

## **Institutional Gender Representation and Career Progression Disparities at Management Levels in Selected Public Academic Libraries in Kenya**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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*The education sector is one of the most crucial sectors in the world. The very remarkable growth of academic institution has created massive employment opportunities for our educated men and women of our nation. These men and women play a vital role in the Kenyan economy, both socially and economically. However, most of these men and women employees face a lot of challenges at work, especially in career progression related issues. The overall purpose of this study was to examine gender representation and career progression disparities in the management levels of public academic libraries in Kenya. To achieve this, the study sought to find out gender representation in the management levels of the Kenyan public academic universities, determine the barriers hindering career progression of men and women managers, and examine the challenges affecting career progression of men and women at management levels in public academic libraries in Kenya. The study was carried out in selected public academic libraries in Kenya. These included four public universities within Nairobi county, Kiambu county and Uasin-Gishu county. The respondents included university librarians, deputy university librarians, senior librarians, librarians, librarian assistants and senior library assistants. The target population was 85 participants who were expected to participate in the study, and eventually only a sample size of 42 respondents was obtained. Relevant data was collected from the participants using structured interviews and questionnaires. A descriptive case-study research design was used. Data was presented using tables and figures. The findings revealed that gender representation in public academic libraries was not balanced, and persons of female gender were more than persons of male gender. Disparities were also noted within their distribution in various departments, more women had attained higher levels of education than their fellow men colleagues, and women had also worked for a greater number of years within the libraries and in previous positions. It was also observed that, there was a supportive work environment within the organizations, though there were a few instances where the culture within did not encourage a fair job promotion practice. Selection process, networking, policies, rules, and regulations in place, in the organizations were a great barrier to career progression. The study came up with several recommendations on gender representation in the management ranks, fair job promotion practices, education, and training.*

**Key Words:** *Gender Representation, Career Progression, Gender Disparities, Management Levels Disparities*

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## 1. Introduction

The economic participation of men and women and their presence in work force in the quantitative terms is important. Globally, gender balance has been the proposed method of bringing equality in the participation of both men and women in development. Gaps in senior posts, wages and leadership levels still continue even in countries that encourage equality in education and have a high level of economic integration among women as noted by the World Economic Forum in (Schwab & Sala-i-Martin, 2011) its annual global gender gap Report. The WEF report asserts that closing the global gender parity was significant to economic growth and stability. The studies carried out in career occupation have continued to show that during employment males are fewer than females, but as the both groups climb the ladder into the management levels and decision-making positions women continue to be a minority group (*Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education - UNESCO Digital Library*, n.d.). (Gunasekara, 2014) came up with the idea of representative bureaucracy; representation in the public service based on different parameters and has become a major concern for many stakeholders in the public service sector. According to (Thompson, 2010) the agitation for representation in the public service is premised on the perception that, the social background and status of a public servant can potentially affect their output delivery. According to (Meier et al., 2005) representative bureaucracy perception is derived from the fact that individuals who make decisions usually exercises certain levels of discretions because organizational rules do not cover every contingency, this therefore implies that individuals are going to use their discretions to make decisions that reflect their own values and socialization. (Meier et al., 2005) further suggests that these values and socialization are mostly derived from race, ethnicity, geographical area and gender among others. Gender disparity and the struggle to bring about gender parity has been an issue of concern for a long time to the international community, according to the ministry of Gender, Children and social Development (PhD et al., 2014) gender disparity in development programs was officially identified as a global concern in the Charter of the United Nations in 1945. As a result of many stakeholders in the public service sector ascribing to the above perception in the recent past, this has resulted in increased advocacy by public service stakeholders for inclusiveness in the public service appointments. Due to the fact that the public service is increasingly becoming diverse and will most likely continue to be so because of increased agitation for more parameters of presentation, as the society continually becomes diverse, this therefore calls for the need to monitor and evaluate representativeness in the Academic Libraries. During the pre-independence period, the Kenyan public service was skewed in favor of the European who virtually occupied all decision –making positions with the Africans taking up the subordinate positions. Career progression was limited for the natives and as a result of this racial discrimination during public service appointments; racial discrimination was usually done in favor of the Europeans, leading to a situation not acceptable to the native Africans and the freedom fighters. After the independence, the Government of Kenya (GoK) undertook some bold initiatives to make the public service a representative of the Kenyan citizenry as possible. Unfortunately, the Africanization of the Kenyan public service as envisioned in the session paper paid no attention to gender differences; most probably due to patriarchal in most of the then social structures (Akinyi, 2014). Therefore this led to a gender imbalance in public service where most decision-making positions were occupied by persons of male gender while persons of female gender were rendered peripheral actors, taking up mostly subordinate positions. This gender imbalance has persisted over a period of time despite various attempts by the GoK to correct the situation. According to (Mugambo, 2000a) the GoK has been

