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Efforts towards Gender Mainstreaming Policies and Performance of Women Officers in Kenya Police Service in Nairobi County

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Abstract

This paper looked at the efforts towards gender mainstreaming policies and performance of women officers in Kenya police service in Nairobi County. In relation to this, it examined the laws, policies and practices, organizational culture, gender bias, and gender sensitization in service delivery to female police officers. Survey research design of descriptive nature was employed. The study target population was 1200 police officers from 10 police posts in Nairobi County. The respondents comprised of 290 senior officers, gender relevant government officials from Nairobi and a section of the public. The primary data was collected using closed and open-ended questionnaires. Descriptive

and inferential analyses were used while carrying out this research. Coming to the main questions of the study, it is possible to conclude that there is a professionally positive and statistically significant relation between institutional legal framework, gender discrimination, and community perception and the performance of Kenyan policewomen. Thus, the conclusion with following the main findings of research was that, gender mainstreaming should be considered as efficient tools to improve the performance and activity of women within the sphere of national security. The main recommendations was Compulsory Gender Polity Training.

Keywords: Gender, Gender Mainstreaming, Women Officers, Police Service, Institutional Culture, Gender Discrimination

1. Introduction

The current researcher will examine the gender mainstreaming policy, as well as the effectiveness of women police officers in the KNPS in Kenya. Although certain milestones have been archived towards equity in many organizations of police, women performance in the police has highly been criticized in comparison with male counterparts. The women officers also face many challenges and obstacles that hinder their performance. Often, these challenges impede their careers and professional growth.

Gender mainstreaming aims at integrating gender perspectives into every phase of policy and institutions (Hubert & Stratigaki, 2016) ^[4]. By integrating gender perspectives into its policies, practices, and operations, the police service can better respond to the diverse security needs and vulnerabilities of both men and women (Brown, *et al*, 2019) ^[1]. Hence providing satisfactory services to the citizens in their jurisdictions. Gender issues in policing remain contentious yet it is crucial. Gender issues stem from the uniqueness and differences possessed by men, and women and other gender. This is further pronounced by the gender roles assigned to men and women in various sectors including security and law enforcement sectors.

Women and men are inclined to adopt different perspectives on service delivery with justice being predominantly male-oriented, while the morality of care is predominantly inclined to women police (Jackson, 2017) ^[6]. This highlights how gender roles can influence one's approach to service, underscoring the importance of diversity in our institutions. Women are thought to take their commitment to police service and policing to greater heights, especially in encounters with the public, due to their less violent approach with reassuring attitudes and demeanors (Mira, 2019) ^[12]. Such attributes contribute to building trust and positive relationships between the police force and the community. The National Police Service is critical in ensuring national security by maintenance of law and order, protecting citizens' lives and property, and upholding the nation's sovereignty (Republic of Kenya, 2011). Their role is fundamental to the stability and safety of society, acting as guardians of the public's well-being.

Gender mainstreaming in the National Police Service involves ensuring that both genders in police officers have equal opportunities for recruitment, training, career advancement, and participation in decision-making processes (Republic of Kenya, 2014). This promotes equality and fairness, crucial for a modern, democratic society. It acknowledges the significance of the police force that fully reflects the population it serves since the population's support increases its credibility. A diverse force can better understand and respond to the community's needs. Analyzing and using sex-segregated data also helps the police in prevention and combating GBV, domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking (UN Women, 2017) ^[20]. This targeted approach enhances the effectiveness of interventions and support for victims. This requires developing specialized units, protocols, and training programs to respond effectively and support victims of such crimes. Tailored strategies ensure that victims receive appropriate and sensitive care. Gender mainstreaming also enables the police service to address gender biases and discrimination within its ranks, fostering a more equitable and inclusive work environment (Natarajan, 2014) ^[13]. Creating an inclusive environment is essential for the well-being and morale of all officers, improving overall performance.

Gender mainstreaming and the performance of female police officers have been subjects of study globally, regionally, and locally. Extensive literature exists that explores the correlation between gender mainstreaming efforts and execution outcomes of female in the police force (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013) ^[15]. According to Brown *et al.* (2019) ^[1] conducted a comparative analysis of gender and policing in both England and Wales, highlighting female officers' experiences in different countries. The studies also explore the positive effects of gender mainstreaming interventions, such as targeted training programs, mentoring, and supportive policies, in enhancing the performance and job satisfaction of female officers.

