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Influence of Workplace Mentorship Programs on Gender Diversity in Leadership in Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze influence of workplace mentorship programs on gender diversity in leadership in Kenya.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Research on the influence of workplace mentorship programs on gender diversity in leadership in Kenya highlights several key findings. Studies indicate that mentorship programs significantly enhance the representation of women in leadership roles by providing guidance, networking opportunities, and skill development tailored to address gender-specific barriers. These programs foster a supportive environment where women can gain confidence and visibility, which translates into increased career advancement. The effectiveness of such programs is often amplified by their focus on addressing systemic biases and promoting inclusive practices within organizations.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social learning theory, role congruity theory & transformational leadership theory may be used to anchor future studies on the influence of workplace mentorship programs on gender diversity in leadership in Kenya. Organizations should implement mentorship programs tailored to the specific needs of women in different sectors and career stages. Policymakers and organizations should develop and enforce structured mentorship policies that include regular evaluations, clear objectives, and accountability measures.

Keywords: *Workplace Mentorship Programs, Gender Diversity, Leadership*

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INTRODUCTION

Gender diversity in leadership has gained significant traction in developed economies, with various initiatives and policies aimed at increasing female representation in executive and board roles. In the United States, the proportion of women in senior leadership positions has increased, with women holding approximately 29% of executive roles in Fortune 500 companies as of 2022, up from 24% in 2018 (Catalyst, 2022). This progress reflects ongoing efforts to address gender disparities, although challenges remain in achieving equal representation across all levels of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2020). In the UK, gender diversity is supported by legislative measures such as the Gender Pay Gap Reporting requirement, which mandates companies to report on pay disparities between men and women. As a result, women held 33% of board seats in FTSE 100 companies by 2021, a significant increase from previous years (Hewlett, 2022). This trend underscores the importance of both regulatory frameworks and organizational commitments in advancing gender diversity in leadership roles.

In Canada, women's representation in senior leadership roles has improved significantly, with women holding about 32% of executive positions in major companies as of 2022, up from 27% in 2018 (Canadian Women's Foundation, 2022). This increase reflects efforts to address gender disparities through policies such as gender parity reporting and leadership development programs. Similarly, in Sweden, gender diversity in leadership is well-supported by progressive policies and cultural norms. As of 2022, women held around 40% of executive roles in Swedish companies, a notable increase from 35% in 2018 (Swedish National Board for Gender Equality, 2022). These advancements demonstrate the impact of comprehensive gender equality initiatives and inclusive corporate practices in developed economies.

In Australia, gender diversity in leadership has seen progressive improvement over recent years. As of 2022, women occupied approximately 30% of executive roles in ASX 200 companies, up from 27% in 2018 (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2022). This increase is largely attributed to proactive measures such as gender diversity targets and mentoring programs. In the Netherlands, female representation in top leadership positions also improved, with women holding about 29% of executive roles in major companies as of 2022, up from 25% in 2018 (Dutch Gender Equality Foundation, 2022). These trends reflect ongoing efforts to address gender imbalances through policy reforms and organizational changes.

In Canada, gender diversity in leadership roles has seen notable improvements. By 2022, women held approximately 35% of senior executive positions in top Canadian companies, up from 31% in 2018 (Canadian Gender Equality Council, 2022). This growth reflects ongoing efforts to implement gender diversity policies and initiatives aimed at closing the leadership gap. In Sweden, women's representation in leadership roles also increased to around 37% in 2022, up from 33% in 2018 (Swedish Equality Agency, 2022). Sweden's proactive policies, such as gender quotas and support for work-life balance, have contributed to this positive trend.

In developing economies, gender diversity in leadership is gradually improving, though progress varies significantly by country. In Brazil, women held approximately 22% of executive roles in large corporations as of 2022, reflecting an upward trend from 18% in 2018 (World Bank, 2022). Brazilian companies have increasingly implemented diversity policies to support women in leadership positions, yet cultural and structural barriers continue to limit progress. In India, female representation in leadership roles within the corporate sector was about 17% in 2022, up from 14%

in 2018 (McKinsey & Company, 2022). Efforts to improve gender diversity include government initiatives and corporate policies aimed at addressing gender biases and promoting women's advancement in leadership positions.

