**Drivers of Gender Imbalance in the Senior Management of
the Parliamentary Service Commission of Kenya**

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Abstract

Purpose: There have been several studies focussing on gender imbalance among the political leadership in Kenya and the internal workings of the Parliament of Kenya, however, minimal attention has been given to the leadership of the PSC employees. The objectives of this study were to analyse the extent to which promotion criteria, organizational politics, and corporate norms drive gender imbalance in the senior management of PSC.

Materials and Methods: A descriptive research design guided the study. The research adopted the Skills theory of Leadership and the African Feminism theory. The study population was the permanent and pensionable employees of the PSC. Interviews and a structured questionnaire were used to collect the data efficiently and effectively. The study applied both descriptive and inferential analysis.

Findings: The study concluded that practices entrenched in the overall organization politics, corporate norms and promotion criteria do significantly influence gender imbalance at the PSC. Individually, the study found out that only promotion criteria had a significant effect on the gender imbalance at the PSC. Specifically, supporting inclusive promotion criteria will help in reducing gender imbalance at the workplace as it will foster better gender representation in positions of senior management. The study found out that organization politics and corporate norms have an insignificant effect on gender imbalance at the PSC.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study, therefore, recommended that supporting inclusive promotion criteria will help in reducing gender imbalance at the PSC as it will foster better gender representation in positions of senior management. Further, the PSC should consider using affirmative action in the selection of their senior management to achieve the two-thirds gender principle. Another recommendation is that the PSC needs to implement and enforce a gender policy, as provided for in its Strategic Plan. This policy needs to be well communicated and disseminated to all employees. The study recognizes the importance of mentorship and coaching programs in shaping women's views and perceptions of leadership and in building their confidence.

Keywords: _Gender Imbalance, Organizational Politics, Promotion Criteria, Corporate Norms_

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The social and political structure of the human population is rapidly evolving, and in recent years, the question of gender equality has emerged as an important social, political and economic goal. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women, 2015) affirms that ensuring all individuals have equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities is a human right and a necessary condition for sustainable development. Kivoi (2014) confirms that having more women in the workforce can result in substantial social, political and economic benefits. The UN women (2015) report adds that advancing gender equality is not just a moral imperative but a necessity for future gender-equal economic growth and social cohesion taking into account rapidly ageing populations, low fertility and multiple crises. In addition, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency of Australia- WGEAA (2016), urges organizations to foster gender equality and address gender imbalance in the workplace by ensuring women are represented in all workplace ranks and have an influence on establishing their priorities and goals.

In 2015, a review of the implementation of the 1995 Declaration and Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women noted that gender equality was yet to be achieved globally (UN women, 2015). Article 12 of the Charter of the Commonwealth recognises that gender equality is a crucial factor for human development. Article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981) calls upon States parties to employ necessary measures to eliminate prejudice against women. In the United Kingdom, the House of Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme (2012- 2015) and its successor, the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2015- 2018), were developed pursuant to the Equality Act 2010. They touched on various protected characteristics, including age, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief. The Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (2015- 2018) sought to develop frameworks to show that organisations value their employees' skills and experience. Regionally, Rwandan women demonstrated their value after the 1994 genocide when they took up leadership and administrative positions after making up seventy per cent (70%) of the country's remaining population.

According to Barsh and Yee (2011), women are not only just as ambitious and hardworking as men but are also empathetic and inclusive leaders whose experiences often lead them to make inclusive and sustainable decisions. Kivoi (2014) confirms that increasing the number of working women can offer significant social and economic benefits, and transform political and social norms and actual laws. Kenya's Constitution recognizes the importance of gender parity in political representation, and Article 27(8) provides that either gender should not occupy less than a third of appointive and elective bodies. The Bill of Rights set out in chapter four of the Constitution provides freedom from discrimination as provided for in Article 27 and sub-article 3. The right to equal treatment of women and men in political, economic, cultural and social spheres, is affirmed. In addition, Article 232 calls for the public service to provide equitable appointment, training and advancement opportunities for men and women.