In Africa, the challenges of gender policies, institutional frameworks, and the political will to develop a gender-sensitive police service have brought about serious negative impacts on the lives of police officers, the local community, and in essence, the police women. For instance, in South Sudan, the officers in the South Sudan Police Service (SSPS), both women and men, feel that 'rank trumps gender when it comes to discipline', while evidence shows that women are continuously discriminated against in their workplaces (Riak & Bill, 2022) ^[16]. This contradiction underscores the persistent challenges women face in achieving true workplace equality, even within structures that strive for fairness. In Liberia, the participation and recruitment of women into the Liberia National Police (LNP) was successfully increased when a target was set for the recruitment of women into the force. This was done by working towards gender balancing of police staff while creating an enabling environment and space to bring in more qualified women of all service categories/levels into the police service (Karim, 2019) ^[8]. This proactive approach not only enriches the police force but also reflects a commitment to equality and better representation of the community.

In Kenya, numerous efforts have been driven towards gender mainstreaming and the elimination of discrimination against women. However, it has emerged that the challenges

that women who serve in the three arms of the National Police Service, face unique requirements that are different from their male counterparts (Kathimba & Anyieni, 2018) ^[9]. This has created the essence of developing a mechanism that supports the environment supportive of female officers to assert their authority. The mechanisms should also bring changes to the policies governing gender, as well as create an institutional culture in the police service. In 2013, following intensive lobbying for the establishment of a legal gender-sensitive police framework, the Kenya Association of Women in Policing (KAWP) was formed to champion women's rights, develop the professionalism of women police officers, and promote gender equality in the service.

According to Onyango and Natarajan (2022) ^[14], there is a great underrepresentation of women in the Kenya Police Service. Women account for approximately 11% of the entire police. This implies that there is a need for gender alignment in the police workforce and an international call to the peace and security agenda for women to be engaged in conflict resolution and peace-building. Policy frameworks form the foundation of gender mainstreaming in the security sector, explicitly including equality in gender and empowerment of women objectives (Hendricks, 2015) ^[3]. These frameworks serve as critical pillars for promoting inclusivity and fairness within the security sector. Such policies should ensure equality in women opportunities and their participation in the positions of decision-making and address GBV, sexual harassment, and discrimination within security institutions (Ilesanmi, 2021) ^[5]. By addressing these issues head-on, a more just and supportive environment can be created for everyone in the sector. Little is known about these policies in the Kenya Police Service and how they impact on performance of women. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of gender mainstreaming policies, practices, and their implications for national security, this study sought to contribute to understanding how gender mainstreaming can effectively enhance national security in Kenya.

2. Materials and methods

A descriptive survey study design was utilized for this study. Through this design, data was collected both qualitatively and quantitatively enhancing understanding on the impact of gender mainstreaming on the effectiveness of police women in Nairobi City County. The design consisted of both primary and secondary data and they were gathered from the use of semi structured questionnaires and analyzed descriptively. The study relied on primary data, collected through semi-structured questionnaires. Some questions were predetermined and structured, with closed-ended options for respondents to choose from, while others were open-ended, allowing for more in-depth responses (Saunders, *et al.*, 2012) ^[17]. Structured questions were designed in advance, following a predetermined order, and utilized Likert scales and nominal scales. Statements concerning dependent and independent variables were captured using Likert scales that employ a five-point scale to estimate the extent of agreement of the respondents to any given statement. Close ended questions developed from the Census were used in this study to measure demographic information about the respondents.

This study was conducted in the County government of Nairobi. The target population was as follows, the female police officers in 10 police posts in Nairobi County, senior

officers in KPS-both male and female, government officials in the Department of Gender, and members of the public in Nairobi City County both male and female.

