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Differences between Men and Women Perception towards Gender Issues among Non-Teaching Staff of Egerton University, Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract:

This study examined gender equalities at the work place among the non-teaching staff in Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya. Gender equalities have been contentious globally. Gender segregation of labour has been identified in many countries including Kenya. The phenomenon of gender equalities among employees in public institutions have been attributed to existing barriers and obstacles. However gender equalities among the non-teaching staff of Egerton University has not been investigated. This study investigated the reasons as to why despite the fact that many male and female employees have similar qualifications and occupy senior and influential positions, gender equalities is still a concern. Objectives of this study was to evaluate factors hindering gender equalities at the work place among the non-teaching staff in public universities in Kenya especially Egerton University. This study was guided by the following specific objectives namely; to establish positions that are held by men and women among the non-teaching staff members of Egerton University, to examine the causes of gender equalities among the non-teaching staff members of Egerton University and to determine the difference in the way men and women perceive gender issues. The study was also guided by the social feminist theory. A random sample of 100 persons, both male and female employees were selected and involved in this study. The study utilized cross sectional design where data was collected using questionnaires administered to the selected respondents and supplemented by secondary sources of information. The unit of analysis was the individual university non-teaching staff. The data was processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS). The study found that there was gender equalities in the university and also indication that empowering male and female employees at work place in terms of job performance, personality, and self-motivation was likely to enhance equalities at the work place. The study also found out that there were more men in the administration of the University than women and majority of women were secretaries and cleaners. The study concluded that there is no gender equalities at the work place in Egerton University. The study recommends from here that affirmative action should be strictly implemented for both men and women to compete on the same level. Also women should be encouraged to venture into those fields which have been traditionally dominated by men, while men should be encouraged to venture in the fields that have traditionally been dominated by women for instant secretarial duties.

Keywords: *Difference between, men and women perceptions, gender issues, non-teaching staff, Egerton University*

1. Introduction

This study focused on perception of gender equality issued among the non-teaching staff of Egerton University. This section looks at how men and women perceive gender at Egerton University. Gender related issues are a global phenomenon which are being discussed and analyzed in every country. All over the world, a review of the progress achieved by women in the work place is of great concern. However, there is still an imbalance between women and their male counterparts in the work place in the world today. According to Chant (2007), the obstacles to women taking their rightful places in the management/running of business and industry are still formidable and, some would argue, growing more intractable. The realignment of power needed to change the position of women in the working world is only gradually beginning to inch forward and may not make appreciable gains. Meanwhile, the male-dominated institutional management and business world is denying itself the remarkable contributions women could make to wealth creation and the provision of services, whenever opportunities for them to take visible roles in the management sphere are open to them. Part of this contribution is the sense of collaboration, cooperation, participation, empowerment, credit-sharing and involvement that women bring instinctively to their jobs.

2. Methodology

The study was carried out in Egerton University. The University is one of the public Universities in Kenya. Its main campus (Njoro) is located in Njoro sub county, Nakuru County (Nakuru District Development Plan, 2002 - 2008). The Njoro Campus is located 35kms from Nakuru town, 180 Km, North-west of Nairobi on the Njoro-Narok road. It has 42 departments and 8 faculties with about 2000 staff members (teaching, administrative and support staff) of whom 1400 are non-teaching staff, 8098 students as at September, 2006 Egerton University calendar. Egerton University is the oldest institution of higher learning in Kenya. It was founded as a Farm School in 1939 by Lord Maurice Egerton of Tatton, a British national. In 1950, the School was upgraded to an Agricultural College offering diploma programmes. The Egerton Agricultural College Ordinance was enacted in 1955. In 1979, the Government of Kenya and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded a major expansion of the institution. In 1986, Egerton Agricultural College was gazetted as a constituent college of the University of Nairobi. The following year, 1987, marked the establishment of Egerton University through an Act of Parliament. Egerton University used to be a multi-campus University. The main campus at Njoro houses the faculties of Agriculture, Arts and Social Sciences, Commerce, Education and Community Studies, Engineering and Technology, Environment and Resources Development, Health Sciences, and Science. There are also the Board of Undergraduate Studies and Field Attachment, and the Board of Postgraduate Studies as well as the institute of Women Gender and Development Studies. Laikipia Campus College has now changed to Laikipia University College, which is located near Nyahururu town, comprises the Faculty of Education and Community Studies for Arts-based programmes, and the Faculty of Humanities and Development Studies. Nakuru Town Campus caters for Self-Sponsored Programmes (SSPs). Kenyatta Campus is located five kilometres from the Main Campus. This is where, in 2002, the University established its College of Distance Education. The ten faculties of the University offer a wide range of programmes at diploma, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels. All of them are open to both Government-sponsored and self-sponsored students. The University also offers courses in computer literacy, computer repairs and maintenance, as well as secretarial and accounting courses and, gender and development studies. Throughout its history, Egerton University has been guided by the key principles of integrity, continuous improvement of services and products, accessibility to the society and gender equity. That's why Egerton University was the best choice for this study. One of the survey designs used in social science research is causal comparative research also referred to as *ex facto* research. The study used *ex post facto* design that involves teasing out possible antecedents of events (observing dependent variable) that have already occurred and cannot therefore, be engineered or manipulated by the researcher, then studied the independent variable in retrospect (Mugenda&Mugenda, 1999). The sample population was 100 non-teaching staff members in different departments of Egerton University, Njoro Campus, which represents 5.0% of the target population. To ensure that a representative sample was obtained, random sampling method was used. Staff lists were obtained from the University Human Resource department. A sample of 100 was selected using simple random sampling as per their respective Faculties and Departments since 100 is the minimum according to Kathuri and Pals (1993). Members of staff for the study were randomly picked from non-teaching staff members of staff at Egerton University, Njoro Campus, Nakuru County.

