

The Invisible Gender in the Corporate World: A Case Study of the Business Daily Newspaper in Kenya

Joseph K Karanja^{1*} and Rachael C. Atamba²

1. Gender and Disability Unit, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, PO box 190-50100, Kakamega, Kenya
2. Office of Registrar Administration, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, PO box 190-50100, Kakamega, Kenya

*E-mail of the corresponding author: kakajos2002@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

The business world creates a power structure of male as authority (topdog) and female as the underdog. This discriminative structure has been passed down through generations. Consequently it has denied women the power to control their own resources. This paper purposes to show that the corporate world has maintained the male as authority bias to date and progress in attaining gender parity is 'painfully' slow especially for women seeking executive positions.

Keywords: merchants, social construction of gender, corporate world

1.0: Introduction /Background

In the 1600's early modern commerce adopted a new way of keeping record in commerce called double entry bookkeeping system (POOVEY 1998).

This bookkeeping was meant to trivialize the narrative (memorials) writing which was associated with women. In this period of history, the merchants of England were trying to gain respectability within the sovereign courts.

Ironically, the merchants –experts used the information from the women's' work (memorials) to make their own entries into the double entry bookkeeping system by translating the narratives into numbers. The women's work was then discarded and only the merchant-experts' double entry bookkeeping entry remained.

Besides the double entry bookkeeping system, a second factor that helped establish the male as the authority figure was a style of writing (a linguistic device)

The merchant-expert was described using the masculine pronoun 'him' having the following qualities:

1. He ought to be a good penman.
2. He ought to know measures weights
3. He ought to know customs(ibid:8)

This way, the women's work was trivialized in the courts and made invisible. The domain of 'expert' was closed to women because only males were merchants and only merchants were experts. Deborah Cameron (1995) says that the question of who has traditionally 'owned' the language is a 'shaper of ideas.

The merchants of the 1600's gained control of corporate world and were defined as experts in a world where the work of women was excluded only because they were not included in the definition of "merchant as male" norm. The question that this paper seeks to answer is: How different is the norm of 1600 and that of 21st century in the corporate world?

According to Mary Poovey the merchants of the 1600s invalidated the women by trivializing their writings as subjective and irrelevant to the more objective numbers ridden double-entry book keeping system (Mary Poovey, 1998:6). The corporate world creates a power structure of male as authority. This has been passed down through generations and has denied women the power to control their own resources (Ibid).

The Global Gender Gap Index was introduced by the World Economic Forum in 2006 as a framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities across health, education, and political and economic empowerment criteria and for tracking progress over time. The World Economic Forum places a strong emphasis on a multi-stakeholder approach in order to engage leaders to design the most effective measures for tackling global challenges.

In *The Corporate Gender Gap Report 2010* published by World Economic Forum, it's clear that in almost all countries, there is a clear pattern across the levels of positions (entry level, middle level, senior management and board positions).

Female employees tend to be concentrated in entry or middle level positions— that is, the more senior the position, the lower the percentage of women. A major exception to this trend is Norway, where the percentage of women among the Board of Directors is above 40% for the majority of respondents.

From the sample of the world's largest employers who answered the survey, the average number of women holding the CEO-level position was a little less than 5%. Finland (13%), Norway (12%), Turkey (12%), Italy (11%) and Brazil (11%) display the highest percentage of female CEOs, while Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, India, Mexico, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United

States have no female CEOs among the responding companies(ibid).

Even though women make up more than half of Kenyan workforce, only 12%of the seats on the board of the listed companies are held by women. The percentage is slightly better in public institutions accounting for 20% of boardroom representation.

Kenya institute of management in a study dubbed ‘bringing in the other half’ found out that female professional are locked out of executive corporate positions despite having the requisite qualifications (East African standard, Sunday December 23rd 2012).

The research revealed that out of every ten boardroom executives in state corporations, only two are female. Companies listed in Nairobi securities exchange fared poorly with an average of one woman for every ten boardroom positions.

According to the study, only two firms Kenya Reinsurance and Uchumi supermarket have women chairing the boards.

Chief executives positions in listed companies are equally biased towards men with only two firms (BOC Kenya and Diamond Trust) having female CEOs. In the public sector .a CEO who stands out as female is from National Oil.

This research paper is a culmination of an analysis of business daily newspaper. Business daily newspaper is a premium newspaper launched in March 2007 that featured business news and analysis for the Kenyan market .it is published between Monday and Friday. Distribution is currently 80% in Nairobi and the paper is among the most read on the internet. It is available in English language.

2.0: Methodology

2.1: Introduction

In this section, the areas under consideration included research design, target population, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection procedures and data analysis techniques.