The National Policy on Gender and Development (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender, 2019) acknowledges that Kenya has a patriarchal social order, and it aims to facilitate the implementation of constitutional, international, and regional obligations that advance gender equality and integrate gender in policies and programmes of both state and non-state actors. The Legislature is required to reflect the diverse needs, interests and experiences evident across all

societies (UN women, 2015), and it follows, therefore, that the Constitution requires Parliament to reflect the gender diversity of the nation. To guarantee women's full participation and inclusion in political processes, institutions such as the National Gender and Equality Commission have been mandated to promote gender equality and freedom from discrimination (Akala, 2019).

In Kenya, women's representation has been and remains minimal (Bouka, Berry, & Kamuru, 2019). The first elections held in 1963 served as the harbinger of women's exclusion from Kenya's electoral politics, with women, who, despite accounting for 50.44% of the population, had no female representative (Bouka, et al., 2019). There was minimal improvement in subsequent elections where women only accounted for 4.1% of elective positions in 1997, 8.1% in 2002 and 9.8% in 2007. Wainaina, Iravo, and Wanjala (2022) report that the numbers improved following reforms to the Constitution of Kenya in 2010 to 20.7% in the eleventh Parliament. However, this is still the lowest in East Africa. In 2022, out of the 290 elected members of the National Assembly, only 23 were women. In the Senate, women occupy 18 of the 67 available positions, indicating that Kenya is still struggling to comply with the constitutional provisions on gender equality. Kenyatta (2023) argues that while the constitution encourages engagement of women in politics, structural and perceptual factors still hinder women's participation in Kenyan politics.

Problem Statement

Women comprise approximately 40% of the workforce in the public sector in Kenya (KNBS, 2017). Being a patriarchal society, the country's women face deeply rooted resistance to acceptance and consideration in leadership. Further, it has been observed that achievements made in tackling gender imbalance could be slowed or reversed (The Human Development Report, 2016). For instance, the political class of Kenya has shown that goodwill for advancing gender equality could be withheld or lost in spite of it being provided for in law (Muturi, 2020). To date, the country's parliament and public sector have been unable to implement the two-thirds gender rule, despite it being a constitutional requirement in Article 27 (3), 81 (b) and 100 of the Constitution (Maraga, 2020).

This lack of inclusion extends to the PSC, which is the administrative section of Kenya's Parliament. For instance, in the current twelfth Parliament (2022), only six (6) of the twenty (20) officers who constitute the senior management of the PSC were women (PSC, 2022). This persistent failure to guarantee women's inclusion in governance is global and extends to all industries, prompting research into the factors that drive gender imbalance in society. There is a growing body of scholarship seeking to explain the continued under-representation of women in leadership positions. In China, gendered social expectations and gendered perceptions of capacities were reported to influence how people perceived women leaders (Miao, 2023). Miao (2023) averred that organizational culture and hierarchical structures fortified and reproduced power structures that support gendered decision making.

According to Igiebor (2021), public institutions often institute policies that facilitate the reproduction of male hegemony and impede the advancement of women to leadership positions. Makhanu (2015) revealed that institutional resistance originating from a patriarchal organization culture had impacted the Kenyan Parliament's lack of assertiveness while Musyoka (2011) noted that having more women in the tenth Parliament than in previous Parliaments had caused focus on gender related issues to increase.

While these studies inform on the factors that contribute to gender imbalance, it was evident that there are no studies that specifically looked into gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC. This research sought to examine the drivers of gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC of Kenya. The drivers include- promotion criteria, organizational politics and corporate norms.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

i. To examine the extent to which promotion criteria drives gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC.
ii. To assess how organizational politics drive gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC.
iii. To analyse in what ways corporate norms, drive gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Skills Theory of Leadership

Theories on leadership have developed over the years from the focus on the characteristics and accomplishments of an individual (Khan, Nawaz, & Khan, 2016), to having leadership qualities being developed through a combination of trainings of the potential leader and achieving the expectations of those being led (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015). The Skills theory was proposed by Katz (1955) who reasoned that leadership was determined by the skills that one possessed as opposed to who the person is innately. The Skills theory, therefore, posits that technical, human and conceptual skills, which can be acquired, are the key to effective leadership (Katz, 1955).

