



Routledge Studies on Gender and Sexuality in Africa

GENDER-INCLUSIVE HIGHER EDUCATION IN TANZANIA

TRANSFORMING ACADEMIA

Edited by

Susan P. Murphy and Perpetua John Urio



Gender-Inclusive Higher Education in Tanzania

This book draws on extensive empirical data to analyse gender mainstreaming and gender transformative actions in Tanzanian higher education. It maps the practical landscape of gender mainstreaming across 14 universities in Tanzania, and the theoretical landscape of African theories of masculinities and femininities underpinning educational institutions and practices. It then assesses the Gender Awareness and Transformation through Education project, which was designed to support the development of gender expertise and capacities in research and education at one specific institution, across both its administrative and academic units. This project was funded by the Embassy of Ireland to Tanzania, Irish Aid to support institutional collaborations between Tanzania and Ireland. The project team designed and delivered a participatory action research project that culminated in the establishment of a Gender Research Centre that will provide gender expertise in research and teaching to the College and to other HEIs nationally and regionally. By bringing together real-world insights from action-based research with extensive analysis of the national and global contexts, the book demonstrates the impact of real-time social change and gender transformation, with implications both for Tanzania and beyond.

Bringing novel empirical insights and policy recommendations, this book will be of interest to researchers and policy makers across the fields of gender studies, education, and African studies.

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The gender awareness and transformation through education (GATE) participatory action research project that provided the knowledge-action-research basis of a number of the chapters in this collection was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, all of our team and participants were affected. We had to work from home, care for loved ones, and look after one another. A small number of our team members lost loved ones. Our deepest sympathies are shared with our team. We dedicate our work to our loved ones.

Introduction and Challenge

Perpetua John Urrio and Susan P. Murphy

A chance meeting at a seminar on gender and development between two early career female academics from Tanzania and Ireland in 2010 set in train events and relationships that led to the Gender Awareness and Transformation through Education (GATE) project, an institutional collaboration between Tanzanian and Irish Higher Education Institutions supporting capacity development and gender mainstreaming. The insights gathered through this project culminated in the essays shared in this edited collection. Both scholars were interested in gender (in)equality in higher education and in understanding how universities, traditionally built to educate men and places of masculine power and privilege, could be transformed to become gender equitable and inclusive. Higher education institutions (HEIs) represent important sites of epistemic power where gender norms and cultural practices can be examined, explored, challenged, and reimaged. They are also key sites where values and world views are reinforced and reproduced (Bourdieu, 1985; Byrd, 2019; Gander, 2019).

The pursuit of gender equality and the dismantling of gender bias, stereotyping, and discrimination is a key concern and focus of action in the field of higher education internationally. It is recognised as a necessary step to improving scientific research and developing science-based solutions to urgent and pressing global issues (Drew & Canavan, 2020: 7). Quality educational institutions and practitioners from primary through to tertiary levels are directly linked to improving human development outcomes. In institutions across countries and regions, gender inequality in the areas of recruitment, progression, promotion, research, and leadership remains an issue of concern and attention. In a 2022 *UNESCO-Times Higher Education* (UNESCO-THE) Report ranking universities on their performance against the targets and indicators of UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), over 776 universities across all continents shared their data on SDG 5. This goal aims to achieve gender equality, end all forms of discrimination against women and girls, and empower women and girls in all spheres, both public and private. Strong progress is evident globally, albeit with significant regional variation, in efforts to achieve parity in access to higher education for female students. However, indicators on the numbers and performance of female

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academics within academic institutions point to continuing trends of under-representation in the areas of research and leadership, with the report finding that more needs to be done to support women in academia (UNESCO-THE, 2022: 17).

According to the Tanzanian Commission for Universities (TCU, 2019a) report, the *State of University Education in Tanzania 2018*, female academic staff represent less than 25% of total academic staff across the state's universities and are more heavily represented in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences disciplines. It should also be noted that of the entire academic community, less than 30% of academic staff were trained to PhD level in 2018. Of this number ($n = 2197$), approximately 22% of PhD holders are female ($n = 482$). Thus, academic life, including teaching, research, and service, remains male dominated.

The role and importance of education for political and economic development is recognised and articulated in numerous Government policies and strategies in Tanzania. According to the 2008 *National Strategy for Gender Development*

The existing stereotype attitudes still favour education for boys than girls in most communities. As a result, the majority of girls tend to concentrate on stereotype fields of study such as home economics, secretarial courses, and nursing. Other shortcomings of the education system include limited budgetary allocations, gender insensitive school management practices, unfriendly learning environment for girls and people with disabilities, inadequate trained teachers on gender issues, gender biased curricula, social and cultural values which are resistant to change for girls' education. Poverty and work overload for girls and women at household level continue to be major obstacles which cause drop-out of both girls and boys in school and training institutions.

(URT, 2008: 9)

To address these problems, the national policy set out a renewed commitment to ensuring equal access for all students and identified several gender mainstreaming strategies within HEIs and teacher-training colleges as mechanisms to achieve this outcome. These include gender sensitisation and training of teachers and educators, gender sensitive teaching and learning materials, affirmative action programmes, and enhanced infrastructure and facilities to accommodate a more inclusive teaching and learning environment.

Tanzania's higher education sector is relatively young. Its first public university was established in 1963 following independence from colonial rule. Today it is home to almost 50 institutions. As a post-colonial state, Tanzania's leaders, under the presidency of Julius Kambarage Nyerere, prioritised education as an essential pathway to national development. However, since the foundation of the United Republic of Tanzania as an independent state, the funding available to support this vision has been deeply constrained. Despite the challenges and financial constraints, education has remained a core government priority

and in 2014 and 2015 tuition fees were removed for primary and secondary level schooling in state run schools. This has led to a radical expansion in access to education for the entire population.

With a population in 2023 of approximately 67.5 million, and a fertility rate of 4.8 births per woman (Tanzania Population 2023 (Live) (worldpopulationreview.com)), the demand for access to quality education for this young population is high and increasing. The number of accredited institutions has grown from one university established at the time of independence (University of Dar es Salaam, 1963) to 49 accredited universities in 2020 (TCU, 2020). These include a blend of 21 public and 28 private institutions. The legacy of significant under-investment in education and corresponding skills deficit in trained teachers has resulted in large class sizes and challenges with the delivery of quality education over many decades. Since 2005, teacher-training colleges have been rapidly expanding but challenges continue as the demand for education continues to increase to meet the needs of a growing population.

Over the past three decades, many institutions have implemented affirmative action programmes aimed at increasing access for female students, with varying degrees of success (see, for example, [Morley, 2010](#); [Mwaipopo, 2011](#)). More recently, the TCU, a governmental agency responsible for accreditation and oversight of the Tanzanian higher education sector ([TCU, 2019a](#)), explicitly mandated that ‘every University shall establish clear policies and procedures ensuring equal opportunity and gender equality and equity in the institution and in staff recruitment, retention and promotion based on consideration of qualifications, competence and skills’ ([TCU, 2019b](#): Guideline 1.7.1); that ‘every University shall establish a gender policy framework that spells out the institutional gender equality and gender equity arrangements’ ([TCU, 2019b](#): Standard 1.13); and that ‘every University shall strive to establish affirmative strategies for the achievement of at least 50 percent gender parity’ ([TCU, 2019b](#): Guideline 1.13.2). Thus, at the national scale, there are clear and explicit governance instruments and oversight bodies to support the transformation of gender relations in the Tanzanian Higher Education sector.

In the field of higher education research, there has been considerable scholarly attention to gender equality efforts in institutions in western and northern states. Extensive funding through research councils at national and regional level in Europe, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other high-income states has supported an extensive and impressive body of action-based research into gender mainstreaming strategies and research into the persistence of gender (in)equality in HEIs (see, for example, [Henderson & Nicolazzo, 2019](#); [Drew & Canavan, 2020](#); [O’Connor & White, 2021](#); [Rosa & Clavero, 2022](#)). There is considerably less research funding available in low and middle income countries, in particular funding to local academic teams to examine gender social and cultural dynamics in low-income resources constrained countries. Although there was some attention and studies on the Tanzanian experience in the 1990s and early 2000s (see, for example, [Morley, 2006, 2007, 2010](#); [Lihamba et al., 2006](#); [Mwaipopo, 2011](#); [Unterhalter, 2006, 2014](#)), there has

been little systematic analysis of developments since this time. As one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse countries in the world, with a rapidly growing population and strong demographic dividend potential through its young population, this has been a period of extraordinary expansion of the higher education sector in Tanzania. With the increased number of universities, the number of students attending universities has also swelled to unprecedented levels. Further, the Ministry for education and associated agencies have developed several new and ambitious mandates aimed at improving gender equality and access. Yet there has been little funding available for Tanzanian researchers to lead independent action-research on gender dynamics and relations within their own spaces. Although regularly engaged as important implementing and enabling research partners in projects funded by international development agencies and IFIs, such projects tend to be designed and led by universities in high-income states. Local researchers are also widely engaged in consultancies for many of the large intergovernmental organisations, such as UNICEF and UN Women, however, there are limited opportunities for Tanzanian academics to design and lead independent research projects and secure highly competitive research funding. This collection of essays on gender mainstreaming at national and institutional scales bucks this trend. It arises out a participatory action research project designed by a team of Tanzanian and Irish researchers to examine the strengths, opportunities and barriers to progressing gender equality objectives in a rapidly expanding institutional space. The following explains further how this collaboration emerged.

