

INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN MANAGERIAL POSITION A CASE OF ELDORET MUNICIPALITY, KENYA

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Abstract

Women continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance in both the public and private sector. However even in the modern society women are still facing challenges in their attempt to participate in managerial positions. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to determine how family chores and gender stereotype affect women's participation in management. The study employed a descriptive survey research design and was limited to respondents in Eldoret town. The study purposively selected 58 respondents and data was collected using questionnaires. Data was presented in frequency tables. From the descriptive findings women engage in many domestic or family chores which consume a lot of time and women are treated less than men. In organizations management prefer men in the top position than woman. Regression results showed that family chores and gender stereotype negatively and significantly affect women's participation in management. The study recommends that organizations need to offer work/life programs that support outside commitments, particularly for senior-level positions. Organizations need to treat women equally with many especially in their careers as the participation of women bring about diversity and wealth of experience.

Keywords: Culture, Stereotyping, Management, Leadership, Women's Participation, Gender

INTRODUCTION

In developed countries often cited as the reason for why women are not represented in top management positions is the "glass ceiling." The glass ceiling effect is defined as an unofficial barrier to opportunities within an organization or company preventing protected classes of workers, particularly women, from advancing to higher positions Glass Cliff, (2008). According

to Helfat et al. (2006), the percentage of women in executive positions is gender specific. For example, industries with the highest percentage of women executives include publishing and printing (15.8%), transportation equipment (15.7%), securities (14.8%), healthcare (14.6%), temporary help (14.5%), airlines (13.8%), and food Services (13.6%). In contrast, industries with women holding the least amount of executive positions include semiconductors (1.3%), energy (2.8%), waste management (3.6%), trucking (3.8%), aerospace (3.8%), mail, package, and freight delivery (3.8%), and pipelines (3.9%). There have been a growing body of research attempting to explain barriers to why women are so poorly represented in senior educational leadership positions (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Weyer, 2007; White, 2003). Whatever these barriers are termed, either horizontal/vertical (Weyer, 2007), internal/external (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2008) or cultural (Norris & Inglehart, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1987), these findings reveal the obstacles and challenges women encounter. One difficulty women face in their access to leadership roles and career development is the lack of formal and informal support and encouragement. However, these studies did not regress effect of family chores and gender stereotype on participation of women in top leadership.

Statement of the Problem

In Kenya women constitute slightly over half of the total population and form a critical portion of the human resource base. However, available data indicates that they are inadequately represented in senior management positions in public institutions and where policies that affect them are made, Lodiaga and Mbevi, (1995). The possible explanation for this situation could be that gender issues have not received due attention in most institutions. While a few researchers have in recent years began to document women's participation in management in the public and private sector in Kenya, Nzomo (1995); Lodiaga and Mbevi; (1995); Kanake (1997), such documentations often have not focused on the actual factors that affect women's participation in top management.

From the literature it is noted that there exist disparities on gender representation in top leadership positions worldwide. It is noted that this disparity is not as a result of qualification, skills or talents but rather on the basis of gender discrimination. This disparity has led to under representation of women in major decision-making positions hence lack of equity in opportunity distribution in all sectors. While a few researchers have in recent past began to document on women's participation in management positions in Kenya, such documentation has not focused on effect family chores and gender stereotyping on progression and participation of women in management.

Research Hypotheses

HO1: Family chores has no significant effect on women's participation in management,

HO2: Gender stereotyping has no significant effect on progression and participation of women in management

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by the feminist theory. The theory recognizes the pervasive influence of gender divisions on social life and tries to understand women's oppression and the structures in society that espouse this oppression and subordination. The feminist perspective, looking at the many similarities between the genders, concludes that women and men have equal potential for individual development. Differences in the realization of that potential, therefore, must result from externally imposed constraints and from the influence of social institutions and values Nzomo, (1995).

Feminists advance three broad perspectives in trying to explain the absence of women from senior management in the public and private sector. The first perspective is personal factors in which the paucity of women in management positions is attributed to the psychosocial attributes, including personality characteristics, attitudes and behavioral skills of women themselves.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Women and Leadership

According to Helfat, et al. (2006), women in top management positions were nearly non-existent from the 1970s to the early 1990s. Information from Helfat, et al. (2006) shows a dramatic increase of women in business leadership roles as of 2005 women accounted for 46.5% of the United States workforce, but for less than 8% of its top management positions although at Fortune 500 companies the figure was a bit higher ,The Economist, (2005). Female managers' earnings now average 72% of their male colleagues' Emory, (2008).