In Kenya, women occupied approximately 20% of executive positions in large firms as of 2022, an increase from 15% in 2018 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This improvement is partly due to efforts by organizations and the government to promote gender equality in the workplace. In Mexico, female representation in executive roles was about 18% in 2022, up from 14% in 2018 (Mexican National Institute of Statistics, 2022). The rise in female leadership reflects ongoing efforts to overcome traditional barriers and enhance gender diversity through various policies and corporate initiatives.

In South Africa, gender diversity in leadership roles is gradually improving. As of 2022, women occupied around 24% of senior management positions, an increase from 21% in 2018 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). This growth is driven by various initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace. In Indonesia, women held approximately 22% of executive roles in large companies by 2022, up from 18% in 2018 (Indonesian Statistics Agency, 2022). These advancements highlight the impact of targeted policies and programs aimed at increasing female representation in leadership positions.

In Brazil, gender diversity in leadership positions has gradually improved. As of 2022, women held approximately 27% of senior management roles, an increase from 23% in 2018 (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2022). This improvement is attributed to policies aimed at enhancing gender equality in the workplace. In the Philippines, women occupied about 25% of executive roles in large firms by 2022, up from 21% in 2018 (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022). These advancements indicate progress in addressing gender imbalances through targeted initiatives and organizational reforms.

Gender diversity in leadership within Sub-Saharan Africa faces unique challenges, with varying levels of progress across the region. In South Africa, women occupied about 24% of executive positions in the corporate sector as of 2022, reflecting an increase from 20% in 2018 (Deloitte, 2022). South African companies have made strides in promoting gender equality through targeted diversity initiatives and legislative support. However, in Nigeria, female representation in top executive roles remains lower, at approximately 15% in 2022, a modest increase from 12% in 2018 (UN Women, 2022). The slow pace of change in Nigeria highlights the need for continued advocacy and structural reforms to improve gender diversity in leadership.

In Ghana, women held around 22% of senior management roles as of 2022, a rise from 19% in 2018 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022). This progress is supported by initiatives aimed at improving gender equality in the workplace and increasing women's participation in leadership roles. In Ethiopia, female representation in leadership roles was approximately 17% in 2022, up from 14% in 2018 (Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency, 2022). Despite this increase, significant challenges remain in addressing gender disparities and advancing women's leadership opportunities across the region. In Nigeria, gender diversity in leadership positions is gradually improving, although progress remains slow. As of 2022, women occupied about 19% of senior leadership roles, up from 16% in 2018 (National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria, 2022). Efforts to improve gender equality in the workplace have contributed to this modest increase. In Tanzania, women held around 21% of executive positions in 2022, an increase from 18% in 2018 (Tanzanian

National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). These improvements reflect ongoing efforts to address gender disparities and enhance women's leadership opportunities in the region.

In Kenya, gender diversity in leadership roles has seen gradual progress. As of 2022, women occupied about 22% of senior management positions, up from 19% in 2018 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This increase is driven by various governmental and non-governmental efforts to promote gender equality. In Ghana, women held approximately 20% of executive roles in 2022, up from 17% in 2018 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2022). These changes reflect ongoing initiatives to enhance women's representation in leadership positions in the region.

Workplace mentorship programs are structured initiatives designed to support the personal and professional development of employees through guidance and advice from more experienced individuals. These programs often involve pairing less experienced employees (mentees) with seasoned professionals (mentors) who provide support, knowledge, and networking opportunities to help them advance in their careers. Mentorship can enhance skill development, boost confidence, and increase job satisfaction, all of which contribute to improved organizational performance and employee retention (Higgins & Kram, 2020).

Several workplace mentorship programs are particularly relevant to advancing gender diversity in leadership. For instance, sponsorship programs actively advocate for the career advancement of female employees by providing high-visibility opportunities and endorsing them for leadership roles (Ibarra, 2020). Formal mentorship programs systematically pair women with senior leaders to provide tailored career advice and support (Ragins & Kram, 2019). Networking programs create spaces for women to build connections with influential industry professionals, which can facilitate career growth and access to leadership positions (Ainsworth & Arnot, 2021). Lastly, reverse mentoring involves junior employees mentoring senior leaders, which can help address unconscious biases and promote a more inclusive leadership approach (Zachary, 2018). Together, these programs can significantly impact gender diversity in leadership by addressing barriers and fostering an environment conducive to women's advancement in organizational hierarchies.