taking different concrete strategies to ensure systematic gender parity in the entire development programs, with the emphasis being laid on increasing female gender representation across the cadres. The Kenyan citizenry (Mugambo, 2000b) has equally been in the fore front in advocating for certain levels of gender representation in appointments; key example to attest to this being observed during the clamor for constitutional changes in Kenya that lasted for two decades, where the need for gender parity in all development programs especially in gender representation in public service appointments featured in all initiatives that were taken. The enactment of the Constitution of Kenya on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2010 marked a milestone in the struggle of constitutionalizing gender equality in development programs especially on gender representation. According to (*UNESCO 2011 - UNESCO Digital Library*, n.d.) women do not obtain higher positions in the numbers anticipated, considering their efforts in education and working experience. (Foundation, n.d.) observed that gender legislation has not allowed women to succeed equal pay as men or even get to senior positions of power and decision making in big numbers. They have not been entering the management ranks at the similar speed as their male counterparts, even as they remain significantly low in numbers at high rank positions. Despite the foregoing gender parity policies and strategies of increasing female gender representation, implementation has been very slow and sometimes insignificant and fails to deliver the desired goals of gender representation in most institutions.

## **2. Statement of the problem**

The emergence and determination survival of men and women in high flying jobs today in the institutions of higher learning depends on their own willingness to confront and fight strong barriers and hurdles that stand on their way, some too grave to confront and others less weighty, which include education levels, societal stereotypes, institutional policies, among others. In the process of progression to ascend the ladder, men and women face a lot of challenges. Some of these barriers drag and slug them down in the pursuit to progress in their careers and definitely pose as huge barricades to employment. (Horn & BRIDGE (Organization), 2013) stated that Kenyan women have over the years been making significant career progression in academic institutions, but they are grossly underrepresented particularly at decision making positions. Whereas significant career progression in Kenya could be attributed to policy changes being witnessed in the public service in the recent past, gender disparities that continue to exist at decision-making positions could be attributed to the women inferior positions in the hierarchy of most out that only 70% of social structures, male dominance and resistance which together with a generally hostile patriarchal environment, can be cited as serious obstacles to gender balance in public service appointments. The question remains as to which gender is more represented in the managerial level of public academic libraries?

A survey carried out in 2009 by MGCSD, (*Mgcsd-Training-Manual-on-Gender-Mainstreaming-2008.Pdf*, n.d.) Pointed Kenyan government ministries had complied with the executive order on gender equity in public service appointments. The survey further pointed out that the implementation of the 30% gender rule in accordance with the executive order was slow, (MGCSD, Bi-Annual Report on Implementation of 30% gender rule. The enactment of the Constitution of Kenya (*Constitution of Kenya*, 2010) gender representation in public service appointments is now a constitutional requirement under the bill of rights, and therefore the state has no option other than to implement this constitutional requirement on gender representation in all sectors in both appointive and elected positions. The inability to implement and attain this gender representation within this constitutional requirement, may throw the institution into a

constitution crisis and be declared unconstitutional in harmony with the provisions of article 22 of the (*Constitution of Kenya*, 2010). The study is set to investigate gender representation and career progression disparities at management levels in selected public academic libraries in Kenya. It will examine the issues that keep on plaguing men and women career progression as they attempt to progress up the ladder at the managerial levels in public academic libraries in Kenya. It will also examine the challenges affecting career progression of men and women at management levels in public academic libraries.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

This study was specifically guided by the following objectives:

- i. Find out gender representation in management levels in Kenyan public academic libraries.
- ii. Determine the institutional barriers hindering career progression of either men or women in the public academic libraries in Kenya.
- iii. Examine challenges affecting career progression of men and women at the management levels in public academic libraries.

