Exploring Gender Equity in Tanzania- A Comprehensive Study on the Need for Inclusive Practices in Selected Major Media Houses in Tanzania

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender equity in Tanzanian print media, particularly focusing on women's leadership. Utilizing a qualitative approach with an interpretivist paradigm, the explanatory case study design includes 12 in-depth interviews. The research unveils the impact of Stereotype Theory on employment promotion policies, emphasizing challenges related to family life and child-rearing in career advancement. Challenges in adhering to maternity leave regulations are identified, hindering the balance between family planning and career progression for female journalists. The study highlights subjective performance evaluations, favoritism concerns, and a lack of transparency in

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promotion policies, contributing to gender inequity. A glass ceiling is noted at middle and senior management levels. Recommendations include implementing supportive structures for working mothers, revising promotion policies for transparency, and fostering a workplace culture that actively promotes inclusivity. The aim is to create a more equitable and inclusive media industry in Tanzania.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic tapestry of Tanzania's media landscape, entities such as IPP Media Group, The Tanzania Standard (TSN), and Mwananchi Communications Limited wield significant influence, shaping narratives and reflecting societal values (Baptister 2022). As the pillars of information dissemination, these media organizations play a crucial role in not only informing but also influencing public opinion. Amidst this influence, a critical concern emerges — the noticeable gender disparities that persist within their structures and content (Mason 2023). Tanzania, a culturally diverse nation in East Africa, has witnessed significant advancements in various sectors, including media and communication (Küng et al., 2008). As the media industry plays a pivotal role in shaping public opinion, influencing societal norms, and reflecting the diversity of voices, it becomes imperative to critically examine the state of gender equity within Tanzania's media companies (John 2020).

Historically, the media industry worldwide has been characterized by gender imbalances, with women often underrepresented or marginalized in various roles (Corsbie-Massay and Wheatly 2022). Tanzania, despite progress in other sectors, grapples with similar challenges, as evidenced by a noticeable gender gap in media employment, decision-making positions, and overall representation (Factsheet, 2023). The landscape of Tanzania's media industry is predominantly male-dominated, with a disproportionate number of men occupying key roles such as editors, news directors, and executives (Media Council of Tanzania (MCT) Report, 2019). This underrepresentation of women not only hinders the industry's potential for comprehensive storytelling but also perpetuates gender stereotypes and reinforces societal norms that may contribute to gender inequality.

Additionally, the media has a significant impact on molding public opinions and perspectives regarding gender-related matters. According to (Trappel 2019), distorted portrayals and stereotypes in media materials can worsen pre-

existing disparities, shaping societal perceptions and perpetuating gender norms that constrain opportunities for women. Rectifying these imbalances is not solely a question of social equity but is also imperative for cultivating a media environment that is inclusive and reflective of the diverse nature of Tanzanian society.

The article aimed to delve into the various dimensions of gender equity in Tanzania's media companies, examining factors such as workforce representation, analyzing the distribution of men and women across different roles within media organizations, from entry-level positions to top leadership roles, content analysis by scrutinizing media content for gender biases, stereotypes, and the representation of diverse voices to understand how media narratives contribute to or challenge existing gender norms, and barriers to advancement by investigating the challenges faced by women in the media industry, such as discriminatory practices, limited access to professional development opportunities, and cultural barriers that hinder their career progression (Dwifatma 2021).

This comprehensive article explores the gender landscape of Tanzanian media giants, IPP, The TSN, and Mwananchi Communications Limited, examining the imperative for inclusive practices. Grounded in sociological perspectives, the Stereotype Theory posits a critical lens through which gender roles and biases prevalent in media are scrutinized Within these organizations, ingrained stereotypes may shape perceptions of women's roles, potentially influencing career trajectories and opportunities (Solomon 2014). By unraveling and challenging such stereotypes, this article aims to pave the way for a more equitable media landscape in which individual capabilities, rather than preconceived notions, drive career advancements.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In parallel, the Liberal Feminism Theory forms a foundational framework for understanding the dynamics within these media corporations. Advocating for gender equality through legal and societal reform, liberal feminism emphasizes

dismantling barriers that limit women's opportunities (Gallagher 2013). In the context of Tanzanian media, this theory prompts an examination of existing policies and practices. It calls for interventions that ensure equal access to promotions, address subjective evaluations, and foster an environment where women can thrive professionally. By aligning with liberal feminist principles, these media organizations can contribute to the broader societal shift towards gender inclusivity, not only within their confines but also as agents of change within the Tanzanian media landscape (True 2003).

