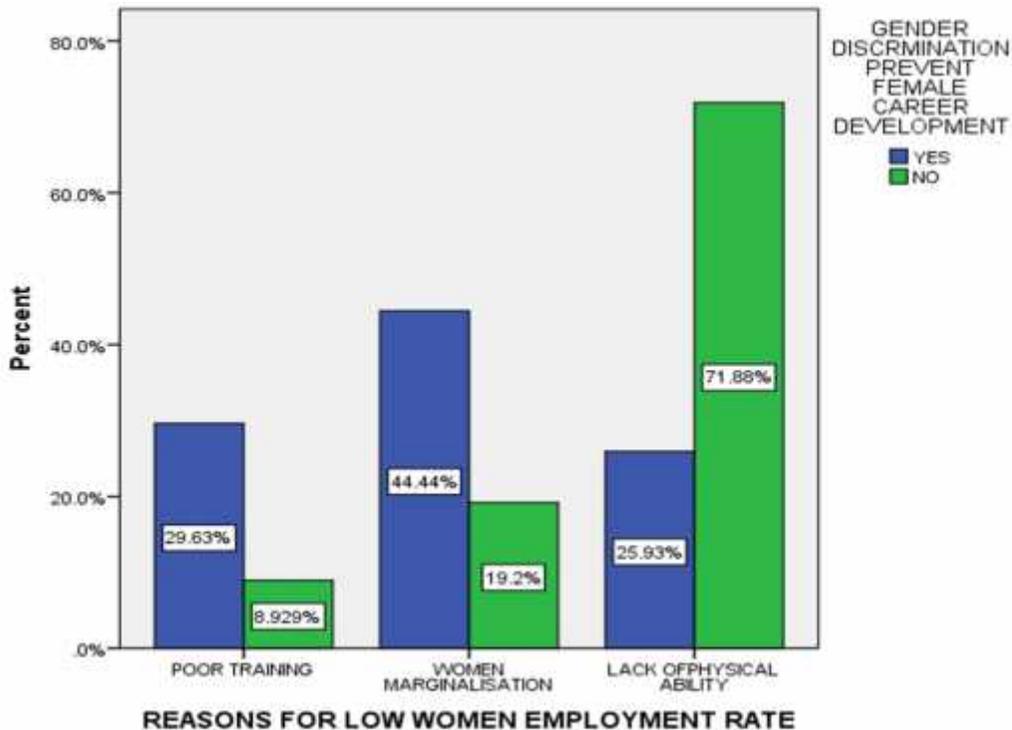


Figure 3: Reasons for low women's employment and gender discrimination

The survey revealed a significant relationship between gender discrimination and the reasons for low women employment ($X^2 = 23.867$ $df=6$, $P<0.05$) fig.3. Gender discrimination has contributed to the low employment rate of women in Cameroon and other countries of the developing world. In some parts of Cameroon a good number of women are still deprived from schooling on grounds of marginalization and forced into early

marriages in which they are further suppressed by their husbands into the kitchen household services and related responsibilities where their voices would never be heard anywhere. This syndrome of discrimination has long vanished in some traditions through the women academic education, equipping them with professional qualities needed for the competitive employment market in the country.