In 2013, an opportunity for collaboration emerged for the two early career academics to put their interests and passions into action. The university at which the Tanzanian scholar was based was a relatively new institution, established in 2005 as constituent college of the most established university, the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). Its mandate is to train secondary school teachers to work in public schools across the country. Guided by the gender policy of the main university (UDSM), the College established a gender unit in 2013 and mandated this unit to develop its own institutional gender policy, appropriate for its student body and focus on the education of future secondary school teachers. As the institution did not have a dedicated or trained team of gender experts in place, they reached out to their networks nationally and internationally. A colleague from an Irish university was invited to provide some support in designing the gender policy. This resulted in the beginning of a decade long institutional collaboration between universities in Tanzania and Ireland. Irish universities were also actively engaging in gender mainstreaming and equality actions with the Higher Education Authority of Ireland completing its first national review of Irish HEIs in 2016. Starting in 2014, the two academics selected a team of students and interested researchers at both institutions and worked together to gather primary data that could be used in the development of a contextually informed, situation relevant gender policy for the institution. This policy was drafted and approved in 2016. These activities

and outputs were not funded by external funding agencies. The teams used supports through their home universities and interested students to undertake the research and deliver the gender policy.

Based on the success of this collaboration, the team secured a small knowledge-exchange grant to come together for a workshop in Dublin in 2018 to extend their ambition and design a new project that would augment the work of the gender unit and support the unit to transform into a national and regional centre for research and education on gender in higher education. The project design process was deeply participatory, structured around specific needs of the Tanzanian university and the research interests of the team in exploring and supporting gender equality and equity in higher education through action research. The project design that emerged was an action-based research proposal aimed to develop a sustained pipeline of gender experts and capacities in research and education through the training of current and future academics in gender-based research and gender responsive curriculum content and pedagogy. It included PhD training and post-doctoral mentorship focused on the opportunities and barriers to transforming gender relations in HEIs across Tanzania. Principal investigator (PI) responsibilities were shared between a lead academic in Tanzania and a lead academic in Ireland, with a higher proportion of time covered for the Tanzanian co-PI and team, given that this is where the actions would be based. The project formally adopted a feminist participatory action research approach, designing a governance framework that gave mutual recognition and parity of esteem to both institutions. The project team also established an external expert advisory board to bring in additional expertise from universities in Tanzania, Ireland and South Africa with knowledge and experience of gender mainstreaming policies in the higher education sectors in these countries. This external body was designed to cultivate a network of critical friends who could share ideas, build stronger networks and relationships, and also hold the main project team to account.

As the first large external grant to augment the work of the gender unit, the project team needed to build the institutional architecture to support the management and administration of a cross-institutional large grant. Core deliverables of the project included establishing systems, processes, and structures within both institutions to receive funding and distribute overheads, ensure auditing and accountability, and also to ensure that there was a structure in place to lead and administer future research grants through the gender centre. The methodology, methods, and theoretical learnings were gathered and documented by the team across the duration of the project and carefully stored to ensure that this journey and the key learnings could be shared more widely.

Following the development of the proposal the team sought funding partners. The team of development specialists at the Embassy of Ireland to Tanzania had been observing the engagement and work of the team for several years. Gender equality, female empowerment, and education are key priorities in Ireland's development cooperation policy and the country strategy of the

Embassy in Tanzania. Following several months of engagement, agreement was reached to fund the project to support both the institutional collaboration between Irish and Tanzanian universities and augment the capacity development plans of the gender unit. Although planned as a four-year project, funding was initially granted for three years with the final year contingent on successful completion of a number of deliverables including regular reporting and auditing. The team fulfilled all requirements and secured the final year of funding. As the project was seriously disrupted by the global health pandemic, COVID-19, an additional no-cost extension was agreed with the funding body to complete all project deliverables. It was formally launched in 2019 and ended in 2023 and this collection of essays shares insights from this work.

This collection of essays evaluates the progress and challenges on the gender mainstreaming journey of Tanzanian HEIs over the past decade of growth and change within this sector. Since its inception in the 1980s and 1990s, concepts and practices of gender mainstreaming have been a source of critical interrogation and debate within feminist and gender studies (see, for example, Abou-Habib et al., 2020; Walby, 2005). Although a significantly contested concept, as a practice, gender mainstreaming is broadly understood as a ‘process to promote gender equality ... intended to improve the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes’ (Walby, 2005: 321). Gender mainstreaming, and its core objective of gender equality, is conceptualised and operationalised in very different ways in different contexts and sectors. Within the higher education field, it has mainly focused on equality of opportunity and issues of access to education, and to a lesser extent, on equality of outcomes, and the persistent barriers to progression of female academics through the stages of career advancement. Further, addressing invisible barriers including social and cultural norms and values embedded in wider social and institutional practice that influence selection, retention, and promotion of academics is less examined (Byrd, 2019; Gander, 2019), and in particular in low-income countries it is often under-researched.

Overview of Chapters

The following collection is divided into two parts. The first examines the history and evolution of gender mainstreaming efforts in Tanzanian higher education. The second part shares insights from a gender mainstreaming and equality initiative at a teacher-training college in Dar es Salaam, a rapidly growing urban commercial centre on the east coast of Tanzania.

Moses’s chapter provides an overview of the landscape of gender equality policies and initiatives in place in HEIs across Tanzania. Gathering this baseline information is necessary to understand what has been tried and tested, what lessons can be learned from the experiences of others, and what opportunities exist for creative collaboration. This study employed a multi-site case study different systems design. Case sites included accredited public and

private HLIs that are regulated by TCU; institutions were over 20 years in operation and had demonstrable experience in gender mainstreaming; institutions were either secular or held explicit faith-based missions; that offered STEM only curriculum, medicine only curriculum and mixed curriculum. They ranged in size from large (>10,000 students) to small (<5000 students) located in urban and peri-urban spaces. The study examined different universities with different characteristics to generate insights in the wide and diverse range of HLIs in Tanzania.

Through an in-depth investigation to examine reasons to explain the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in Tanzanian higher education, Mwakitalu draws upon qualitative data collected from 48 purposively selected university leaders at four case study sites. The data collected reveal that cultural factors, institutional barriers and individual constraints are factors that discourage female academics from seeking senior positions in both private and public universities. Reasons for the lack of progression include traditional gender roles and family responsibilities, societal expectations, institutional ethos and the persistence of harmful gender stereotypes. The study points to the need for universities to go beyond basic policy mainstreaming to support transformative understandings of equitable gender relations and norms.

Chapter 3 provides insights into the experiences of Tanzanian institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This event marked a critical moment for the pursuit gender equality in all countries, as public health policy responses pushed both work and labour back into households, and for many, progress of gender equality in the workspace was rolled back. As academics moved to work from home, they now shared their professional space with children being home-schooled and wider familial and community care needs that became localised within household spaces. Traditional gendered expectations and roles swiftly emerged affecting the productivity of female academics as they struggled to balance personal and professional expectations, responsibilities and commitments. Urrio's chapter explains how this period brings into sharp focus the fragile nature of progress in gender relations, and the co-dependencies of this progress on public and social services and supports.

The final chapter in this section explores the theoretical landscape of masculinities and femininities in the African context. Here Moses provides a synthesis of African scholarship on gender. Her review identifies core themes and categorises conceptual insights in the published literature on African theories on masculinities and femininities by African scholars over the past decade. Although there is an abundance of theoretically sophisticated research within the development sector and grey literature that is used to support development interventions in low income countries, there is a dearth of peer-reviewed social scientific studies within the mainstream and most influential academic journals and publishers led by African researchers. This points to a distinct epistemic gap and presents an opportunity for the radical amplification of African voices and knowledge on African gender relations in higher education from an African perspective.

Essays in part two of the book focus on the journey and experiences of a teacher-training college as it designed and delivered a project – *Gender Awareness and Transformation through Education* – designed to build gender expertise and leadership in research and teaching within the community. The project took a whole-of-community approach and invitation participation from all members of academic, professional, administrative and technical staff and of the student body. Murphy et al. begin this section sharing an overview of the feminist participatory action research methodology that was used in the project – its strengths and weaknesses, lessons learned and challenges that persist.

Mudawi's chapter then examines persisting manifestations of gender stereotyping among the academic staff at a teacher training college. Her study sought to understand the context within which a gender action plan was being implemented. The study utilised qualitative research methods that employed a secondary data analysis methodology. The data analysed was collected as part of the reporting process for two capacity building workshops focused on implicit bias and gender responsive pedagogy. The findings suggest that the academic staff held deeply internalised essentialised understandings of gender and gender relations. Gender categories rested on a strict gender binary linked to male/female biological features and sex roles and associated responsibilities. She explores the activated trait and role stereotyping that associate women to the activities related to domestic care, consensus building, and social reproductive labour. Men and masculine traits were associated with economic responsibilities and family and community leadership activities. Such findings are important in highlighting how internalised understandings can influence one's role as a teaching professional and responsibility for driving positive change in this context.

Chua et al. engage with student leaders and members of the wider student body to again map the landscape of internalised norms and explore how these effect student participation in learning. This chapter draws upon qualitative data collected over several years that is used to construct an understanding of gendered beliefs, norms, and expectations among the student body, recognising the power that this body will have in their role as further teachers and educational practitioners. It points to the tensions experienced by female students as they navigate institutional and cultural expectations.