The theory has received literature recognition and used for different goals. (Karagianni & Jude Montgomery, 2018), for instance, used the theory in examination of how leadership programmes influence the development of leadership skills among adolescents and the youth. Gipson, Pfaff, Mendelsohn, Catenacci, and Burke (2017) used the theory in analysis of how selection, development, leadership sytles and performance evaluation mechanisms influence women and leadership. Blaney (2020) used the theory in research into gender inequities in leadership within STEM academia.

This study employed the Skills theory of leadership whose notion that anyone could become a leader so long as they possess the desired skills, offers women the opportunity to be considered for leadership as opposed to the idea that leaders are born with the traits already in them which advantages men, particularly in the corporate sphere where masculine traits can be perceived as corresponding to leadership traits.

African Feminism Theory

Feminist theories emerged in 1974 to examine men's and women's social roles, experiences, interests, and feminist politics with the goal of understanding the root causes of gender inequality.

Atanga (2013) and Kamau (2014) state that intellectuals in the African context note that feminism needed to be contextualized to address issues of concern for women in Africa as opposed to those of women in other places, hence the need for a theory that explains feminism in the African context. This study is based in Africa and used the African Feminist theory which is of the view that African women should define lived experiences within the patriarchal African society. African feminism aims at transforming gender relationships and conceptions in African societies and improving the situation of African women. It takes into consideration the uniqueness of African cultures and acknowledges traditional and modern forms of gender oppression (Moyo & Perumal, 2020). African feminism holds that African women have the capacity to handle traditional roles such as mothers and wives, while being actively engaged in social, economic and political activities in the development of their countries.

This theory thus offers a useful foundation for understanding the pressures that women in the modern economy cope with as they advance their professional goals while attending to social/family roles. The theory also recognizes that race, gender, and class discrimination are all aspects of the same system of hierarchy that can be addressed through cultural change. Specifically, a more inclusive culture where inequality is called out, organizational politics minimized and all forms of discrimination discouraged would reduce inequality. This theory holds that changing the culture can improve gender representation and, for this study, anchored the organization culture variables that would be evaluated in the research.

Empirical Studies

Hunter, Crofts, Keehn, Schlagintweit, Luc and Lefaivre (2021) confirmed that in Canada, women remain greatly underrepresented in the highest levels of promotion and leadership in surgical specialities. The study employed a cross-sectional approach to investigate how faculty appointment, promotion and leadership roles influence gender representation in Canadian universities. The study used generalized linear regression models in analysis and the findings were that metrics used by promotion committees when considering surgeons for faculty promotion and leadership roles put women in disadvantaged positions and that lack of female role models limited female surgeons access to gender-specific mentorship. Thus, the study showed how institutional factors influence women's competency development and preparedness for leadership roles in educational institutions.

Nyoni, He, andYusuph (2017) carried out research into the sustainable interventions employed to enhance gender parity in Tanzanian institutions of higher education using expert data analysis. The study used thematic analysis which revealed that women are significantly under-represented, therefore there were no women leaders in place to champion the change process. The study identified ethnic, administrative and personal barriers that perpetuate women's under-representation in leadership. Financial assistance, relaxed entry scores and remedial pre-university programmes, women's management training programmes and equal opportunity policies were recognized as affirmative actions that can redress the low representation of women. The study urged that recruitment, appointment and promotion committees should provide for women's inclusion.

Locally, Stephens (2017) confirmed a high degree of gender imbalance in administrative positions in public secondary schools in a study which used the phenomenology approach in the assessment

of the factors that influence women's career advancement. Data from female school principals was analyzed using thematic analysis, and the findings were that role conflicts, institutional barriers and personal factors do contribute to gender imbalance. Conclusions were that adopting a gender ratio-based appointment policy, designing female-led mentoring programs and basing school leadership on merit would increase avenues for women to take up leadership positions.

