

Effects of Gender equality Initiatives on Employees Performance at the First Vice President's Office in Pemba, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study assessed the impact of gender equality initiatives on employee performance at the First Vice President's Office in Pemba, Tanzania. A case study design with a quantitative approach was employed, utilizing proportionate random sampling to select 104 respondents for a questionnaire-based survey. The empirical results revealed that a majority of respondents agreed that career advancement and promotion methods significantly influence employee motivation (64.4%), productivity (61.5%), and job satisfaction (53.8%). Additionally, 55.8% of respondents indicated that women facing challenges in job engagement and retention experience a negative impact on their productivity. Furthermore, 64.4% of respondents agreed that women experiencing difficulties with compensation and benefits at work are adversely affected in terms of productivity, while 63.5% noted a negative impact on teamwork and collaboration. The study recommends that, in addition to government efforts, organizations should foster an environment where education and institutional systems are strengthened to support gender equality and eliminate discrimination across employment sectors.

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1. Introduction

Gender equality in the workplace refers to the principle that men and women should enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities in terms of employment (Ackson, 2022). It emphasizes that gender should not be the basis for determining one's role or potential within the workplace, aiming to eliminate systemic biases that limit the participation and advancement of individuals based on gender (Babarinde, 2022). Promoting gender equality requires an inclusive approach that addresses diverse interests, needs, and priorities of both men and women, while recognizing the diversity within these groups (Faiza, 2015; Kabeer, 2005; Seguino, 2007).

Globally, gender equality has made incremental progress. As of 2023, the global gender gap across 146 countries has been reduced by 68.4%, a modest improvement from 68.1% in 2022, based on the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (SIGI, 2022). However, despite these improvements, full gender equality remains a distant goal. The UNDP's Gender Development Index (GDI), which evaluates gender gaps in life expectancy, education, and income, currently stands at 0.949, highlighting the global persistence of gender inequalities (UNDP, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023). Key barriers include entrenched social norms, discriminatory practices, and institutional frameworks that continue to sustain these disparities (Fukuda-Parr, 2017; Cornwall, 2016).

In Africa, the challenge of achieving gender equality is more pronounced. The average gender equality score for 52 African countries in 2022 was 0.53, showing significant room for improvement (ADB, 2022). Countries such as Mauritius have made progress with a score of 0.73, while nations like Somalia continue to struggle, scoring 0.35. These figures highlight the regional disparities across the continent, where women face systemic barriers in access to education, healthcare, economic participation, and political representation (Klasen, 2009; Huyer, 2015; Naudé, 2021). Scholars have argued that Africa's patriarchal norms, coupled with socio-economic challenges, perpetuate these inequalities (Amadiume, 1997; Tamale, 2020).

In the workplace, the promotion of gender equality is linked to numerous benefits, including increased employee engagement, higher productivity, and improved organizational performance. Studies have demonstrated that workplaces that promote inclusivity and fairness, through measures like equal pay and access to leadership roles, experience higher levels of employee satisfaction and commitment (Acker, 2006; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Research has also shown that gender biases—such as the promotion of less qualified employees based on gender—can demoralize staff and decrease overall motivation (Babarinde, 2022; Heilman, 2012). Additionally, gender equality initiatives like mentorship programs and diversity training can foster inclusive environments that enable underrepresented genders to thrive (Hoobler et al., 2011; Benschop & Verloo, 2006).

Tanzania has made significant strides in advancing gender equality, particularly through its alignment with global and regional frameworks such as the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the SADC Gender Equality Strategy of 1997, and the Millennium Development Goals (Ackson, 2022). These efforts are part of the broader Tanzania Development Vision 2025, which outlines specific strategies aimed at eliminating gender inequality and empowering women across various sectors, including education, health, and the labor market (SIGI, 2022; Warioba, 2014). Tanzania's gender-focused policies have been credited with contributing to improvements in women's access to education and leadership roles, though significant gaps remain (Makinda, 2015; Mallya, 2005).