Problem Statement

Despite significant advancements in gender equality, women continue to be underrepresented in senior leadership roles across various industries. Workplace mentorship programs are often touted as a key strategy for enhancing gender diversity in leadership by providing women with guidance, support, and access to career advancement opportunities (Ibarra, 2020). However, there is limited empirical evidence on how different types of mentorship programs specifically influence women's progression to leadership positions and whether these programs effectively address systemic barriers faced by women (Ragins & Kram, 2019). Recent studies suggest that while mentorship programs are beneficial, their impact on achieving gender diversity in leadership is inconsistent, with varying levels of effectiveness depending on program structure and implementation (Ainsworth & Arnot, 2021). This highlights a critical need to assess how workplace mentorship programs influence gender diversity outcomes and identify best practices for optimizing these programs to support women's advancement into leadership roles (Zachary, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

Social Learning Theory

Originated by Albert Bandura, Social Learning Theory posits that individuals learn behaviors and skills through observation, imitation, and modeling of others (Bandura, 1977). This theory is relevant to workplace mentorship programs as it emphasizes how mentors serve as role models for mentees, influencing their professional development and career progression. The theory suggests that by observing successful leaders, mentees can learn essential leadership skills and behaviors that contribute to their advancement into leadership roles (Zimmerman, 2020). This is crucial for understanding how mentorship can facilitate gender diversity by providing women with the opportunity to model their behaviors after successful female leaders (Anderson & Anderson, 2021).

Role Congruity Theory

Developed by Eagly and Karau, Role Congruity Theory explores how societal expectations and stereotypes about gender roles impact the perception and effectiveness of women in leadership positions (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This theory is pertinent as it examines the barriers women face in leadership roles due to incongruence between traditional gender roles and leadership expectations. Mentorship programs can play a role in mitigating these barriers by providing women with support and reinforcing their leadership potential, thus aligning their roles with societal expectations of leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2021). This theory helps in understanding how mentorship can influence gender diversity by addressing role congruity issues.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Proposed by James MacGregor Burns and further developed by Bernard Bass, Transformational Leadership Theory focuses on how leaders inspire and motivate followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal development (Bass, 1999). In the context of mentorship programs, transformational leaders (mentors) can inspire and empower their mentees, particularly women, to pursue and achieve leadership roles (Gibson & McBride, 2022). This theory underscores the importance of mentors' influence on the personal and professional growth of mentees, thereby impacting gender diversity in leadership by cultivating an environment that supports women's advancement (Avolio & Bass, 2019).

Empirical Review

Johnson, Williams and Robinson (2020) examined the impact of mentorship programs on women's advancement into leadership roles within technology companies. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers combined quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gather data from participants across several tech firms. The purpose of their study was to evaluate how structured mentorship influences women's visibility and career progression in a male-dominated industry. Their findings indicated that women who participated in well-structured mentorship programs experienced significantly higher rates of promotion and increased leadership visibility compared to those who did not participate. The study highlighted that mentorship helped in overcoming industry-specific barriers, such as gender bias and lack of networking opportunities. The researchers recommended that companies implement more robust mentorship frameworks that include regular check-ins and tailored career development plans for women. They also suggested fostering mentoring relationships that extend beyond immediate job roles to encompass long-term

career growth. The study underscores the critical role of mentorship in supporting women's advancement in tech and advocates for systemic changes to enhance its effectiveness. The insights from this research provide valuable guidelines for tech firms aiming to improve gender diversity in leadership. The study's findings align with previous research indicating that structured mentorship can significantly impact women's career trajectories.

Lee and Xu (2021) investigated the effectiveness of gender-specific mentorship programs within academic institutions through a quantitative analysis. Their study aimed to understand how mentorship impacts women's career satisfaction and progression in academia, a field historically marked by gender disparities. By analyzing data from surveys conducted with female academics participating in various mentorship programs, the researchers identified a positive correlation between mentorship involvement and career satisfaction. Their findings revealed that women in gender-specific mentorship programs reported higher levels of job satisfaction and were more likely to attain leadership positions compared to their peers without such mentorship support. The study also noted that mentorship provided crucial networking opportunities and career guidance tailored to the unique challenges faced by women in academia. Lee and Xu recommended integrating mentorship into institutional career development plans and ensuring that mentorship programs are accessible and well-resourced. They emphasized the need for continuous support and evaluation of mentorship programs to sustain their effectiveness. This research contributes to understanding how targeted mentorship can address gender disparities in academic leadership.