Urio's chapter evaluates the effects of gender responsive pedagogic training on academic staff over time. From Mudawi's initial baselining of internalised stereotypes that were evident at the beginning of the training process, Urio follows up with a number of the participants over time to examine the extent to which they have integrated their learnings into their teaching practices. The findings point to some positive and progressive results that offer the potential for strategies that creates the conditions for flourishing for the full student body. Its effects will take time and will require further analysis to understand the wider impact of this training.

Finally, Murphy et al. undertake an extensive review of the effects of the project within the institution through an analysis of staff attitudes gathered at the beginning and end of the project. The findings point to persistent gender gaps in areas such as promotion duration and research outputs. It also found positive indications of change in levels of sexual harassment and bullying, with decreasing numbers of incidents and an increasing likelihood of reporting. Finally, gentle shifts in attitudes were detected in areas related to recognition and belonging, with increasing levels of female satisfaction, but declining levels of male satisfaction suggesting that as institutional norms and expectations shift, this can come into conflict with individual norms and sense of belonging.

Conclusion

Every researcher of gender issues will be familiar with the conceptualisation of gender as socially constructed and contextually embedded. It refers to the norms, values, expectations, roles and responsibilities assigned to a specific sex at birth, all of which influence lived experiences, opportunities, and relationships. As a distinctly relational concept, gender roles and norms are produced and reproduced through situated relationships, actions and practices. As such, there is no single monolithic account of gender norms that apply in all contexts. As a social phenomenon it is fluid and malleable shifting over space and time, and deeply influenced by environmental and political-economic practices, and cultural and political shifts at multiple scales. Conceptions of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, although powerful intellectual constructs for influencing and advocacy, have limited analytical power as universal abstract ideas. Conceptions of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming are presented using universalist language on paper and in policy articulations, but the lived experiences which are shaped through everyday interactions, relationships, responsibilities, and choices required the research team to reflect intensively on internalised understandings and implicit biases. The research team was composed of researchers from Ireland and Tanzania who held different understandings of gender equality and equity. Those living and trained in Ireland were very heavily influenced by a social liberal egalitarian feminist world view that focused on concerns for individual freedoms, rights, and opportunities to flourish. Those living and trained in Tanzania held a deeper relational understanding of gender influenced by African philosophies and principles of care, connection, and interdependence.

Gender in both contexts is identifiable by normative assumptions undergirded by distinct teleological world views. African feminisms, as noted by [Chilisa and Ntseane \(2010\)](#), tend to be more explicitly relational and stand in stark contrast to the forms of methodological individualism that influence liberal feminist accounts. Ideals of masculinity and femininity are deeply intertwined and co-constituted such that it is not possible to fully grasp an understanding of the conceptions of maleness and masculinity without relating this to their role and position within heteronormative relationships.

The analysis in this book points to a distinct gender hierarchy that influences gendered ideas of inferiority and superiority in different fields, such as assumptions of males as providers, leaders, protectors, and women as mothers, lovers, and carers, but both can only be understood and experienced in relation to one another, completely interconnected and co-dependent. Engaging in this project and writing this book required the entire team to engage in listening and learning, reflection and critical analysis of each participant's beliefs and views. Rather than seeking to 'impose' western views and values, the team consciously engaged in collaborative learning to examine situated and place-based constructions of gender. It makes no attempt to universalise or generalise beyond the scope of the studies.

The insights presented in these chapters point to both challenges and opportunities for change and transformation. To fully grasp the relationality of gender in action, it is necessary to understand that targeted interventions in one field, such as interventions aimed at increasing gender equality or enhancing professional opportunities for women in higher education, are influenced by and will influence relationships and experiences in other interacting fields. For women to take leadership roles in one field can create tensions for her in other interacting fields including the domestic sphere where duties of care to family, community, and concern for others are more highly valued. These tensions help us to understand why change can be slow and sporadic, seemingly making progress in one space but facing resistance in others.

In its focus on experiences of gender mainstreaming in Tanzanian HEIs, the collection makes a substantial empirical contribution to the field of gender and education. It includes several papers that explore the extent to which earlier mainstreaming efforts from the 2000s have faced resistance in HEIs across Tanzania. It also provides insights to a more recent gender mainstreaming intervention in a teacher-training college, documenting the journey of institutional change, individual experiences, and ongoing contestations.

Further, the collection includes important theoretical and conceptual insights related to African theories of masculinities and femininities and unpacks the distinct conceptualisation of gender that emerged through the empirical explorations. These insights help to explain why there are fewer women in academia than men, why their progress and promotion pathways are slower, and what kinds of institutional, structural, interactional, and social changes would be required to transform gender relations in higher education. As the outputs of HEIs reach considerably beyond the walls of the academy, and what happens in each institution is deeply influenced by the social, political and cultural norms of the wider communities within which they are based, transforming this field is challenging, but potentially radically far reaching.

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Part I

Gender Relations and Knowledge in Tanzania



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1 Gender Equality Practices in Higher Learning Institutions in Tanzania

Opportunities and Challenges

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and Susan P. Murphy*

Introduction

Gender mainstreaming as a policy instrument requiring institutions and organizations to incorporate women's and men's voices and experiences into policy and planning emerged as a strategic priority at the United Nations (UN) Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi (1985) and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Its primary objective is to achieve gender equality and equity in all sectors and spaces. Since its inception, gender mainstreaming has been as source of critical interrogation and debate within feminist and gender studies (see for example [Abou-Habib et al., 2020](#); [Morley, 2010](#); [Murphy, 2015](#); [Rosa & Clavero 2021](#); [Walby, 2005](#)). Although a significantly contested concept, as a practice, gender mainstreaming is broadly understood as a 'process to promote gender equality ... intended to improve the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes' ([Walby, 2005](#): 321).

The global policy architecture of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) incorporates both a targeted and integrationist approach to gender mainstreaming. Goal 5 outlines a range of specific areas that require action to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls, including the elimination of all forms of violence, harmful practices, and the promotion of women's participation and voices in leadership positions in political, economic, and public life. There are also over 80 gender indicators measured across the 17 goals, reflecting the cross-cutting nature of gender inequality and discrimination that women and girls continue to experience globally. Despite continued international attention, according to the *Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023*, '[a]t the current rate, it will take an estimated 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws, 140 years for women to be represented equally in positions of power and leadership in the workplace, and 47 years to achieve equal representation in national parliaments' ([UN, 2023](#): 22).

In the field of higher education (HE), it remains an important area of policy and practice ([Rosa & Clavero, 2021](#)). Here, gender equality is understood as

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equality of opportunity – to access opportunities for learning, and to progress in academic practice. Gender equity is concerned with addressing uneven starting points and embedded barriers that influence the progression of women in academia. Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Gender equality indicators in SGD 4 include access to gender-sensitive, safe, non-violent, inclusive learning environments and educational opportunities, and sets specifiable and measurable targets that aim to transform gender disparities at all levels of education, including higher learning institutions (HLIs). Target 4.3 of the SGD4 requires equal access for both women and men to all levels of education. Target 4.5 seeks to eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education, while target 4.7 requires that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to promote sustainable development and gender equality. Operationally, SDG4 seeks to create an environment that promotes gender equality and hence calls for measures that provide the necessary frameworks, information, and awareness to improve, and deepen learning and understanding of gender equality; and broaden representation, participation, and decision-making within institutional and leadership structures.

Signatory states to the Incheon Declaration on the Education 2030 Framework for Action further commit states to develop gender-sensitive policies, planning, and learning environments. The Education 2030 Framework for Action guides implementation. It encourages strategic approaches that emphasize equity, inclusion, and equality at the forefront of action:

To ensure gender equality, education systems must act explicitly to eliminate gender bias and discrimination resulting from social and cultural attitudes and practices and economic status. Governments and partners need to put in place gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstream gender issues in teacher training and curricula monitoring processes and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in education institutions to ensure that teaching and learning have an equal impact on girls and boys, women and men, and to eliminate gender stereotypes and advance gender equality.

(UNESCO, 2015, 32)

As a signatory state to these agreements, Tanzania has committed to ensuring gender equity and equality for all citizens in both its constitution and national development plans. Within the field of HE, the Universities Act (2005) established the Tanzanian Commission for Universities (TCU, 2019). This commission is mandated to recognize, approve, register, and accredit universities operating in Tanzania. TCU is also responsible for coordinating the proper functioning of university institutions to foster a harmonized HE system in the country. The University Act also incorporates an explicit regulation that requires universities to mainstream gender in all activities. The TCU is thus required to oversee the establishment of locally designed gender policy

frameworks that define and describe the necessary institutional arrangements in all universities across the country. As a result, a gender policy is listed by TCU as one of the governance tools for all universities in Tanzania. Furthermore, in order to ensure equal access to HE, the TCU requires every university to strive to implement affirmative strategies for the achievement of at least a 50 per cent gender parity in student enrolment and to establish clear policies and procedures that ensure equal opportunity and gender equality in staff recruitment, retention and promotion (TCU, 2019).