### **4. Theoretical Framework**

In a scientific research, theories may help in- description, explanation, prediction, and control. (Zikmund, 2003) asserts that a theory is a coherent set of general propositions used to explain the apparent relationships among certain observed phenomena which allow generalization beyond individual facts. According to (Mugenda, 2000) a theory is a system that explains phenomena by stating constructs and the law that interrelates these constructs to each other.

#### **4.1 Feminism Theory**

Feminist theory first mentioned at about 1794 in such scripts as a vindication of the rights of women by feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft. Feminist theory was founded in Netherlands, by Wilhelmina Drucker (1847-1925) (“Wilhelmina Drucker,” 2020) who successfully fought for the vote and equal rights for women through political and feminist establishments she formed. Feminist theory is a denotation of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It tries to grasp the characteristics of gender disparity. It checks men’s and women’s social roles, experience, interests, chores and feminist politics. Subjects analyzed include oppression stereotyping, objectivity (especially sexual), discrimination, patriarchal etc. the society as having the incorrect moral convictions that women are, by Feminists’ debate character, less mentally and physically capable than men: thus it tends to prejudice against women in the system, and the market place. According to (Tong, 2013) “female subordination is rooted in a set of customary laws and legal constrains that prevent women’s entry into power in the so-called public world”. They struggle for party through legislation, political and legal reform. (*Woman Suffrage and the Origins of Liberal Feminism in the United States, 1820-1920* — Suzanne M. Marilley, n.d.), stated that, the aim of feminists is to get women’s chance below the opinion that they would at the same time quantify individual freedom. They wanted freedom and liberation from males cruelty and thus gaining liberty to opportunities to befit all persons According to (Hooks, 1998) the other areas significant to feminists contain to reproductive rights, education, fair compensation for work, affordable health care, voting, sexual harassment etc.

According to (Watson, 2000) feminism can be termed as a broad movement which seeks to realize the equality of men and women in all areas of life, so that there is a relationship

characterized by freedom and mutuality. Since historically it is the woman who has been disadvantaged and such inequality remains to date, projects and programs tend to target women in order to bring about equality, a feminist is therefore a man or woman who is interested in improving the situation of either a woman or a man. Feminist movements brought out social injustices against either men or women and the work place has been identified as one of the key areas where measures should be introduced for gender liberation. Feminists like (Watson, 2000) argue that, women have the same capacity as men at creation, and believe - that it is patriarchy in the society that has historically denied marginalized gender group the opportunity to participate fully in public sphere. Feminist advocates that patriarchy needs to be altered through social and legal reforms. It is significant to note that since the causes of gender inequality are profound in history, religion, culture, legal systems, political systems and the social attitudes, then feminist believe that for changes to be felt, the solution must penetrate as deep as the causes. Feminists such as (Tong, 2013) argued that the primary goal of all feminists' movements and activities should be the attainment of gender equality in all the public spheres. Tong suggests that, the law should offer equal opportunities where rights are not based on biological sex, this can however only be achieved by means of structural changes through legislation and regulation of employment practices and other development activities. Feminists theory have been criticized by scholars like (Liza, 2006) in that it fails to recognize that structural and natural differences exist between men and women and the fact that, as a matter of fact some opportunities are for a specific gender as a result therefore gender equality may be hard to apply. According to Liza, it also fails to recognize the inequalities that occur naturally, for example the social-cultural values in patriarchal societies. Feminist believe that the oppression of women is caused by the patriarchy in most social structures which is characterized by a socio-political and economic system that grants men power over women across the society. Under patriarchy men control the society and use family units to exercise power over women and children by way of using them for their production activities. Feminism therefore perceive men as oppressors of women and the only way out is to make structural changes within the society that will end up in bringing about transformation of the oppressive gender relations and questions patriarchy in socio-cultural, economic and political structures in the society.

#### **4.2 Relevance of the Feminist theory to this Study**

This theory, apart from addressing the gender gaps by giving a holistic analysis on poverty and placing gender at the heart of a new plan of action for development theory and practice, it focuses on institutions such as firms, academic institutions, multinationals among others, and offers a way of understanding how they work and interrelate. It emphasizes that there should be no taking sides and favoring neither the females nor males, but organizations are supposed to evaluate their own institutional practices and culture as part of any planning process (Kabeer, 2013). The libraries and academic institutions should strive towards gender distinctive policies where interventions are meant to suit the target needs of both men and women. This suggests that all institutions have same distinct but interrelated aspects of social relationships above all people, rules, power, resources and activities. These aspects are significant to the evaluation of social unfairness in general and gender disparity. Interrogating an institution on the foundation of their distribution of resources, practices, people, rules and their authority and control structures assist the academic libraries to comprehend who gains, who does what, who loses (men or women). It greatly assists contextualize the challenges men and women face in career progression that has been accepted as organizational culture norms.

