

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER DISPARITIES IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: EVIDENCE FROM SOME SELECTED HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN TANZANIA

Grace Jeremiah Mushi Assistant Lecturer, Business Administration Department, College of Business Education P.O Box 1968, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, E-mail: g.mushi@cbe.ac.tz,

Jane Wilson Massi Assistant Lecturer, Business Administration Department, College of Business Education P.O Box 1968, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, E-mail: j.massi@cbe.ac.tz

Roby Mwema Tutorial Assistant, Business Administration Department, College of Business Education P.O Box 1968, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, E-mail: r.mwema@cbe.ac.tz

Mzomwe Yahya Mazana Lecturer, Department of Mathematics and ICT, College of Business Education P.O Box 1968, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, E-mail: y.mzomwe@cbe.ac.tz

ABSTRACT

The role of women in the development of nations has continued to gain its attention all over the world. That is why, issues concerning with gender disparities are often addressed. In Tanzania, gender inequality, especially the dominance of men is well reflected in leadership positions in higher learning institutions. This study, therefore, investigated factors contributing to gender disparities in leadership and managerial positions in the selected higher learning institutions in Tanzania. The study employed a mixed method and design utilizing both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and interview. Quantitative data were analysed through descriptive statistics and qualitative data through thematic analysis. The study revealed that family commitment, patriarchy culture, motherhood and men tending to be decision makers contribute to gender disparity in leadership positions in higher learning institutions. The study is significant to women because it addresses the factors that are pushing them back from holding leadership positions and their solutions. Also it is significant to policy makers because it will direct them towards making policies that touch gender inclusion in all levels as well as institutions to improve their efforts towards woman empowerment at working place.

Keywords: *Gender, Inequality, Leadership positions, Higher learning Institutions, Usage of Information, Access to information,.*

INTRODUCTION

Background Information

Gender equality benefits everyone in any society that is why it has been nominated as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDG) which aims at providing equal access to education, health care and job opportunities. Despite decades of progressive efforts done worldwide to reduce gender inequality in all arenas, by increasing accessibility and equity of women in various areas, yet there is a great deal of inequality in workplace across the world. Moreover, it has generally been observed that there is unequal treatment of both men and women at work place, in education, health services, economic opportunities and political arena. The level of inequality differs from one country to another; though the highest rate of gender inequality is found in sub-Saharan Africa under which Tanzania is a subset (Eboiyehi, 2016). This gender disparity is also experienced in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) at the management level in particular (Olaugun et al, 2015).

Gender equality is very important to be maintained at workplace because it leads into a better economy and improve productivity, increase innovation among women as well as stabilizing the workforce. Having female leaders in these institutions influences the extent of emphasis placed on gender equality in policy and practice (Smith 2014). Women in leadership positions tend to favour the equitable redistribution of resources. This means having higher number of women leaders in HLIs can impress young girls to have higher aspiration in their future life (Chen, 2010).

The Tanzanian government has adopted policies that promote gender equality from the ministerial level down to the levels of the department. This act supports the sustainable development goals on removing gender inequality in all aspects such as education, academics, leadership, politics and management in the management level of HLIs (Swai, 2018). In the same line, other stakeholders such as Tanzania gender networking program, Tanzania medical association of Women, and women's lawyer's association to mention a few, are supporting government efforts in creating a conducive environment for women (Mutarubukwa & Mazana, 2017). Such environment would enable women to access, own resources, and participate in decision making.

There are several reasons associated with the occurrence of gender disparities in leadership positions. These include, lack of educational qualifications, religious factors, the patriarchal nature of society, the involvement of women in domestic chores, lack of encouragement from husbands, lack of leadership skills and poor mentorship (Mazana & Mutarubukwa, 2017). Proper coaching and mentorship are among the key factors for a successful and effective leadership, however, to become a good leader coaching and action learning are important (Burkinshaw et al, 2018). In most cases, women receive good coaching on motherhood, caregiver and other domestic chores and little on clerical jobs that would not take them to higher management positions.

