Strategy

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND PROPORTIONS OF
WOMEN IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP SKILLSAND PROPORTIONS OF WOMEN IN TOP LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

*Purpose:*In 2000 the United Nations member states ratified and committed themselves to achieving the eight millennium development goals. The most salient of the goals is number three that sought to promote gender equality and empower women. Despite the new constitution and other affirmative measures that have been undertaken by the Government of Kenya, there is still low representation of women in leadership in Kenya. The study sought to the relationship between leadership skills and proportion of women in top leadership positions in Kenya. The justification was driven by the realization that despite the affirmative action measures and the promulgation of the new Kenyan constitution which prohibits either gender from constituting more than two-thirds of any elected body, there has not been much progress in increasing the number of women in leadership positions.

*Methodology:*This thesis used mixed method methodology (qualitative and quantitative). The study design was cross a sectional study and the data was collected using structure questionnaires, with closed ended questions for quantitative data and open ended questions for qualitative data. 221 senior managers in state corporations were sampled using stratified sampling technique. The questionnaires were self administered.

*Results:*The findings indicate a positive relationship between Leadership Skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.The findings of this study suggest that leadership skills hinder the progression of women to high leadership positions in state corporations in Kenya.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: The thesis makes an important contribution in understanding the factors influencing proportion of women in top leadership positions in state corporations in Kenya. This study contributes to the theorythrough discussion of local and international literature on culture, leadership skills, family determinants and political considerations, affirmative action and gender mainstreaming issues were discussed. Literature on gender was thus used to make policy recommendationon organizational leadership.Female leaders have proved to be very effective in the current competitive world of business.
Keywords:leadership position, leadership skills, proportion of women, State corporations

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The government of Kenya has made a concerted effort to increase the number of women in leadership positions in state organizations. The major progress has been brought about by the new constitution of 2010 which, as discussed below, seeks to advance the position of women in Kenya. There have also been specific policies focused on affirmative action measures, and gender mainstreaming effort, and other measures that the Kenyan Government has adopted in an attempt toempower and increase the number of women in leadership positions within state organizations (Nzomo, 2013).

Hope for women in Kenya lies in the full implementation of the new constitution of 2010, which is intended to bring equality to all Kenyan citizens. This constitution has been lauded as one of the most progressive in the world for its inclusive and comprehensive bill of rights, decentralization of power, reserved legislative seats for youth and the disabled. With the promulgation of the Kenyan Constitution in August 2010, notable gains have been realized for the women in Kenya; including the entrenchment of the principle of affirmative action, for women and other marginalized populations, including important provisions related to gender equality whereby it guarantees an expanded role of women in leadership (Nzomo, 2013). In fact, regarding representative institutions in Kenya, the constitution prohibits either gender from constituting more than two-thirds of any elected body; this means women, who are currently severely underrepresented in Kenya's public institutions, must make up at least one-third of all elective public bodies (Government of Kenya, 2010).

Various challenges have been identified as hindering the progression of women to high level leadership positions. Most African cultures value qualities such as "masculinity", which, it is believed, is an important attribute of great leaders, and it is assumed, is only to be found in men, both in community and the workplace (Rowley, Hossain and Barry, 2010). In addition, certain African cultures, at the social level, associate leadership with men and this is apparent from the family level to more complex organizational levels (Pheko, 2009). The result is that there is often a cultural bias against women and their presumed capacity to fulfill leadership roles. Many employers believe that women lack the necessary skills, and work experiences that organizations require for their leaders (Rowley, Hossain and Barry, 2010). This cultural bias can also affect the dynamics of specific organizations, and the way power and influence is distributed within and outside them, again to the detriment of women. In this context, women miss out in organizational politics whereby most decisions are made in informal settings, usually outside the work place, such as men's exclusive clubs (Turk, 2011).

In addition to the higher value placed on male attributes in some African cultures, another factor hindering the advancement and greater equality of women in Kenyan society concerns the unequal distribution of labour within many Kenyan families. Women have been known to carry more family responsibilities than men, and this has also interfered with their progress to leadership positions (Koyuncu and Burke, 2012). Indeed, such factors hindering the advancement of women to leadership positions are also evident within the wider economy and society. According to Tsoka (2010) in many African countries, unequal access to property, discrimination in the labor market, and business-related obstacles hinder women from contributing on an equal basis to their countries'

growth and well-being. The World Bank's World Development Report of 2012 on Gender Equality explains, at length, why, the exclusion of women from economic activity is a missed opportunity for development. The report notes that the majority of foreign aid and development finance pursues social and economic outcomes which are blind to gender considerations.