3. Differences between Men and Women Perception towards Gender Issues

As Chant pointed out, women tend to define power differently. Traditional definitions of power have a lot to do with the ability to dominate other people and benefit unfairly from their work. Women, on the other hand, tend to define power as the ability to pursue our own talents and to control our own lives' (Chant, 2007). There are always certain groups in any society that are discriminated against unfavourably due to the prejudices and preconceptions of the people with whom they have to deal with. The preconceptions are sometimes verbalized but often not, and the people holding these preconceptions may well be unaware of the way they see and judge things and people. However, verbalized or not, these preconceived ideas influence the actions of the people who hold them and the way they deal with others. The effects of this can be seen in the employment arena. Disadvantaged groups who have already been identified are women, people from other racial backgrounds, disabled people and older people. By far the most attention, in terms of public interest and legislation, has been paid to the first two groups. There is, however, some legislation relating to disabled people, and there have been some unsuccessful attempts by private members to establish legislation to protect older workers. This study therefore sought to establish whether there is gender discrimination on the disadvantaged groups among the non-teaching staff of Egerton University.

Due to the rise of industrialization and urbanization in Western Europe during the eighteenth century, there was shifts from Researchers have concluded that social institutions are gendered (Government of Kenya, 1999 and Seguno, 2000). In Africa, women lack independence and authority in decision making and have no control over their conditions of life (Nuwagaba, 2001). Despite the heavy work, women are seen by policy makers primarily as a source of voluntary labour for development activities and their invaluable socio-economic contribution goes unrecognized.

The gender stereotypical belief of "think manager-think male" is predominantly found in organizations irrespective of the era, sector or culture of the country (Hind and Baruch, 1997). It still holds women with feminine characteristics back in moving up the career ladder. Apropos, feminine characteristics are believed to be essential bringing diversity into organizations. The culture in the construction industry is extremely male dominated. As a result of this, gender stereotypes are salient in construction organizations as direct antecedents of discrimination of women at work (Cooper, 2001). The norm characteristics of managers in construction are perceived as masculine. They restrict women from entering, promoting and training in the industry. The lack of female role models, diversity training and poor implementation of initiatives and policies on equal opportunities can be identified as the main barriers to reduce prevailing stereotypes in the industry (Amadiume, 2007). In brief, it can be inferred that to improve the status of women's career advancement in the construction industry it is essential to reduce the influence of occupational gender stereotypes on women

managers through a holistic approach of organizations, authorities, research and development institutions and society as a whole. The study explored how men and women perceive gender issues among the non-teaching staff at Egerton University.