Santos and Stephanie (2019) realized that some women aspire to be leaders, but they are limited by institutional cultures. They narrated that, in the past some institutions had masculinity, culture that could not give women the chance to be leaders even when they are committed to become one. However, gender equality in leadership in higher learning institutions is important because it eliminates barriers to participation and stereotypes in leadership that limit the opportunities and choices of both sexes. It also widens the opportunities for leadership and raise awareness so as to reduce the assumptions in the society that women are less intelligent, weaker and emotional than men (Kilango, Hai, Nyoni, & Senguo 2017). Customarily, the gender roles of women require them to take care of the home and family while men spend most of their time away from home (Mazana & Mutarubukwa, 2017).

Several efforts have been done to change the masculinity, culture and there is a progress in many institutions starting from the political parties' representation, leadership in higher learning institutions, and other levels of management. For example, on the political arena in 2013 out of 55 appointed ministers and deputy ministers, there were only 15 (27.3%) women (URT, 2014) and in 2015 the number came down to 8 women out of 38 ministers (21.05%) (URT, 2015). On the other hand, among the 372 members of the parliament in the 2015 elections, there were only 136 women, which is 36% representation (WB, 2015). This means that the country has not attained the 50% women representation as it is stipulated in the Beijing Declaration and within the region of Africa. Even the SDGs stipulate that gender equality and empowerment of all girls and women in all aspects of life and levels is fundamental for achieving these goals (UN, 2015). Despite the efforts by government and other stakeholders the number of women in leadership and management levels is still low. Therefore, this study investigated factors contributing to gender inequalities in leadership and managerial positions in the selected HLIs in Tanzania. Specifically, the study found out the gender composition of academic and non-academic staff in managerial position; factors responsible for women's low participation in leadership and managerial position and various efforts done by HLIs to solve the problem of inequality in leadership in Higher Learning Institutions. This study is significant because it provides relevant information related to the factors responsible for gender disparity in leadership and managerial levels that provide a leeway for different stakeholders to come up with strategies and formulate policies that help in dealing with the problem (Kagoda, 2011).

Problem statement

Currently, there are insufficient number of women holding leadership positions as compared to men in higher learning institutions. This causes women's underrepresentation in the political arena, social arena, economically and also in academia. However, equality can bring about access to resources and decision making, effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership. On the other hand, unequal representation is coupled with inequalities in arrangement for productive activities and access to resources, sharing of power and decision making and managing natural resources and safeguarding the environment (Mujwahuzi, Sirika, & Lyimo 2018). In Tanzania, the Tanzania Gender Networking Programme, Tanzania Media Women Association (TAMWA), Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA) have made tremendous effort in creating forums that bring women together to discuss different issues and challenges that are encountered in the process of acquiring leadership positions at different angles (Mazana & Mutarubukwa, 2017). Despite these efforts, the number of women in management levels in higher learning institutions is still low. Therefore, the study investigated factors contributing to inequalities in leadership and managerial positions in the selected higher learning institutions (Higher Learning Institutions in this study comprises of Universities and Colleges) in Tanzania and suggest a way forward. The study was guided by the following research questions:

How many men and women hold senior and managerial positions in selected higher learning institutions?
What are the factors responsible for women's low participation in senior management positions in the selected higher learning institutions?
What institutional measures were taken to address the problem of inequality in senior and managerial positions in the selected higher learning institutions?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender composition in senior and managerial positions in higher learning Institutions

Gender disparity in senior positions has been a call to several authors. Zulu (2003), in the study titled gender representation pattern in higher education management found that out of 1,647 available top positions, only 217 which is 13.2 percent is occupied by women. Efforts by many agencies to fix women in leadership pipeline has been done with little improvement. Shepherd (2017) commented that women tend to opt out in applying for top management positions which encourages their underrepresentation. The study insisted natural selection, than being biased. Makara (2005), had similar findings in Lesotho, although according to this study, women have effective management style when chances are given. However, with such underrepresentation, universities adapted new model that includes an institutional change that would create a balance between men and women and their impact on management (Machado & Carvalho, 2010).