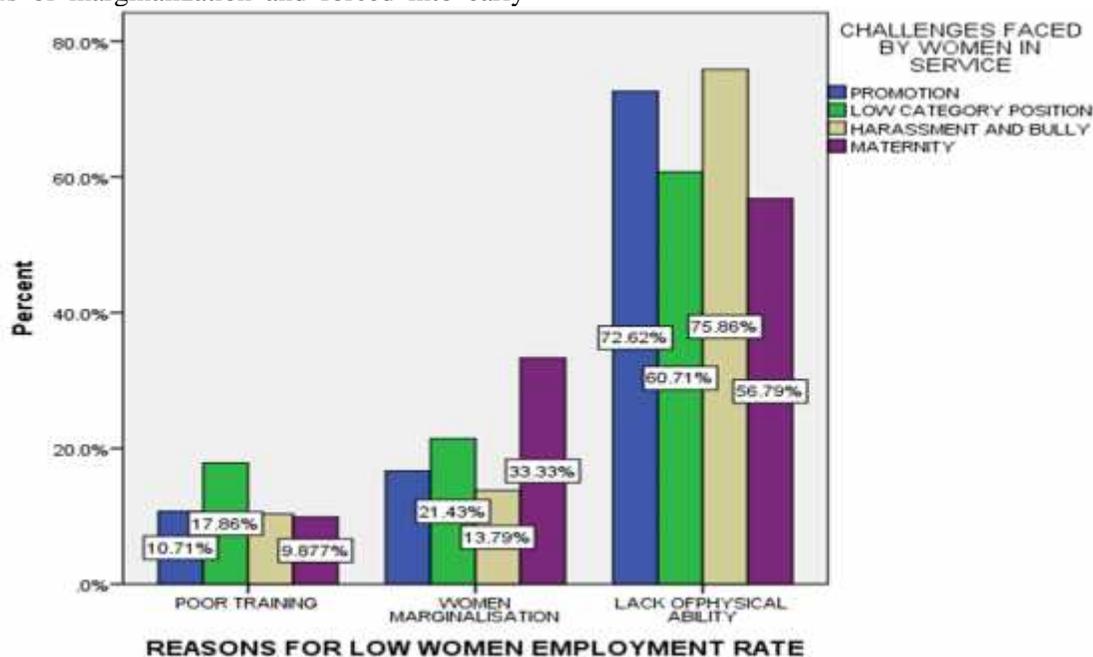


Figure 4: The reasons for low women employment and challenges faced by women

The survey has shown a significant association between challenges faced by women and the reasons for low women employment ($X^2 = 11.429$ $df=6$, $P<0.05$) fig. 4. Though educational knowledge is fast taking women out of the social atmosphere of marginalization in Cameroon; household responsibilities stand as hindrance to their career development in almost all the professions. The most affected are the married

women who sometimes would combine the household services with office-work responsibilities. The Cameroon labour law has a provision for a three month maternity-leave offer to a nursing mother immediately she gives birth. This situation has made some women to retard in their professional career development especially in professional school training.

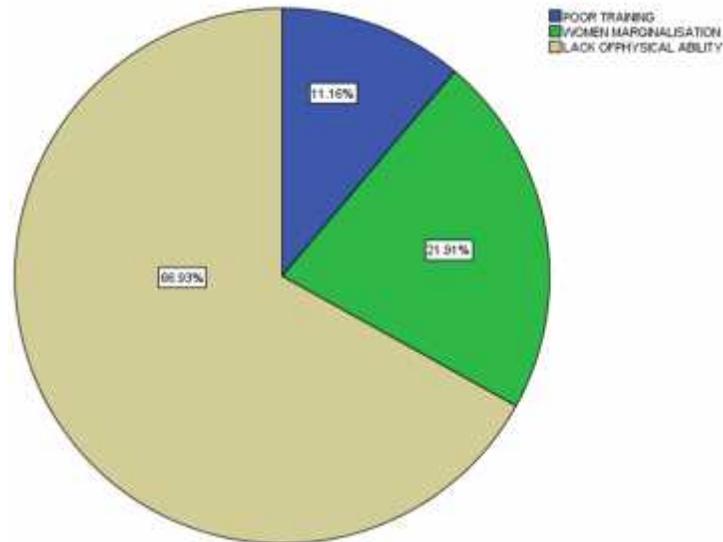


Figure 5: Reasons for low women recruitment

A respondent score of 66.93%, 21.91%, and 11.16% was recorded on the lack of physical ability, women marginalization, and poor training respectively as key reasons for low employment rate for women in the tourism industry in Buea (fig.5). Most women are physically weak as compared to their male counterparts hence disadvantaging them from professions like wildlife tourism industry. Some also believe to work in this profession you must be physically strong like the males; however, this is an impression established

by the males to decrease the tension of female rivalry in the profession. Gender discrimination has also played a serious role to the low employment rate of women in this industry, for example, the low category positions women occupy in the hospitality domain, hotel clean-up, cooking and serving meals to the tourists are physically challenging and sometimes considered to be strenuous; while the general paper-work services like report-writing demanding less physicality are executed mostly by males.