Furthermore, the Equity Theory provides a lens through which to assess the fairness of employment policies and practices within these media entities. This theory posits that individuals seek fairness in their work relationships, and inequities can lead to dissatisfaction and reduced motivation (King and Sheffrin 2002). In applying the Equity Theory, this article scrutinizes promotion policies and career advancement opportunities, evaluating if they align with principles of fairness and equal treatment. By addressing any identified disparities, these organizations can create a more conducive and motivating work environment, fostering gender equity and propelling the media industry toward a future characterized by inclusive practices.

On a lighter note, (Padovani and Bozzon 2020) argue that organizational practices are based on assessing the effectiveness of existing gender-related policies and initiatives within media companies, identifying areas for improvement, and best practices that promote inclusivity.

By undertaking a comprehensive article on gender equity in Tanzania's media companies, this article seeks to provide insights that can inform policy changes, promote awareness, and inspire concrete actions toward fostering a more inclusive, representative, and gender-sensitive media landscape in the country. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to the creation of an environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, can participate and thrive in the media industry, shaping narratives that reflect the rich diversity of Tanzanian society.

3. METHODOLOGY

This article embraced the interpretivism paradigm, rooted in the understanding of a socially constructed reality shaped by subjective human experiences and meanings. The interpretivism paradigm proponents are; Max Weber, Alfred Schutz, and Edmund Husserl in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Weber's major works were published in the early 1900s, and he was active during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Mid-20th century Schutz's key works were developed in the mid-20th century, particularly in the 1930s and 1940s. Late 19th to early 20th century. Husserl's foundational work in phenomenology emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Putnam and Banghart 2017).

Rejecting an objective and distant stance, the research sought to explore and interpret theories related to gender equity at IPP Media, TSN, and Mwananchi Communications Limited. The interpretivist approach was chosen to unravel the complex and subjective nature of gender dynamics in media companies and their societal implications (Omidi et al., 2022), aligning with the global shift towards recognizing diverse perspectives.

A qualitative research approach was chosen due to the scarcity of existing studies on women's leadership in Tanzanian media. Qualitative methods, renowned for their flexibility and depth, allowed for a nuanced exploration of gender equity (Teherani 2015). The article adopts an explanatory case study research design, facilitating an in-depth examination of factors influencing gender equity in Tanzanian media. This design suits causal investigations, focusing on understanding the reasons behind observed phenomena (Alase 2017).

The target population comprised employees from three influential Tanzanian media companies: IPP Media, Mwananchi Communications Limited, and The Tanzania Standard Newspaper. These organizations were selected based on their significant influence within the media landscape.

The study was conducted in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania's economic hub, where the majority of media companies are situated. The diverse media landscape, including radio, TV stations, newspapers, and online sources, adds depth to the study.

The study focused on print media companies, conducting 12 in-depth interviews, with a proposed sample size of 12 respondents determined by information saturation (Saunders, 2017). Purposive sampling targeted journalists and media leaders based on positions, ensuring a representative gender mix in each group (Tenny, Brannan, Brannan, & Sharts-Hopko, 2022).

Interviews were conducted using schedules with questions tailored to research objectives, allowing for interaction and prompt data collection. Respondents included workers from TSN, IPP, and MCL. Documentary reviews scrutinized books, journals, and relevant documents in media house libraries, enriching the study with existing qualitative data.

In essence, the interpretivist paradigm emphasizes the subjective nature of human experiences and meanings, allowing for a nuanced exploration of gender equity in Tanzanian media. The qualitative research methods employed align with interpretivist principles, offering depth and understanding in uncovering the complexities of gender dynamics in media organizations. The focus on print media companies is justified by their significance within the media landscape, providing a concentrated exploration of gender equity issues within influential entities.

