



Kenyatta University
Women's Economic
Empowerment Hub



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

POLICY BRIEF

*Women's Participation in
Management and Leadership in The
Public Sector In Kenya:
Closing The Gender Gap".*



Executive Summary

The views presented in this policy brief paper stem from a pilot study conducted in two Nairobi City County Departments and one government Ministry to ascertain the participation of women in management and leadership in the public sector and come up with recommendations to close the gender gap. The study observes that there is a legislative framework for gender equality entrenched in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and attendant legislative and policy documents namely National Policy on Gender and Development of 2000, 2011, 2019 which focus on gender equality and development.

These aim to leverage and mainstream the needs of women and girls in society. However, despite all these efforts women continue to be significantly under-represented in management and leadership positions in the formal labour market. This under-representation has led to a gender gap in the workplace (KNBS, 2019). The study therefore set out to ascertain the effectiveness of the National Gender Policy in promoting Women's participation in management and leadership in the public sector, the barriers they face and how these can be combated.

The pilot study found out that men outnumber women in positions of leadership and management in public service and recommends that different approaches should be adopted to achieve gender diversity in public service including a cultural change and shift in policy at the various levels of government to address gender inequality in career progression.

Introduction

In Kenya, women constitute 51.2% of the total population as established by the 2019 census in the country. They also represent half of Kenya's labour force and hence contribute to the country's social, political, and economic pillars (KNBS 2019, 2020). They are, however, higher concentrated in the informal sector, often earning low wages (The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) report, 2015). Gender inequality at work reflects the social structure of a society (MGI report (2015) and Nigam (2014). According to UN women, Sub Sahara Africa has 89% of the total employed women in informal employment, with many of them working without the protection of labour laws, social benefits such as pension and health insurance, paid leave, compassionate or sick leave, controlled working hours, and work for lower wages, in unsafe conditions and exposed to many forms of violence, harassment and abuse. It is no wonder therefore that without access to social protection such as pension, many elderly women live in poverty. It has been argued that the under-representation of women in the labour market has a negative effect on the overall productivity of a country (Ellis, 2007). The UN Sustainable Development Goals and other multilateral dialogues emphasise on the importance of the empowerment and well-being of women to address the enduring gender inequalities, and to enhance a country's productivity and economic development..

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This study recognises that increasing women's participation in management and leadership in the public sector is a key enabler to empowering women economically. Its focus is to ensure we attain a sustainable increase of women's representation in the public sector in Kenya through increasing the proportion of women in management and leadership positions by 30% by 2025. It therefore seeks to establish the extent these policies have been implemented to enhance the participation and advancement of women in management and leadership in the public sector and give recommendations for institutions and organizations as the policy implementers to implement these through specific employment programmes.

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Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- 1) To establish factors that contribute to women's under-representation in management and leadership positions for women's economic empowerment in the public sector in Kenya.
- 2) To examine to what extent the National Policy on Gender and Development (2000) and its subsequent amendments 2011 and 2019 have been implemented in the public sector in Kenya
- 3) To examine the extent to which women's participation in management and leadership in the public sector as evidenced by monitoring and evaluation indicators promotes women's economic empowerment.
- 4) Suggest how the National policy on Gender and Development can be made more effective in enabling women's participation in management and leadership positions in the public sector for economic empowerment.

Methodology: Research design

This study used a mixture of methodologies to integrate three sources of data: a structured questionnaire which was answered by middle level managers, key informant interviews with senior managers were conducted to obtain information about events and to understand participants' perspectives on women in leadership and management in the public service. An observation checklist was filled by the researchers. Thematic analysis was used to analyze all data. (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman & Pedersen, 2013)

Key Findings

This being implementation research aimed at collecting evidence-based knowledge to inform policy and practice, it was important to seek opinions across both men and women because each perceive programmes and policies in place differently. Getting views from each with their different perspectives provides an understanding of the interventions that need to be put in place. According to Tannenbaum et al (2016), seeking opinions from both sexes enables informed decision making, communication, stakeholder engagement and preferences for the uptake of interventions. This study looks at the implementation of the national gender policy 2019 in the public sector. The responses from both men and women will provide insights on which of the implemented strategies work, for who and under what circumstances. This is because different programmes and strategies may work differently for different sexes. In addition, seeking information from both men and women will ensure inclusivity and effectiveness in the strategies for impactful implementation of the policy. It will help evaluate whether the strategies in place may have inadvertently segregated, alienated, exploited, or ignored, sex instead of transforming, the workplace to be more inclusive. The recommendations for change that this study will bring out, will therefore be more balanced and inclusive and enable more women to participate in management and leadership.