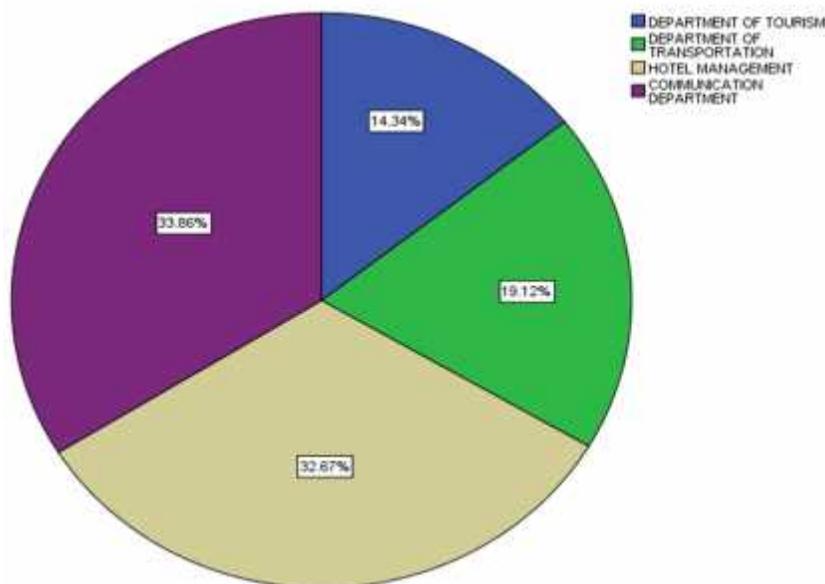


Figure 6: The female work-force in wildlife tourism and affiliated services in Buea

The study has recorded a respondent score of 33.86%, 32.67%, 19.12%, and 14.34% on communication, hotel management, transportation, and department of tourism respectively on the female work-force in Buea (fig.6). Tourists' communication by internet and telephone services is important in the development of wildlife tourism industry in Cameroon. The Cameroon tourism industry is predominated by the wildlife scenery, remotely far from cities, making communication difficult. Tourists face a lot of challenges communicating in the wild due to poor electronic communication net-work problems. The communication sector is dominated by women and the role it plays in this industry cannot be overlooked. Women are seen hawking telephone credit-cards in the city of Buea encouraging customers for a discount purchase benefit especially the workers of MTN and Orange telephone companies. The work-force of women has also been noticed to be relatively high in the hospitality sector (32.67%) in this study. Most of the women working in hotels in Buea are known to occupy the less professional positions like clean-up and meal-serving services. The reason may be due to gender discrimination rooted into lack of professional training for these female workers in this sector. A respondent score of 19.12% recorded on the female work-force in the transportation department; a profession historically dominated by males, with the advent of transportation agencies in Cameroon a few women have gained low position jobs. Generally, most women in Cameroon and other parts of the world consider commercial driving physically challenging and would never adventure. Moreover, a respondent score of 14.34% was recorded on women work-force in the tourism department. The Ministry of Tourism and Leisure has a history of gender imbalance especially at the level of leadership positions. The state government has been unable to trigger a solution towards gender equality in its employment scheme. Much effort has been made by the state government on gender equality in educational and health Ministries already, but majority of Cameroon Ministries are still deeply buried into the historic colonial gender discrimination problems.

DISCUSSION

Tonyacsi (2004) presents that gender inequality is

still a huge issue today. According to Mooney *et al.* (2013), males are considered superior to females; women had to fight to vote for equal pay, and have male dominance, but still have lower incomes, fewer prestigious jobs, usually female orientated college degrees, and are more likely to live in poverty than men. Domestic abuse is another issue in the home, many women flee their homes due to this and end up living in poverty. ILO report (2013) mentioned that tourism industry earned about 10th of the world GDP and became major source of employment where 260 million jobs were elated. HCT (Hotels, Catering and Tourism) is a major sector which produces many job chances around the world. The report indicates that 70% of women were engaged in tourism sector but many were paid less compared to men and mostly in selective jobs like house-keeping and customer contact. The UNWTO/UN women global report pointed that employment opportunities for women in tourism industry at professional levels are slim.