Thematic analysis was employed for qualitative data, involving transcription, familiarization, and coding using MAXQDA software. Content analysis is applied to reviewed documents, presenting findings through narrations aligned with specific objectives. This methodology sought to contribute empirically grounded insights into gender equity within Tanzanian media, aligning with the scientific rigor advocated by the positivist paradigm.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This article delves into the intricate dynamics of gender equity within Tanzanian media organizations, specifically focusing on IPP Media, Mwananchi Communications Limited, and The Tanzania Standard Newspaper. The research is framed within the interpretivist paradigm, aligning with the global discourse on gender equity prevalent in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

This comprehensive study explores the multifaceted challenges faced by female journalists within Tanzanian media organizations, specifically focusing on IPP Media, TSN, and Mwananchi Communications Limited. The intricate interplay between gender dynamics, workplace policies, and organizational culture becomes evident through the narratives of respondents, providing a nuanced understanding of the barriers hindering gender equity in the media industry.

Stereotype Theory: The narratives expose the pervasive influence of Stereotype Theory within these newsrooms. The expectations and stereotypes surrounding women's roles, particularly about family life and child-rearing, emerge as significant factors impacting career advancement. Interviews highlight the existence of corporate regulations dictating specific intervals for maternity leave, reinforcing societal norms around women's reproductive choices (Dixon 2019, Kiprotich and Chang'orok 2017) posits that stereotypes also manifest in newsroom assignments, with the perception that mothers may be less capable of handling high-profile tasks, thereby limiting their career progression. This lens offers insights into how ingrained gender norms shape policies and assignments, affecting the professional trajectory of female journalists.

Equity Theory: The article uncovers disparities in employment promotion policies, revealing subjective performance evaluations that rely on perceptions, industriousness, and personal relationships. Respondents expressed concerns about favoritism, emphasizing the incongruence between formal regulations and actual promotion practices (Zelditch 1981). The Equity Theory proves relevant as it highlights the discontent arising from perceived unfairness in promotions. The dissatisfaction stemming from unclear promotion criteria and perceived bias underscores the importance of aligning promotion policies with merit-based principles to foster a more equitable work environment.

Liberal Feminism Theory: Through the lens of Liberal Feminism Theory, the article elucidates the overarching need for systemic reforms. Interviewees articulate the call for transparent conflict resolution mechanisms, fair promotion policies, and a reconsideration of workplace structures hindering the career progression of female journalists (Steeves 1987). The emphasis on empowering women through training programs, mentorship, and addressing unconscious bias aligns with liberal feminist principles seeking gender equality through systemic changes. The narratives underscore the significance of dismantling barriers and fostering an inclusive workplace culture where women can excel based on merit, education, and experience.

In essence, these intertwined theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the challenges impeding gender equity within Tanzanian media organizations,

offering valuable insights for both academic discourse and practical interventions.

Study findings indicated that family life and child-rearing have affected the rate of career advancement. The researcher wanted to know whether there are cases when female employees are denied maternity leave, in which the overwhelming majority of respondents argued that they had never been denied leave, commenting, however, that the regulations are very clearly stipulated for a woman to seek maternity leave every three years; otherwise, if she gets pregnant before that period, she would be guaranteed leave by her employer based on the Excuse Duty (ED) issued by the medical doctor. The respondent argued that:

> *There are procedures set out by the corporation that a woman should have maternity leave after every three years. Baby spacing should be respected. In case a woman messes up, she can still be allowed to be out of duty by considering the directives issued to her employer by a doctor. I have never had a denial of maternity leave. Some specific guidelines and procedures favor pregnant women at our corporation (Interview, March 6, 2023).*

One of the respondents noted that as an extension of the challenge with workplace flexibility, the interval of motherhood, in particular, is one in which the newsroom lacks an adequate support structure to retain talent, expounding that news editors unconsciously choose not to assign mothers to more high-profile assignments over the fear that they may not be able to deliver or would make demands for accommodation facilities. He commented that:

> *News media is an industry in which many professionals, especially on-air talent, work contracts to contract most working mothers lack the power to make family-friendly demands when they see their next set of contract negations around the corner (Interview, March 6, 2023).*

The respondent said despite having the regulations for maternity leave, female journalists bear the brunt of losing well-paying assignments such as covering the parliamentary deliberations or State House news due to the nature of their health status, adding that news editors may not reveal that kind of discrimination but may be compelled to assign men on major duties, leaving women to cover light stories, which could not be demanding.