Sample size for this research was decided based on (Saunders *et al* 2012)^[17]. These authors note that the process of sample size determination aimed at determining an appropriate number of findings or replicates to be used in the scientific undertakings (Saunders, *et al*, 2012)^[17]. The Krejcie and Morgan (1970)^[10] sample size determination method was used to determine the actual sample size from the total population (Singpurwalla, 2013)^[18]. Thus, there was an opportunity to create a representative sample of participants so that the study would include a sufficient number of respondents. Therefore, the total target population comprises of officers from the 1200 women police officers working in Nairobi City County. The sample also included representatives of the government from the gender department and the public. Through the application of the Krejcie and Morgan method, the resulting sample size was calculated to effectively capture the diverse perspectives and insights necessary for the research objectives. The sample was determined as follows.

$$n_0 = \frac{Z^2 P(1-P)}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{384}{1 + \frac{384}{1200}} = 290$$

3. Results and discussion

To establish the efforts towards gender mainstreaming policies and performance of women officers in Kenya police service in Nairobi County, the participants were asked to indicate institutional and legal framework and performance of Kenya policewomen officers, and institutional culture and performance of Kenya police women officers. The findings are displayed below (Table 1 and 2):

3.1 Institutional and Legal framework and Performance of Kenya Policewomen Officers

The authors asked the respondents to express their level of agreement towards a set of statements that related to the institutional and legal framework and performance of Kenyan policewomen officers. This involved the use of Likert scale whose options included; strongly disagree=1, disagree=2, neutral=3, agree=4, strongly agree=5. The scores of disagreeing have then been used as a proxy for a variable that ranges between 0 to 2.4 on the continuous Likert scale ($0 \leq \text{Mean} < 2.4$). The scores of 'Undecided' represent a variable with a mean score of 2.5 to 3.4 on the continuous Likert scale ($2.5 \leq \text{Mean} < 3.4$), and the scores of both agree and strongly agree represent a variable which had mean scores of 3.5 to 5.0 on a continuous Likert scale; ($3.5 \leq \text{S.A.}$). The findings are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Institutional and Legal framework and Performance of Kenya policewomen officers

Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
We have effective Gender Mainstreaming policies	4.0543	1.12280
Institutional Mechanisms are in place to ensure gender equality	4.4253	.63967
Gender-responsive measures are	4.0679	1.03129

implemented		
Communication structures affect the performance of women police	4.0000	1.21356
We have an active gender-designated department	4.0181	1.17149
Gender equality is considered when assigning roles at the National police	3.8281	1.27112
Equality of remuneration between men and women is ensured	4.2443	.93129
Frequent trainings on gender mainstreaming to employees are done	4.0181	1.07011
Valid N (list wise)		

As is indicated from the table, the study findings suggest that the respondents hold a positive perception of the institutional mechanisms placed to ensure gender equity within the KPS. Notably, the respondents agreed that there are effective institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality, as evidenced by 4.2 as mean score (sd = 0.63). Furthermore, the individuals surveyed agreed that the Kenya Police Service ensures equality of remuneration between male and female officers, as supported by a mean score of 4.24 (sd = 0.93). This indicates that the police force adheres to the principles of equal payment for equal work. The study also found that the individuals surveyed agreed that the Kenya Police Service implements gender-responsive measures, with a mean score of 4.06 (sd = 1.03). This suggests that the police force has taken steps to address the specific needs and concerns of officers.

Additionally, the participants agreed that the Kenya Police Service has effective gender mainstreaming policies in place, as showed in average score of 4.05 (standard deviation = 1.12). This implies that the police force has institutionalized measures to promote gender equality and integration across its operations. The individuals surveyed also agreed that the police service has an active gender-designated department, with mean score of 4.01 (sd = 1.17). This specialized unit likely plays a critical role in addressing gender-related issues and ensuring the implementation of gender-responsive initiatives.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that communication structures within the Kenya Police Service affect the performance of female officers, as evidenced by average score of 4.00 (sd = 1.21). This suggests that the police force may need to evaluate and strengthen its internal communication channels to better support professional development of women in service. Lastly, the respondents agreed that gender equality is considered when assigning roles within the Kenya National Police, with a mean score of 3.8 (sd = 1.27). This indicates that the police force attempts to ensure a fair and equitable distribution of responsibilities across both male and female officers.

The study agreed with Thelma and Ngulube (2024)^[19] who underscored the positive impact of clear policies and initiatives that address gender disparities within police organizations. These measures have been found to boost morale, career advancement, and overall job satisfaction among women officers. Similarly, findings from other studies (Smith, 2014) emphasize the role of mentorship programs and gender-sensitive training in fostering improved performance outcomes.