Major political barriers prevent women from ascending to political leadership at the macro-level where major decisions that affect their lives are made. The high level of illiteracy in Kenyamakes it difficult for women to understand their voting options. In marginalized communities such as the Maasai, the Samburu, and the Turkana tribes in Kenya, young girls are not sent to school, as their fathers believe that it is a waste of time and money to educate a girl, as her only role will be that of a wife (Sang, Masila and Sang, 2012).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is insidious gender bias with regard to the assessment of leadership in organizations, which permeates each step of the process: namely, the identification of criteria, the techniques of assessment adopted and the ways in which women are evaluated on the basis of the data collected (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995).

A survey conducted in Kenya by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development in 2008, showed that only approximately 20 percent of women occupy high level positions in the public sector in Kenya. This prompted the President of Kenya to issue a degree for affirmative action on employment and recruitment of women in the public service. The degree compels the public sector to have at least 30 percent women representation (Government of Kenya, 2008). This degree however, was not legislated, and reports show that the number of women in public service has not reached the 30 per cent mark (Government of Kenya, 2010).

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between leadership skills and proportion of women in top leadership positions.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Synergistic Leadership Theory (STL)

The effective practices highlighted above further demonstrate that women should be themselves and should not feel the pressure to conform to patriarchal practices in order to move forward.

Women's practices of inclusion, collaboration, valuing others and their contributions, and the ability to balance work and family are helpful in breaking barriers to gender equity in educational leadership. In any case, Irby, Brown, Duffy, and Tautman (2002) affirmed, that even though such practices are widely advocated, they are not incorporated in common leadership theories. Synergistic leadership theory (SLT), however, "openly acknowledges the feminine organization as a major component," which lacks in other leadership theories (Irby *et al.,* 2002).

The leadership model by Irby *et al*. (2002) has the following four factors that serve as dynamic interactions: (a) attitudes, beliefs, and values; (b) leadership behavior; (c) external forces; and (d) organizational structure. These four factors have six interaction pairs, and there is no structural hierarchy or linear nuance (Leonard and Jones, 2009). Further, the model contains "both male and female leadership behaviors, a range between closed and open organizational structures, and infinite possibilities of external forces and attitudes, believes, and values" (Irby *et al.,* 2002 p. 312). Leonard and Jones (2009) noted that effective 21st century leadership can be fostered through the gender inclusive framework of STL.

2.2 Empirical Review

Although the world population shows an almost equal representation of both males and females, paid employment is not evenly balanced. Figures from countries all over the world indicate that men are over-represented in manufacturing and construction while women are mostly found in the service industries (Pfeffer, 1993). These figures also show that in almost all industries, women are to be found in the low ranks, while men occupy management positions (Huat and Torrington 1998). Examples given include the United Kingdom, where in a directory listing more than ten thousand decision makers in the country's industry, only two percent were female. Further, a survey in the United Kingdom showed that 99 percent of chief executive officers of the top 100 companies were male. The retail sector, which is female dominated, showed that the chief executive officers were 100% male. By 2005, 99 percent of the top 100 quoted companies were headed by male chief executive officers (Pfeffer, 1993). Scicchitano (2012) examined the male-female pay gap in the managerial workforce in the United Kingdom. The result showed lower rewards for female employees. This difference in rewards, increased as it moved to the upper sections of the whole wage distribution.

Paustian-Underdahl, Walker and Woehr (2014) conducted a study on Gender and Perceptions of Leadership Effectiveness: A Meta-Analysis of Contextual Moderators. Despite evidence that men are typically perceived as more appropriate and effective than women in leadership positions; a recent debate has emerged in the popular press and academic literature over the potential existence of a female leadership advantage. This meta-analysis addressed this debate by quantitatively summarizing gender differences in perceptions of leadership effectiveness across 99 independent samples from 95 studies. Results showed that when all leadership contexts are considered, men and women do not differ in perceived leadership effectiveness. Yet, when otherratings only are examined, women are rated as significantly more effective than men. In contrast, when self-ratings only are examined, men rate themselves as significantly more effective than women rate themselves.

Elmuti, Jia and Davis (2009) conducted a study on the Challenges Women Face in Leadership Positions and Organizational Effectiveness: An Investigation. This study was undertaken to discover working public thoughts about roles of United States women in leadership positions and to test the relationship between managerial leadership styles and organizational effectiveness. A survey of perceptions of leadership roles and effectiveness distributed 700 randomly selected entities from industries in the United States. Findings suggested approximately 50% of women leaders perceive barriers that prevent women for entering management positions and lower

advancement rates for women. This study shows that aspiration in women exists whether or not they take action and motivate themselves to advance for top management positions. However, barriers like discrimination, family-life demands, prejudice, and stereotyping result in fruitlessness in many cases. The majority of women and men felt education and training could increase the preparedness of women for leadership roles. Respondents expressed overwhelming support for a participative leadership style. A positive association existed between participative leadership style and organizational effectiveness.