For the past three decades, Tanzania has experienced remarkable growth in the number of HLIs, student population, and programmes offered (TCU, 2019). The number of accredited universities has grown from one university established at the time of independence (1961) to 49 accredited universities in 2020 (TCU, 2020). These include a blend of 21 public and 28 private institutions. In line with this growth, progress has been made in terms of the number of female students entering tertiary level education, from below 17 per cent in the 1990s to 42 per cent in 2019/2020 (TCU, 2019).

Recent research on gender mainstreaming and affirmative action suggests gaps between gender policy and practice (Mwaipopo, 2011; Tarimo & Swai, 2020). These are important studies but focus on the experiences of single institutions. No research has been undertaken to date to map the landscape of gender mainstreaming in Tanzanian HLIs over the past decade and during this period of institutional growth and policy change. This chapter addresses this gap and provides an empirical contribution by mapping the range of institutional responses to TCUs' required gender policy mandate. It also explores how different universities understand the concepts of gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

Since its inception in the 1980s and 1990s, gender mainstreaming has been as source of critical interrogation and debate within feminist and gender studies (see for example Abou-Habib et al., 2020; Murphy, 2015; Walby, 2005). Although a significantly contested concept, as a practice, gender mainstreaming is broadly understood as a 'process to promote gender equality... intended to improve the effectivity of mainline policies by making visible the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes' (Walby, 2005: 321). This chapter will map the landscape of these processes within Tanzania's HE sector.

Similarly, there are multiple competing conceptualizations of the concept of gender. As we examine changing structures and processes that interact with human relationships within a distinct field, we will draw upon a feminist relational theory of gender which explores the interactions between structures and agency, and how gendered norms and practices are produced, co-produced, and reproduced through relationships and institutions (Koggel et al., 2022; Murphy, 2022). Fundamentally, the study of gender mainstreaming within the HE sector is a study of shifting power relations as the hegemony of masculinity (Connell, 2020), and traditional patriarchal norms and values are questioned and challenged.

Over the past decade, little research has examined conceptualizations and implementation of gender mainstreaming in Tanzanian HLIs. Morley's seminal examination of gender mainstreaming in HLIs in Tanzania and Ghana

found that gender equality is frequently conflated with gender parity, and the practice of gender mainstreaming is seen as something external to and imposed upon Universities (Morley, 2007, 2010). This study builds on Morley's seminal work by examining the experiences of 14 HLI (8 public; 6 private HLI) across Tanzania on their journey of gender mainstreaming over the past decade that is marked by a changing policy and regulatory landscape with an enhanced role of the TCU, increasing numbers of HLI, and increasing student enrolment numbers. The chapter presents results from data collected through key informant interviews and document analysis of institutional materials and policies to understand how gender mainstreaming is understood and operationalized, how gender policies are localized and implemented, and how gender equality strategies and ambitions are realized in practice. The study was guided by three research questions: (i) How do Tanzania HLI conceptualize and implement gender mainstreaming policies? (ii) What are institutional practices and initiatives focusing on gender equality? and (iii) What are the barriers to mainstreaming gender equality persist in this context?

Literature Review

Gender Mainstreaming in HLI

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), gender mainstreaming can be understood as 'a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated' (UN ECOSOC, 1997). Within this framework, HLI in all countries are expected to mainstream gender across the entire spectrum of activities including teaching, research, and service.

Gender equality has become an increasingly important policy requirement for academic institutions. Faced with enduring inequalities between female and male academics and administrators at all levels, university leaders have been charged with defining action strategies to ensure the effective implementation of structural measures to reduce and eliminate gender bias in their organisations

(Rosa et al., 2021, 1)

The intention of gender mainstreaming is to create a gender-sensitive environment where the university learns from the past and addresses gender biases (Bencivenga & Drew, 2021). Gender mainstreaming practices in HLI intend to transform the institution and the ethos and to create a conducive environment that not only enhances equality of opportunities and access but also encourages and rewards gender scholarship through retention and progression processes (FAWE, 2015; Palmén et al., 2020).

There have been numerous gender equality practices in HE over the decades. Approaches that focus on inclusion seek to widen women's participation by increasing the number of female students and staff in all subject areas and at all levels of employment and decision-making (Højgaard & Henningsen, 2013; Unterhalter, 2006). Approaches that seek to deepen analytical and social engagement tend to focus on gendered relations, norms, and values with gender mainstreaming of university policies and practices directly targeting structural power relations (Unterhalter, 2006).

Although widely used as a strategy for driving gender equality in HLIs and conceived to bring about institutional transformation, experience has shown that gender mainstreaming has had limited success in its implementation internationally (Rosa et al., 2021). Earlier research in the Tanzanian context found different explicit and implicit, individual and institutional obstacles to the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in HLIs, including a lack of clarity and mystification of gender mainstreaming as an imposed issue in the African context in particular (Morley, 2010). Other obstacles found in international research include institutional resistance by not prioritizing gender mainstreaming, not allowing the voices of gender experts to significantly influence the policy process, and lack of adequate capacity-building for gender mainstreaming (Rosa et al., 2021). Similarly, in Nigeria, Igiebor (2020) found that HLIs, as a kind of resistance to cultural change and intellectual development gender units and gender expertise are under-funded, under-staffed, and under-rewarded.

Earlier research had also argued that the evaluation of gender-equality performance in HE has often only focused on access; counting the number of women – a viewpoint that according to Odejide et al. (2006) and Unterhalter (2006) does not take into account the experience of studying or working in HLIs. In their view, equality of condition should value gender differences and include diverse perspectives or forms of practices that create conditions for equitable engagement and empowerment in decision-making. According to Mama (2006), equity of access and parity in numbers is a minimal condition of equality. The author (ibid) argues that '[m]ainstreaming gender is a strategy that if taken seriously, suggests much more than affirmative strategies that seek to add women on and in' (2006: 76). The pursuit of gender equality for these scholars requires cultural change within the ethos of institutions in addition to the removal of structural barriers to access.

HLIs' Policies for Gender Equality

African HLIs have actively engaged in formulating policies and guidelines that influence access issues, integration of gender in curriculum, and staff development over several decades (Igiebor, 2020; Kwesiga & Ssendiwala, 2006). HLIs in Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, and Tanzania have led in the design and implementation of affirmative action interventions to increase women's access into HE by lowering their entry requirements (Aina, 2013; Morley, 2010).

Although successful at increasing access into HE for female students (Onsongo, 2009), affirmative action interventions have received strong critique. According to the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE), affirmative actions have provided grounds for discrimination and undermining of female excellence in academic attainment (FAWE, 2015). Lihamba et al. (2006), observed that affirmative action interventions to increase enrolment have generated some resentment and negative views in their study of Tanzanian HLIs. Their research indicates that female students who benefited from access through affirmative action interventions were subject to demeaning and degrading attitudes and comments, commonly referred to as ‘students of low merit’ (2006: 588).

Nonetheless, initiatives such as the Preferential Admission Criteria (PAC) in which female candidates are admitted at up to 1.5 points lower than male candidates but not lower than the university entry points have contributed to increased females enrolment in HLIs (Lihamba et al., 2006). Data from the TCU evidences an increase in female students from 30% in 2011 to 42% in 2019 (TCU, 2020). However, it was noted that this increase in numbers has not changed the traditional gendered choice of subjects with female students underrepresented in STEM subjects. Females constituted 34% of all students enrolled in STEM subjects ($N = 37,695$) in 2019. This trend is consistent with international estimates (Kinahan et al., 2021; Tarimo & Swai, 2020). The gender gap in academic staff and leaderships roles within HLIs is also evident in Tanzania, as it is in other states (Schendel et al., 2021). Within the Tanzania context, the data indicates 28% of females constitute the academic staff across HLIs (TCU, 2020).

Cultural Aspects of Gender Inequalities in Education

Research on staff and students understandings of gender equality in Dar es Salaam found deeply embedded cultural factors that mitigate against greater gender equality in representation and leadership (Murphy et al., 2019). Research on adolescent girls school progression experiences found that the gendered division of labour within households directly influence girls participation rates at secondary level (Mwita & Murphy, 2017). Gender relations and power dynamics are reflected across all stages of the educational cycle as deeply rooted cultural norms and practices perpetuating gender discrimination through educational institutions (Unterhalter et al., 2014). In their study of gender discrimination in African universities, Morley (2006) found, for example, that discrimination is formally embedded in structures, including limited childcare facilities, lack of opportunities for professional development, and informally perpetuated through name-calling, gendered networks, and exclusion of female voices from decision-making. Morley (2010) also found that rumours of sexual exchanges were often used to denigrate women scholars’ academic achievement and influenced female students to minimize their visibility and academic performance and construct negative female learner identities.

Research from [Aina \(2013\)](#) similarly found HLIs to be hostile environments for female staff and students and characterized by norms that foster male superiority, devaluation of female scholarship, and trivialization of sexual harassment ([Aina, 2013](#)). In recent years, sextortion, which is defined as a form of sexual harassment, sexual blackmail, or exploitation that employs forms of coercion to extort sexual favours from the individual in exchange for grades or favourable treatment, has also been found to be prevalent in Tanzanian HLIs ([Kambuga, 2016](#); [Mukama, 2018](#)). Thus, while gender mainstreaming in HE has focused on addressing issues of access for women and girls with some success, this focus has seemingly failed to alter the balance of power in gender relations or the ethos of institutions that continue to silence and stifle the voices, academic potential, and experiences of women, girls, and marginalized males.