Factors responsible for women's low participation in senior management positions and measures to address the situation

Madera (2017) found several barriers towards pursuing a leadership position in higher learning institutions. Such barriers include cultural barrier, institutional barrier and individual barriers. A similar idea is found in Dang (2017) study regarding the influence of culture on gender inequality and women's advancement to senior positions. The results show that there is still a gap between gender policies and practices. This implies that there is a gap between policies that are documented and what is found on the ground. The study of Obeiyeh (2016) about gender inequality in senior management of the universities found that lack of qualified education, religious factors, involvement of women in domestic chores, lack of support from husband, patriarchal nature of the society is among the barriers to leadership positions. Adamma (2017) argues that there is less percentage of women holding higher ranks in the management. However, the stereotypical view has little impact on women who aspire to be leaders in higher education (Faye, 2017). Yousaf et al. (2017), found that there are several barriers which women might be experiencing in academia, including personal barriers, organizational barriers, and societal barriers. Also, Nishan et al. (2018), on challenges of women leaders in higher education institutions in Maldives, found that heavy workload, lack of career development opportunities, voice not being heard and lack of support from spouses are the barriers towards achieving higher positions in higher learning institutions. Some of the barriers found in the study by Mazana and Mutarubukwa (2017) include dominant masculine culture, negative attitude from subordinates, woman natural roles, low level of commitment and confidence, lack of time to socialize and networking.

However, Doroba (2015) in dealing with gender inequality in higher education institutions found that women are prepared to hold lower positions in the management level. This is in line with the White (2019) who said that, higher learning institutions require gender competent leadership which is a high level of gender responsiveness to change organizational culture. The study by Mwaipopo (2015) also found that organizational culture impacted leadership. Palagan et al (2017) found that institutional policies are changing to include gender mainstreaming that in the future it will help to reduce the gap between men and women in leadership and management positions.

The study by Sart (2014) on the factors that affect women's leadership in university administrations in Turkey found that organizational culture affects positively and negatively most women in holding leadership positions. The study shows further the importance of the organizational culture which impacts on the acceptance of women as leaders in the administration. Also, Wroblewsk (2017), state that senior women are overloaded with responsibilities and that nothing will change structurally unless these responsibilities are owned and shared by the whole office.

Agosto et al. (2011), in the study about underrepresented women in higher education institution found that race has an impact on career development and advancement. In this case, therefore, black women had little chances to advance in their career as opposed to their white counterpart. In this case race has acted as a barrier towards climbing the leadership and carrier ladder.

The above review shows that several authors have focused on the organizational culture as one of the barriers towards women holding positions in higher learning institutions (HLS). However, little has been documented about personal barriers or factors, therefore this study will add to the existing literature. The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.

