

Possible Measures to Overcome Gender Differences and High Profile Jobs in Selected Universities of Western Uganda

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Abstract: The article investigates the relationship between possible measures to overcome gender differences and high profile jobs relating to institution policy change and development in selected Universities of Western Uganda. The study adopted an observational, cross-sectional exploration design with both quantitative and qualitative as paradigms in order to describe the data and its characteristics. Questionnaires and an interview guides were employed to gather information from the respondents. Data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and bar graphs. Study findings showed that there was a positive correlation between addressing gender differences and top job positions in universities in western Uganda. The study suggested remedies like; that there is need to advertise and give scholarships to young and well qualified women to go and pursue further studies for their career development and for helping their organizations to grow. There is need to encourage girl child education through the practice of positive discrimination and affirmative action in society. The study recommend also the practice of gender mainstreaming for all academic institutions to avoid the problem of under representation of both sexes , sensitization of stakeholders for girl child education, encouraging female candidates to apply for higher job positions and addressing gender-imbalance through staff development.

Keywords: Gender, Gender differences, Measures, Gender equality, Employment, Western Uganda.

INTRODUCTION

It was recognized worldwide that women are the majority of the world's poor in spite of the fact that women are economically active and generally work long hours than men. Women represent 65% of the world's poor [5]. The number of women living in poverty has doubled in the past 20 years. Girls and Women represent 2/3 of the world's illiterate [1].

Addressing gender allows harnessing all available human resources. The distribution of resources favors men the world over and constrains women's welfare and development. Considering gender therefore helps in improved allocation and utilization of resources [4]. In Uganda, the government has adopted a gender policy in 2007. Among others, it emphasizes alleviating gender differences in means of earning a living [7].

In Uganda, there is still a strong gap between men and women, the overwhelming majority of high job positions are still being filled with men [7]. Apart from traditionally different gender roles and related differences in educational attainment, the actual or

perceived constraints of motherhood, gender biases of hiring panels (which are dominated by men), personal traits (confidence, leadership), gender stereotypes, maternity leave and discrimination might be the root cause why women do not make it to the top [8]. This study explores the possible measures to overcome gender differences based on the findings it offers recommendations to overcome this gender gap.

The target population was drawn from five purposively selected universities based around western Uganda hence a cross-section of different segments of the formal employment sector. The research design combined a survey based on a structured questionnaire for academic and administrative staff and also expert interviews with the human resource executives [8].

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted non-experimental research design while using both Questionnaires and interview guide as research tools to collect data from the field. The study population covered all academic and administrative staff of all public and private Universities of western Uganda totaling to 130 people.

The selected Universities include: Mountains of the Moon University, Kampala International University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology and Uganda Martyrs University. The sample size was chosen using the table of Morgan & Krejcie (1970) and it was 96 participants whose findings were generalisable to the target population [8].

Close ended questionnaires were used to collect information (quantitative data) for the research study because they gather information within a short period of time (7). At the same time, interview schedules were also employed to collect information in form of words (qualitative data) for the research study because interviews can also collect data from facial expressions of participants [8].

Stratified random sampling was used to gather information from various categories of the respondents. This was to make sure that no category was left out (7). Purposive sampling was also utilized in order to garner vital data from the focal persons in Universities in Western Uganda.

The reliability of the close ended questionnaire was reached at by cronbach alpha coefficient formula, and for interviews was through carrying out persistent observations on the participants.

While the validity of the close ended questionnaire was arrived at using Content Validity

Index and the validity of the interviews was assured by less talking and much listening (7).

Data was analyzed using frequencies, percentages and bar graphs for quantitative data, while for qualitative data, it was analyzed employing categorization of data into themes and sub-themes along a story manner structure (7).

RESULTS

Demographic characteristics

This describes the age brackets of respondents and educational levels of participants that have contributed enormously to the value of the study.