The study came up with the following findings:

Key Findings

01

62% of women felt that they had overstayed in the various positions

Fewer men tend to remain in the same position for long as seen in the number of years the respondents stayed in the same position. More women stayed in one position longer, 62% of these feeling they had overstayed in the various positions. This means that they are not promoted as fast as men, yet looking at the levels of education, fewer women than men had only the lower levels of education, that is secondary and college, and both men and women were nearly at par with the higher level of education, that is graduate and postgraduate degrees. This is an indication that there are other barriers to their progression

02

barriers to women's progression include organizational barriers, educational and training among others.

The main barriers to women's progression include organizational barriers, educational and training, leadership experience and individual attributes such as lack of confidence. Organizational barriers were cited by majority of the respondents and by both men and women equally a clear indication that these are obvious and evident barriers. Both men and women were almost in agreement that limited exposure to, and experience in leadership were a barrier, and this is expected since not many women are in positions of leadership to gain the requisite experience. Education and training were mentioned by more women than men yet there were more women participants with higher levels of education than men. More men had had lower levels of education than women and at the higher levels they were at par. Perhaps it is the training element that the women felt they lacked. Also, more women than men said that individual attributes such as a lack of confidence impeded their progression. It is possible that many of them need leadership training to develop the necessary confidence. Other barriers that were mentioned by more women than men include work/social/family life balance and a lack of networks that can open opportunities for them to progress, absence of mentorship, and disability. Social cultural barriers were mentioned by both men and women equally. This analysis is indicative that men are not fully cognisant of the issues that women must deal with or the barriers that impact on their progression to leadership and management positions.

03

More men (64.7%) were aware of the National Policy on Gender compared to women (54.5%)

Of the respondents interviewed, 60.7% were aware of the National Policy on Gender and Development (2000) while 39.2% were not. Most of those aware of this policy, that is 64.7% were men while women who were aware of it made up 54.5% of the total respondents aware of the policy. This is possible since most of those in decision making positions, and who interrogate the policy more, were men. Most respondents said that the 1/3 gender rule has been implemented in recruitment and promotion to ensure gender balance. However, this gender rule has been misinterpreted to mean that it is women who should constitute 1/3 while men should be represented by a 2/3 majority. As a result, women have continued to be underrepresented compared to men.

04

1/3 gender rule can only be implemented by the public service board

Most respondents were of the opinion that positions are openly advertised although there is no deliberate action to give a chance to the women. Many did not know why the 1/3 rule was not always implemented but some said that role of hiring and promoting personnel was in the hands of the public service board, and it should therefore be responsible for implementing the policy. With this view held by many, the role of implementing this policy was therefore transferred to another body outside the department.

05

Gender offices have the largest turnover of the section heads

Although the various departments had gender offices, some respondents felt that these were non-functional and did not know the measures put in place to guarantee equal opportunities for women. These were also the offices with the largest rate of turnover of the section heads thus lacking continuity and consistency in planning and implementation of gender activities and plans.

Affirmative action not implemented because of lack of familiarity of the National Gender Policy

One of the main reasons that the affirmative action is not implemented in most departments is the lack of familiarity with the content of the policy. Those involved in recruitment are not the ones in charge of implementing the gender policies on hiring and promoting. They do not have the mandate to deviate from set out guidelines on recruitment and promotions to accommodate gender representation and considerations.

Some departments have noted the apparent barriers and put in place some measures which can be adopted and scaled up to other departments. These include:

- 1.Rolling out a curriculum on work-life balance training to empower women and enable them to participate in management and leadership positions.*
- 2.Focused training on confidence building, assertiveness, career life planning and mentorship carried out by senior female managers to young women at the entry level of employment. Although this was done informally as it was not part of the department's policy, it should be domesticated within the department and conducted in a planned and organized manner*
- 3.Most vacancies are filled through internal advertisements and women are encouraged to apply. There should however be a deliberate policy to have a specific quota for women applicants.*
- 4.Through devolution, new vacancies were created with each county having a gender department. This has increased gender advocacy as well as capacity building in the country.*
- 5.Instituting specific directives targeting women during interviews, selection and formation of committees, promotions, and staffing.*

Conclusion

Despite the established benefits of gender diversity in Kenya, there still a dearth of women in leadership and management positions in public service as compared to their male counterparts. Consequently, specific, deliberate, and targeted approaches should be adopted to address this situation to achieve gender diversity in public service. As noted, Kenya has a legislative framework for gender equality entrenched in the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and attendant legislative and policy documents namely National Policy on Gender and Development of 2000, 2011, 2019 which focus on gender equality and development, but it's the implementation is wanting. It can, however, be enhanced by provision of resources and continued engagement of all relevant stakeholders as well as monitoring and evaluation frameworks. There is a need for continued engagement with the policy implementers in different institutions and continuous national information exchange on how the policy can address and counter women underrepresentation in Kenya.