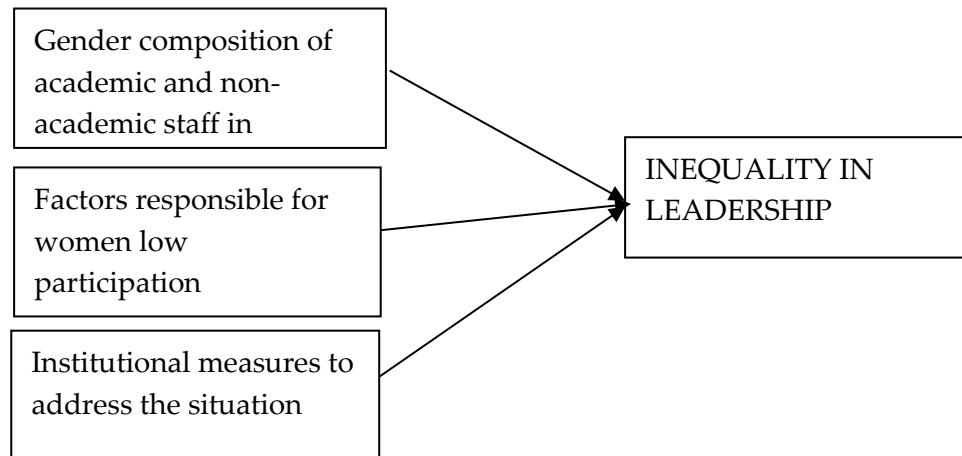


Figure 1. **Conceptual framework**

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The study was conducted in Tanzania mainland and it included seven institutions; Mzumbe University, Tumaini University Dar Campus (TUDARCO), IAA Arusha Campus, College of Business Education (CBE), Institute of Finance management (IFM), Dar Es Salaam Institute of Technology (DIT) and Tanzania Institute of accountancy (TIA) Dar es Salaam Campuses. The institutions were selected from urban areas in administrative regions, namely Dar es Salaam, Arusha, Morogoro, and Dodoma. Among the selected institutions, 2 were universities and 5 were non university colleges.

Research Design

A parallel convergent mixed research design was applied. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to achieve a better understanding of the factors contributing to low participation of women in leadership positions and measures to improve the situation. We chose to use both qualitative and quantitative methods because they complement each other in terms of weaknesses and strengths (Creswell, 2014).

Sample size

The sample size for the study included 80 participants, 7 from top management level and 73 from lower levels of management. The sample was obtained by using a sample size calculator (CreativeResearchSystems, 1982).

Sampling technique

Two types of sampling techniques were applied; purposive sampling for the top management respondents that we knew can provide the required information and simple random sampling which was applied to other staff in the management position.

Instruments

The primary instrument for collecting data in this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaire composed of open-ended questions and a 5-point Likert scale survey with 22 statements. The Likert scale survey was adapted from Onsongo (2004) in order to ensure content validity. Three factors were considered: Personal factors, Institutional factors, and social factors. A description of each factor, a corresponding sample statement and the Cronbach's Alpha is displayed in Table 1. All statements composing these factors were scored on a 5-point scale ranging from 5 = strongly agree to 1 = strongly disagree. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability scores for the sample in the three factors were adequate as Cronbach's Alpha values range between 0.539 and 0.779 (see Mazana, Suero Montero and Olifage, 2019).

Table1. Description of the scale items and sample items

	Description	Cronbach's Alpha
Personal factors	A Likert scale with ten statements was adapted from Onsongo (2004). It was meant to measure perceptions and attitude of women towards leadership in management positions. Sample statement " <i>Lack of confidence among women</i> "	0.779
Institutional Factors	A Likert scale with six statements adapted from Onsongo (2004). It was meant to measure the perception of men and women participants regarding the contribution of institutional factors on women climbing towards leadership positions. Sample statement " <i>Unclear promotion procedures</i> "	0.539
Social Factors	A Likert scale with six statements which was meant to measure the contribution of societal factors in holding leadership position for women. Sample statements, " <i>Men are seen as decision makers</i> "	0.703

The gender composition of the academic staff in management was measured by the number of male and female staff, which was provided by the human resource officer in each institution. Information regarding the institutional measures taken to address the situation was collected through open-ended questions. There was one open-ended question which is what are the interventions put in place by the institution to enhance women's participation in management positions?

Procedure and ethics

The research clearance was sought from the institutions where data were collected. Consent of the participants was sought prior to commencing data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the research, both verbally and in writing. Voluntary participation and complete anonymity were guaranteed to all participants. After obtaining the permission from the relevant departments in each institution, the researchers communicated with the heads of the human resource departments who facilitated meetings with the appropriate research participants. All participants gave their consent through signing the consent form. Some questionnaires were administered in person for the respondents to complete and return and some were delivered to the respondents through email or Google forms.