4.1 Employment Promotion Policies and Gender Equity

Nine out of the twelve interviewed respondents noted that news organizations have subjective performance evaluations, in which perceptions, industriousness, and intimate relationships determine whether a journalist deserves to be promoted. Subjective evaluations leave decision-makers vulnerable to unconscious bias, which can result in less favorable evaluations of members of historically underrepresented groups compared to members of a dominant group, even when controlling for competence and track record. The respondents noted that as long as subjectivity persists in performance assessment practices, even a general meritocratic culture is not enough to grapple with the challenges of gender inequity. One of the respondents said:

> *Employment promotion policy is not very clear for private media corporations. I have been working for this company for over six years without being considered for promotion, but I have witnessed new entrants fresh from colleges being promoted and fully employed within six months. Therefore, favoritism is the order of the day. The regulations are well stipulated in papers that an employee should be promoted every four years based on the requirements of the key performance indicators (KPIs), but I normally wonder why are these KPIs friendly to some writers and not me. (Interview, March 7, 2023).*

Another respondent said promotion policies abide by gender and capability. If there are chances for promotion, a capable woman should be sought to fill them but by considering her level of education/merits and experiences, noting that the corporation has in-house special training for journalists and that women are more encouraged to pursue these courses. She added that facilitating the resolution of work and family plays a major role in augmenting gender equity in staffing patterns; a better work-life balance also helps to increase staff motivation.

4.2 Measures to Encourage Women to Hold Top Decision-Making Positions

When asked to state the measures that should be put in place to ensure that women hold top positions in newsrooms, employees from the three selected media corporations had diverse views. One of the respondents said there should

not be a one-size-fits-all solution, which means there is no universal mode of gender equity that accounts for the complexity and diversity of an organization. He commented that:

> *Leaders must call for systems of conflict resolution and problem-solving that address their particular culture, power dynamics, and patterns of daily interactions that contribute to gender inequity. Leaders must establish a strong public and internal stand against workplace discrimination and harassment, be the first in line for training push for other initiatives, and chair the committees tasked with solving the gender inequity problems (Interview, March 7, 2023).*

He pointed out that there should be a means of promoting talented and deserving women into leadership ranks, which may have a double benefit of improving equity, expounding that there should also be well-developed mentoring and training programs that can help enlist, retain and promote women journalists of color and support the inclusion of candidates from diminished socioeconomic means through alternative pay incentives, flexible schedules, and public transportation subsidies.

Another measure suggested by the majority of respondents was that, alongside setting and sharing metrics for the representation of women in news stories and newsrooms, leaders should apply a focused, data-driven approach to assess relationships among variables and detect patterns and trends of gender inequity to inform interventions. This may include more regular reviews of dynamics such as performance support bias. She commented that:

> *There is a need for practical measures. The boss should always want to see women's attitudes before considering them for promotion. Their exposure to new technology after online training, such as Women News-World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), places female journalists in a position of being promoted. However, interventions on how they reach the top should have parameters aimed at responding to diverse mind-boggling questions concerning the mistreatment of women in newsrooms, such as the following: Are female journalists being assigned less attractive, less impactful, or gender-stereotyped topics? Or, is there performance reward bias: Are even identical ratings more likely to translate into promotions for males (especially for positions of leadership and authority)? (Interview, March 7, 2023)*

When asked to state the measures that should be put in place to grapple with inequity, one of the respondents noted that while it can be unnerving to grapple with the major systemic issues facing women, leaders can signal their intent and commitment by addressing the little things that shape inequity and keep every employee from doing their best work. She noted that:

> *Measures are encouraged. There is no explicit effort to empower women. Women do push themselves to hold plum posts. There are no practical efforts made by any boss in the newsroom. In ensuring gender equity, leaders should consider having employee surveys to understand little, such as the following: Are there sufficient lactation rooms for new mothers? Is the dress code, uniform, or safety gear expected of women comfortable and truly safe, given their smaller average height and weight? Are temperature settings in the workplace comfortable for all (most workplaces are adjusted to men's metabolic rates)? The work of addressing inequity can be multifaceted and extensive, but these signify ways to gesture interest and intent and simply get started (Interview, March 6, 2023).*

4.3 Despite Improvements, Women fail to Hold Plum Positions

When asked why women do not make it to the top decision-making organs despite improvements in levels of education, 10 out of the twelve 12 respondents noted that the ability of women to juggle career and family responsibilities is to blame for their mistrusted performance, explaining that long and added working hours and the demanding nature of the career stifle their progress. She commented that:

> *Media careers are very demanding, with long working hours, frequent travel, and demanding assignments, which make it hard to balance family and work. In the previous year, many separations between couples were rife because men hardly trusted their spouse's absence from their homes over soaring media duties. This has contributed to a common stereotype that most women in the media are single, divorced, and have loose morals (Interview, March 7, 2023).*

The respondent noted that unequal chances for promotions in newsrooms are to blame for the absence of women in the top decision-making organs, hinting that many newsrooms lack clear guidelines on promotions and hence discrimination against women because of unfair promotions. Career progression is lengthy because of gender bias, and although women voice up, management rarely takes them seriously.

More than half of the respondents noted that the media is still a man's domain and that women are still stigmatized as people with loose moral values, especially if they hold top positions. In addition, so long as promotions just pass women, it was palpable that they could easily be compromised to get promotions men misuse and coerce women into secret affairs to have them promoted. She noted that the idea that women can be strong and effective leaders is not reflected in the reality of women's status in the news media. One of the female respondents commented,

> *There is oppressive male dominance syndrome in newsrooms. People think women have a lot to do, which might stifle them from fulfilling the set goals. If a woman is pregnant, she is rarely given demanding duties, and this is done without her consultation when, in fact, she might be in a better position to deliver. News coverage that involved trips was hardly given to me when I was pregnant, while in fact, I knew I was able to work even much harder. I was mostly assigned to soft news coverage but I was denied a chance to argue about my capability due to male dominance. Women are looked down upon by men who always think they (women) discuss their trivial issues. In a group, men think women are activists, just pushing to pursue their rights. I fail to voice up for fear of being seen as a radical feminist (Interview, March 9, 2023).*

Explaining further why most women do not hold plum positions in the print media, one of the respondents noted that having many qualified female journalists does not guarantee to see them on top because many of them find print media very demanding and tiresome, adding that women would prefer being Public Relations Officer and marketing managers to clinging to print journalism, which they think has many hurdles in meeting the set life goals.

When asked about their relationships with male co-workers, 7 out of the 8 respondents interviewed female employees noted that men were supportive of young women in the media, expounding that it was much easier to seek assistance from a man than a woman in the newsroom in case one gets difficulties in writing.

One of the respondents, however, noted that men were overly accused of asking for sexual favors, something that inhibited female journalists' opportunities to grow. She added that even when a man could fully know that a woman is in serious intimate affairs with someone else, he could still keep on prodding for the favor, thanks to social media whose evidence can easily expose unethical men before the law.

She commented that:

> *I have been in the newsroom for the past 12 years. In the first place, my relationship with men was not that rosy. There were stubborn cock-eyed men. They kept on asking for intimate affairs over and over while they fully knew I was already married. I am now aged, and with my position as a senior reporter, few men could take the trouble to approach me (Interview, March 9, 2023).*

The respondent said, that reinforcing the challenges presented by the structure of the work itself, had forced many newsrooms to embody and value an always-on culture, where journalists think of their role as a calling and willingly work around the clock to break news, deliver remarkable stories, and shape the next news cycle.

Commenting on how women feel after being trapped in gender inequity, the respondent noted that the challenge put forward by the structure of the work itself is to blame for what stifles women from advancing, noting that many newsrooms embody and value an always-on culture, especially this time when digital journalism is at stake, where writers think of their roles as a calling and willingly work around the clock to break news, deliver outstanding stories, and shape the next news cycle.

He added that doing so may tip over into a "masculine" culture, in which people stay up all night to file stories, hop on a plane at a moment's notice to track a story, or refuse to take off at night or on the weekend because they fear missing the next big story, illuminating that these

cultural elements reinforce the barriers identified regarding workplace flexibility retention of female employees.

4.4 Glass Ceiling

The article identified glass ceilings for women in three media corporations: IPP Media, TSN, and Mwananchi Communications Limited. Most commonly, these invisible barriers were found at middle and senior management levels. At least these companies surveyed have an established company-wide policy on gender equity. There are more women in top positions as news editors, managing directors, and human resource managers.