## 5. Research Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design to establish the gender representation and career progression disparities at management levels in public academic libraries in Kenya. Descriptive research design provided for collecting information to demonstrate the situation as it exists on the ground. The study was carried out in public academic university libraries. Fully chartered public academic universities libraries were selected for the study. The four academic libraries were among the first universities libraries to be established in Kenya. They are well established and stable in terms of staffing. They are located in Nairobi county, Kiambu county and Uasin Gishu county. This study was carried out in public academic libraries, where population comprised of 85 members of staff in the management levels, who were permanent employees. The researcher chose four fully chartered public universities, and from the selected four universities, the target population is shown in Table 3.2 below.

In this study, a systematic random sampling technique was relevant in that, each element of the population had an equal and independent chance of being included in the sample and bias was minimized. The researcher hence selected according to a random starting point and a fixed periodic interval, consequently picked every 2<sup>nd</sup> item from the list of 73 middle level manager subjects. The study also used purposive sampling technique to get sample population from the university librarians and the deputy university librarians. The target population for this study was 85 elements. The researcher picked every 2<sup>nd</sup> element of the population from the starting point with a fixed, periodic interval. To meet the research objectives, the researcher used the following instruments - semi-structured questionnaire administered to 34 senior librarians, librarian Assistants, Librarians and Assistant Librarians. Key informants' interviews schedules were carried out with 8 University Librarians and their deputies. The analyzed data was then accumulated and arranged into themes that were derived from the research objectives and the research questions. Descriptive analysis was done in order to describe the results of the data. For interviews, the collected data was classified and categorized into coded themes which helped in categorization and classification of the content which assisted in summarizing of the results. Data was then presented in tables, pie chart and in frequency distributions tables of percentages.

## 6. Research Findings

### 6.1 Policies and Career Progression

The researcher sought to establish how the policies of the institution in terms of Terms of Service laws affected career progression. When asked "to what extent the organizations policies affect career progression", the results were as presented in the Table 1.

**Table 1: Extent Labor Laws Affect Career Progression**

	Frequency n (%)		Total
	Male	Female	
Great extent	3 (21.4)	11 (78.6)	14 (33.3)
Moderate extent	5 (62.5)	3 (37.5)	8 (19.0)
Not sure	0 (0.0)	2 (100.0)	2 (4.8)
Minimal extent	5 (62.5)	3 (37.5)	8 (19.0)
No extent	5 (50.0)	5 (50.0)	10 (23.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 (42.9)</b>	<b>24 (57.1)</b>	<b>42 (100)</b>

**Source:** Field Data (2021)

Eleven (33.3%) of the respondents believe to a great extent labor laws affect career progression; this is followed by 10 (23.8%) who believe the labor laws to no extent affect career progression, 8 (19.0%) believe to a moderate extent, while 8 (19.0%) others to a minimal extent and lastly 2(4.8%) who was not sure to what extent they affect career progression. The analysis showed that respondents of female gender believed to a greater extent that policies and labor laws affect career progression. This concurs very well with the Guy (2005), who asserted that policy statements influence human resource management and criteria used for promotions in the public service and may include merit qualifications, experience, competency, and suitability but where representation is an issue relevant policy guideline may be required to set the criteria for equity.

The study further sought to establish how the Organization culture encouraged on fair job promotion practices. Respondents were asked if the organization culture encouraged fair job promotion practices, majority of the respondents believed it somehow doesn't (17 [40.5%]), followed by those who responded it does not (13 [31.0%]). The findings of the study also reveal that majority of female respondents believe that organizational culture doesn't or somehow doesn't encourage fair job promotion while an equal number of male and female respondents felt that it does. There were only 3 male respondents who were not sure. These is in support by (Tong, 2013) who after noting such an observation believed that the law and policies are the ones that should offer equal opportunities where rights are not based on biological sex.