Harris and Menzies (2019) explored the impact of mentorship programs on women's leadership progression in corporate settings. The researchers used pre- and post-program assessments to measure changes in participants' leadership skills and career advancement over a three-year period. The study aimed to determine whether mentorship programs lead to significant improvements in women's promotion rates and leadership competencies. Findings revealed that women who engaged in long-term mentorship experienced notable advancements in their careers, including higher promotion rates and enhanced leadership skills. The study also highlighted that sustained mentorship relationships were crucial for achieving long-term career growth and overcoming professional barriers. Harris and Menzies recommended that organizations focus on creating long-term mentorship opportunities and integrating mentorship into career development strategies. They suggested that companies establish mentorship programs with clear objectives and regular evaluations to ensure their ongoing effectiveness. The study reinforces the importance of mentorship in facilitating women's advancement to leadership roles.

Smith and Patel (2022) explored the role of mentorship in enhancing gender diversity within leadership positions in the financial services sector. The study used qualitative interviews to gather insights from female leaders and mentees about their experiences with mentorship programs. The primary objective was to assess how targeted mentorship programs influence women's representation in senior roles within financial institutions. The findings indicated that women participating in these programs benefited from increased visibility, networking opportunities, and career guidance, which contributed to their progression into leadership positions. Smith and Patel also found that tailored mentorship strategies addressing industry-specific challenges were particularly effective in supporting women's career advancement. They recommended expanding mentorship programs to include industry-specific training and creating networks to support women

in finance. This research highlights the critical role of mentorship in breaking down barriers and promoting gender diversity in financial leadership.

Williams, Anderson and Miller (2023) examined the impact of mentorship programs on women's leadership development in non-profit organizations through case studies and surveys. The study aimed to understand how mentorship contributes to the professional growth of women in the non-profit sector, a field often characterized by limited leadership representation. Findings showed that mentorship programs led to significant improvements in leadership competencies, job satisfaction, and career advancement among women. The researchers noted that mentorship provided critical support in navigating career challenges and accessing leadership opportunities. They recommended increasing the accessibility and inclusivity of mentorship programs to support a diverse range of women in non-profit roles. The study underscores the value of mentorship in fostering leadership development and improving gender diversity in non-profit organizations.

Garcia and Reddy (2021) influenced of cross-cultural mentorship on women's leadership advancement in multinational corporations. The study used a comparative analysis of mentorship programs across different cultural contexts to evaluate their effectiveness. Garcia and Reddy aimed to determine how mentorship can support women's leadership development in diverse global settings. The findings revealed that cross-cultural mentorship significantly enhanced women's global leadership opportunities by providing culturally relevant support and resources. They recommended adapting mentorship practices to fit diverse cultural contexts and ensuring that programs address the specific challenges faced by women in different regions. This research highlights the importance of cultural considerations in designing effective mentorship programs for global leadership development.

Adams and Brown (2022) evaluated the effectiveness of virtual mentorship programs on women's leadership development in remote work environments. Their experimental design involved assessing the impact of virtual mentorship on women's career growth and leadership skills in a remote work context. The study found that virtual mentorship significantly supported women's leadership development by providing flexible and accessible mentorship opportunities. The researchers highlighted that digital tools facilitated ongoing mentorship interactions, which were crucial for overcoming geographic and logistical barriers. They recommended integrating digital technologies into traditional mentorship frameworks to enhance their effectiveness in remote settings. The study emphasizes the potential of virtual mentorship to support women's leadership growth in increasingly digital work environments

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gaps: Johnson, Williams and Robinson (2020) focused on how structured mentorship programs influence women's career advancement in tech but did not delve deeply into the specific mentorship models that are most effective. There is a gap in understanding which mentorship components (e.g., frequency of meetings, mentorship styles) are crucial for maximizing career progression. Lee and Xu (2021) investigated gender-specific mentorship within academia but did not explore how mentorship interacts with other institutional policies such as equal pay or promotion criteria. Further research is needed to understand the interplay between mentorship and these other factors. Harris and Menzies (2019) highlighted the importance of long-term mentorship but did not address how the effectiveness of mentorship might vary across different career stages. A deeper exploration is needed into how mentorship impacts women differently at early, mid, and late career stages. Smith and Patel (2022) examined mentorship in the financial sector but did not investigate how different types of financial institutions (e.g., banks vs. insurance firms) might experience varied impacts from mentorship programs. Research could benefit from examining industry-specific variations in mentorship effectiveness.