Age brackets of the respondents

The study revealed that 10.4% (10) of staffs were aged between 18-24 years, 39.8%(35) of staffs were aged between 25 -31 years, while 30.7% (27) were aged between 32- 38 years and 27.3% (24) were aged between 38 and above years. This meant that most of the staffs were not too old; having a creative mind that may be good for the future of the institutions. This implied that most of the Universities in Western Uganda are dominated by those within the age of 25 and 38 years indicating that it is still a young workforce able to contribute to the growth and development of the country. All these categories of the population were consulted for a credible research study. Refer to the table 1 below:

Table-1: The Age of respondents

	Particulars		Total
	Male	Female	
18-24	8	2	10
25-31	16	19	35
32-38	12	15	27
Above 38	15	9	24
Total	51	45	96
Grand total	96 participants		

Source: Primary Data

Education level of participants

From the figure 1 below, the study findings showed that the majority of the respondents were Masters’ holders which constituted 51.05% (49 participants for both males and females), the bachelor’s holders constituted 27.09% (26 participants for both males and females) and the PhD holders constituted 12.5% (12 participants for both males and females) and diploma holders constituted 9.38% (9 participants for

both males and females). In relation to gender, the study revealed that on general average males (12.76%) dominated concerning the level of education in comparison to the females counterparts (12.24%). This implied that women need to continue putting in a lot of efforts to uplift their level of education though women PhD holders were greater than men PhD holders [2] Refer to figure 1 below for details:

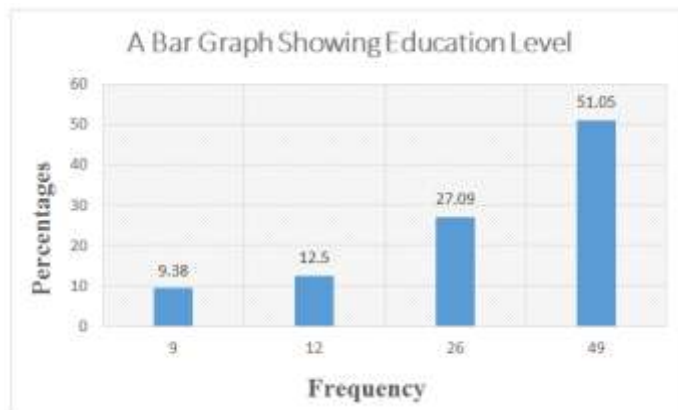


Fig-1: Education Background of the respondents in relation to gender of participants

Source: Primary data

Results from interviews

One of the human resource executive from the said universities stated;

It is not difficult for women than for men to take up high profile jobs, women can also make it to the top provided one has the required qualification and experience for a particular job position. However, what may make it difficult is, women have more career interruption. This has a negative impact on their career development and promotion prospects. It also means less financially rewarding career.

This implied that women still have other jobs like domestic, traditional, societal and cultural gender roles that call upon their energy and concentration. This

limits those chances for career development especially higher qualification attainment. The dilemma here is to which of the two they should reserve their best time between studies and domestic work.

Possible measures to reduce gender differences

The information presented below shows respondents’ views about the possible measures of reducing gender differences in high job positions. all of the respondents (96 males and females) responded to the question. However 31 of the male and female respondents think that gender mainstreaming is the best measure to prevent gender differences in high profile job among high institutions of learning [3] this implies that gender equality is very important when it comes to balancing work across institutional departments [2].

Table-2: Measures to reduce gender differences

Measures	Male	Female	Total
Avoiding corruption	2	2	4
Not considering one sex for employment	5	10	15
Balancing number of work according to sex	6	13	19
Gender Mainstreaming	11	20	31
Avoiding the consideration of relationship in employment	2	4	6
Career mentoring for young, well-qualified women	8	13	21
None of the above	0	0	0
Total	34	62	96

Source: Primary data

Results from interviews

One of the senior lecturer from the said Universities stated

In most cases women are not interested in applying for the high profile job even though they see the advertisements; this can be attributed to women inferiority complex, low educational attainment and lack of confidence in leadership skills. To avoid this gender gap, all Institutions should make gender equality part of training and education. Young people should be supported in choosing jobs that are future-oriented and promising, regardless of their gender.

One of the faculty deans from the said Universities mentioned

Many institutions of learning lack convincing and motivating skills in setting up their job advertisements that’s why most women develop fear towards applying and competing for same job positions with men because they are not encouraged to do so. Job adverts should be proactive about welcoming women and should clearly state that they want to hire, support and promote women, also salaries and promotions should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure equal treatment. Institutions should offer a broad range

of different options for example; make flexibility and work-life balance as part of the wider institutional culture. Employees should specifically be asked to work as part-time or work from home for example online teaching where possible, this can favor women to balance work and compete favorably with men.

This suggested that women empowerment is very key right from our societies to the work place; they need to be reminded and supported in all spheres of life so that they are not left behind Excluding women is not the way to solve gender differences. Rather, employees need to learn to include female colleagues in their social circles; it will ultimately bolster workplace gender equality, and improve institutional overall performance.