Gender equality ensures that all people (men and women) are treated as equals in dignity and rights. Globally, there are deliberate attempts to reduce the gender gap in education, employment and all spheres of life, for instance there is an emphasis on millennium development goals which emphasizes on education, health care, education for all, among others. These millennium goals do not discriminate against either gender. It is in this context that Kenya has committed itself to achieving at least 30% representation for women in employment and has included gender equality in the economic, social and political pillars of Vision 2030. Government of Kenya, 2006 Equality of opportunity in Kenya's education system is implied in various official documents. Republic of Kenya (1999) Development Plan clearly states in the introduction on education that, every Kenyan has the right to basic education. There is need to address the gender equality at every level of employment. In Kenyan universities, gender equality is experienced in relation to staff recruitment, training, and promotion. The present study focused on gender equality among the Egerton University staff so as to determine how the university has been able to deal with gender equality of the non-teaching staff.

The present study evaluated whether inequalities at Egerton University among non-teaching staff, and if any could be attributed to its historical origin and the cultural context in which the society is premised. FAWE (2001) observed that there is little systematically documented gender inequality data, insufficient publications on the areas where women find problems on their levels of participation and performance. This has hampered the implementation of programmes to correct gender inequality in most African Universities. The United Decade for Women (1976 - 1985) will perhaps be remembered for the way it not only focused global attention on gender based inequalities, but also facilitated in depth investigation and analysis of the origins and manifestations of gender imbalances in development. However, the awareness created on the needs of women in development did not necessarily lead to innovative strategies for tackling the root causes of inequality and discrimination. Indeed many efforts aimed at developing women on specific projects and strengthening the capacitated women's organizations for selfish ends, and carrying out gender-blind research is still witnessed (Gachukia, 2002).

Most policy makers, planners, programmers and researchers continue to exclude women, treating them as mere consumers of services, rather than as crucial contributors and participants. They have been described as catalysts. The study benefited from both perspectives to link gender equality among the Egerton University non-teaching staff to the past and current direct forms of gender inequality in the world. International campaigns for gender equality have contributed to creating awareness of the injustices committed against women in society. There is legislation in the new constitution requiring universities to promote equality in their practices; it may not be easy to realize the good intentions spelt out in international conventions such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1985. Again, emphasizing access as is the case now, without making efforts for including and promoting women to decision making positions may only reinforce the gender stereotypes. The study looked into factors that affect gender equality among the Egerton University non-teaching staff and enrich the proposition of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1985.

According to Anselmi and Law (1998) the factors responsible for the gender equality such as teaching qualification and work experiences in most cases translate into advantages for men more than for women. Others include socio-cultural factors, like preference for the same sex in a similar occupation and position. This preference is established during childhood and does not allow cross-sex interactions. This is not encouraged in the constitution, which has adequate provisions for protections against gender based discriminations.

Onsongo (2006) observed that the literacy rates of the world's women stands at 71.2% while that of men is 83.6%. Also, two thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women of whom the majority live in Asia, Africa and Latin America. It is noted that this imbalance contributes significantly to the gender inequality exhibited in various workplace settings. Thus gender equality is a function of educational accessibility in this case. In Britain, it was found that in the 1980s the number of women in higher level occupations, particularly professional and managerial occupations, increased significantly. They increased by 55%, whereas men increased by only 33%. This shifted the gender compositions of these occupations from 21% to 30% female. The major reason attributed to this was an increase in educational qualifications gained by women. Onsongo (2006) also states that in professional and managerial positions the number of women increased, but he does not spell out why male percentage went down.

In Kenya, statistics collected by Onsongo (2006) from the ministry of education on student enrolment for 1998/99 indicates that, of the 40,613 students admitted to the five public universities, 30.5% were female. In comparison, in private universities, female students constituted 46.6% in the same period. This difference was attributed to two major factors: first, the fact that the private universities are dominated by the arts based subjects which attract more female students than their male counterparts, and secondly, the conducive environment and flexible learning periods, in addition to adequate accommodation and security provided in private universities. In public universities it was found that female students encounter difficulties which negatively impact their learning in a different way from their male colleagues. These include sexual harassment, insecurity, inadequate funding and insufficient accommodation facilities. The Courses they enrolled for were further found to be gender segregated. Male students dominated in the Sciences, Engineering and Commerce whereas their female counterparts were concentrated in Arts and Education courses. Gender inequality in courses taken contributed greatly to the continued gender inequality at various settings.

Onsongo (2006) points out that in any organization there is a limited number of women in top positions, and an abundance of interested and qualified male candidates. He further asserts that affirmative action policies employed by Joint Admissions Board (JAB) have been limited to undergraduate female students and nothing has been done for those in need of post graduate and doctoral studies. The argument is that since the points required for female students for university admission at undergraduate level are lowered by one mark, it should be extended to female students enrolling for postgraduate studies. This will enable them to compete equally with men for top management positions. Despite the challenges encountered, a majority of women attain the minimum qualifications

and experience yet they still predominate in the lower ranks. The university is an institution of higher learning and can train its staff, yet few women have received such training in comparison to the men. There seem to be barriers in gaining access to training and experience. The study explored this argument in relation to upward mobility of men and women in the university's occupational structure.