Deloitte (2015) affirms that organizational politics can be positive or negative and can range from simple actions such as engaging in office gossip and working within cliques or can be complex and involve individuals seeking to climb the career ladder at the expense of more productive candidates. Political behaviour includes actions such as controlling information flow, trying to impress key office holders, deflecting responsibility for wrong actions and affiliating oneself with those in power. It can also include actions such as gatekeeping and territorialism whereby new ideas and high-performing individuals can be blocked from advancing to more important positions to conserve acquired power.

Prillaman (2021) contributes to the literature on the impact of organizational politics within the context of the gender gap in political participation. The study focused on the impact of political networks as sources of strength for Indian women's ability to close the country's political gender gap. The study collected data from women in self-help groups who had access to micro credit and civil education and observed that these groups had a significant and substantial impact on women's political participation, as indicated by their doubled attendance at public meetings. This study concluded that collective groups can increase women's political participation by increasing the size of their networks, the capacity of collective action within networks, and developing their civic skills.

Greene (2019) confirmed that while the number of African American women had increased in the workplace, the increase was not reflected in leadership positions. The study used a phenomenological approach examining women's lived experiences with regard to limitations that impact their advancement in Fortune 500 firms in the USA. Data was sourced through interviews, and analysis involved the Kaam method. The study found that the barriers to women's advancement could be grouped into themes of race, gender, stereotyping and lack of development programs for African American women. The lack of mentorship was also associated with poor career choices and development pathways for African American women in the workplace.

Carter and Peters (2016) identified the existence of the glass ceiling as well as the concrete ceiling, which interact to limit the ascension of African American women in executive leadership. The study carried out a secondary literature analysis and reported that in America, African American women face a dual bias of race and gender. For instance, although the work environment is considered competitive, any form of demand or attempt to assert themselves is considered overly aggressive when made by African American women. They also have to work harder and outperform their counterparts to be recognized, are often excluded from informal social networks and struggle to obtain sponsors. Moreover, African American women are also stereotyped as lacking in 'emotional toughness' and thus get overlooked for executive positions.

According to Kivoi (2014), the sustained dominance of men in Kenya's politics has resulted in the political climate being significantly violent and marred with chaos and bravado. This negative environment, accompanied with negative stereotyping that women are weak and ineffective, has

resulted in the systematic exclusion of women from the public and productive spheres. Opoku, Anyango and Alupo (2018) opine that these dynamics have shaped and continue to explain the historical gender imbalance in political leadership in Kenya. In their study, a sociological approach was found to be key to understanding women's minimal involvement in politics in Africa. Opoku et al. (2018) used a qualitative approach and sourced data from women in executive positions in public and private firms. An inductive content analysis of the data found that a lack of support from fellow women, financial constraints, political violence and propaganda drove the limited participation of women in political activities in Kenya.

This study therefore sought to address the various research gaps identified in the literature review including the lack of awareness of gender imbalance in leadership; corporate norms that serve to hinder women from being considered for leadership positions; the limited implementation of legal provisions that would address gender imbalance in leadership; and the need for more women to aspire to and attain leadership positions such that there are role models, mentors showing the possibility of being leaders in an institution and being champions for addressing drivers of gender imbalance in the leadership of an institution.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design whereby questions concerning the present position of the subjects in the study were answered giving a systematic and accurate description of their characteristics to show an association between the variables. The target population, collection of respondents that meet the identified criteria and are relevant to the study (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng- Abayie, 2017), was the 844 permanent and pensionable employees within the PSC. A sample of 87 respondents was considered in the research.

Primary data was collected using interview schedules and self- administered questionnaires. Interviews were conducted at the offices of the respondents or through telephone calls depending on the choice of the respondent. While, the questionnaires were sent to the respondents through emails to ensure that responses were captured appropriately and in a timely manner. The quantitative data collected was analysed using descriptive measures such means and standard deviation. Further, correlation and regression tests were conducted to estimate relation between the variables. Lastly, qualitative data was presented using content analysis within the themes of the study.