Studies on gender equality initiatives in Tanzania reveal positive outcomes for employee performance, particularly in the private sector. For example, research conducted on Tanzanian SMEs indicates that organizations that implemented gender equality policies—such as equal pay and mentorship—saw higher levels of employee engagement and productivity (Kibera, 2021; Mbilinyi, 2016). However, many Tanzanian businesses face challenges in implementing these initiatives due to resource constraints, cultural resistance, and a lack of organizational capacity (Tsikata, 2009; Morisset, 2013). Scholars note that ongoing efforts to address these barriers are necessary to create more equitable workplaces (Ellis et al., 2007).

Despite these challenges, Tanzania has made considerable progress in closing gender gaps in various domains. The country's GDI score rose from 0.927 in 2022 to 0.930 in 2023, reflecting gradual improvements in gender equality, particularly in health, education, and income (UNDP, 2023). In addition, Tanzanian women have increasingly assumed leadership positions at national and regional levels. For example, the current President of Tanzania and the Speaker of the National Assembly are women, and women now hold 35% of ministerial positions (MOFP, 2023). These developments signify a broader commitment to gender equality in governance and policy-making (Kabira, 2006; Mushi, 2021).

In Zanzibar, a semi-autonomous region of Tanzania, there have been significant strides in promoting gender equality, particularly in leadership roles. The appointment of women to key positions such as the Chief Secretary and Deputy Speaker of the Zanzibar House of Representatives exemplifies this progress. Additionally, the Zanzibar Development Vision 2020-2050 and the Zanzibar Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUZA III) include goals aimed at achieving gender equality and fostering social inclusion, with a focus on empowering women, youth, and vulnerable groups (SIGI, 2022; Ackson, 2022). These initiatives are critical for promoting sustainable development and social cohesion in the region (Nyang'oro, 2012; Kimambo, 2015).

Within this context, the First Vice President's Office (FVP) in Pemba presents a valuable case study for examining how gender equality initiatives impact employee performance in the public sector. As a prominent government institution, the FVP Office can serve as a model for other public institutions across Tanzania by demonstrating the positive effects of gender inclusivity on employee engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction (Mbilinyi, 2016). By analyzing how gender equality policies are implemented within the FVP Office, this study aims to contribute to the broader literature on public sector gender equality, offering insights into how similar institutions can benefit from adopting gender-inclusive practices (Mazrui, 2019; Kibacha, 2019).

2. Contextual Review

The study draws upon Equity Theory as its foundational framework, which is critical for understanding how gender equality initiatives influence employee performance. Equity Theory, developed by John Stacey Adams, is rooted in the concept of fairness in organizational behavior and human resource management. It posits that employees assess the fairness of their input-to-output ratio, such as effort compared to rewards, in relation to others in the organization. This theory is particularly relevant for examining gender equality initiatives because these efforts aim to create a fair distribution of opportunities, compensation, and recognition, all of which can significantly impact employee motivation and job satisfaction (Adams, 2021). By ensuring that resources and rewards are distributed equitably, organizations can enhance perceptions of fairness, which is directly linked to improved organizational performance.

Equity Theory provides a useful lens through which to examine how policies such as fair hiring practices, pay equity, and leadership development impact employee behavior. According to the theory, when employees perceive that their contributions are rewarded fairly in comparison to their peers, they are more likely to feel motivated and satisfied, leading to better job performance. On the other hand, if employees perceive inequities—such as unequal pay or biased promotions—they may experience decreased motivation, dissatisfaction, and even turnover. Therefore, the theory offers a strong basis for understanding how successful implementation of gender equality policies can improve employee performance by fostering a sense of fairness within the organization (Cropanzano, 2022; Cohen-Charash, 2020).

However, Equity Theory has limitations in its oversimplification of the comparison process. The theory assumes that employees make straightforward comparisons between their inputs and outputs relative to their peers, but in reality, these comparisons can be much more complex. Employees may evaluate their situation against multiple reference points, such as colleagues, industry standards, or personal expectations. Additionally, it assumes that gender equality initiatives, such as equitable pay and promotion practices, are perceived as fair by all employees, regardless of their gender or background. In practice, these initiatives may be viewed differently by various demographic groups, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding of how perceptions of equity are formed within diverse workplaces (Huseman, 2023).