The researcher noted that female journalists in the surveyed companies are downgraded in terms of both their low participation and the terms in which they are employed. The second of these indicates that men hold most of the full-time regular jobs in these print media corporations. Because of higher overall participation, men also hold most of the jobs by all other terms of employment. One of the male journalists noted the following:

> *Women in journalism do show more of an advantage in pay scales, which suggests that they may be paid similar to or even higher than men in some newsroom jobs. The corporations surveyed make this finding tentative. One of the surveyed companies shows little inclination to adopt policies that would advance women in the profession (Interview, March 9, 2023).*

The respondent argued that the senior management level represents the glass ceiling for Tanzanian journalists, signaling a point beyond which women have not advanced in any number. He said, however, that in some occupational levels, women are near parity with or even surpass men, e.g., in middle management where women are more than half, especially at the TSN. While scant data do not allow for a clear determination of salary along gender lines, there is the suggestion of gender parity at some occupational levels. In addition, most of the news companies surveyed have adopted policies favorably to gender equity. One of the respondents commented about the way the glass ceiling is perceived:

> *Yes, there is a glass ceiling. Our company has a limit on the number of women to get promoted to higher position. They claim to have not more than two or three women holding decision-making titles. They have limitations in promoting women. It is very illogical. A leader should have subordinates notwithstanding their gender (Interview, March 6, 2023).*

In an interview with one of the respondents who held a senior position, it was noted that female journalists have somewhat surpassed men at the TSN, representing higher percentages at most levels of the profession, explaining that the lack of a glass ceiling for women reflects progressive gender policies in the nation's news company, a mirror of women's advancement in other areas of society. Most women are employed in full-time jobs at the TSN, signifying relatively higher job security and stability than men experience. Women journalists have achieved much in their efforts to secure fair treatment and equity. The newsrooms that have responded to women's pushes for equity stand as examples to other media houses surveyed.

The findings draw similarity to the study conducted by Curran (2012) which contends that fairly promoted individuals have legitimacy and power within the various areas of the organization that determine the background rules and make the many decisions that accumulate to define professional growth, insisting that they can speak the language in the currency of the community, noting that they derive their influence not from their formal position but from their ability to link individual and systemic problem-solving.

Regarding the benefits accrued from considering gender equity, the study findings revealed that at least both men and women have now been in a position to raise income. By having news covered without biases, every qualified journalist is entitled to allowances and leeway for promotions based on the quality of the news content.

Indeed, feminist scholars have come up with the notion that gender is mostly part of a member of social relations that they blend in any society and is never separated from other social relations, such as race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, and many other social identities (Young 2017). Even though the academic trend has put significant emphasis on differences among individuals in their local contexts, there is proof that feminists globally do manage to find

common ground. Starting from the crooked understanding of gender and its intersection with other social elements, feminist scholars push to decipher the reasons that lead to women's peripheral and inferior status and try to provide suggestions and solutions to improve it by theorizing knowledge contrary to that traditionally legitimatized the male-dominated world (Valentine 2007).

Sung (2013) posits that a combination of masculine and feminine discourse features while doing leadership is represented most favorably in the American television show '*The Apprentice.*' Nevertheless, this combination of leadership styles was judged more positively when it was done by men. Rantama (2018) had the same results since they concluded that feminine traits and discourse features are represented negatively in; leadership positions held by women. These judgments might be some of the reasons resulting in the famous glass ceiling and affecting women's careers.

In suggesting the way forward to improve the situation, (Shames 2017) call on the need to expand the recruitment, hiring, and retention of employees by considering fairness based on the capabilities of every qualified individual. The commission posits that promoting talented and deserving women into leadership ranks may have a double benefit of improving gender equity. Newsrooms with female leadership, according to the commission, tend to have more women on staff. Developing mentoring and training programs helps to enlist and promote women journalists who exude extraordinary performance.

The Management Center at Northwestern University, U.S., through its longitudinal research, claims that current media companies have to dwell on innovation and being constructive, instead of defensive, to survive and fare in the global evolving media environment. They also point out that, the key to successful innovation and cultivating constructive organizational culture is to set up a creative workforce. In their studies, they have revealed that media companies that enjoy growth from innovation are more likely to have a different set of leaders, which means more women and minorities, at the top (Schermerhorn and Bachrach 2023).