3.2 Institutional Culture and Performance of Kenya police women officers

The participants were requested to indicate to which level they agree on institutional culture and the performance of

Kenyan policewomen officers. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Institutional Culture and Performance of Kenya Policewomen Officers

Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation
Leadership is committed to developing women's police	4.1855	1.03878
Gender Inclusive policies have been implemented in our institution	4.0724	.99280
Accountability and Monitoring is maintained	4.3891	.72780
Respect is a key value at our institution	4.2579	.92022
Professionalism is upheld at our institution	4.1176	1.23388
Integrity is maintained	4.1086	1.06471
Valid N (list wise)		

As is indicated from the table, the study findings indicate that the respondents have a favourable perception of various organizational attributes and practices within the Kenya Police Service. Notably, the respondents strongly agreed that the police service maintains a high level of accountability and monitoring, as evidenced mean score of 4.38 (sd = 0.727). Furthermore, participants agreed respect is a key value upheld within the KPSS, as supported by a mean score of 4.25 (sd = 0.92). This suggests that the police force places a strong emphasis on cultivating a culture of mutual respect among its personnel. Also on findings, leadership of the KPS is committed to developing the women's police force, with a mean score of 4.18 (sd = 1.03). This indicates that the police leadership is actively engaged in initiatives to promote the professional growth and advancement of female officers.

Additionally, the respondents agreed that professionalism is upheld within the KPS, as indicated by a mean score of 4.11 (sd = 1.233). This implies that the police force maintains high standards of professional conduct and expertise among its personnel. The respondents also agreed that integrity is a key value maintained within the Kenya Police Service, with a mean score of 4.108 (sd = 1.06). This suggests that the police force prioritizes ethical behaviour and high moral standards in its operations.

Furthermore, the respondents agreed that the KPS has implemented gender-inclusive policies, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.07 (sd = 0.99). This indicates that the police force has taken concrete steps to create a more inclusive and equitable working environment for both male and female officers.

The foregoing findings are consistent with Maina (2021) ^[11] who also acknowledges that culture occupies a central place in people's life and is significant in the growth of countries especially on how can foster to enhanced gender equality. The duty males are likely to fulfill for his family as the money earner while the female as housewives (Zuo and Tang 2000) ^[21]. According to Feldberg & Glenn (1979) ^[2] and Jurik & Martin, (2001) ^[7], it is expected that social differences will take place between male and female employees especially in male dominated fields such as policing, roles learned and fostered during childhood including; values, characteristics and personalities.

The research concludes that, institutional legal framework has positive effect on performance of Kenyan policewomen. The research revealed that gender mainstreaming policies,

institutional mechanisms, and gender responsiveness influence the performance of Kenya women police officers. Furthermore, the research concludes that, institutional culture has negative significant effect on the performance of Kenyan policewomen officers. The research revealed that leadership commitment, gender inclusive policies, accountability, and monitoring influence the performance of Kenyan women police officers.

4. Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that, the Kenyan government and the National Police Service continue to prioritize and enforce robust policies and legal frameworks that promote gender equality, non-discrimination, and equal opportunities for women in law enforcement. This can be achieved through regular reviews and updates of existing policies, ensuring alignment with international standards and best practices. Additionally, adequate resources be allocated for effective implementation and monitoring of these policies, including training programs for law enforcement personnel on gender mainstreaming and sensitivity.

The study also revealed that institutional culture, specifically leadership commitment, gender-inclusive policies, and accountability mechanisms, negatively impacted the performance of Kenyan female police officers. To address this issue, it is recommended that the National Police Service undertake a comprehensive cultural transformation initiative. This can involve fostering strong leadership commitment to gender equality, implementing gender-inclusive policies and practices, and establishing robust accountability and monitoring systems to ensure compliance. Regular training and awareness campaigns should be conducted to challenge gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination within the police force.

5. Further Research

Based on the scope and the findings for this study, the following is the recommendation for future research: This research focused on the broad factors of institutional and legal frameworks, organizational culture, gender discrimination, and community perception. However, it is crucial to recognize that women's experiences and challenges within law enforcement are shaped by the intersections of various identities and social categories, such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location. Future studies should adopt an intersectional lens to explore how these intersecting factors interact with gender to impact the performance and advancement of female police officers in Kenya.

While this study concentrated on the Kenyan context, conducting comparative studies across diverse regions or countries would be beneficial. Such studies could examine the similarities and differences in the factors influencing the performance of female police officers in varied cultural, legal, and institutional settings. This would not only broaden our understanding but also facilitate the exchange of best practices and strategies for promoting gender equality and empowerment in law enforcement agencies globally.

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