Research suggests that HLIs should focus on addressing cultural factors that perpetuate inequalities and shift to more holistic gender-responsive strategies that require whole-of-community and/or institutional responses rather than a focus on ‘fixing women’ ([Bailey & Drew, 2021](#); [Hearn, 2021](#); [Murphy et al., 2019](#)). Such strategies, they argue, move beyond access to issues affecting all members’ ability to progress, fully engage, and perform within their institutions. Creating a gender-positive culture facilitates change towards gender equality – ‘the institutional culture needs to be, or become, in tune with the vision of gender equality, otherwise nothing will change’ ([Bailey & Drew, 2021](#), 136). In the African context where gender mainstreaming is predominantly funded through development cooperation programmes and international donors, ideas of gender equality are often perceived as externally forced and not relevant to the African context ([Aina, 2013](#)).

Given the significant changes in the policy landscape internationally, through Education 2030 and the SDGs, and nationally, through the enhanced role of the TCU, this chapter makes a timely and important contribution to debates concerning the efficacy of gender mainstreaming as an instrument to drive transformative change in gender relations and to attaining gender equality and sensitivity in HE.

Methods

Study Design and Sampling Strategy

This study employed a multi-site case study design. Case sites included accredited public and private HLIs that are regulated by TCU; institutions that were over 20 years in operation and had demonstrable experience in gender mainstreaming; institutions that were either secular or held explicit faith-based missions; that offered STEM only curriculum, medicine-only curriculum, and mixed curriculum. They ranged in size from large (>10,000 students) to small (<5,000 students) located in urban and peri-urban spaces. The study examined different universities with different characteristics to generate insights into the wide and diverse range of HLIs in Tanzania.

Table 1.1 Profiles of HLIs and their participants

HLIs' Id No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14				
Category	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Public	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private				
Participants' Id No	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16	17	18	19
Gender	F	F	F	F	M	F	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	F

Note: F = Female; M = Male

Characteristics/profile of Study Participants

Participants were purposively selected due to their positions and affiliations to units involved with gender mainstreaming activities. Additional names were added where necessary and upon recommendation of interviewees, if they felt that others would be better placed to answer research questions. Hence, depending on the institution we interviewed directors/heads/coordinators of the gender department/unit/section, gender desk coordinators, Dean of Students (DoS), Deans of faculties, and human resource officers. We interviewed one or two people depending on the institution's structure. The resulting profile of the 14 HLIs and participants is summarized in [Table 1.1](#). In order to conceal HLIs' identities, they are given numbers, and because some HLIs have unique positions that can easily identify them the positions are not included.

Data Collection

The researchers reviewed documents on the gender policies at each institution and reviewed publicly available information on gender mainstreaming and equality initiatives through an analysis of institutional websites. Student completion numbers and the number of academic staff by gender were also examined. Semi-structured key-informant interviews with universities members in posts involved with gender mainstreaming or related activities were conducted on all sites to understand how gender policies were adopted, adapted, and implemented within the institution. Thus, interviews collected information about institutional policies and practices related to gender mainstreaming and gender equality initiatives. Interviews were important to capture participants' insights into how institutions conceptualize and practice gender equality.

Data Processing and Analysis

Interviews were conducted in person in Kiswahili. They were recorded, then transcribed verbatim, and translated into English. Although English is the official language used in HLIs, Kiswahili was preferred as it is Tanzania's national language and is more widely spoken and understood by all participants. For the analysis of the data collected, the data was coded and sorted by content ([Figure 1.1](#) presents a coding frame). Thematic analysis was then used to explore key themes and sub-themes emerging around changes and transformations within the institutions.

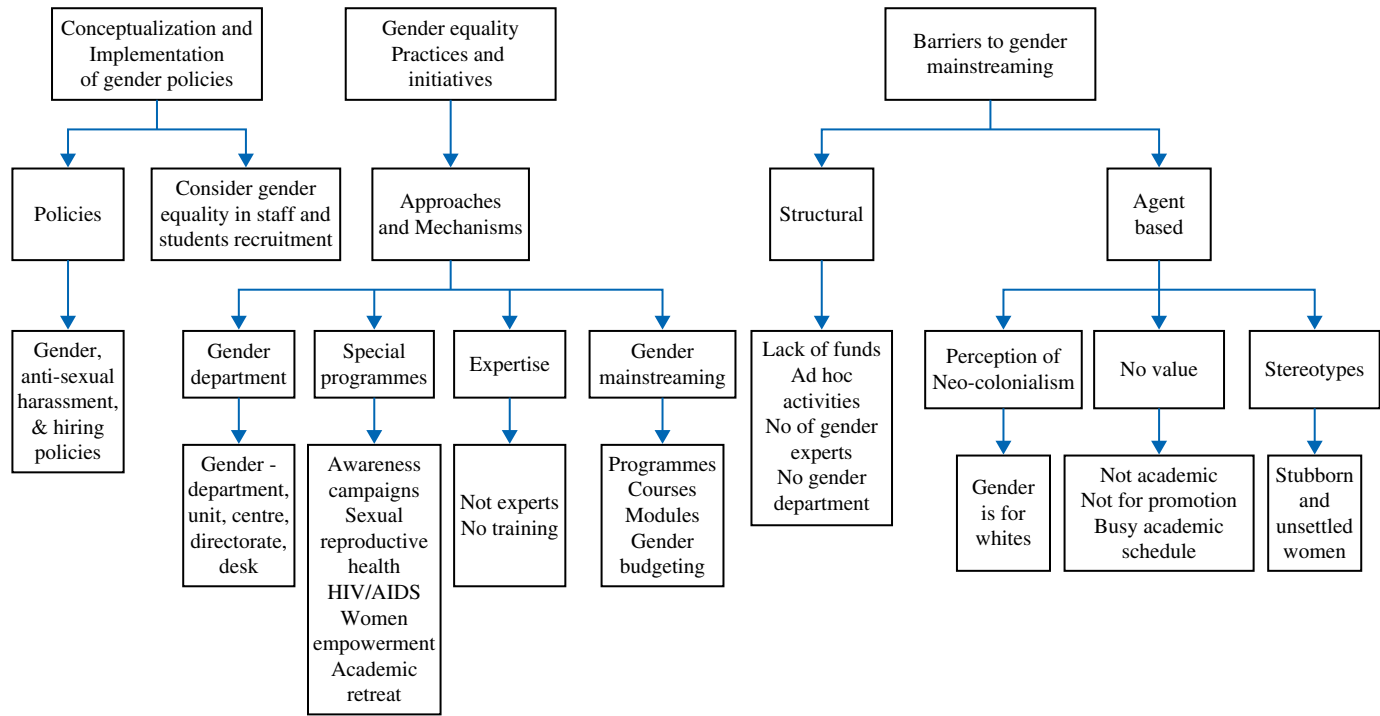


Figure 1.1 Coding frame

Ethical Considerations

Research permits and ethical clearances were obtained from the researchers' universities. Permission was also obtained from regional, district, and the studies university's authorities. Participants were informed of the study objectives; informed consent was secured in advance of all interviews; and all data was anonymized and stored securely.

Positionality

The research team members were insiders to academia. The team was composed of Tanzanian and Irish researchers and active academics engaged in education research and teaching. In addition, the principal researcher worked as a gender coordinator in her university. This insiders' position had positive and negative influences on the study. By recording interviews, transcribing the content immediately after each interview, sharing with and analysing with the wider team of international researchers, the team continuously checked their data to ensure that this was not influenced by their predispositions and pre-understanding of gender and gender activities, but represented situated knowledge – knowledge coming from those being interviewed (Rose, 1997).

Analytical Framework

This study sought to understand how transformative gender policies and practices in Tanzanian HLIs have been by investigating the institutional understanding of gender equality and mainstreaming policies within each institution, examining institutional practices and initiatives focusing on gender mainstreaming and equality, and, identifying opportunities and barriers to mainstreaming gender within these universities. Given our interest in both agent-based and structural factors, the study adapts Barker et al. (2007) and Gupta's Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) to develop an analytical framework that can examine both the structures of the institution and the attitudes of key leaders to understand situated gender relations and power dynamics. This framework examined the relationship between policy and practice; to map out how policies are operationalized; and to document gender actions and programmes.

Based on Barker et al. (2007) and Gupta's GTA, our study's indicators of gender transformation include firstly evidence of localized gender policies that had been adapted from national policies and made appropriate for the participating HLI. Second, evidence of equality strategies and action plans that are used to operationalize and implement the policies including initiatives, projects and programmes, departments, expert training, and other actions. Third, evidence of how the HLI embeds gender considerations in university activities and plans including budgeting for gender operations across the academy with sustained support local units/departments, expertise, and the necessary

Table 1.2 Analytical framework

<i>GTA areas</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>TOC components</i>
Policy <i>Government</i>	Localized gender policy <i>Institutional level</i>	Input for transformation <i>Government policy translated into local institutional policies</i>
Policy Strategy (Plan) <i>Local institutional strategy(plan)</i>	Localized Gender Equality strategies/plans <i>How policy is to be operationalized. (experts, departments, budgets)</i>	Output Institutional policies translated into specific action plans
Policy (plan) Implementation	Implemented strategies, i.e., initiatives, projects & programmes, departments, expert training and other interventions	Outcome <i>Action plans translating into tangible initiatives, activities and entities.</i>
Policy Evaluation	Change: Evidence of positive changes in Gender equality e.g., Experts, improved females enrolments/ access in HE	Impact Evidence of transformation towards gender equality

facilities to promote, manage and monitor gender related initiatives at the institution. Fourth, gender equality is shown in the enrolment and recruitment of students and staff respectively.