Recommendations

There is need to put in place an effective policy shift and cultural change at all levels of government to address gender inequality in career progression. Hence the following recommendations are suggested:



There is need to decipher the meaning of the 1/3 gender rule. The one 1/3 is not restricted to women and it does not mean that the representation of women should be 1/3 and no more. It should be redefined.



There should also be an enforcement component of this rule. Since 1/3 rule carries no penalty, it is not always enforced. Its enforcement would go a long way in closing the gender gap. The government should therefore monitor the implementation of the gender policy.



The public service needs to review the working environment, institutional practices, and policies to minimize gender discrimination and insensitivity.



Women friendly work environments should be created with a fully equipped mothers room attached to each section



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The government needs to strengthen gender awareness campaigns within all institutions aimed at changing the culture of Kenyan organizations to view men and women as equals in career related opportunities



Develop programmes aimed at changing attitudes and creating an enabling environment for women empowerment especially for young women who are joining the service and to sensitize employees on the need to take professional courses. The employees should also be sponsored for these courses.



Institute focused training and mentorship programmes targeting young women joining the career on confidence building and assertive training as well as management skills to accelerate their upward mobility in and career planning



Institution of mentorship training for all women. With the seniors being role models to the juniors, holding their hands in progression to beat the stereotype of women being their own enemies.



Encourage both men and women to apply when positions are advertised.



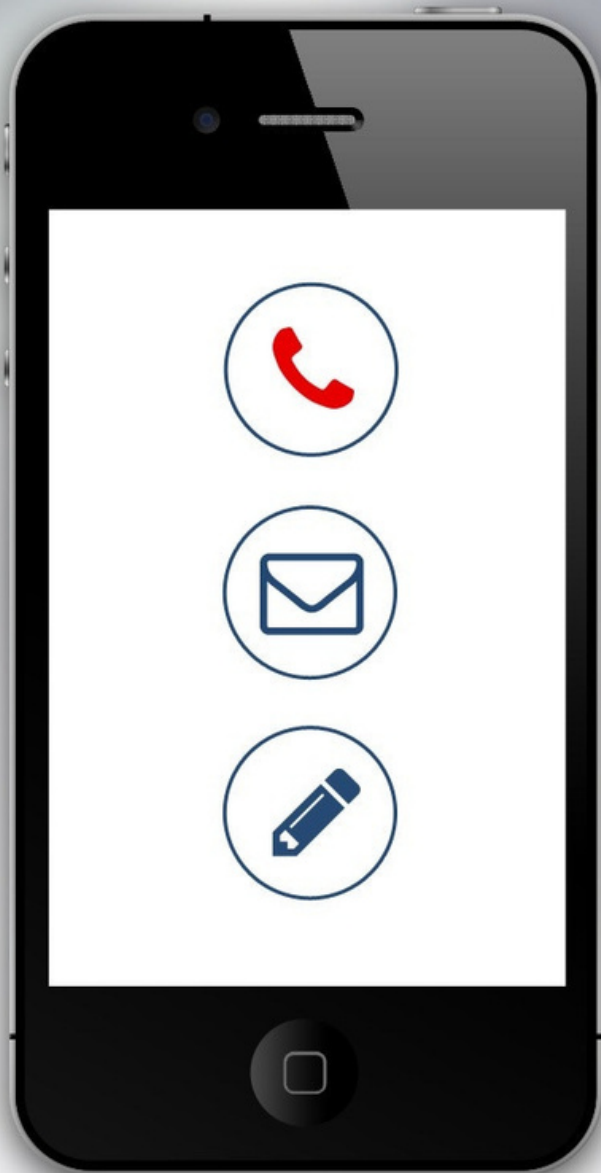
Men and women perceive things differently. It is therefore important to have women in positions of decision making, planning, and budgeting for issues dealing with women



Women needs at the workplace are different from those of men. It is therefore important to have a specific gender sensitive and inclusive budget to cater for needs of all staff.

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