Young Shin and Bang (2013) conducted a study on the Top Factors That Prohibit WomenFrom Advancing into Leadership Positions at the same Rate as MenFor at least a quarter of a century, women have been entering the professional and managerial ranks of U.S. corporations at about the same rate as men. Yet they remain dramatically underrepresented at senior levels. Women currently constitute only 2.2% of Fortune-500 CEOs and about 15% of these companies' board seats and corporate officer positions. This report analyzed the top factors and made some recommendations to solve them. They assessed impediments for women advancing into senior leadership positions by using an ecological model which takes societal, organizational and individual levels into consideration. They categorized the factors into individual level factors, organizational level factors and societal level factors. Given that such top factors which is holding women to be promoted to top management, companies need to establish integrated strategies which affect change at the societal, organizational and individual levels.

Pew Research Center (2016) research on women and leadershipexplored public attitudes about gender and leadership with a particular focus on leadership in U.S. politics and business. The analysis is based on two new Pew Research Center surveys. The main survey was conducted Nov. 12-21, 2014, among a sample of 1,835 adults – 921 women and 914 men – 18 years of age or older. The survey was conducted by the GfK Group using Knowledge Panel, its nationally representative online research panel. A second survey was conducted Nov. 20-23, 2014, among 1,004 adults, 18 years of age or older, living in the continental United States. This survey was conducted over the telephone (landline and cellular phone) under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International. In addition to the surveys, this report drew on data from a variety of sources to document women in leadership positions in politics (national and state levels) and in business with trends over time. Research findings indicated that for women, the issue of having more female leaders goes far beyond equality in the workplace. Four-in-ten of them (38%) say having more women in top leadership positions in business and government would do a lot to improve the quality of life for all women. An additional 40% of women say this would have at least some positive impact on all women's lives. For their part, men are less convinced that female leadership has such wide-ranging benefits. Only 19% of men say having more women in top leadership positions would do a lot to improve all women's lives, while 43% say this would improve women's lives somewhat.

In a study carried out by Aisenbrey and Bruckner (2008),on career ambitions of men and women from the point of transition from school to the work place showed that even though women have increased their education and labour participation levels, women still earn significantly less than men in most industrialized countries. This was attributed mainly to career choices women make from the time they join the job market. The study showed that in Germany, for example, women

earn an average of 75 percent of what their male counterparts with the same qualifications earned. Structural theorists believe that it is easy to maintain and justify unequal pay for men and women by differentiating work done by men and work done by women (Jirjahn and Gesine, 2006). Women in management positions tend to have less opportunity for development in organizational situations. Also men are likely to have more responsibilities than women at the same level in organizations (Young, 2010). Human capital theory supposes that those who invest in their careers through attaining relevant education, training and skills expect to be rewarded in their workplace through promotions and benefits because they become valuable to the employer. Such skills also determine the person's productivity within that occupation and the subsequent success. Workplace experiences however shows that compared to men, women with equal education and work experience receive lower pay than men. Also compared to men, women who spend equal time on household work are more likely to be penalized and paid less, leading to the women opting to work part-time (Pierce-Brown, 1998).

Hunnes (2012) was of the opinion that the way the labour market operates has a bearing on the progression of women to high level leadership positions. The term "Internal Labor Market" refers to a set of structured employment relationship within an organization, consisting of a set of rules that govern all jobs and their interrelationships. A key feature of internal labor markets is internal promotion. According to Grimshaw and Rubbery (1998) promotion in organizations is often seen as serving two distinct purposes: First, it allocates heterogeneous individuals to appropriate jobs. The matching of workers to jobs usually requires time, as employees invest in human capital and firms collect information on their abilities. Second, promotion provides incentives for lower-level employees, who value both pay and prestige associated with higher ranks in the firm. Economic theories of the labor market are facing challenges, whereby internal and external competitive pressures mutually interact to shape employer strategy and the relative labor market positions of employees (Grimshaw and Rubbery 1998; Hunnes 2012).

