

# Organizational Cultural Factors Hindering Women Ascending to Top Management Positions in Public Universities in Kenya: A Case of Moi University

M/s Rebecca s. Makori<sup>1</sup> Prof. Maria Onyango<sup>1</sup> Prof. Judith Miguda Attyang<sup>1</sup> prof. Edward Bantu<sup>2</sup>  
Dr . Peter Omae Onderi<sup>3\*</sup>

1. School of Business and Economics Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of science and technology, Kenya.

2. Kisii university. School of education, KENYA

3. Maseno university-school of arts and social sciences. Maseno University, KENYA

## Abstract

It is observed that the major setback to economic development in Kenya is stagnation in industrial development. To overcome these, Kenya plans to be a middle level income nation by the year 2030. These plans are to be realized through “Vision 2030”. To achieve these goals, Kenya requires gender mainstreamed team of highly skilled workers with competency in administration and strategic management. Kenya has to prepare at least twice as many women graduates with administration and management background to match the male counterparts even in the stipulated 1/3 ratio. Globally, women experience many challenges in ascending to top management positions especially in institutions of higher learning. This is despite endless calls and legislations to push for gender equity in appointments to both junior and top management positions in all departments of our institutions. This study aimed to determine the influence of organizational culture on women ascending to top management positions, to determine the effects of social factors on women ascending to top management positions and the effects of demographic factors on women ascending to top management positions. The target population was of 114 out of whom 34 was sampled. Semi structured questionnaires were used to collect primary data. Secondary data was collected from document reviews. The primary data collected was analyzed using computer supported software and presented using descriptive statistics. The Computer aided program was used (SPSS Version 22.0 for analyzing quantitative data. The study findings established that organizational culture hindered women ascending to top management position. It was concluded that the University Management should adopt policies that will ensure gender equality and equity in the appointments and promotions in leadership positions be considered. In addition, the study concluded that gender discrimination hindered women ascending to top leadership roles. The study recommended that University should develop and implement policies that are harnessing gender equity in the appointments and promotion of staff.

**Keywords:** Gender balance, Organizational culture, Equal opportunities

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

The disparity of women in top management in the work force has been a major debate in both management and gender studies (Raburu, 2011). In institutions of higher learning as in other sectors, studies shows that the number of women in top positions remains very low, with women significantly under-represented in senior positions in Universities. Similarly, women ascending to top management positions in institutions of higher learning remain very low. ILO (2008) declaration on social justice for a fair globalization highlighted the significance of fundamental rights such as elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. This is despite women being higher in population compared to their male counterparts. Wirth (2007) observes that the percentage of women ascending to top management position is less than 25% indicating that women have not been able to ascend to top management positions in major institutions irrespective of their abilities.

### 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the enacted of the New Constitution of Kenya 2010 that emphasized on the gender equity on the appointments of the either gender in the public offices to be at least a third, gender inclusion in top management positions in the public universities is still skewed towards male leadership in the appointment and promotion to these positions. (Onsongo, 2000) In the case of Moi University only 1% of the women occupy the senior management positions. In addition, Moi University 2005-2015 Strategic Plan showed that out of 173 senior administrative positions: only 20% are occupied by women and only 10% of the women form the academic staff at Moi University. It is not clear if there are no qualified women to compete fairly with men in appointments to top management positions. Women have ventured into University career both in the academic and administrative lines. Previous study by Onsongo (2000) showed that in the universities and in the work force in Kenya, very few women have made their way to top management positions. There still exist huge disparities between the

genders in as far as top management positions are concerned. This study explored the factors which affects this disparity; it sought to establish the factors hindering women ascending to top management positions in the public Universities set-up through a case study of Moi University.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study and research questions**

The main objective of this study was to determine the factors hindering women ascending to top management positions at Moi University, Kenya. The specific Objective of the study was to establish the effects of organizational culture on women ascending to top management positions at Moi University. The research Questions was what are the effects of organizational culture on women ascending to top management positions at Moi University?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study might be significant to universities as it might shed light on their compliance with the constitutional requirements on the issue of gender equality in the work place. This should help them improve their hiring practices. . This study also might contribute knowledge in the existing body of knowledge about women studies.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The study was carried out in Moi University. The study restricted itself to the factors hindering women ascending to top management positions in Public Universities in Kenya, with a case of Moi University.

### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

This study was limited to Moi University, a public university; therefore the findings of this study might not be generalized to represent other public universities in Kenya. However to overcome these, similar studies should also be carried out in other public universities in Kenya.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theoretical Perspective**

The study was guided by Radical Feminist theory. The Radical Feminist theory tries to explain how revolution change can offer the possibility of women's liberation according to Benerjee (2001). He developed this theory to guide women in their sustained effort to change the situation of women in the society. It advocates on how women should fight for their rights and achieve their goals. The theory recognizes the pervasive influence of gender division on social life and tries to understand women's oppression and the structures in society that espouse this oppression and subordination. The feminist perspectives look at the many similarities between the genders and conclude that women and men have equal potential for individual development. Differences in the realization of that potential therefore, must result from external imposed constraints and from the influence of social institutions and values (Nzomo, 2005). Feminist theorists have also started to question the differences between women, including how race, class, ethnicity, and age intersect with gender. Feminist theory is most concerned with giving a voice to women and highlighting the various ways women have contributed to society. Radical feminists theory identify physical violence as being at the base of patriarchy, but they think that patriarchy can be defeated if women recognize their own value and strength, establish a sisterhood of trust with other women, confront oppression critically, and form female separatist networks in the public spheres.

### **2.2 Theoretical review**

Historically, Management position has carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women is still common today. Although the number of female leaders has increased, the society often overlooks the abilities of women to lead. According to (Hujgaard ,2002), the societal conventions regarding gender and management traditionally exclude women, and top management positions are viewed as a masculine role. Hujgaard further argues that the cultural construction of management in itself instigates difference and this is only now being transformed or contested as women gain access top management positions. The belief in African societies is that men lead and women follow (Ngcongong, 2003). It is not uncommon in rural villages in Africa that on a trip undertaken on foot the man will be literally walking ahead of the woman. Different reasons may be advanced for this but ultimately it is a simple enough illustration of the deeply held notion of management as masculine.

### **2.3 A situation analysis of women ascending to top management positions**

In institutions of higher learning, women have been marginalized as men monopolize the decision making structures and are the majority. One underlying problem for women has been the difficulty in dealing with the inherent patriarchal structures that pervade the lives of people, the processes of state and the party (Nzomo,

2007). In many societies, women are still assigned a secondary place by the prevailing customs and culture. Examples abound of efforts that have been made to include and involve women but for the most part, these are superficial changes (such as minimum quotas of 30% women are introduced by certain parties, or the constitution is changed to allow representation by women, as in Tanzania). However, on careful examination of the situation one finds that implementation is lacking. It has been said of women in Kenya that not only are societal customs and attitudes to blame for their small part in leadership, but their education and training tend to make them accept their secondary status as the natural order of things (Duverger, 2005 as cited in Nzomo, 2007). It would seem there are other barriers, explicit and implicit, that make it difficult to attain equity even after policy and legal interventions.

#### **2.4 The proportion of Women: Men in Top Management Positions in the University**

A study done by Onsongo (2000) assessing the status of women in management positions at six public and six private universities found out that women were less represented in all the posts as observed in the tables below. The post of Directors and Dean of Students were the only posts with considerable number of women in public (30% and 40% respectively) unlike the private universities which had 50% women as librarians, the six public universities had none. None of the six public universities had a woman in the post of VC but they had about 13.3% DVC's.

#### **2.5 Organizational culture and women ascending to top management positions**

The study discussed literature on the effects of organizational culture on women ascending to top management positions. The organizational culture was involving sub-themes comprising of: institutional policy on recruitment and promotion, discrimination and stereotyping and imbedded institutional mindset and leadership style.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.2 Research Design**

The study used a descriptive survey design. A descriptive study is one in which information is collected without changing the environment (i.e., nothing is manipulated).

#### **3.3 Study Location**

This is a case study of Moi University which is located in Eldoret, 310 kilometers northwest of Nairobi, the Capital City of Kenya.

#### **3.4 Target Population**

Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), defines population as the entire group of people, events, or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate. The targeted population of this study comprised of 114 respondents which included, 27 Professors, 21 Associate Professors, 40 Senior lecturer, 13 Deans of Schools, 10 Directors and 03 Registrars, in Moi University and its satellite campuses. The Table 3.1 shows the target population and distribution.

#### **3.5 Sample size and Sampling Techniques**

A sample is a small proportion of the population selected for observation and analysis (Amin, 2005). The researcher used simple random sampling method to draw the sample size.