The researcher also sought to establish the respondents' perception on how stereotyping affects management decision-making regarding career progression. When asked "Does gender stereotyping affect management decision-making regarding career progression in academic libraries?". The findings were that Stereotyping does affect management decision-making in regard to promotion in the libraries according to majority of the respondents (18 [42.9%]), followed closely by no extent (13 [31.0%]). From the table 4.5 above, it shows that female respondents believed that gender stereotyping is practiced in no extent than their male colleagues. This implied that stereotyping rarely affected promotion decision making, and this is echoed by (Heilman & Eagly, 2008), who said that, gender stereotyping in management role only arises when qualities and characteristics needed for a certain role are qualified with the same side of the divide. One of the female key informant noted that most managerial roles are allocated to men, while sectional roles are allocated to women, which is a sentiment that is also echoed by (Bauer, 2002), who stressed that although women have gained a lot of achievements, negative attitudes and stereotyping women managers still exist in many cultures of organization and believe that a common stereotype is – "think manager think male".

The researcher sought to understand how work balance and other social issues affected career progression of men and women in different institutions. The respondents were given an opportunity to state whether it was true or not. The respondents were asked if their work/life balance affects career growth, 14 (33.3%) were in agreement that it somehow did affect growth while a similar number (14 [33.3%]) were of the contrary opinion that the statement was very untrue. Significant majority, 10 (23.8%) of the respondents, found the statement to be very true reflection of the work/life balance affecting career growth. More female respondents agreed that it was somehow true and very true that work/life balance affect career growth as opposed to more males who believed it was or very untrue. This analysis correlates with feminists like (Woodford-Berger, 2009) who notes that organizations decision-makers place different expectations for men and women competence in career progression. The findings also concurs

with (*Mgcd-Training-Manual-on-Gender-Mainstreaming-2008.Pdf*, n.d.), that no organization can create this work/life balance, with the reality being more on the individual to create the environment and also up to them to tip the scale towards their need.

The study also sorts to establish whether communication styles affect career progression. Fifteen (35.7%) of the respondents believe that communication style affects promotion in organization to be very true, which was followed closely by those who found the statement somehow true (14 [33.3%]). The table 4.7 clearly shows that, more of the female respondents felt that it was very true communication style affects promotion, while comparable numbers between the genders found it to be very untrue, somehow true as well as somehow untrue, that it does. (Miller, 2003) notes different people will have different communications style resulting in different ways of negotiations on such things like promotions whereby one is required to display an aura of confidence which can make one lag behind. The implication here is that managers must always show balance in both boldness, confidence and courage since lack of self-confidence can affect promotions and career progression.

The researcher further sort to establish, whether undertaking challenging assignments affects career progression. Table 4.8 shows the respondents perception on how undertaking challenging assignments affects career progression. An equal number of 17 (40.5%) respondents each reveal that it's very true and also somehow true that undertaking challenging assignments affects career progression while 6 (14.3%) respondents find it very untrue. The researcher sought to understand the duration one had worked in the current position. Nineteen (45.3%) respondents had worked below ten years in their current positions, i.e. 12(28.6%) who had worked for up to 5 years and another 7 (16.7%) who had worked between 5 to 10 years in the current position. There were 10 (23.8%) of them who had worked between 10 to 15 years while 13 (31.0%) had worked in the current position between 15 to 20 years. The study revealed that majority respondents of the male gender had worked in the current position for less than 5 years as compared to the female gender, while there was more female gender than male gender who had worked for 15 years and above.

The researcher sought to find out the duration of time individual managers had worked in the previous position. For those who have been promoted, 7 (16.7%) of them had worked between 5 to 10 years in their previous position, 10 (23.8%) worked between 10 to 15 years, 12 (28.6%) less than 5 years, while 13 (30.9%) worked between 15 to 20 years prior to their promotion. The study sought to find out if there were differences between the genders in terms of the number of years worked in previous position. The results indicate that more male work for less years the number of years worked in previous position comparable amongst the two genders and more females in 15 -20 years. (Watson, 2000) points a possible explanation, where he notes that men can be aggressive in terms of underground networking, and thus would move to other grades much faster. He also noted that men move from one organization to another easily than women. This also concurs with Berger (2005) sentiments, that women tolerate different unfortunate positions, discrimination and conditioned predicaments in institutions as compared to their male counterparts.

## **6.2 Organizational Barriers to Career Progression**

The study probed further on respondent's perception on organizational barriers that affect career progression. The responses are as shown in Table 2.