4. Results

The objective of this study was to establish gender differences among non-teaching staff members of Egerton University.

5. Differences between Men and Women Perception towards Gender Issues

This study sought to establish whether there is gender equalities or equalities in Egerton University and its causes. To answer this question, out of those given the questionnaire to fill, 58% noted that there is gender equalities in the University while others refuted the fact that gender equalities exists in the University. This can be attributed to the perception of workers towards how gender related issues are treated in the work place. There is a small margin between those who thought that gender inequalities exist and those who thought that it does not exist. The university management needs to look into ways of solving issues to do with gender equalities. In relation to whether the respondents have experienced gender discrimination while working in Egerton University, majority agreed while minority disagreed. This portrays a very big margin between those who approves and disapproved that gender discrimination exists. It is discouraging that at least majority disagree that gender discrimination exists in the university. This might be attributed to the fact that despite the fact that gender institute has sensitizes the workers against gender discrimination, still discrimination is still present. The management should follow up with those who thought that it exists and try to know why they thought so.

Respondents were further asked who they thought were majority workplace abusers and majority of the respondents noted that men were majority work place abuser while few respondents thought that women were majority work abusers. The study showed that a number of women face a number of challenges which includes discriminatory appointment and promotion criteria, resistance from men, hostile work environment, abuse and sexual harassment. The majority suggested that men are the majority abusers. This can be attributed to cultural and social orientation of men on how they treat women so as to instil discipline in them. Such a trend in the university should be discouraged at all cost and perpetrating it should be dealt with accordingly so as to treat equally both men and women.

This study further established that men find it hard to seek help when they are victims of workplace abuse and the result were as follows: those who thought it was so were more than those who disagreed. This might be due to the perception which men have if in case they report of the workplace related abuse. Men are seen culturally and socially as the head of the family and in most cases they fear to report any issue related to victimization in the work place especially if it originated from a female colleague. The University needs to identify how it can identify and assist men who are victims of workplace abuses so as to ensure that they don't suffer in silence. Also it should create for them a channel where they can put across their dissatisfaction in terms of how they are treated in workplaces.

An evaluation indicated that 54% respondents believed that women are more likely to be in lower paid jobs than men, however the respondents had an opinion that women are in lower paid jobs than men. This therefore shows that there is gender equalities at Egerton University. This study has shown that the universities in Kenya have been entrusted academic freedom and autonomy, which gives the universities freedom to staff appointments without dictation from other authorities, so whether a university adhere to equal opportunity or not, there is no monitoring system in place. Currently most leaders in Egerton University (both male and female) are currently working on gender issues. Egerton University was among the first to establish gender institute for women, which should be open to the males since they seem to have the same problems as their female counterparts.

Majority of the respondents (62%) indicated in their response that they felt comfortable to work under men as compared to those who prefer to work under a woman supervisor. This indicates how men and women interact and perceive gender issues in the University. In this case, majority of the respondents rated working under the male supervisor as more affective in influencing gender equalities at Egerton University, as compared to working under women which is lower. This suggests that male and female employees perceive gender in different ways. Public institutions are influenced by the external characteristics of the country, and how men and women perceive gender issues will therefore depend on the interplay of these factors. The overall gender equalities will depend on the interaction and influence of individual, organizational factors. This study therefore confirmed that men and women perceive gender issues in different ways.

Respondents were asked whether they men have advantage over women in recruitment. In response to this question 63% agreed and strongly agreed to this fact. This response might be as a result of the number of men who are recruited as compared to that of women. Also this can be attributed to the fact that employers in most cases prefer men because they are not so much engaged with family sores like women.

It is evident from this study in table 4.28 (page 49) that the respondents indicated that they were divided almost in the middle on whether they receive the same support and encouragement as their colleagues of the opposite sex while some disagreed. This can be attributed to the fact that the university upholds the issue of gender equalities and it has tried hard to ensure that both men and women are treated equally in their places of work without any discrimination. This can also be attributed to the work of the gender institute which has spearheaded and sensitized the issue of gender equalities in the university.

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