Drawing on Rogers (2014) Theory of Change (TOC), the research examined key *inputs*, *outputs*, *outcomes*, and *impacts of initiatives*. *Inputs* entailed the external policy requirements; *outputs* included the HLI's localized gender policy, strategy, and action plan; *outcomes* are the HLI's own gender initiatives and practices; and *impacts* measure evidence of transformation towards gender equality drawing upon the key indicators outlined above (Table 1.2).

Findings

First, and concerning the initial research question on the institutional conceptualization of gender equality and mainstreaming policies, findings indicate that there are diverse conceptualizations of gender equality and practices describing what a specific gender policy should entail.

Conceptualizing Gender Equality

Generally, more than half of the participating HLIs had introduced some kind of policy concerning gender equality and demonstrated an awareness of the concept of gender mainstreaming to drive gender equality within their institutions. Three types of gender policies were identified in the selected HLIs.

Table 1.3 Institutional gender policies

<i>Institution</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Gender policy	√	√	√	√	√	√		√						
Anti-sexual harassment policy	√	√	√			√								
Gender sensitive hiring policy	√	√	√								√			

Note: Institutions are presented in numerical numbers

First, an overarching gender policy, which is a statement of intent, outlines institutional commitments to gender equality. Second, anti-sexual harassment policies are meant to address and put sanctions to stop practices of sexual assaults and harassment. Finally, gender-sensitive hiring policies (as stipulated in the university’s charters) intended to increase the recruitment of female staff in HLIs. Seven out of fourteen HLIs and all are public universities had a gender policy adopted from the national policy and localized this to suit the institutions’ needs; four and all public universities had an explicit anti-sexual harassment policy; and four (three public and one private) universities indicated to have a gender sensitive hiring policy.

A total of three universities had all three types of policies and all are public universities located in the commercial capital city of Dar es Salaam. Six universities did not have any type of gender equality policy, and all are non-urban institutions (five private and one public) pointing to a severe lack of gender equality concern in private and non-urban institutions. The public institution without a gender policy had a gender department established and was in the process of establishing a gender policy. [Table 1.3](#) indicates institutions and the respective policies they have.

By content, the reviewed institutional gender policy documents indicate diverse understanding among universities. Four out of the five policy documents reviewed had well-stipulated policy statements focusing on issues of access, parity, and representation while reflecting on cultural change, ethos and environmental factors. These policy documents also explicitly state the institutions to mainstream gender in different university’s aspects such as curriculum, teaching, research, and consultancies. Two of the five policy documents had policy statements that focus on access and parity but not explicitly reflecting on cultural change and gender mainstreaming in all university functions.

In one of faith-based based university, which lacked policy documents related to gender equality and mainstreaming, participants suggested that gender matters are considered as religious matters and not matters of academic or institutional concern.

... Regarding gender projects ... we don’t have specifically such things. But because we are a religious institution, we have things like women and men committees; so, women issues are dealt with by the women committee and

men issues by their committee. But they are dealt in a more religious view rather than institutional-educational institution.

(Female respondent ... 10 Private HLI 09)

All participating HLIs indicated to observe gender equality in staff recruitment and student admission by observing set qualifications and TCU requirements. This study noted a remarkable increase of female enrolment of more than 5% in eight of the participating universities in the period of five years 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 with two of the participating universities reaching parity since 2015/2016 (see Table 1.4). Of these, only three institutions had a gender policy in place; thus, an increase in females' enrolment should be cautiously interpreted as it implies that there may be other than institutions' response for gender equality contributing factors. It may be due to enforcement of TCU regulation requiring HLIs to strive for enrolment of 50% gender parity. The increased enrolment may also be due to increased universities' demand for students as it is during this period of time there was an increase of universities in the country that would absorb all eligible candidates provided they have university fees (TCU, 2019). This window might have contributed to an increase in females' enrolment that would otherwise be difficult.

The figures show that females continue to be underrepresented in STEM related subjects/courses. In medicine fields males dominate the medical doctor course while women dominate the nursing courses. Findings further indicate that little change was evident during this period of a shift in female academic underrepresentation with 72% of all academic posts being held by male staff members.

Regarding the second research question on understanding Tanzania HLIs' institutional practices and initiatives focusing on gender mainstreaming and equality, we found evidence of diverse approaches used by HLIs in operationalizing gender policies. They were depicted through strategies or mechanisms and implementing action plans including diverse initiatives, activities, and entities. In a TOC model, these are translated as outputs and outcomes of the process of change.

Table 1.4 Per cent of female students' enrolment in HLIs in 2015/2016 and 2019/2020 academic year

<i>Institution</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
2015/2016	36	30	28	31	47	33	54	19	41	38	37	16	38	53
2019/2020	41	31	39*	38*	46	40*	57**	21	48*	39	47*	23*	46*	52**

Note: Universities are presented as numerical numbers

* Institutions with 5% or more increase in female enrolment

** Institutions with more than 50% female enrolment

Diverse Approaches by HLIs in Operationalizing Gender Policies and Action Plans: Diverse Outputs and Outcomes

Within the process of adopting and localizing the national policy, diverse approaches are evident across the institutions as to how these should be operated in practice. The findings show diverse approaches used by HLIs in operationalizing gender policies through strategies or mechanisms and implementing action plans. In terms of structural implementation mechanisms, six of the participating universities (all public) have established formal departments specifically to support scholarship in gender studies and to lead in gender coordination activities for the university. Six HLIs that have not invested in establishing gender departments/units indicated that gender matters are handled in the office of the DoS. Ten out of fourteen HLIs (six with gender department and four of the institutions that incorporated gender issues in the DoS office) reported having some gender activities being implemented.

A new initiative established in two participating institutions are ‘gender desks’, which are intended to be a single point of contact safe space for reporting and dealing with gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment cases. Establishment of gender desks in HLIs is a new (2019) government directive taken as a measure to combat GBV and sexual harassment in HLIs ([Mbashiru, 2019](#)). Its structure and how it is operating was however not clear from the data collected. Two respondents from one university explained they had been appointed to their desks three months prior to the date of the study and still did not know the terms and conditions of the post. They felt stuck and did not know about their new roles as they were yet to receive any training as one respondent says:

... for now we have been working to get the job descriptions that shows exactly what our responsibilities are, so that we do our job well. But because we have not been given a job description we are stuck, we have not done anything.

(Female respondent ... 15 Private HLI 12)

We found several gender activities regarded as stand-alone or targeted programmes in the university setting. These typically aim towards gender awareness raising, female empowerment campaigns/workshops, and leadership training for female members, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS workshops, and gender courses. Gender awareness and/or female empowerment workshops are the most popular and were mentioned by all ten HLIs. In addition, institutions with a gender department/unit tended to have more diverse gender activities including research projects, community outreach and mentorship, and academic retreat programmes for females compared to institutions that handle gender matters in the DoS office. Four HLIs indicated that they conduct community outreach to reach secondary school students to inspire

and help girls to join their universities. Participants suggested that this is a good practice but is limited in reach to urban-based schools and easily accessible locations.

For institutions that lacked formal mainstreamed gender policies and placed gender concerns under the responsibility of the DoS, reproductive health, and HIV/AIDS workshops were the main activities undertaken. There was no evidence of gender mainstreaming across institutional policies, staffing matters, decision-making structures, and leadership.

Regarding expertise, this study found that only four out of fourteen institutions have gender expertise on site. The experts are those who teach and conduct research on gender and are recognized as gender experts by their institutions.

As an output of a localized gender policy input, findings of this study indicate that most HLIs, nine (seven public, two private), indicated to have mainstreamed gender in their curriculum either by having gender courses or having a module incorporated in at least one university course. In this way, students access gender knowledge and are made aware and sensitized to gender issues. There is, however, a worry that some students may graduate without gender knowledge because these courses are not mandatory in many of the universities examined.

Furthermore, gender budgeting as an output mechanism to enhance gender equality was lacking in many institutions. Findings indicate that five (all public) out of fourteen institutions have some funds specifically allocated for gender activities. The rest of the institutions were uncertain about funding.

Barriers for Gender Equality Mainstreaming in HLIs

Finally, with regard to barriers to transforming gender relations and regimes, the study found structural and agent-based attitudinal barriers to gender mainstreaming in HLIs. We found structural barriers such as lack of funds, lack of systematic action plans, and lack of gender experts. It was noted that most of the gender equality initiatives and activities carried out in HLIs are not planned through formal college planning processes and therefore are not budgeted. Rather, training and activities are selected on an ad hoc basis as opportunities and funding arise. This appears to be a major barrier for the implementation of gender strategies over time. It was found that this negatively affected the pace of change and successful implementation of gender initiatives. Two out of the seven universities that indicated having a gender policy in place reported that the implementation of the gender policy is pending due to lack of funds. A respondent says:

... the gender policy was graced with strategies, action plan, now the problem in implementing the strategies was lack of funds

(Female respondent ... 04 Public HLI04)

Lack of funding is connected to lack of political will of leaders to enacting gender mainstreaming initiatives. Respondents frequently mentioned gender issues are seen as not important and not taken seriously by the institutional leaders:

... we have the gender policy as a tool to promote gender; however, to have the policy is one thing and to use them practically is something else ... I don't know if it is here in (x University) but if the tool is available it should be used to bring about development.