According to Laff (2006), while this information can be explained in part by female preferences, it can also be attributed to educational choices. Some analysts believe that the educational choices women make explain the low number of executive and managerial position women hold in tactical, science, and engineering fields. According to Nelson and Lavesque (2007), women in the United States only comprise 25% of the doctorates in math and science and less than 17% in engineering and computer and information sciences. The figures suggest education is an enabler of the glass ceiling.

Research has shown that in male work environment, female managers often do not get the diversity of experience compared to male managers, women are blocked from promotions while moving up the ladder and also gender inequality and culture and dissatisfaction with promotions negatively influence women's overall job satisfaction. Satisfaction with one's job is very crucial because it has been found to be positively related to career growth Resign, (1998).

Work and Family Balance

Work and life balance challenges can impact women's advancement and, if not dealt with, may contribute to the glass-ceiling phenomenon. Women are typically the primary family caregivers for children and/or the elderly. Assumptions are often made regarding women's availability to do a job without interference from family responsibilities. Further, some organizations may not offer work/life programs that support outside commitments, particularly for senior-level positions. As a possible solution, perhaps, women could choose to work fewer hours than men in order to spend more time with their families. Women also measure success in the workplace differently than men. Men tend to measure success by high salaries and important job titles whereas women place a higher value on their relationships with colleagues and community service. Therefore, many women are at a disadvantage to take steps that would increase the likelihood of advancing up the corporate ladder.

Having children brings a lot of responsibilities to a family life and this is the reason why many women decide to leave their careers prematurely so as to raise their children sufficiently. For this reason, employers occasionally hesitate to promote women because they are afraid that women will choose their families first. Nonetheless, an increasing number of companies are realizing the fact that women need some time out and have undertaken attempts to encourage women to remain longer in their careers as the participation of women is vital to the diversity and to the successes of corporations (Goff, 2005).

Kamau, (2001) indicates that the different needs of women lead them to create a self-imposed glass ceiling, in this manner only artificially seeming as if a glass ceiling would block their careers. Confronted with the ever-present glass ceiling, it is no longer possible, as has often been the case, to talk of the "choice of women for family" in explaining the absence of women in applying for certain vacancies, whilst at present many women uphold both a successful career and children. It is therefore necessary to "shift the focus" so as to give more weight to the organizational obstacles outlined here.

Many women who are at senior management positions seem to be not quite willing to climb for upper management positions because they cannot take the risk of bringing political conflicts, and ambition into their family lives. Additionally, women often do not see their own

personal skills and talent sufficient for those kinds of roles. However, the idea that women are not interested in high hierarchical positions because of the difficulty of reconciliation is increasingly challenged. Thus, the 2004 Catalyst study, “corporate leadership: same workplace, different realities” shows that women executives who aim at reaching the Chief Executive Officer’s position are as much as men and women with children at home desire it even more (55% against 46%).

Finally, the realization of organizational work-family initiatives is perceived to pave the way for women to make it to the top. Especially as programs such as child care support services, maternity leave arrangements or part-time working enables women to balance their family needs without sacrificing work. Powell (1999) mentioned that the “typical executive job has enormous responsibilities, time demands and pressures, which eventually calls for considerable sacrifices in personal life”. As a consequence, women are often less willing than men to make such substantial sacrifices as many want to have children, spend time with family or simply do not want such a huge responsibility in their daily work.

Stereotyping and Leadership

Past perceptions of leadership skills, competence, and assertiveness may hinder the ability of women to succeed in management. Many companies associate masculine characteristics with success and achievement. These include assertiveness, aggressiveness, and task-oriented leadership abilities, Jogulu and Wood (2006). Other stereotypes of women include the expectation of being modest, quiet, selfless, and nurturing. These simple characteristics may be seen as non- executive material. Entities desire a leader who will execute, take criticism, and do what is best for the company at all cost, Nelson and Levesque, (2007).

Leadership styles are closely associated with common perceptions and stereotypes of women leaders Goff, (2005). In early 1990 studies found that men emerged as task-oriented leaders more frequently than women who emerged as social leaders more frequently than men. Due to the demands of leadership positions, it became a socially accepted tendency for men to assume leadership because their task-oriented style was more widely accepted, Ryan and Haslan, (2007). As time moved on, the social leadership style of women was more accepted and valued in some circumstances, Jogulu and Wood, (2006).