Data analysis

A quantitative method was used to analyse quantifiable portion of the questionnaire. Using SPSS version 25.0 descriptive analysis was performed. Data obtained from closed-ended items were coded and entered in the SPSS computer programme. At this point, negative items were scored in the reverse order. Mean scores were calculated for each statement in each of the three factors to get variables which were used in subsequent analysis. The first research question of the study required to establish the gender composition of staff in management. To analyse the participants' responses, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used. The second research question required to examine the factors responsible for low participation of women in management positions. Towards this end, descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean and standard deviation were used.

The answers from the open-ended question were analysed through thematic analysis. The analysis was done manually and followed a number of stages. The first stage involved familiarisation with the data whereby the data were transcribed in such a way that textual data were recorded as close to verbatim as possible from the written responses. Then, the transcriptions were read severally while writing notes of the initial raising issues. The second stage, involved the coding of data and identification of verbal expressions relevant to each code. In the third stage, different codes were sorted into the emerging themes and all relevant data extracts within the identified themes were pulled together which were finally organised by using tables. The next stage, involved reviewing the themes to determine the relationships with the data set. Finally, verbal extracts were used to support the identified institutional measures pertaining to women's participation in the leadership positions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to investigate factors contributing to gender disparity in leadership and managerial positions in the selected higher learning institutions in Dar es Salaam and the institutional measures taken to address the situation.

Demographic characteristics of respondents

There were 55 percent of men who responded to the questionnaire and 45 percent women. Among them, 57.5 percent hold a master's degree, 22.5 percent Bachelor degree, 17.5 percent PhD, and only 2.5 percent were Professors from both private and public institutions. Furthermore, 43.8 percent of the respondents are aged between 36-45, 31.3 percent are aged between 21-35, 20 percent are between 46-55 and 5 percent are above 56 years of age. The respondents include both teaching and non-teaching staff.

Gender composition in leadership and managerial position in the selected higher learning institutions (RQ 1)

To analyze responses to the research question about the gender composition of staff who hold managerial positions in the selected higher learning institution, the data were organized under three major categories, namely; the top management (TM), directors (DR) and heads of department (HoD). The study revealed the following results;

The results depicted in Figure 1 show that, men are 81%, and women are 19% in the group of top management. This means that fewer women hold managerial positions at the level of top management in most of higher learning institutions as compared to men. At the level of directors, the findings show that there is significant gap existing between men and women holding managerial posts whereby 81%, are men and 19% are women. These findings align with Swai (2018) in the study titled gender representation pattern in higher education management.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that, women experience in leadership and decision making seems to be different at least at the level of heads of department in most of the sampled higher learning institutions. However, women hold 32% and men 68% at the level of heads of department. This is supported by Doroba (2015), who posit that women are prepared to hold lower positions in the management level. The results are represented in Figure 2

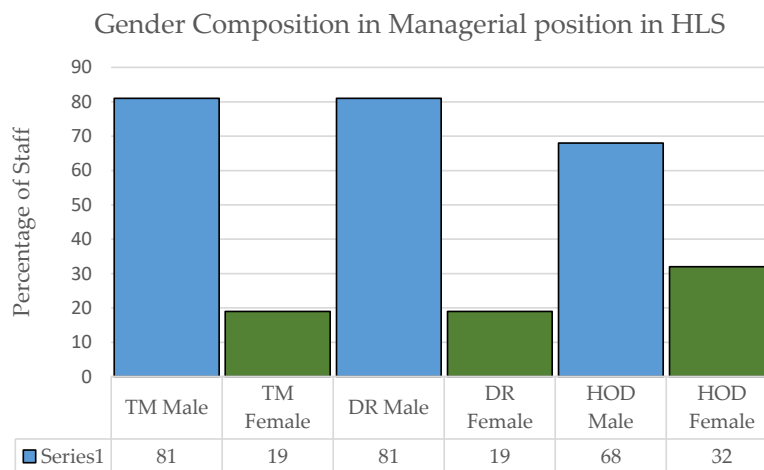


Figure 2. Gender composition of staff in managerial positions in HLS

Factors responsible for women's low participation in senior management positions in the selected higher learning institutions (RQ 2)