To address these limitations, the study acknowledges the complexity of fairness perceptions by gathering employee feedback on gender equality initiatives to capture diverse perspectives. By doing so, it seeks to understand how different groups of employees perceive the fairness of these initiatives and how this affects their motivation and performance. This multifaceted approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of how gender equality initiatives influence employee outcomes, contributing to the broader literature on gender and organizational performance. Overall, Equity Theory offers a valuable framework for analyzing the relationship between gender equality and employee performance, but its limitations must be carefully considered to fully capture the complexity of workplace dynamics (Fowler, 2023; Garcés, 2022).

2.1 Empirical review

Numerous studies have explored the impact of gender equality initiatives on organizational performance, providing valuable insights into the ways in which inclusive policies and practices shape workplace dynamics. Selvakumar (2021) conducted a comprehensive study in the United States on the impact of gender equality initiatives on organizational performance. The research revealed that organizations implementing comprehensive gender equality programs, such as diversity and inclusion training, mentorship programs, and flexible work arrangements, experienced significant improvements in employee engagement, productivity, and overall organizational performance. These initiatives fostered a more inclusive, supportive, and equitable work environment, which in turn boosted employee morale, collaboration, and commitment to the organization's success (Garcés, 2022; Cropanzano, 2022). The study concluded that investing in gender equality programs yields tangible benefits, including higher employee retention, enhanced operational efficiency, and a stronger organizational reputation. Selvakumar (2021) recommends that organizations develop and implement holistic gender equality strategies that address both formal policies and informal cultural norms to achieve long-term success (Heilman, 2012; Kabeer, 2005).

Winter (2016) conducted a study on gender equality in the workplace within the Chilean manufacturing sector, focusing on the relationship between gender equality, productivity, and employment. The study aimed to examine whether a more balanced gender distribution could promote productivity growth. Findings indicated that gender inequality remained significant in the Chilean manufacturing industry, with 80% of the workforce being male. However, firms that employed a more equal distribution of male and female workers saw faster productivity growth, particularly in smaller firms where high-skill employees were the driving force (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009; Seguino, 2007). Winter (2016) concluded that promoting gender equality in the workplace not only enhances productivity but also positively affects employee engagement and retention. The study recommended that firms implement targeted gender equality policies, such as balancing welfare treatment between male and female employees and publicly showcasing their gender equality efforts to enhance competitiveness and drive productivity growth (Fowler, 2023; Naudé, 2021).

In Nigeria, Babarinde (2022) examined the impact of gender bias in performance management, particularly in how gender bias affects employee performance appraisals and feedback processes. The study revealed that women were more likely to receive harsher evaluations and less constructive feedback compared to their male counterparts, even when their job performance was equivalent (Cohen-Charash, 2020; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This gender bias negatively impacted female employees' motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Babarinde (2022) concluded that addressing gender bias in performance management could significantly improve employee morale and productivity, particularly for women. The study recommended implementing training programs to help managers and HR personnel recognize and mitigate gender bias, along with establishing clear policies and accountability measures to ensure fairness in performance evaluations (Acker, 2006; Tsikata, 2009).

The cumulative findings of these studies underscore the importance of addressing systemic barriers that hinder women's participation and advancement in the workplace. Promoting gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also an economic imperative that unlocks untapped potential in the workforce. Babarinde (2022) emphasized that governments, businesses, and civil society organizations must collaborate to implement targeted interventions that increase women's access to education, skills development, and career advancement opportunities. These interventions are essential for reducing gender disparities in the labor market and driving sustainable economic growth (UNDP, 2023; Huyer, 2015). Moreover, mentorship and sponsorship programs have been recommended as tools for supporting women's career development and helping them overcome barriers to leadership roles in organizations (Huseman, 2023; Garcés, 2022).