(Male respondent ... 05 Public HLI 05)

We found that HLIs do not have systematic action plans or implementation strategies. It was found that most of the gender equality initiatives and activities carried out in HLIs are not planned through formal college planning processes. Rather, training and activities are selected on an ad hoc basis as opportunities arise. Only three HLIs indicated that workshops are planned and must run every year or semester. The three institutions that do plan and organize annual activities had gender policies in place. Of the remaining institutions, seven (four with gender policy and three without gender policy) reported that workshops and actions are undertaken on an ad hoc basis when opportunity and funds are available. A further four institutions' gender matters and activities tend to be only mentioned occasionally and limited to information giving, e.g., during Fresher's orientation. Similarly, it was found that eight HLIs did not have a special gender coordinating department/unit.

Moreover, it was found that the majority of the institutions (ten out of fourteen) lacked gender expertise. Individuals appointed to lead the gender centres are generally not gender experts. They reported no on-the-job training and were not given help to perform their duties, thus opting to consult their own initiatives based on their experience. Because of the lack of fit, it was found that some gender coordinators/heads are not in the gender field at all. They are allocated this role as part of their service to the college and do not see any professional connection or interest in understanding constructions of gender in their institution or in bringing a gender lens to their own research and disciplines. One respondent noted:

When I was appointed, I also thought why this position was not given to someone who specialized on gender so that s/he could get consultancy. I have been working with the anti-corruption body on sextortion; it kills my time but it's not consultancy in anyway. You can work outside Dar es Salaam for two days and come back very tired and your regular duties are waiting for you. So, the challenge is that it doesn't pay you academically in terms of consultancy and promotion.

(Female respondent ... 02 Public HLI 02)

We identified three agent-based attitudinal barriers at the level of individuals. These included the perception that gender equality is a neo-colonial 'western' value; gender matters are less recognized and emphasized within academic disciplines; thus, academics as well as students are not encouraged or incentivized to engage in gender works; and devaluing stereotypes. In one institution, which has gender policy in place already, it was found that leaders perceive gender equality to be a matter of neo-colonialism and imposition, and not relevant to the African context. This was captured in the statement of one respondent talking about challenges of implementing gender equality strategies, she says:

Other challenges are related to implementation of these strategies ... Leaders have knowledge but it is not certain whether they are resisting or stereotyping ... They do not want to change ... When you face them, they say ... aah ... do not introduce white people issues here Leave these issues to white people.

(Female Respondent ... 06 Public HLI 06)

It was also found that gender matters are less recognized and emphasized within academic disciplines. Academics as well as students are not encouraged or incentivized to indulge in gender works, hence resulting in low participation of staff and students in gender activities/initiatives. Informants who are gender leads reported that activities such as gender awareness or women empowerment workshops have received very poor responses from academic staff and students. When queried about their absence from attending such organized and advertised sessions, academics and other staff members complain of busy academic schedules and say that such programs are therefore not a priority. Both academic staff and students feel that gender activities are not connected to academic life.

I as an organizer for trainings on gender awareness have experienced poor students' response to these sessions. They see that these gender sessions do not have any impact to their academic life and sparing time for attending them is wastage of time and can lead to poor performance.

(Female respondent ... 01Public HLI 01)

The above voice indicates that when gender is considered separate from rather than central to core university matters, staff and students are less likely to participate in training opportunities.

Another important finding is related to negative attitudes people have towards women who promote gender equality. These women are often labelled as problematic individuals who go against cultural norms.

Stereotyping ... people are looking at women promoting gender equality as women ... women who are stubborn and unsettled with their marriages;

even when you attend a meeting you can find an administrator calling you using stereotyping names. It is embarrassing

(Female respondent ... 02 Public HLI 02)

Discussion

As indicated in the findings, there are different conceptualizations of gender equality and what a specific gender policy should entail. A gender policy is an institutional instrument that guides activities and behaviour aimed towards achieving greater gender equality, empowerment of female staff and students, and more respectful and equitable gender relations. However, it is clear from the findings that only seven universities had the gender policy in place, and all of these are public institutions. Thus, the TCU requirement for HLIs to establish an institutional gender policy (TCU, 2019) is yet to be realized in most private HLIs. Thus, increased focus across the sector is required. Furthermore, the reviewed policy documents generally indicated a focus on structural adjustments to incorporate gender mainstreaming in HLIs dominated by statements focusing on increasing females access in HE and fighting sexual harassment. This implies a reductionist interpretation of the idea of gender equality as a matter of gender parity. Increased focus on equality of participation in decision-making is required. Previous (Mama, 2006; Odejide et al., 2006) research noted similar findings and argued that parity in numbers and access are minimal conditions of equality. A small number of universities have moved towards more transformative practices that focus on attitudes and behaviour and challenging discriminative gender norms. Their gender and/or anti-sexual harassment policies have statements that stipulate a focus on providing gender sensitivity training, attitudinal change, and specify sanctions and penalties for misconduct. As argued by others (Aina, 2013; Bailey & Drew, 2021; Mama, 2006; Odejide et al., 2006), transformation of gender relations towards greater gender equality requires both structural change and a shift in the dominant culture and ethos of institutions.

Our study suggests that, despite TCU and government regulations, there is limited evidence that gender has been mainstreamed across Tanzania's HE sector. Of those institutions that have made some effort to mainstream gender by introducing gender policies, there is limited evidence of sustained actions that are required to drive gender equality and transformative change in gender relations. Several barriers to gender mainstreaming identified in this study indicate problems in individuals and institutions' transformation. Earlier studies point to the gap between policy and practice, and (Aina, 2013; Morley, 2013), and there is little evidence to suggest that this has changed over time, in particular, in private universities. That a number of HLIs do not have specific gender coordinating units suggests that gender equality is not a priority for university leadership. The continued practice of allocating responsibility for managing gender affairs to the office of the DoS implies that gender issues

rest only at the level of students and are not the concern of the staff of institution. This office has no responsibility for staffing, recruitment, retention, and progression.

Although progress is evident in the increasing number of female students within universities, the gender gap persists in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Gender stereotypes persist across subject preferences which, according to [Vincent-Lancrin \(2008\)](#), continue to influence to gender differences in employability, remuneration, and social status. This suggests that further effort is required to address barriers to diversity and inclusivity in male dominated disciplines. Further, the number of completed and qualified female academics remains significantly below parity and in Tanzania and so the problem of the leaky pipeline found in earlier research ([Kinahan et al., 2021](#); [Tarimo & Swai, 2020](#)) continues.

We acknowledge the emergence of some positive practices in a smaller number of the HLIs studied. Mentorship and academic retreat programmes are welcomed affirmative action opportunities for female members of the HLIs. Academic retreat programmes give female staff space, time, and encouragement to focus on their research. Although welcome, these practices are not sufficient to some of the core issues concerning the gendered division of labour and social reproduction, unequal gender power relations and general attitudes.

A number of barriers to implementation of gender action plans and mainstreaming initiatives were identified in this study. Both funding and institutional commitment were found to be the main barriers to change. According to [Igiebor \(2020\)](#), this points to ‘institutional resistance’ to change. Emphasizing this point, [Aina \(2013\)](#), [Igiebor \(2020\)](#), and [Morley \(2010\)](#) argue that for years, HLIs have been depending on external funding to run gender activities and thus affect sustainability that is needed for transformation.

It was found that most of the gender equality initiatives and activities carried out in HLIs are not planned through formal college planning processes. Rather, training and activities are selected on an ad hoc basis as opportunities and funding arise. This means that gender policy documents remain hollow promises that are more likely to gather dust than to instigate change. Gender transformation is less likely to be achieved without institutional gender equality plans. Institutional gender plans are roadmaps of actions and guides for institutional implementation, monitoring, and evaluation ([Bailey & Drew, 2021](#)).

Moreover, this study identified the lack of gender expertise as one of the barriers to gender mainstreaming in HLI’s. In many institutions, gender actions are undertaken by non-experts. This is a significant concern due to the possibility of harm and a complete disregard for the importance of gender equality and gender scholarship and knowledge. According to [Igiebor \(2020\)](#) and [Rosa et al. \(2021\)](#), this is also a kind of institutional resistance to change. The fact of under staffing gender offices and lack of adequate capacity-building for gender mainstreaming implies that this area is not an institutional priority.

For successful mainstreaming initiatives, and where execution of the activities requires some levels gender expertise, investment in gender expertise and gender-based research initiatives is indispensable.

As noted by earlier researchers ([Aina, 2013](#); [Morley, 2010](#)), we found that a number of leaders in HLIs perceive gender equality to be a matter of neo-colonialism and imposition of external non-African values, and not relevant to the African context. According to [Lombardo and Mergaert \(2013\)](#), this leaders' behaviour is a kind of resistance to change that exist in HLIs. This implies that although institutions may have gender policies, gender equality agenda is not positively accepted, the tools will remain being a check box issue. If not accepted by leaders, it will hardly be implemented in the responsible Institutions. This is probably the reason that we found claims of low response and participation on gender matters by staff and students in HE. Both academic staff and students feel that gender activities are not connected to academic life.