4.0 FINDINGS

A sample of 87 respondents was used for the study. A total of 84 questionnaires were distributed and 3 interviews were organized. The total number of responses obtained were 60. This represented a response rate of 69% of the sampled 87 respondents. A majority of the respondents were within the age bracket of 31 to 40 years representing 74% of the sample and 17% were within the age bracket of 41 to 50 years. Having majority of the respondents at an age where they are eligible for senior management at the PSC, indicates that they had the necessary experience to adequately participate in the study.

The distribution of the respondents by Service was representative of the total number of employees in the Service. The Parliamentary Joint Service which has the most employees had a representation

of 43% while the National Assembly had a 22% representation and the Senate 35% representation. The findings revealed that all the services sampled were able to participate in the survey thus fostering quality of information obtained.

Regression Analysis

The dependent variable for the study was binary in nature (female/male) hence binary logistic regression was adopted to estimate the magnitude of effect of the independent variables on the gender imbalance in the PSC.

Table 1: Omnibus Test

Omnibus Test[a]		
Likelihood Ratio Chi-Square	df	Sig.
12.053	3	.007

Dependent Variable: Gender
Model: (Threshold), Promotion Criteria, Organization Politics, Corporate Norms
a. Compares the fitted model against the thresholds-only model.

Source: Researcher, 2022

The Omnibus test was conducted to examine whether the model with the intercept variables included was significantly different than the baseline model. From the results above the Log-Likelihood ratio = 12.053, Sig = .007<.05 implying there was a significance of the several parameters (Promotion Criteria, Organization Politics, Corporate Norms) considered in the research model as compared to the base model without any predictors.

Table 2: Parameter Estimates

Parameter	B	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval		Hypothesis Test		
			Lower	Upper	Wald Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Threshold [Gender=1.00]	-2.945	4.7568	-12.268	6.378	.383	1	.536
Promotion Criteria	.449	.1823	.091	.806	6.054	1	.014
Organization Politics	-.902	.5637	-2.007	.203	2.560	1	.110
Corporate Norms	.104	.1429	-.176	.384	.529	1	.467

Dependent Variable: Gender
Model: (Threshold), Promotion Criteria, Organization Politics, Corporate Norms
a. Fixed at the displayed value.

Source: Researcher, 2022

$Y = -2.945 + .449X_1 + -.902X_2 + .104X_3 + 4.7568$

On the first objective the findings showed that promotion criteria had a coefficient of .449, Wald Chi^2 = 6.054, Sig = .014<.05 showing there was a positive and significant effect. This indicated changing promotion criteria will improve gender imbalance by a factor of .449 (44.9%). These findings are in line with the skills theory of leadership which asserts that no specific gender has more valuable leadership skills, and that it is an individuals' skills, rather than their personalities

that should determine their career advancement and development within the workplace. These findings are also in line with the assertions in the African Feminism theory which posits that highly intimate intersecting patterns of discrimination against women exist and are engrained in organizations in highly patriarchal societies.

Egbuta (2018) reported that women in Nigeria lack career-building opportunities, encounter workplace harrassment and lack the internal support when seeking recognition and more important positions within the organization. Accordingly, the study by Nyoni et al. (2017) revealed that in some scenarios, companies lack equal opportunity policies resulting in a situation whereby women are not represented in recruitment, appointment and promotion committees, hence lack adequate internal support when seeking leadership support. Moreover, Stephens (2017) affirms that divisive politics often discourage women from seeking leadership positions.

Findings on the second objective showed a Wald Chi^2 = 2.560, Sig = .110>.05 showing an insignificant effect of organizational politics on the gender imbalance in the PSC. This finding is in contrast to the skills theory of leadership and in line with the African feminism theory which posits that an intersectionality of gender, and class discrimination combine to create a highly aggressive workplace environment for African women that then leads to more direct forms of aggravated inequality. The theory refers to divisive agenda such as efforts to retain and control power distribution, and gatekeeping as some of the organizational politics that exacerbate gender imbalance in the workplace. The theory also posits that in some instances, women's presence in the office is only a stop gap measure to show that the organization is inclusive thus complying with equality legislation. However, according to Prillaman (2021) certain forms of collective politics can yield positive outcomes such as flexibility, broader representation and improved organizations' ability to balance the interests of different individuals.