One of the most comprehensive inquiries into personalities and leadership issues is the “Big Five” personality traits. The five factors include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Cross-cultural researched has concluded that there is a universal pattern of sex differences on responses to the Big Five Inventory. Women consistently report higher neuroticism and agreeableness, and men often report higher extraversion and

conscientiousness. Sex-based differences in personality traits are larger in prosperous, healthy, and egalitarian cultures in which women have more opportunities that are equal to those of men. Von Glinow et al. (2006).

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted through a descriptive survey research design approach. Survey design describes and explains the events as they are in the real life context in which they occurred, Polonsky and Weller, (2009). This research design was suitable for this study because it was able to appropriately capture the required data within the specified time for the study it provided the required data more quickly thus enabling the gathering and analysis of the relevant information.

This study was based in Eldoret town. The study targeted people holding managerial positions who estimated to be 580 as sourced from Kenya National Bureau of Statics offices in Eldoret.

The researcher employed snowball sampling which was most appropriate because the respondents could direct the researcher to the next person who was in a managerial position.

The study was based on primary data collected from the field using questionnaires. The main data collection instrument was questionnaires to the sampled respondents. According to Kothari, (2009) questionnaires are; first it is cheap to administer since it does not require a trained researcher to distribute and collect the questionnaires. Secondly, it eliminates interaction between the interviewer and the respondents which reduces biases. Moreover, the person filling the questionnaire is anonymous and therefore may be willing to give information especially over sensitive issues. It is a useful method, particularly when the questions are straightforward enough to be comprehended without verbal explanation. However, the researcher cannot probe for further information, cannot control who fills the questionnaire and the response rates may be low Kothari, (2009).

The instruments of data collection was to be sub-divided as per the variables and objectives and was comprehensive and representative of the behaviour domains that was to measure content validity of the instrument and was determined through expert judgment which involved discussing items in the instrument with the supervisor and colleagues. The suggestion for change will be incorporated in the final instrument to be used in the study.

The data collected from the research instruments was entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and checking was done for any data entry error before data analysis was done. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency analysis) and inferential statistics such as multiple regression model to test hypothesis, while descriptive

statistics enabled the researcher to describe the aggregation of raw data in non numerical terms Neumann, (2000). It involves the use of cross-tabulation. This enabled the researcher to describe, summarize and compare variables.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

From the study above, the respondents were of different educational levels from which they read and interpreted the questionnaires well. Majority of the respondents had diploma education. This tends to show that a high number of the respondents held diplomas as their educational level. However, the education level of the respondents was ideal in carrying out the study since they were able to respond to questionnaires considerably. This study tended to show the different reasons as to why respondents chose their professions. Majority of the respondents represented by 29% of the respondents stated that it was the attractive salary and the benefits that made them join their profession. The study indicated that majority of the respondents joined the profession because of attractive salary and benefits as supported by 29.3% of the respondents.

The study indicates women often lack freedom of geographical mobility which impedes their career development mostly because of their children schooling and other family obligations. In general, women are less available for geographic mobility and are mostly "followers" of their spouses. Dual career households therefore impact on traditional family roles; the problem of such households is a female problem, however, as women have greater difficulty in making their husbands and partners accept any professional mobility. To meet (to satisfy) the educational needs of children, dual-career couples can develop different carrier strategies: differentiation or division of roles, sequentially or simultaneously. The acceptance or not of mobility by the partner can be influenced by the support proposed by the company. If there is a dual career situation, for the double career couple, the mobilization of men can be a problem for his conjoint. For a professional couple with dual career, juggling work and home responsibilities has never been easy. However, in today's global economy, where local job opportunities may be harder to find, new challenges are emerging. May be, it is possible to have a successful career without sacrificing personal satisfaction, life balance, or relationships.

Women are always perceived in stereotype roles mostly due to their gossiping and their ability to meddle in people's affairs as indicated by the study findings. Past perceptions of leadership skills, competence, and assertiveness may hinder the ability of women to succeed in management. The study further found out this view is mostly held by men. Many companies associate masculine characteristics with success and achievement. Due to the demands of leadership positions, it became a socially accepted tendency for men to assume leadership

because their task-oriented style was more widely accepted. As time moved on, the social leadership style of women was more accepted and valued in some circumstances. One of the most comprehensive inquiries into personalities and leadership issues is the “Big Five” personality traits. The five factors include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. Cross-cultural research has concluded that there is a universal pattern of sex differences on responses to the Big Five Inventory. Women consistently report higher neuroticism and agreeableness, and men often report higher extraversion and conscientiousness.