Personal factors

Among the issues related to personal factors the results presented in Table 3 show that only family commitment contributes to gender disparity in leadership in HLIs. This is supported by 61.5% of the respondents who agreed with the statement that family issues are one of the barriers towards climbing the leadership ladder. Other factors, including women do not aspire higher, lack of confidence among women, eligible women turn down appointment, lack of ambition, academic qualification, women tend to be helpers, lack of role models, want favors, and lack of experience is not responsible for the observed gender disparity in leadership in HLIs. Results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Personal factors (in percentage)

Variable	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Women do not aspire higher	34.6	39.7	1.3	17.9	6.4
Lack of confidence among women	23.8	28.7	-	37.5	10.0
Eligible women turn down the appointment	21.3	49.3	1.3	24.0	4.0
Lack of ambition	11.4	44.3	1.3	35.4	7.6
Family commitment	11.5	24.4	2.6	39.7	21.8
Low academic qualification	34.2	40.5	3.8	15.2	6.3
No role models	32.5	42.5	3.8	18.8	2.5
Women tend to be helpers	13.9	40.5	-	38.0	7.6
Women want favors	26.3	43.8	-	18.8	11.3
Lack of experience	23.4	35.1	3.9	31.2	6.5

Generally, results presented in Table 3 show that with regards to personal factors only family commitment has been shown to be a factor responsible for gender disparities in leadership positions in HLIs.

Institutional factors

For the case of institutional factors, results represented in Table 4 show that, the majority of respondents, 64% supported the statement that patriarch system hinders some women in holding management positions. The results also show that men dominating the management positions is a limiting factor to women holding those positions as the majority of respondents 71.8% supported the statement. Moreover, the findings show that unclear promotion procedures are not a contributing factor, meaning that the observed gender disparity in leadership positions may be due to the relatively low number of women in these institutions which in turn affect their chances to be appointed for managerial positions. This is somehow similar to Shepherd (2017) who argue that women tend to opt out applying for top management positions. Other factors such as men fear female domination and organization culture were shown not to be contributing to gender disparity in leadership in HLIs. In totality under institutional factors, patriarch structure and management positions dominated by male are the only contributing factors for the observed gender disparities in HLIs. The findings is supported by Sart (2014) on the positive impact of these factors in relation to women holding leadership positions. Table 4 summarises the findings.

Table 4. Institutional factors

Variable	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Patriarch structure	6.7	28.0	1.3	42.7	21.3
Unclear promotion procedure	16.7	38.5	1.3	32.1	11.5
Management position dominated by male	10.3	16.7	1.3	44.9	26.9
Men fear female domination	17.9	43.6	-	29.5	9.0
Organizational culture	23.7	60.5	1.3	11.8	2.6

Social factors

Results presented in Table 5 show that motherhood is a contributing factor to gender disparity in leadership in HLIs, supported by the majority (63%). This is because women spend a lot of time for childcare, housework, and elder care. Many women take maternity leaves or request shorter workdays to take care of their children. This reduces their chances of being considered for promotions (Yousaf, 2017). Another contributing factor hindering women from climbing the leadership ladder is culture as the majority of respondents (67.1%) agreed with the statement. Regarding the statement there are few opportunities for women to advance in education, the results show that it is not a limiting factor. This has been indicated by (69.2%) of the respondents who disagree with the argument. Considering the statement women fear to be isolated because of being leaders in the institutions, the findings show that it is not a limiting factor as 57.2% of the respondents disagreed with the argument. In summary, regarding the social factors, culture, motherhood and men are seen as decision makers are the factors contributing to gender disparity in leadership positions. The findings are depicted in Table 5.