Nyaruwata and Nyaruwata (2013) report on gender equity and executive management in tourism showed that fewer women than men become executive managers over their careers; earn less throughout the period compared to men, hold more junior positions, and exit the occupations at a faster rate than men (Thornton, 2011). Over the past 20 years, a majority of both developing and industrialized countries have initiated programs aimed at promoting gender equity in executive management in all major sectors of the economy. However, within the tourism sector women are still under represented at executive management positions male-dominated. Their gender composition of employees in Zimbabwe's three major hotel groups in 2011 shows: Directors and CEOs female are 4, male are 7; Senior managers female were 76 and male were 119; General Managers female were 5 male were 21; Front office managers female were 78 male were 143 and general workers female were 1225 while male were 1829.

UNED-UK (1998) report about gender and tourism on women's occupations and positions in the tourism industry stated that: Some facts about women's positioning in terms of hierarchical levels have been extracted from the very few

sources giving information, which is not sufficiently differentiated. However, it seems very clear that the situation in the tourism industry resembles the one in the labour markets in general. As in many other sectors, there is a significant horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market in tourism. Horizontally, women and men are placed in different occupations - women are being employed as waitresses, chambermaids, cleaners, travel agencies sales persons, flight attendants, etc., whereas men are being employed as barmen, gardeners, construction workers, drivers, pilots, etc. Vertically, the typical "gender pyramid" is prevalent in the tourism sector - lower levels and occupations with few career development opportunities being dominated by women and key managerial positions being dominated by men.

Swain (1990) observed that generally, men and women are unequally impacted by tourism. This view is expounded by Bolles (1997) who stated that women's importance in the industry is often minimized or referenced primarily in terms of sex work. He argued that tourism becomes a vehicle for exploring the differences and commonalities among women. Scheyvens (2000) described experiences from the developing world in the promotion of women's empowerment through involvement in ecotourism. Gupta and Shah (1999) presented a case where women in Himachal Pradesh, India took advantage of the tourist industry's reliance on beautiful stable mountainsides to mobilize resistance against deforestation. The ecotourism needs enabled the women to strengthen their case. This means that their involvement in joint forest management increased. In this way, they had control of how other tourism activities in the area should be ordered, not letting the male-dominated accommodation enterprises deplete forests for fuel needed for the tourists' heating needs. Besides, there is ample empirical evidence to show that money in the hands of women benefits the livelihoods of the children in the community, such as increased expenditures on nutrition, clothing, and schooling. There is similar empirical evidence indicating that the degree of education of a woman affects expenditures on her child's health and education (Doepke & Tertilt, 2010). This is

illustrated by two examples, one from a developed country (Canada) and the other from a developing country (Cote d'Ivoire). Hoddinott and Haddad (1995) found that an increase in the wife's share of income is associated with an increase in the share of expenditures on food and a decrease in the share of expenditures on alcohol and cigarettes. Phipps and Burton (1998) used data from Canada and found that the share of wives' income matters (even when both spouses work full time) for several expenditure categories, such as childcare, children's clothing and food. Phipps and Burton (1998) concluded that an increase in a woman's income is directly related to increasing childcare expenditures, while a man's is not.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed gender discrimination in wildlife tourism industry in Cameroon and this might have played a negative role to the growth of this industry. The economic growth of many countries in sub-Sahara Africa is mainly based on wildlife tourism industry, though all these countries might be facing the syndrome of gender discrimination, the proper integration of the female work-force in this industry would boost the industry financially. Cameroon government has already taken some steps towards this direction yet women are to be seen in top management positions of the sector. Hence, this study recommends the inclusion of women in top wildlife tourism management levels and more Cameroonians should be trained in professional tourism management schools. Cameroon is rich in wildlife resources but lacks professional wildlife management institutions and expertise that would translate wildlife into tourism asset.

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