**Table 2: Organizational barriers that affect career progression**

	Frequency n (%)		Total
	Male	Female	
Policies	2 (50.0)	2 (50.0)	4 (9.4)
Rules and regulations	2 (50.0)	2 (50.0)	4 (9.4)
Selection process	5 (45.5)	6(54.5)	11(26.2)
Networking	9 (39.1)	14(60.9)	23(54.8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>18(42.9)</b>	<b>24 (57.1)</b>	<b>42 (100.0)</b>

**Source:** Respondent's Data (2021)

Networking (23 [54.8%]) was observed as the biggest organizational barrier that affect career progression in their institution by the respondents, this was followed by the selection process (11 [26.2%]), policies and, rules and regulations, both echoed equally (4 [9.4]). Both policies and rules and regulations were equal amongst the male and female respondents. One informant noted that men are able to use informal networks in managing their promotions unlike women who mostly rely on formal procedures, as they are good in having a very wide network but are not able to lobby for career promotions. Another informant in addition stated that rules and regulations of promotions were gender-blind and those unwritten laws limit career progression particularly at the top management level, while yet another informant also observed that policies are not clear and men tend to be promoted faster than women even in institutions where women dominate in terms of numbers. This was probably an indication that the promotion process was prone to all manner of abuse including gender discrimination.

Education and training provides much more advantages for career progression since it can give competence levels to employees and their institutions as this is echoed by the majority (27 [64.2%]) of the respondents were of the opinion that education and the training level of employees affected their career progression, 12 (28.6%) of the respondents were of the contrary opinion that it did not while only 3 (7.1%) was not sure if it did affect their career progression. Most of the respondents that were in agreement of the opinion were male (14 [51.8%]), with only 13 (48.1%) being female, while those with an opposing opinion were female (10 [83.3%]), with only 2 (16.7%) being male. One of the female respondent mentioned that education and training is supposed to influence and also be a prerequisite for promotion, but there are instances where one has all the qualifications but ones network connections appeared to count more. The findings here correlates well with (Beardwell, 2004) who alluded that individuals should expect reward for their hard work after training and development, which may be in the form of promotion, pay increase or demanding higher status.

Most of the respondents (24 [57.1%]), believed there was equal application of standards when it came to promotion, 11 (26.2%) of them were not sure, while only 7 (16.7%) of them had a contrary opinion that the application of standards was not equal when it came to promotions. The respondents were asked if the employee remuneration and benefits correspond to skill, experience and expertise level, majority 28 [66.7%]) responded in the affirmative, while only 10 (23.8%) respondents were of the contrary opinion and 4 (9.5%) who was not sure. Majority of the informants who answered in the affirmative were male 15 (53.6%), while 13 (46.4%) were female.

Twenty six (61.9%) of the respondent's view that their institutions policies with regards to staff promotion in the library is very fair, 7 (16.7%) believe it's only fair while only 9 (21.4%) view those policies as being unfair. Majority of the informants viewed this as very fair were males (53.8%) as compared to female (46.1%). Majority (24[57.1%]) of the respondents find the glass ceiling hypothesis applicable to a moderate extent, 10 (23.8%) to a minimal extent while 4 (9.5%) found it to be applicable to both great extent and those who were not sure. This study sought to know the unseen yet unbreakable barriers that affect men and women in career progression, and it revealed that both the male and female informants were equally in agreement that glass ceiling effects is real to a moderate extent. The others felt that it is not very significant.

Some of the informants revealed that some technical positions are believed to belong to men since they are masculine in nature, while some tasks are masked and labeled to belong to certain gender because they are stereotyped that they are women related tasks. Another informant analyzed that some tasks are assigned to men even when in lower cadre just because it is assumed they are more confident and able to defend well. These findings concurred with the views of Napier (2008) who asserted that although the glass ceiling being 'invisible' it is really visible to those who have been affected by it. Glass ceiling is not a one spot wall but a quagmire of many handles valid in size and design which are manifested form of gender bias that come about frequently in both open and hidden. The researcher sought to establish if some set of procedures set about by the institutions could help to curb the notion of "invisible" barriers, and from Table 4.20, Policy (21 [50.0%]), followed by qualifications (15 [35.7%]), and finally merit (6 [14.3%]) in that order were considered to be the strategy towards addressing the glass ceiling hypothesis.