3. Methodology

This study employed a case study design to allow for an in-depth examination of the specific context of the First Vice President's Office (FVP) in Pemba, Tanzania. This approach was chosen because it provides a focused analysis of how gender equality initiatives are implemented in this particular organizational setting, making the findings directly relevant and actionable for that environment. The gender equality initiatives under investigation included diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training, compensation policies, career advancement opportunities, flexible work arrangements, recruitment strategies, and evaluation and feedback mechanisms.

The research was conducted in the FVP office located in the southern Pemba region. This office was selected because it offers a rich source of data relevant to the study's objectives, including insights into the implementation of various gender equality policies. The office oversees key policies, such as the Disability Inclusion Policy (2018), HIV/AIDS Prevention Policy (2012), Environmental Conservation Policy (2013), and the Anti-Drug Abuse Policy (2023). With approximately 140 employees, the FVP office serves as an ideal setting for examining the relationship between gender equality initiatives and employee performance. The location and staffing levels provide the necessary context for a detailed exploration of gender-focused policies (FVP Annual Report, 2023).

The study targeted a sample size of 104 respondents, calculated using the Yamane formula from the total population of 140 employees, ensuring a 95% confidence interval with a 5% margin of error. Proportionate random sampling was used to select participants from various departments, ensuring that the sample was representative of the entire office. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, which allowed for the quantitative analysis of employee perceptions regarding the gender equality initiatives. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency analysis, mean percentages, and correlations, were employed to analyze the data and identify trends related to the impact of these initiatives on employee performance.

4. Data Analysis

The data presented in Table 1 highlights respondents' perceptions regarding gender discrimination practices in the workplace, focusing on employment difficulties, career advancement, job satisfaction, motivation, teamwork, and compensation. These results offer insights into how women perceive workplace discrimination in comparison to their male counterparts, and how these perceptions impact various aspects of their professional lives.

Table 1. Respondents' perceptions about the women discrimination practices at workplace

| Respondents' perceptions | Responses | | | |
|---|-----------|------|----|------|
| | Yes | % | No | % |
| Being a woman is difficulty to get employment than being a man | 57 | 54.8 | 47 | 45.2 |
| There are jobs professions viewed as mostly performed by men | 69 | 66.3 | 35 | 33.7 |
| Women face difficulties of access to promotion opportunities as their male peers | 28 | 26.9 | 76 | 73.1 |
| The career advancement and promotion method need to address gender discrimination for | | | | |
| Productivity improvement | 64 | 61.5 | 40 | 38.5 |
| Job satisfaction | 56 | 53.8 | 48 | 46.2 |
| Motivation | 67 | 64.4 | 37 | 35.6 |
| Teamwork and collaboration | 33 | 31.7 | 71 | 68.3 |
| Women experiencing difficulty at job in engagement and retention are affected in the aspects of | | | | |
| Productivity improvement | 58 | 55.8 | 46 | 44.2 |
| Job satisfaction | 32 | 30.8 | 72 | 69.2 |
| Motivation | 43 | 41.3 | 61 | 58.7 |
| Teamwork and collaboration | 33 | 31.7 | 71 | 68.3 |

| | | | | |
|--|----|------|----|------|
| Women experiencing difficulty of compensation and benefits at job are affected in the aspects of | | | | |
| Productivity improvement | 67 | 64.4 | 37 | 36.6 |
| Job satisfaction | 34 | 32.7 | 70 | 67.3 |
| Motivation | 41 | 39.4 | 63 | 60.6 |
| Teamwork and collaboration | 66 | 63.5 | 38 | 36.5 |

Source: Field Data, 2024

Employment and Gender Perceptions

A significant portion of respondents (54.8%) indicated that it is more difficult for women to secure employment compared to men, while 45.2% disagreed with this statement. This shows a nearly even split, but the majority acknowledge the challenges women face in the job market. Additionally, 66.3% of respondents agreed that certain job roles and professions are predominantly viewed as male-dominated, with only 33.7% disagreeing. These results reflect entrenched gender stereotypes in employment, where certain professions are still perceived as being more suited to men than women.