In a six-year research, the project leaders at the Media Management Center came up with the declaration to tie the role of women in leadership to the profitability of media companies. Most of the top innovative companies today have women in very senior positions for their talents and to ensure those companies are abiding by the needs of their women consumers (Ross 2024).

Scholars at the Media Management Center aver that women have an advantage because their leadership style tends to be more inclusive and responsive, (rather than hierarchical), which nurtures talents together, and embraces new ideas and innovation. Women journalists as newcomers to leadership positions also have another advantage: they are not as engrained in the conventional way things have always been done, which often cannot meet the challenge proposed by the significant change going on in the media industry (Schermerhorn 2011).

Regrettably, (Gallagher 2001) points out that, some media companies are defensive and not innovative enough to meet the market challenge, which is also related to their unwillingness to bring women to the leadership cabinet.

To benefit from the talents of top women, media companies are supposed to make a commitment to increasing women in management and avoid relegating them to departments outside the line of succession. To retain women employees and ensure there are enough women in the working channel, newsrooms should have favorable work and family policies (Cai 2008).

Notwithstanding the encounters women around the world face every day, women leaders in the most recent 2022 study by the Media Management Center are optimistic about women's contributions to the future of the media and the resulting positive changes that women in the media will come up with to all of society. A survey by the International Women Media Foundation on women journalists worldwide established this positiveness.

The conclusion one can draw from these findings is that, the article aimed to contribute valuable insights into gender equity within Tanzanian media, acknowledging the complexities of societal norms, workplace dynamics, and the evolving landscape of gender equality. Through in-depth interviews, thematic analysis, and a qualitative research approach, this article strove to offer empirically grounded recommendations

for fostering a more inclusive and equitable media industry in Tanzania.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDA-TIONS

The article reveals a nuanced perspective on maternity leave within Tanzanian media organizations. While regulations exist, the adherence to guidelines and the balance between family planning and career advancement present challenges. Female journalists encounter difficulties in securing prestigious assignments during motherhood. To address this, a more supportive structure that accommodates the unique needs of working mothers is essential. The findings expose subjective performance evaluations, fostering concerns about favoritism and hindering career progression. The article emphasizes the necessity of a meritocratic culture and transparent promotion policies. Recognition of gender and capability, coupled with training programs, can contribute to a more equitable work environment. There is a clear call for organizations to revisit their promotion processes and ensure fairness.

Diverse perspectives on measures to enhance women's representation highlight the need for customized solutions. Conflict resolution systems, mentorship programs, and data-driven interventions are recommended. Leadership plays a pivotal role, with a call for proactive initiatives to champion gender equity. Regular assessments of dynamics such as performance support bias are essential to inform targeted interventions. The article uncovers multifaceted challenges hindering women's progression, including the perceived inability to balance career and family responsibilities. Glass ceilings persist at middle and senior management levels, raising questions about the effectiveness of existing gender policies. Societal perceptions, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices contribute to the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles.

To foster gender equity within Tanzanian media organizations, it is imperative to implement supportive structures that specifically address the challenges faced by working mothers. This involves the establishment of flexible working arrangements and accessible childcare facilities, acknowledging the unique needs of women navigating both professional and family responsibilities. Additionally, a critical review and revision of existing promotion policies are essential. Transparency and merit-based evaluations should be prioritized to eliminate subjective biases that hinder career progression. The introduction of mentorship programs and conflict resolution mechanisms can further contribute to a fair and inclusive professional environment, ensuring that gender-related challenges are promptly addressed. Regular gender equity assessments, with a focus on performance support bias and career advancement, will serve as a vital tool for organizations to continuously refine their strategies and practices.

Looking ahead: fostering a workplace culture that embraces inclusivity and diversity is paramount. Organizations should actively promote an environment that values and recognizes the contributions of women in the media industry. Employee surveys can play a crucial role in identifying and addressing specific challenges related to work-life balance, facilities, and overall workplace comfort. Embracing innovation and creativity involves actively promoting women to leadership positions, thus contributing to the success and vibrancy of media organizations. A commitment to fair recruitment, hiring, and retention practices is fundamental, recognizing and leveraging the capabilities of all qualified individuals should be the way to go. A steady assessment and adaptation of policies necessary to respond effectively to the evolving needs of women in the media industry by ensuring sustained progress toward gender equity should be embraced.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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