2.2: Research Design

The researcher used an ex-post facto design. This is a research design where the researcher does not have direct control of the independent variable because their manifestations have long occurred.

The researchers investigated the independent variable, that is, the *business daily* newspaper. The researcher could not change any data within the selected issues of the *business daily* newspaper. The independent variable, the *business daily* newspaper was investigated in relation to dependent variable, the social construction of gender in the corporate world.

2.3: Target Population

The study targeted the text population. The writer and the reader interacting through the *business daily* newspaper are part of the text population.

2.4: Sample Text Population

Relative to the text population, six issues of the *business daily* newspaper of between December 31st 2012 and February 13th 2013 were selected. The total number of pages in the 6 selected issues of *business daily* is 232.The researchers sampled this period because it was considered recent enough to reflect the current status.

Using simple random sampling method, the researchers selected Thursday December 27th 2012,Monday December 31st 2012,Friday January 4th 2013, Monday 28th January 2013,Friday February 8th 2013 and Wednesday February 13th 2013.

The study then selected the key areas to analyze from each newspaper which are pictures of men/women and experts who made contributions in the *business daily newspaper*. .

2.5: Data Collection Procedure and Analysis and Interpretation.

The study used issues of the *business daily newspaper* for data collection. Data was analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner Kerlinger (1983:525).

Content Analysis involves examining the information contained in a written text by counting how often certain words and themes occur. This includes pictures and names of experts.

3.0: Analysis and Discussion

3.1: Introduction

This chapter is a presentation of discussion and analysis to investigate the social construction of gender in *business daily newspaper*. This resulted from the content analysis of six issues of the *business daily newspaper*.

3.2.0: Gender Construction in the Financial Pages

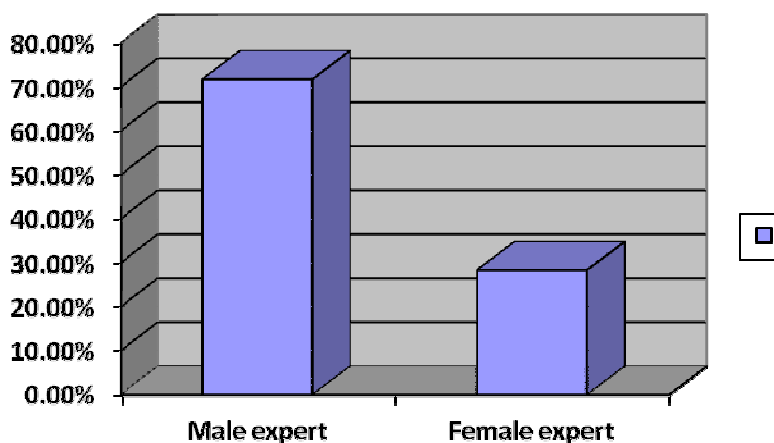
The number of pictures of men/women and expert contribution in the business daily newspaper can be used as an indicator of social construction of gender in corporate world.

3.2.1: Experts Contribution in business daily

Male as authority in the world of commerce is maintained in the financial pages of *business daily* where the male

analyst expert appears 71.7 percent while the female-analyst expert is 28.3 percent.
 (See Table 2).

Date publication	Male Expert	Female Expert	Total
Thursday Dec 27 th 2012	14	4	18
Monday Dec 31 st 2012	19	5	24
Friday Jan 4 th 2013	19	5	24
Monday 28 th Jan 2013	14	10	24
Friday Feb 8 th 2013	15	7	22
Wednesday Feb 13 2013	10	5	15
Total	91	36	127
Percentage	71.7%	28.3%	100%



Cameron says that gender has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norm (Cameron, 1997:49). This cultural reality of the male as the corporate analyst – expert is repeated so often that it is internalized and unquestioned. Women are socially constructed as subordinate and dependent on men.

It is not clear whether women have accepted their silencing as the norm and that, men were the unquestioned leaders in the finances world.

The cultural reality of male as experts in the financial world is so internalized that few women have as yet challenged that reality. The women in financial world are socially constructed as helpless.

Men are portrayed as financial wizards, which help construct their gender identity as male analyst expert and construct the women’s identity as needing the help of these men. The more powerful male in corporate world forced women into submission and constructed both the male and female gender identities, which went unchallenged by the women.

3.2.2: Pictures of Women/Men in the Business Daily

An examination of pictures of men and women in the *business daily newspaper* of the six selected issues revealed that women are still subordinate in the financial world. Pictures of men and women were counted; this included identifiable figures. The analysis of pictures showed that men appeared 64 percent and women appeared 36 percent. This is shown in figure 4.2.1 below:-

Date publication	Male	Female	Total
Thursday December 27 th 2012	26	8	34
Monday December 31 st 2012	31	7	38
Friday January 4 th 2013	34	26	60
Monday 28 th January 2013	28	15	43
Friday February 8 th 2013	29	26	55
Wednesday February 13 th 2013	28	17	45
Total	176	99	275
Percentage	64 %	36 %	100 %

Amy Sheldon says that “females become invisible if you rarely see them or refer to them and to be invisible is a way of being demeaned” (Sheldon, 1990:4).