Results from interviews

One of the Deputy Vice chancellor from the said Universities mentioned

Women have been very instrumental in contributing to institutional performance and development. So, the University gender policy does not exclude them, except, some universities ignore these policies by just leaving them on paper and not practically implemented which mostly puts a women on a disadvantage.

This implied that, institutions with gender policies respect gender equality. Except they need to make them practical and then follow them. This will help ensure that gender discrimination does not occur, will set a standard of performance for employees to meet if they want to advance and will decrease the likeliness of unnecessary gaps.

One of the Head of department from the said Universities mentioned

Gender discrimination is illegal, definitely immoral and just plain wrong. Workers should be judged, promoted

and valued based on the merit of their effort, contribution and ability. Despite all theses, other external factors can limit women to compete with men at the work place. Careers women who are married when offered management position so often normally have to answer a question. If the management position offered involves transfer is the husband willing to go? If the position offered a cruise a higher income than that of the husband or is perceived as more prestigious, does it settle well with the spouse? If the husband is not willing to go along with the transfer or cannot accept his wife earning a higher income than his, then this qualified wife will turn down her good job offer. The lack of spousal support is one chief reason or main reason why there few married women in management positions. One way to solve this problem is by establishing a joint family account such that the higher income the wife is supposed to get with the new job offer is not viewed as a threat but an addition to the family's welfare.

This suggested that though both sexes aspires for equal opportunities, there are biases which may be brought about by individuals, society and tradition against women not having enough time to concentrate on work because of other domestic roles.

Specific efforts to overcome gender-differences in staffing and promotions in Universities studied

The table below shows respondents' views about the specific efforts to overcome ender differences in high profile jobs. However 29 of the male and female respondents think that Scholarships for women for further studies or career development is the best effort which universities should focus on to prevent gender differences in high profile job among high institutions of learning. This implies that women are left behind due to low qualification required by specific positions [6].

Table-3: Specific efforts to overcome gender-differences in staffing and promotions in Universities studied

Specific Efforts	Male	Female	Total
Through promotion of females in same job positions	7	15	22
Scholarships for women for further studies or career development	15	14	29
Equity, fairness at work. It can welcome men and women in employment	10	15	25
Encourage the underrepresented sex to apply more	10	10	20
Total	42	54	96

Source: Primary data

Results from interviews

One of the human resource managers from the said Universities stated

University gender Policy stresses equal opportunities and no discrimination of males and females when it comes to employment. It is our work to improve gender-balance and promote gender mainstreaming across all departments as long as both men and women are

qualified for a particular high profile job. However other factors may limit equal participation or promotion of both sexes in specific job positions, for example Low educational attainment, stereotyping, constraints of motherhood, organizational culture and commitment to work. In most cases the whole bias and blame is put on women.

This suggested that, if society and culture have a free biased mind on females, then women can be empowered through staff development and leadership skills to compete favorably with men. Young people today have a very different view of what a great career means. Many want equality in their private and professional lives, and see a healthy work-life balance as crucial to their happiness. This presents a huge opportunity for redefining gender roles. The challenge is to address this in all sectors, business, education, research and politics. When it comes to gender equality, we all have to work together. Only then can we provide the next generation with the very best support for shaping their path in life and contributing to the economy's continued success regardless of gender.

CONCLUSION

The research revealed the possible measures taken to solve the problem of gender differences specifically in higher institutions of learning. The study found that there are deliberate or explicit gender-biases in recruitment and promotion of staff in high profile jobs, the study findings showed that biases will affect the way institutions take responsibility for gender-balance. Indeed, responses show clearly that they do not feel responsible but 'blame it' on external factors (mainly education and constraints of motherhood). Such biases and lack of actively addressing gender-imbalance e. g. through staff development and at time of promotions limits good performance or the quality of work because men and women can perform equally well [9]. The study recommended that there is need to advertise and give scholarships to young and well qualified women to go and pursue further studies for their career development and for helping their organizations to grow. There is need to encourage girl child education through the practice of positive discrimination and affirmative action in society. The study recommend also the practice of gender mainstreaming for all academic institutions to avoid the problem of under representation of both sexes , sensitization of stakeholders for girl child education, encouraging female candidates to apply for higher job positions and addressing gender-imbalance through staff development.

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