Lastly, on the third objective the estimates revealed Wald Chi^2 = .529, Sig = .467>.05 showing that there was an insignificant effect of corporate norms on the gender imbalance in the PSC. These findings are not in line with the skills theory of leadership which posits that it is skills rather than one's personality which will determine their career advancement and validates the African Feminism theory which posits that unspoken corporate cultures and norms can reinforce systems of oppression in the workplace. In this view, women are stereotyped to conflict with traditional expectations of leadership male-dominated/patriarchal societies, hence excluded from top positions. The theory posits that gender stereotyping, sexism and discrimination lead to increased intolerance of women leaders, and that these norms create informal structures such as long working hours, lack of maternal duty considerations and informal meetings at odd hours that ultimately disparage women from pursuing leadership positions.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study's main objective was to determine the drivers of gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC. The study was guided by the African Feminism Theory and the Skills Theory of Leadership. The study collected data from employees at the PSC and based on the analysis results, the study found out that only promotion criteria had a significant effect on the gender imbalance in the senior management at the PSC of Kenya and that corporate norms and

organizational politics have an insignificant impact on gender imbalance in senior management at the PSC. The study, therefore, concluded that supporting inclusive promotion criteria will foster better gender representation in positions of senior management at the PSC.

Recommendations

The PSC should consider using affirmative action in the selection of their senior management to achieve the two-thirds gender principle because all government organizations are constitutionally mandated to meet this principle. Affirmative action could necessitate a change in organizational hiring and promotion policies to ensure that men and women are recruited on a proportional scale. The PSC can also authorize mandated audits to ensure non-compliance is punished to show that discriminatory practices would not be tolerated in the future. The PSC needs to implement and enforce a gender policy, as provided for in its Strategic Plan. This policy needs to be well communicated and disseminated to all its employees. The provisions of the policy should be entrenched in the organization's culture and will be key to addressing engrained gender issues in the corporate norms of the institution.

The PSC should conduct gender awareness and sensitivity trainings, to help all cadres of its employees understand the importance of having women in leadership. These trainings should include those already in senior management positions to ensure all employees can identify patterns of gender discrimination. Gender sensitivity training should also be inclusive to ensure men are not side-lined as empirical literature suggests that poorly coordinated efforts can engender negative reactions which can reinforce gender imbalance. These programs should educate employees on the disadvantages of excluding women from leadership, the forms of gender discrimination and the advantages of including women in leadership positions. Such programs should also show the importance of gender equality champions who are key to changing negative norms and nurturing support for gender inclusion. These measures should be communicated to their employees in order to sensitize them on the importance that the institution places on gender equality as set out in the Constitution of Kenya.

The PSC should also employ measures to equip women with leadership skills and give them the opportunity to apply the skills within the institution. The study recognizes that mentorship and coaching programs are vital in shaping women's views, perceptions and confidence and confirms that such programs would equip women with the skills necessary to compete with their men counterparts.

The research was in support of the feminism theory by ascertaining that that highly intimate intersecting patterns of discrimination against women exist and are engrained in organizations in highly patriarchal societies. As shown in the findings, ingrained practices in the public sector have left women participation in leadership positions almost non-existent due to bureaucracy and reluctance to change within the institutions. As such much needs to be done to eliminate these barriers which can help instil and achieve gender balance within public institutions and this can be extended to private institutions thus achieving the much-needed equality and empowerment of women.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Research can be done on the impact that implementing gender balance in the leadership of government institutions can have on the wider society's perception of women as leaders. In addition, the African Feminism theory identifies various forms of discrimination and confirms that men, as well as women face discrimination in the workplace. This calls for research into the factors that influence the marginalization of people based on their ethnicity. This is a form of imbalance in representation that can significantly affect representation of people from different ethnic backgrounds and lead to internal wrangles in management.

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