The study indicates that women tend to perform in the same range as men. However, women emphasize on planning and organizing work and an empathic approach. Generally speaking, women leaders tend to be more participative and less autocratic, more effective in middle management, and in situations requiring cooperation. This idea concurs with the statement above. On the contrary employers often believe that women are less committed to work and less able to undertake a full time career than men, due to their biological make up, rather than ability. When promotion opportunities arise and an employer is given the choice between a man and a woman with equal qualifications, the woman he posits, is frequently viewed as the greater risk. Working in male dominated hierarchies is seen to reduce women’s advancement levels as male managerial hierarchies are more likely to promote men for managerial positions, as men feel more comfortable with other men than they do with women. The study indicated that women should always work near their homes. Additionally, women were supposed to be near their families since their husbands cannot allow them work far from home. The women experience more work interference with family than family interference with work. The intensity of work interference with family was significantly higher in the earlier life-cycle stage than in the later stage. About two thirds of the women intend to leave their job upon having another child, mainly due to the rising cost of childcare services. The study findings indicate that a man who supports his wife to pursue an administrative post is not encouraging her to have extra marital affairs. The twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to her social structure which is still more dominant. Traditional authoritarian set up traditional social structure continues to be the same basically and hence women face problem of role conflict.

The study indicated that women are treated less favourably than men. Majority of men share this view compared to women. For instance; often, promotion criteria are focused on a preconceived notion of who should perform the role rather than the qualification required. The study findings indicate that, women are not ranked as top managers. This attributed this to many factors that include discrimination and lack of women role models. Majority of organizations favor the use of informal recruitment and selection processes, such as small

social networks and employee referrals. Many organizations rely on informal, rather than merit based processes in order to select the best candidates and to screen out large numbers of unsuitable applicants. Informal recruitment processes can lead to biasness because recruiters tend to determine job requirements according to the current job- holder's gender. If the current job-holder is male and displays certain characteristics and abilities, then these characteristics and abilities are determined as being necessary for the job. Applicants are then assessed according to these requirements, and where these are perceived as being held more by men then a man is preferred. This process tends to limit the number of women applicants for men's job. It reinforces occupational segregation and contributes to building stereotypical views of men and women and women's roles and abilities.

Table 1: Family Chores and Gender Stereotyping

	Men		Women	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women lack freedom of geographical mobility	3.34	0.911	4.34	0.491
Women like gossiping and meddling in people's affairs	4.99	1.19	2.1	0.401
Women tend to perform in the same range as men	3.5	0.824	3.1	0.201
Women should always work near their homes	3.23	0.914	2.11	0.45
women are treated less favourably than men	2.9	1.231	4.41	0.131

Hypothesis Testing

A further assessment of the effect of family chores on women's participation in management revealed that family chores has a negative and significant effect on women participation in management, $\beta_1 = -0.482$, $t\text{-value} = -10.609$, $p < 0.000$. This indicates that the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant effect of family chores on women participation in management was rejected. Further, gender stereotyping has a negative and significant effect on women participation in management, $\beta_2 = -0.271$, $t\text{-value} = -5.003$, $p = 0.011$. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that gender stereotyping has no significant effect on progression and participation of women in management. The table also revealed that the overall model was adequate in predicting the change in women's participation in management, $F = 189.605$, $p < 0.000$ with an overall significant relationship between the independent variable and women's participation in management, $R\text{-square} = 0.835$.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

	Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	0.153	1.156	0.250
family chores	-0.482	-10.609	0.000
Gender Stereotyping	-0.271	-5.003	0.011
R Square	0.835		
Adjusted R Square	0.830		

Dependent Variable: Women's participation in management

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the study women often lack freedom of geographical mobility which impedes their career development mostly because of their children schooling and other family obligations. Though women perform in the same range as men, employers are hesitant to promote them because of their family obligations.

Further, the major source of information on gender equality is the radio due to lack of access to television sets, internet and newspapers. Additionally, the study indicates that, majority of the respondents had undergone a kind of sexual harassment at the work place. Making comments on physical appearance was very common in organisations.

The study makes the following recommendations based on the study findings;

- Women should be empowered by both the government and the community to ensure that gender equality is achieved at work
- Women should always work near their homes to enable them balance home and work chores
- Media should encourage men to support their wives to pursue administrative posts
- Organizations need to offer work/life programs that support outside commitments, particularly for senior-level positions.
- Finally, organizations need to encourage women to remain longer in their careers as the participation of women bring about diversity and wealth of experience.
- The study was limited to eldoret municipality; therefore similar study should further focus on private firms.

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