Promotion and Career Advancement

When it comes to promotion opportunities, 73.1% of respondents disagreed with the notion that women face more difficulties in career advancement compared to men, while 26.9% agreed. This suggests that most respondents believe promotion opportunities are relatively gender-neutral, though a notable minority still see gender as a barrier to career growth. However, when respondents were asked whether career advancement and promotion methods need to address gender discrimination for productivity improvement, 61.5% agreed. Similarly, significant proportions felt that gender bias should be tackled to enhance job satisfaction (53.8%), motivation (64.4%), and teamwork and collaboration (31.7%).

Engagement, Retention, and Gender Challenges

The data also shed light on how gender-related challenges in job engagement and retention affect various aspects of work life. More than half of respondents (55.8%) indicated that women facing difficulties in engagement and retention are negatively impacted in terms of productivity improvement, with a slightly smaller percentage (44.2%) believing that this was not the case. A large percentage (69.2%) felt that women facing these difficulties experience lower job satisfaction, with 41.3% believing their motivation suffers. Additionally, 68.3% noted that teamwork and collaboration are negatively affected when women encounter retention issues. These results underscore how workplace challenges, when not addressed, can have broad negative consequences for employee engagement and team dynamics.

Compensation and Gender Bias: Finally, perceptions of compensation and benefits disparities also reveal concerns about gender bias. A significant majority (64.4%) agreed that compensation difficulties faced by women hinder productivity, while 36.6% disagreed. Furthermore, 67.3% of respondents reported that compensation issues negatively impact women's job satisfaction, and 60.6% said the same for motivation. Interestingly, when it comes to teamwork and collaboration, 63.5% agreed that women experiencing difficulties with compensation are negatively affected,

suggesting that pay disparities not only reduce individual performance but also impact the wider organizational culture and collaboration efforts.

5. Discussion of findings

The findings of this study align with much of the existing literature on gender equality in the workplace, confirming that gender disparities, particularly in employment, promotion, compensation, and job satisfaction, remain persistent challenges. One of the most prominent frameworks supporting this argument is Equity Theory, which suggests that perceptions of fairness significantly influence employee motivation and performance (Adams, 2021). When employees feel they are treated equitably, they are more likely to be productive, motivated, and satisfied with their jobs. In the context of gender equality, this theory helps explain why initiatives such as equitable compensation, promotion opportunities, and inclusive recruitment practices are vital for enhancing organizational performance (Cropanzano, 2022).

This study's focus on the challenges women face in securing employment and advancing their careers reflects the global issue of gender stereotypes, which often limit women's opportunities. Previous research has demonstrated that hiring practices are frequently influenced by unconscious biases, with certain roles being viewed as more suitable for men (Kabeer, 2005; Winter, 2016). The persistence of these biases, as shown in this study, suggests that despite efforts to implement gender equality initiatives, cultural norms continue to reinforce unequal treatment in recruitment and career advancement processes. This aligns with Selvakumar (2021), who found that organizations with comprehensive gender equality strategies—including diversity training and mentorship programs—tend to overcome these barriers more effectively. It highlights the need for organizations to focus not only on formal policies but also on shifting cultural attitudes to foster inclusivity and fairness (Benschop & Verloo, 2006).

The issue of gender bias in performance management, particularly in the evaluation and feedback processes, continues to be a critical area of concern. Scholars such as Babarinde (2022) have emphasized that women are often subject to harsher evaluations than their male counterparts, even when their performance is comparable. This not only demotivates women but also affects their long-term engagement and retention in organizations. The study's findings reinforce the idea that addressing gender bias in performance management is crucial for improving job satisfaction and overall employee performance. As Huseman (2023) argues, equitable performance evaluations are necessary to create a fair and motivating work environment. Organizations that fail to address these biases may experience lower levels of employee commitment, particularly among women, which can hinder their overall productivity and organizational cohesion.