According to the findings, though more of the informants of female gender were of the view that policies were very necessary to cure the glass ceiling menace followed by qualifications, they were comparable. From the findings merit wasn't considered as one of the popular principles of helping in addressing the issue of glass ceiling menace, which was only echoed by the male informants. The findings are also well represented by (Akinyi, 2014) who mentions that mentoring is one of the recognized modes of career progression and has been successful in supporting the career development of marginalized managers in public academic universities and other institutions in which are significantly under-represented at senior levels. (Akinyi, 2014) also alludes that it is valuable as a means of providing role models to senior leaders, and in addition it allows managers in institutions to ground their expertise and experiences within the platform context of the organizations to get support to win particular goals in large career development plan.

The researcher sought to understand the most common challenges which affect career progression and a majority of the respondents (19 [45.2%]) said that organizational networks are the top common and personal challenges employees attested to affecting their career progression, this was followed by qualifications (8 [19.0%]), lack of confidence (6 [14.3%]), home obligations (5 [11.9%]), and finally by inability to communicate (4 [9.4%]). One informant of male gender asserted that in order to get some promotion in the management, one has to be rightly connected with ones qualifications counting second. This was confirmed by another informant of female gender who said that, at some management level anything else comes second from network connection. Most informants of male and female gender were for the view that education and qualifications must be there in order for other issues to be considered by the leaders.

The respondents were asked if the organization offers equal opportunities at the work place, majority of them (19 [45.2%]) responded that it was somewhat true, 13 (31.0%) of them found it very untrue, 5 (11.9%) found it to be untrue together with 5 (11.9%) was not sure. According to the findings of the study, informants of male gender felt that it was somehow true that organizations offered equal opportunities. The best practices recommended in bringing about equity in the library job promotion was training (18 [42.9%]), which was followed by creating policies (8 [19.0%]), talent recognition (7 [16.7%]), mentorship (6 [14.3%]), and finally through merit (3 [7.1%]). The researcher wanted to establish practices recommended in bringing about change and equity among men and women in terms of job promotion, and the study findings portrayed that, the informants of both gender equally recommended training, this was followed by policies where there was a slight difference, and finally talent recognition which was again equally shared as the best practices to help determine promotions. One of the informants asserted that institutions should be able to recognize talent and be able to harness such gifts for managers to feel empowered, and that talent should be seen as one of the bases for competitiveness which can be used as a tool for future succession plans in the organizations.

These findings correlate with (Schein, 2006), that some men and women may be underestimated in talent management initiatives due to assumptions that they don't have the potential and value in investing due to other weakness. Training, policies and mentorship are the main strategies for bringing about equity in career progression. Training enhances development and boosts competence levels of individual managers and organizations. Individual managers of either gender should aggressively take advantage of any available chance in training locally or even internationally. These findings concur with (Woolley et al., 2010) that, for marginalized men and women to move from liberation of gender inequality, education is the key, and that training produces results that can help in constructive engagements and thus help in development.

## **7. Conclusions**

The study concluded that there were more women than men in management positions within the Kenyan public academic libraries and disparities were also observed within their distribution in the various departments. This would probably or perhaps be in their differences in their level of education, where more women had attained higher levels of education than their male colleagues and the fact that they had worked for more number of years within the libraries. It is also observed that the women had also worked in the previous position for a significant number of years. It was observed that there was a supportive work environment within the organizations, but there were a few instances where the culture within did not encourage a fair job promotion practice. Selection processes, networking, policies, rules and regulations in place in their organizations were a great barrier affecting career progression, which is also true for the level of education and training. The organizations offered equal opportunities and that they also practiced fairness and equal application of standards and policies with regards to staff promotion and also that the remuneration and benefits correspond to skill, experience and expertise. Undertaking of challenging assignments also does affect how one progresses with their careers.

## **8. Recommendations**

The study recommends that more men should be encouraged to apply for positions in public academic libraries more so in the management positions, but this should come after attaining prerequisite academic achievements and years of experience working within the libraries. The public libraries should also always encourage fair job promotion practices within all the public

libraries and continue with their current supportive work environment. Employees should also be encouraged to undertake more relevant training relating to their career. Though gender stereotyping was observed as a challenge to a minimal extent, it should be discussed and solutions to that be implemented. The employees should also be encouraged to take up challenging assignments as it ultimately affects how they progress through the ranks. To bring about equity the employers should review the kind of training they offer its employees, organizational policies and also recognize talent.

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