#### **3.6 Research Instruments**

The data collected was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. In primary data, self-developed questionnaires were used.

#### **3.7 Validity of research instruments**

Experts from the School of Business and Economics were engaged to ensure that the instruments accurately measured the variables it was supposed to measure. Quality control was necessary to ensure acceptability level of validity and reliability of research findings (Oso and Onen, 2009).

#### **3.8 Reliability of research instruments**

The instruments were pre-tested for reliability using Cronbach alpha approach with a sample of 10 respondents randomly selected from the study population. A Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.83 was obtained. Since the minimum Cronbach alpha of at least 0.7 is acceptable for the reliability of the research instruments, the research found the instruments reliable.

### 3.9 Data collection procedures

Data was collected from members of a population in order to determine the current status of members of that population with respect to one or more variables. In the case of this study the variable was women ascending to top management positions in institutions of higher learning in Kenya, with an objective focus at Moi University.

### 3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used for data analysis. Quantitative data from closed ended items of the questionnaires was coded and analyzed by descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages

On the other hand, Qualitative data from open ended items of the questionnaires were analyzed using Thematic Analysis as per the objectives of the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.3 Response rate

The return rate of the questionnaires from the respondents was 100.0%. Given that the questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher, it was noted that 95% of the questionnaire were appropriately filled.

Gender	Respondents	Percentage %
Men	30	75%
Women	8	20%
Not returned	2	5%
Total	40	100%

### 4.4 Effects of Organizational Culture on Women ascending top management positions

The study objective was to determine the effects of organizational culture on women ascending to top management positions in Moi University.. The findings based on the organizational culture were obtained and presented as in table 4.5

**Table 4.1: Effects of Organizational culture on women ascending to top positions**

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
organizational rules limits gender participation	20(58.8%)	14(41.2%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)
Requirements for appointment, recruitment and promotion in the university are unfair to women who are late comers in the academy	0(0%)	3(8.8%)	1(2.9%)	20(58.8%)	10(29.4%)
The poor documentation of policies for senior management staff in the University has hindered the upward mobility of women to top management positions	2(5.9%)	1(2.9%)	3(8.8%)	5(14.7%)	23(70.6%)
The university advertise vacant positions openly i.e. both internally and externally	0(0%)	6(17.6%)	1(2.9%)	20(58.8%)	11(32.4%)
More male than female employees have been appointed as deans and heads of department in the university	0(0%)	0(0%)	0(0%)	31(91.2%)	3(8.8%)
The traditional stereotypes remain key hindrance of women to rise to top positions	0(0%)	0(0%)	3(8.8%)	2(5.9%)	29(85.3%)
There is lack of policy and practice implementation aimed to encourage women to aspire for senior positions	3(8.8%)	1(2.9%)	8(23.5%)	10(29.4%)	11(32.4%)
Some policies documented discriminate women	4(11.8%)	3(8.8%)	3(8.8%)	14(41.2%)	10(29.4%)

**Scale of 1-5**, where 1= strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=undecided, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree

According to the study findings in Table 4.5, it was found that majority 20(58.8%) strongly disagreed that presence of organizational rules does limit gender participation in top management and 14(41.2%) of them disagreed with the same statement. This finding implied that the presence of organizational rules does not limit gender participation in top management.

The study also indicated that 20(58.8%) of the respondents agreed that requirements for the appointment, recruitment and promotion in the university are unfair to women who are late comers in the academy and 10(29.4%) of them strongly agreed with the statement. On the other hand 3(8.8%) of the respondents disagreed that the requirements for the appointment, recruitment and promotion in the university are unfair to women who are late comers in the academy. Only 1(2.9%) of the respondents were undecided whether

the requirements for the appointment, recruitment and promotion in the university are unfair to women who are late comers in the academy. Overall, 88.2% of the respondents asserted that requirements for the appointment, recruitment and promotion in the university are unfair to women who are late comers in the academy. The study results implied that the requirement for appointment, recruitment and promotion was unfair to women. Therefore, the study advises the human resource management to develop and enact a recruitment and promotion policy that will be friendly to all gender and this will enhance gender equity in all appointments within the public universities.