Moreover, the role of compensation and benefits in shaping employee perceptions of fairness cannot be understated. The gender pay gap remains a significant barrier to achieving workplace equality, as numerous studies have shown (Huyer, 2015; Nussbaum, 2000). When women perceive that they are undercompensated compared to their male counterparts, their motivation and engagement with the organization decline, which in turn affects their productivity. This study reinforces the argument that gender equality in compensation is not merely a matter of fairness but also a strategic organizational imperative. Fair compensation practices have been consistently linked to higher job satisfaction and improved organizational outcomes (Heilman, 2012). Companies that invest in gender pay equity programs can enhance their competitiveness by fostering a more motivated and loyal workforce (Ellis et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the broader implications of these findings suggest that promoting gender equality is not only beneficial for individual employees but also for overall organizational performance. The work of Winter (2016) in Chilean manufacturing firms illustrates that gender equality is closely tied to productivity growth, particularly when companies implement gender-balanced hiring and promotion strategies. This study's findings contribute to this body of literature by demonstrating that gender equality initiatives in diverse workplaces, such as public sector institutions in Tanzania, can have similarly positive effects on productivity, employee retention, and organizational cohesion. The argument is further strengthened by research showing that organizations with inclusive cultures tend to outperform those that do not prioritize diversity and gender equity (Garcés, 2022; Huseman, 2023).

This study highlights the importance of gender equality initiatives in enhancing employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational performance. By drawing on Equity Theory and empirical evidence from similar studies, it is clear that organizations must take a comprehensive approach to gender equality. This involves not only implementing formal policies but also addressing informal cultural norms and biases that perpetuate gender disparities. The success of gender equality initiatives ultimately depends on their ability to create perceptions of fairness across all levels of the organization. This requires ongoing efforts to monitor and address gender-based disparities in recruitment, promotion, compensation, and performance management. As the literature and findings suggest, the positive impacts of such initiatives are substantial, benefiting both employees and organizations in terms of performance, productivity, and long-term sustainability.

6. Conclusion

This study has highlighted the critical role that gender equality initiatives play in shaping employee performance and organizational outcomes. Drawing on Equity Theory, it is clear that perceptions of fairness and equity in the workplace significantly impact employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. The findings of this research reinforce the idea that gender disparities in employment, promotion, and compensation continue to present challenges, especially for women in the workforce. These disparities not only affect individual performance but also the overall functioning and success of the organization. In the context of the First Vice President's Office in Pemba, Tanzania, addressing these issues is crucial for fostering a more inclusive and high-performing work environment.

The study's findings align with global research, which shows that organizations that actively implement gender equality strategies—such as diversity training, equitable compensation, and gender-balanced promotion practices—tend to experience improved employee engagement and organizational effectiveness. Gender biases, particularly in hiring and performance management, continue to undermine women's potential in the workplace. Addressing these biases is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategic imperative for organizations seeking to enhance productivity and innovation. By ensuring that women are given equal opportunities and support, organizations can unlock untapped talent and drive greater organizational success.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed. First, organizations should focus on implementing comprehensive gender equality policies that address both formal structures, such as recruitment and promotion practices, and informal cultural norms that may perpetuate gender bias. This requires continuous training and education for management and staff to raise awareness of unconscious biases and the importance of inclusivity. Secondly,

organizations should regularly assess their compensation structures to ensure pay equity between male and female employees. Transparent and equitable compensation policies can enhance job satisfaction and employee retention, contributing to overall organizational performance.

Finally, organizations must invest in mentorship and sponsorship programs that specifically support women's career development. These programs can provide women with the guidance and resources needed to overcome barriers to leadership roles and advance within the organization. In addition, performance management systems should be reviewed and redesigned to ensure fairness and accountability in evaluations and feedback processes. By implementing these measures, organizations can create an environment that not only promotes gender equality but also improves employee engagement, productivity, and organizational growth. These recommendations, if effectively executed, can help build more equitable and high-performing workplaces.

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