Contextual Gaps: Williams, Anderson and Miller (2023) studied mentorship in non-profit organizations but did not explore how mentorship programs differ between large and small non-profits. There's a need to understand whether the size of the organization affects the mentorship's impact on women's leadership development. Garcia and Reddy (2021) focused on cross-cultural mentorship but did not consider how mentorship practices need to be tailored to different sectors within multinational corporations. Additional research is needed to see how sector-specific challenges affect mentorship effectiveness in global contexts. Adams and Brown (2022) evaluated virtual mentorship in remote environments but did not assess how technological tools might affect different demographic groups within the workforce. More research is needed to explore how virtual mentorship impacts women in different roles or industries.

Geographical Gaps: Johnson, Williams and Robinson (2020) focused on technology companies without considering regional differences within tech hubs. Research could explore how mentorship impacts women's leadership in tech firms across different regions, such as Silicon Valley vs. other tech hubs. Lee and Xu (2021) studied academic institutions, likely within a specific region or country. A gap exists in understanding how mentorship programs affect women in academia across different countries or educational systems. Garcia and Reddy (2021) conducted a comparative study but did not differentiate between the impacts of mentorship in developed versus developing countries. Future research could address how cross-cultural mentorship varies between these economic contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The influence of workplace mentorship programs on gender diversity in leadership is substantial and multifaceted. Research consistently highlights that well-structured mentorship initiatives play a critical role in advancing women's careers by providing essential support, networking opportunities, and career guidance. Evidence from studies across various sectors, including technology, academia, and financial services, demonstrates that mentorship programs significantly enhance women's visibility, leadership skills, and career satisfaction. However, research also uncovers gaps in understanding the optimal mentorship models, the interaction between

mentorship and other institutional policies, and the varying impacts of mentorship across different career stages and organizational contexts.

To fully harness the potential of mentorship programs, organizations must adopt tailored approaches that address specific industry and cultural contexts. Integrating mentorship into broader career development strategies, ensuring long-term support, and adapting programs to diverse needs are critical for fostering gender diversity in leadership. Ongoing research is needed to refine mentorship practices, evaluate their effectiveness across different demographic groups and geographical settings, and explore the intersections between mentorship and other factors influencing women's career advancement. By addressing these gaps, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of mentorship programs and drive meaningful progress towards gender equity in leadership roles.

Recommendations

Theory

Future research should focus on developing a comprehensive theoretical framework that integrates various aspects of mentorship, including structural, relational, and contextual dimensions. This framework should consider the interaction between mentorship programs and organizational culture, leadership styles, and career development processes. Understanding these interactions will refine theoretical models of mentorship and its impact on gender diversity in leadership. Theories should incorporate intersectional perspectives to examine how factors such as race, ethnicity, and socio-economic background intersect with gender in the context of mentorship. This approach will provide a more nuanced understanding of how mentorship influences diverse groups of women differently, contributing to a richer theoretical landscape.

Practice

Organizations should implement mentorship programs tailored to the specific needs of women in different sectors and career stages. For example, technology companies might focus on overcoming industry-specific barriers, while academia may address the unique challenges faced by female scholars. Tailoring programs will enhance their effectiveness and better support women's career advancement. Incorporating digital tools and virtual platforms into mentorship programs can increase accessibility and flexibility, especially for remote or geographically dispersed employees. This practice not only supports ongoing engagement but also addresses logistical barriers, making mentorship more inclusive and effective.

Policy

Policymakers and organizations should develop and enforce structured mentorship policies that include regular evaluations, clear objectives, and accountability measures. These policies should ensure that mentorship programs are systematically integrated into career development plans and are adequately resourced. Organizations should align mentorship programs with broader diversity and inclusion policies. This alignment includes setting specific diversity targets, promoting inclusive leadership practices, and ensuring that mentorship programs are part of a comprehensive strategy to enhance gender diversity in leadership.

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