H_1: *There is a significant relationship between leadership skills and proportion of women in top leadership positions.*

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Considering the purpose of the study and the philosophical orientation adopted, the research design employed was a survey of state corporations in Kenya. The chosen design was able to offer the researcher the opportunity to establish the relationship between leadership skills and proportion of women in top leadership positions. This was a census study of all State Corporations in Kenya. There were eighty four (84) state corporations in Kenya, according to the official government website as at December, 2009. Fifty of the State Corporations were classified as large corporations (more than three hundred employees), while thirty four were small corporations (less than three hundred employees), as defined by the State Corporations Act (Government of Kenya, 2009). The main focus was on top management of the Corporations, and the study respondents were senior management level staff that included chief executive officers.

Primary data was used in the study. Simple random sampling method was used to select the respondents. To establish the nature and magnitude of the relationships between the variables and to test the hypothesized relationships, the researcher used inferential statistics. The appropriate

tests applied were Pearson's Product Moment Coefficient Correlation (r) and bivariate regression. The relationship between leadership skills and proportion of women in top leadership positions was investigated by testing H_1.

4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

One of the objectives was to determine the relationship between leadership skillsand proportion of women in top leadership positions.

H_1: There is a relationship between leadership skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions

The second objective sought to determine the relationship between Leadership Skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions. Data was obtained using a Likert type scale of 1-5 where 1= not at all, 2 = rarely, 3= sometimes, 4= often and 5= very often. Leadership skills was measured by both organization leadership and personal leadership which included; many women do not apply for jobs in state corporations because they fear the difficulty of the application process, women find it difficult to convince a panel of their talents and experience in an interview situation, women leadership is not taken seriously by other women, the extra effort required to work at higher level is not worth it, if women get promoted, they would lose some of their friends, women think they do not have leadership ability, for women family comes first before career, women think they cannot put up with pressure at a higher level and women do not apply for posts because they underestimate their ability.

Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions focused on the number of women on top leadership positions visa vie the number of their male counterparts. Proportion was measured using the ratio scale. The relationship between Leadership Skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions with R = .430, and the R squared value was .185 at a confidence level of 95 percent. The F values and the corresponding p values were also significant. The findings indicate a positive relationship Leadership Skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions. Therefore, hypothesis $H_1$was accepted. The result shows that Organization leadership influences Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions while Personal leadership is not statistically significant in determining Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.

4.1 Correlation Results for leadership skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions

Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistic was used to test the relationship between leadership skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions. The results in Table 1 above indicates a statistically significant relationship between leadership skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions with r = .086 at p< 0.05. Further analysis presented on Table1, also show that there is a relationship between leadership skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.

Table 1: Correlation Matrix

Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions

.	Pearson Correlation	1.000	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
Leadership skills.	Pearson Correlation	.086*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.542	

4.2 Regression results for leadership skills and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.

The R value was 0.430 indicating that there is a positive relationship between leadership and Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions. The R squared (R^2)value of .185 explains indicates that 18.5 percent of the variation in the Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions can be explained by leadership positions. The remaining 81.51percent is explained by other factors.

Table 2: Model fitness

Indicator	Coefficient
R	0.430
R Square	0. 185
Adjusted R Square	0. 133
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.72125

Table 3 provides the results on the analysis of the variance (ANOVA). The results indicate that the overall model was statistically significant. Further, the results imply that the independent variables are good predictors of performance. This was supported by an F statistic of 3.557and the reported p value (0.021) which was less than the conventional probability of 0.05significance level.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.550	3	1.850	3.557	**0.021**
Residual	24.450	47	.520		
Total	30.000	50			

Personal leadership had a β value of .050 at p = 0.01. The result shows that Personal leadership is not statistically significant in determining Proportion of Women in Top Leadership Positions.

Table 4: Regression of Coefficients

Variable	B	Std. Error	t	Sig
(Constant)	2.632	0.488	0.170	0.000

Organizational leadership	0.136	0.041	0.170	**0.005**
Personal leadership	0.050	0. 162	0.055	**0.759**

5.0 DISCUSSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

This study used top level leaders to point to the causes of low female representation in top-level leadership in state corporations.The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between leadership skills and proportion of women in top leadership positions. The study conclusion on leadership skills proved statistically significant relationship with the proportion of women in high level leadership positions in the state corporations in Kenya.

5.2 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The thesis makes an important contribution in understanding the factors influencing proportion of women in top leadership positions in state corporations in Kenya. Arising from this study, the researcher makes the following suggestions for further research.

Future studies may also use the case study approach, which would add value to understanding the relationship between leadership skillsandproportion of women in top leadership positions.

Case studies may also be used to generate other theories that can be empirically tested, thus enabling general knowledge on proportion of women in top leadership positionsin organization get richer.

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