### **5.2.1 Findings on the effect of organizational culture on women ascending to top management positions.**

The study findings revealed that the organizational rules were not limiting gender participation with 100% response. Further the study results showed that majority of the respondents (88.2%) pointed that the requirements for appointment, recruitment and promotion in the university were unfair to women who are late comers in the academic. The study also found out that majority (85.3%) of the respondents confirmed that the poor documentation of policies for senior management staff in the university has hindered the upward mobility of women to top management positions. In addition, the study found out that more than two thirds (91.2%) of the respondents cited the university made advertisements for the vacant positions openly. Moreover, the research results showed that there were more male than female employee appointment as deans and heads of department in the university. Further, the study finding showed that 91.2% of the respondents pointed that traditional stereotypes remained the key hindrance of women to rise to top positions. The study also found out that 61.8% of the respondents confirmed that there was a lack of policy and practice implementation aimed to encourage women to aspire for senior positions. Finally, the study found out that some policies documented discriminated women as evident by 70.6% response.

The study concluded that there must be a human centric and an integrated organizational management strategy for a human centric organizational culture to be adopted. This should happen from the conception of policy planning, monitoring and implementation, the adoption of a human centric and an integrated management approach which can provide favorable results in Universities. Any effort aimed at gender equality in organization management must have implicit objectives of reducing women's under representation and increase their inclusion in top organizational management in Kenya. This approach has to adopt the inclusion of women in top echelons of management positions. A human centric organization culture has to be practiced that would create Ethos that guide organizational management.

An integrated organization management approach must be integrated to all the systems and process into one complete frame work enabling people to work as a single unit with a unified organizational goals, Shared visions and common values. This system should depend on a balanced mix of the masculine and feminine attributes. This system should put its weight towards the adoption measures to attract, advance and empower women so as to benefit from their qualifications, experience and talent in a highly competitive environment

There is need for equal participation by both men and women in the implementation of policies that promote gender equity in employment, job training and opportunities, to prevent unfair discrimination and an eradication of inequalities in the Universities. It is beseeching for the government to set up a deliberate policy capable of translating the perceived Women's goal into reality through introduction of compulsory quarter system and ensure its implementation and monitoring in all the other Universities.

Government should deliberately formulate and aggressively enforce and monitor a policy that ensures organization recruitment, selection and promotion so that these are not biased towards male gender. Such policies should aim at collecting the societal cultural and socialization practices that have relegated women into the private arena from time in memorial.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study the following conclusions were made:

1. Women at Moi University are few in number and most of them are concentrated in the junior ranks of the academic ladder with majority of the women managers involved in teaching, co-ordination of programmes and supervision of staff. Women are not involved in key decision-making activities at Moi University.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following were the recommendations:

1. The management of the university needs to evaluate and implement the gender policy described in the University Strategic Plan (2005-2015) in order to ensure equal opportunity for both men and women. Information on all aspects of Recruitment, promotion and appointment criteria should be known to all members of the staff.
2. There is need to sensitize the staff and the general public and the society that both men and women are key players in the development process and that we cannot relegate one group in our society to traditional roles

which are no longer viable for national development.

### 5.5 Suggestion for further research

The study suggests that there is need to study the effect of the gender imbalance on the performance of public organizations in Kenya

- i) Broaden the study by randomly selecting students and educators at both National and international level. Random selection and larger samples size would increase the generation of the sector.
- ii) Examine the cultural, regional, age differences in perception of gender issues.

### REFERENCES

- Banerjee, N. (2001), The Media Business: Some 'Bullies' Seek Ways to Soften Up: Toughness Has Risks for Women Executives, New York Times, August 10, 2001, C1.
- ILO.(2008). ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. Adopted by International Labour Conference, 9th session in Geneva, 10th June 2008
- Ngcongong, N. M. (2003). Gender imbalances in the school governance : a case study of two Umbumbulu high schools.<http://hdl.handle.net/10413/4067>. retrieved on April, 20 2015
- Nzomo, (2007) Women in Decision-making.Nairobi UON
- Onsongo, (2000) factors affecting women's participation in university; Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa, , Addis Ababa
- Oso, W. and Onen, D. (2009).A general guide to writing research proposal and report. Jomo Kenyatta Foundation: Kenya
- Raburu, P. A. (2015). Motivation of Women Academics and Balancing Family & Career. Journal of Educational and Social Research Vol. 5 No.1 January 2015: MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy. ISSN 2239-978X, ISSN 2240-0524
- Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A.(2009). Research Methods for Business Students(5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Prentice Hall