Table 5. Social factors

Variable	Strongly disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly agree (%)
Few opportunities for women in education	26.9	42.3	1.3	17.9	11.5
Men are seen as decision makers	13.8	35.0	-	37.5	13.8
Motherhood	5.0	31.3	-	38.8	25.0
Women lack social network	10.0	50.0	-	31.3	8.8
Culture	6.3	26.6	-	36.7	30.4
Fear of isolation	13.0	44.2	2.6	28.6	11.7

Institutional measures taken to address the problem of gender disparity in senior and managerial positions in selected higher learning institutions (RQ 3)

Respondents were asked to provide comments on institutional measures taken to help improve the situation of gender disparity in senior and managerial position in HLIs. Their responses were captured in Table 6. Some important ideas pointed by the respondents relate to the need for encouraging women to participate in management, to motivate them to aspire for higher positions, establishment of the gender unit or desk, capacity building in terms of further training and workshops. Other measures include the introduction of the quota system, and implementation of various empowerment programs. Table 6 provides a detailed account of the different institutional measures taken by the selected HLIs.

Table 6. Institutional Measures taken to address inequalities in senior positions in HLS

Theme	Aspect	Example quote
Offer encouragement	Give them the opportunity to lead	<i>“Encourage more women to participate in management and this time, more women (3) have been selected to lead various college faculties and directorates”</i> (respondent. 1)
	Motivation	<i>“Motivating them to aspire for higher position”</i> (respondent 65)
	Encourage women to contest for various positions	<i>“Women are encouraged to apply whenever there is vacancy”</i> (Respondent 11)
	Encourage them to pursue further education	<i>“Encouraging women to go for further studies”</i> (respondent 30)
Establish gender unit	Gender desk to work on the work-related challenges	<i>“We have gender desk, which is meant to protect women from sexual harassment and discrimination”</i> (Respondent 5)
Capacity Building	Provide training and workshops	<i>“Identification and provision of suitable training facilities for women; training facilities offered to female employees proportionately for making us suitable for assuming higher managerial positions”</i> (Respondent 29)
	Provide opportunities for career development	<i>“Career development opportunities through the provision of training and development programs. This will help woman to attain needed education qualifications and experience which will qualify them for management positions”</i> (Respondent 26)
Quota system	Reserve leadership positions for women	<i>“The institution should introduce a quota system whereby there must be opportunities strictly reserved for females”</i> (Respondent 11)
	Provide equal chances to both men and women	<i>“Equal chance is given to both genders for appointment in the managerial positions”</i> (Respondent 25)
	Mainstream gender balance	<i>“Creating and mainstreaming gender balance among...”</i> (Respondent 30)

	Establish policy articles specifying the percentage of women in management positions	“Policy structures necessitate a certain percentage of women in the management” (Respondent 33)
Empowerment programs	Delegate authority to women	“... delegate authorities to them, which gives them the autonomy in executing functions...by doing so women will gain management experience which will activate their confidence to hold higher positions in the management” (Respondent 24)
	Provide chances to participate in decision making	“Involve women in decision making” (Respondent 66)
	Instil confidence to women	“Our institution tends to build self-confidence and self-determination among woman by giving them a chance to participate in decision making process” (Respondent 27)
	Awareness campaigns	“...to create awareness on women rights” (respondent 61)
	Use role models	“Invitation of women role models to the institution” (Respondent 52)
	Establish a gender policy	“...introducing gender policy” (Respondent 54)
	Select women with similar qualification as men during employment	“there is a degree of female consideration in case male and female score the equal marks in the interview” (Respondent 22)
	Establish women forum for sharing their experiences	“Established women forum to encourage each other to aspire for the leadership positions” (Respondent 20)

CONCLUSION

The observed Gender disparities in leadership positions in the selected Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania are the results of four factors. These factors include: family commitment, patriarchy culture, motherhood and men tending to be decision makers. The proposed institutional measures to curb the situation include offering encouragement, establishing the gender unit, capacity building, quota system which deals with providing equal chances for leadership and empowerment programs such as delegation of power and awareness campaigns.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends that men or rather husbands should provide support to the women so that they can get enough time to develop their career. Such support can also be in the form of encouragement which build confidence to women and act as a catalyst in contesting for the managerial positions. The study also recommends that HLIs engage women in empowerment programs, establish the gender desk and a quota system to reduce gender disparities in the senior management positions.

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