Since 1600s many changes have been made to allow women more power and control of their lives (Poovey,

1998). They can now own and control their resources, take care of their own needs, make decisions for themselves and participate in voting and politics.

However, what has not changed is the fact that men in the corporate/financial world dominate women. Men are still powerful and still in control of most of the resources in the world. It was also noted that traditionally, money was considered as a male province.

4.0: Conclusion

An examination of *Business daily newspaper* therefore showed that the corporate world creates a power structure of male as authority. Although the newspaper attempted to avoid sexist language, it maintained the male as authority bias in pictures and experts.

The male dominated pages of *Business daily newspaper* therefore socially constructed the male as powerful and women as weak and silent. This shows women's lack of importance in the financial world and effectively silences them

Consequently the women were the nearly invisible and silenced gender.

5.0: Recommendation

The most important determinant of a country's competitiveness is its human talent—the skills, education and productivity of its workforce. The society ought to acknowledge that in many parts of the developed world, women now accounts for more than half of the college and university graduates and in many emerging economies, gender gaps in higher education are closing dramatically. Women thus constitute a burgeoning portion of the talent pool available to companies today and should be given opportunity.

Over time, therefore, a nation's competitiveness depends significantly on whether and how it utilizes its female talent. To maximize its competitiveness and development potential, each country needs to strive for gender equality— that is, to give women the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities as men.

Governments and private sector have an important role to play by creating conducive environments where the best talent—both male and female can flourish.

REFERENCES

- Cameron, D. (1997) *Feminism and Linguistic Theory*. London; McMillan.
Cameron, D. (1995) *Verbal Hygiene. The politics of Language*. London; Routledge.
Fairclough, N. (1992) *Critical Language Awareness*. Essex; Longman Group Limited.
Hudson, (1973) *Women their Changing Roles*. New York; Times Co.
Kerlinger, F. (1983) *Foundations of Behavioral Research*. New York; Rinehart and Winston Inc.
Nation Media group limited 27th December 2012 *Business Daily*, Kimathi street *Nairobi*, Kenya.
Nation Media group limited 31st December 2012 *Business Daily*, Kimathi street *Nairobi*, Kenya.
Nation Media group limited 4th January 2013 *Business Daily*, Kimathi street *Nairobi*, Kenya.
Nation Media group limited 28th January 2013 *Business Daily*, Kimathi street *Nairobi*, Kenya.
Nation Media group limited 8th February 2013 *Business Daily*, Kimathi street *Nairobi*, Kenya.
Nation Media group limited February 13th 2013 *Business Daily*, Kimathi street *Nairobi*, Kenya.
Poovey, M. (1998) *Accommodating Merchants: Accounting, Civility and the Natural Laws of Gender*, Vol. 8 web address New York.
Sheldon, A. (1990) *Kings are Royaler than Queens: Language and Socialization*. London; Routledge.

Bibliographies of Authors

First A. Author Joseph K. Karanja is a Kenyan gender researcher and currently working as a Gender Officer in Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, public university in Kenya.

He holds a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree and Masters of Arts degree (M.A) in English Language and Linguistics with research specialization in gender and communication from Egerton University. He has also been trained in gender and disability mainstreaming, performance based gender and disability responsive budgeting, trainer of trainers program on gender mainstreaming among others.

His Masters degree research was published into a book called *Social Construction of Gender in Women Magazines* by LAP LAMBERT Academic publishing GMBH & CO.KG. Heinrich-Bocking Str 6-8 Saarbruchen Germany (ISBN 978-3-659-13515-6)

He is a strong proponent of gender diversity and inclusion in all sectors of development and has participated in National and International Conferences in Gender issues.

Second A. Author Rachael C. Atamba is a Kenyan Human Resource Management expert currently working as a Registrar in Administration in Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, public university in Kenya.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree (University of Nairobi) and Masters of Business Administration degree (MBA) Human Resource Management from Egerton University.

She is a reputed professional in Human Resource Management and is passionate about Gender Equality especially in the women empowerment in the corporate world.

She has also attended many National and International Conferences. Further she is a member of reputed professional bodies namely: Institute of Human Resource Management (Full Member), Kenya Institute of Management (Full Member) and Kenya Association of Public Administration & Management) Full Member. She has vast knowledge and experience in management and leadership.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