Issues of resistance to change were also evident in explained stereotype and negative attitude towards gender. It was found that women who stand for gender equality are often labelled as problematic individuals who go against cultural norms. This finding suggests that women, for fear of being stigmatized, would not choose to stand for gender equality. This finding accords with other studies' observations, which showed that masculine cultural norms in HLIs tend to denigrate women in academia ([Gunawardena et al., 2006](#); [Lihamba et al., 2006](#); [Morley, 2006](#)).

Limitations

Two limitations emerged during the course of the research that are likely to influence the findings of this study. First, a number of the private institutions examined had limited information available on their websites relating to their gender mainstreaming activities and gender expertise among their staff. When the institutions were approached, some were unsure who exactly would be an appropriate participant for the study. In some cases, those selected by the institution to participate in the study had very little understanding of gender mainstreaming, the TCU requirements for all institutions to have a gender policy in place, and of the level of gender expertise in their institution. This could imply that some information may have been missed or that the institutions in question simply do not have these policies and expertise. Further study may be required to understand what is happening within their context.

Second, the persisting belief that gender is a matter of concern for women but not male academics means that the vast majority of participants engaging with the interviewers were female. Only two male voices contributed to our study. Further research may be required to explore male attitudes to gender mainstreaming in HE.

Conclusion

This study examined how HLIs understand, localize, and implement gender mainstreaming strategies through gender policies and practices. Employing a multi-site case study approach involving 14 HLI's in Tanzania, this study demonstrated that there are diverse approaches to the adoption and localization of gender equality policies in Tanzanian HLIs. Overall, it was found that gender mainstreaming outputs and efforts are quite unevenly spread in Tanzanian HLIs, with private institutions investing less time, effort, and resource in this area. We found some exciting initiatives in a number of public institutions, including investment in female scholarship and promotion. There is also an increasing and improving number of policies that focus not only on gender parity but also on transforming gender relations, including anti-sexual harassment policies and gender-sensitive hiring policies. While some universities describe gender activities as a process of information giving to its members to observe gender equality, e.g., addressing students during fresher's orientation some have gone far as giving various special trainings and courses and enhancing gender research capacities among its members. Further, the data shows gaps that are caused by overtly focusing on female students and not on academic staff, and on issues related to men and dominant masculinities. This means the approach is mostly to focus on 'fixing women' rather than the whole community approach.

Furthermore, resistance remains strong in some places with gender mainstreaming perceived to be a neo-colonial imperialist activity. Thus, our findings suggest that further effort and investment is required to drive transformative change in this sector. This study concurs with the literature that for transformation to take place in HLIs, gender intervention approaches should shift to more holistic gender responsive strategies that require whole-of-community and/or institutional response rather than a focus on women only strategies and 'fixing women' (Bailey & Drew, 2021; Hearn, 2021; Murphy et al., 2019).

Generally, based on the GTA, findings of this study indicate a disjointed and fragmented gender equality architecture exists within HLIs that is not sufficient to drive transformative changes. Although more than half of the participating HLIs had some kinds of gender equality policy, findings indicate that translation of these into action plans is limited, mainly focusing on issues of access, and thus ignoring socio-cultural factors.

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2 Exploring Female Academics Underrepresentation in Senior Leadership Positions

A Case of Public and Private Universities in Tanzania

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Introduction

Gender inequalities have been a global concern and on the agenda for development for decades. Female underrepresentation is most prominent in senior positions (Morley, 2013) – while women make up 39% of the world’s employed, only 27% of managerial positions globally were occupied by women in 2018 (Willis, 2018). Tanzanian universities are facing a significant challenge in terms of the availability of academic staff. With an ever-increasing demand for quality education and research, the current supply of qualified faculty members is inadequate to meet the growing needs of the student population, and females only make up 30% of the academic staff in the higher education sector (World Bank, 2020). A report on the subject names some universities that suffer from a shortage of academic staff, with some having an acute deficiency of up to the record-breaking 65%, while others only have a staff shortage as low as 2% (Citizen, 2021). The report notes that the shortage is more acute among females in both public and private universities, and more in privately run higher education institutions (HEIs). Data from the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) shows that the total number of academic staff currently teaching at various HEIs comprises 5,933 males and 2,523 females (TCU, 2021). It is interesting to note that there is roughly the same proportion of female academics in public and private institutions – about 30% in both (see Table 2.1). Despite the fact that more females are entering the teaching profession, top educational leadership positions are still being dominated by males (Fuller, 2017; Mukolwe et al., 2018) (Tables 2.2 and 2.3).

Data from the University of Dar es Salaam in the year 2020 for example indicate that there were only four female full professors out of 33 professors. The university employs 55 associate professors, of which 21 are women. In total, 30 of the 147 senior lecturers are female (University of Dar es Salaam, 2022). The situation is not much different in the same year at the Open University of Tanzania, where all full professors (three) are male, only one of the eight associate professors is a woman, and females make up 5% of the

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Table 2.1 Academic staff in university institutions by ownership and gender, 2021

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>Public</i>	<i>Total</i>
Male	1,908	4,025	5,933
Female	833	1,690	2,523
Total	2,741	5,715	8,456

Table 2.2 Academic staff by educational level by ownership

<i>Education level</i>	<i>Ownership of institution</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Public</i>	<i>% of the total</i>	<i>Private</i>	<i>% of the total</i>	
Doctorate	1,499	68.2	698	31.8	2,197
Masters	2,335	58.9	1,627	41.1	3,962
Bachelor	1,109	63.2	645	36.8	1,754
Advanced Diploma	42	66.7	36	33.3	18
Ordinary Diploma	152	71.3	79	28.7	171
Certificate	110	72.1	61	27.9	111
Grand Total	5,247	400.4	3,146	199.6	8,393

Source: TCU (2019).

Table 2.3 Male and female share of academic ranks in the selected universities

<i>All institutions</i>	<i>Actual number</i>	
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Rank		
Professor	11	0
Associate Professor	15	2
Senior Lecturer	48	31
Lecturer	76	62
Assistant Lecturer	341	230
Tutorial Assistant	31	22
Total	522	347

Source: Field Data (2021).

senior lecturers. Impressive, however, is the fact that at the Open University of Tanzania, there are more female than male regular lecturers ([Open University of Tanzania, 2021](#)). The context of education in Tanzania is marked by a distinct and deepening gendered imbalance, with young girls leaving the educational environment at higher rates than their male counterparts during the secondary school cycle, thus influencing the unequal participation rates of females at tertiary ([Mwita and Murphy, 2017](#)). The leaky pipeline commences earlier in the Tanzanian educational system with females occupying approximately only one-third of higher education places and comprising

approximately 30% of academic staff in higher learning institutions (HLIs) in Tanzania (World Bank, 2020).

In Tanzanian universities, seniority typically refers to the progression of academic staff members through various ranks based on their qualifications, teaching experience, research contributions, and service to the university. The steps to achieve seniority need one to move from Tutorial Assistantship which is the minimum educational requirement to be eligible for academic positions in Tanzanian universities with a bachelor's degree to Full Professor which is the highest rank. This rank is typically awarded to academics who have made outstanding and continuous contributions to teaching, research, and the university community (TCU, 2021). It is important to note that academic qualifications are a prerequisite for senior leadership positions, and the low number of females with higher academic rankings in Tanzania means that few women can obtain positions of leadership in HEIs (TCU, 2021).

Tanzania's education system is deeply rooted in cultural norms and traditions which continue to influence gender equality and female engagement throughout the higher educational cycle. Norms of patriarchal ideologies linking women to motherhood and care both within the domestic and professional spheres and men with independence, assertiveness, leadership, and dominance internalized, such that both women and men reproduce them through their practices and values, consequently shaping and influencing self-expectations and behaviours (Murphy et al., 2019).

Gender equality in this study refers to the opportunity of all people to pursue objectives, roles, and development paths they have reason to value and to remove barriers that inhibit them (Chisamya et al., 2012; Mwita and Murphy, 2017). The benefit of bringing gender equality to leadership positions is that it contributes to the overall development of a country. The government of Tanzania recognizes that among the major barriers to development is gender inequality (Bandiho, 2009). That is why efforts to address this problem have been expressed in various documents including the Labour law (2019), strategies, plans, and policies such as the Tanzania Development Vision (2025), National Five-Year Development Plan (2011–2016), and National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGR 2010–2015), Employment policy (2008), and the Women and Gender Development Policy (2000). The Government has also ratified regional and international commitments on gender equality and female empowerment and established the Ministry responsible for Gender in 2010. Moreover, the Tanzanian government is committed to the principles of involving all its citizens in participating effectively in the development of the country; and has signed all the international conventions aimed at eliminating discrimination against women (CEDAW). Scholars have repeatedly documented the benefits of having diverse perspectives around the leadership table (Longman, 2018). Thus, without gender equality, decisions are taken with less or without any input from females, which simultaneously results to decision-making that misses out on valuable insights and potential solutions that could lead to better outcomes because diverse teams tend to be more innovative

and creative as they draw from a wider pool of knowledge and experiences. Excluding female perspectives may limit the potential for innovative solutions to complex problems.

Despite the existence of these policies, strategies and legal frameworks, achievements have been very modest to date (Mukangara and Shao, 2008; Razavi, 2016). The education sector, for example, is among the sectors that exhibits acute underrepresentation of women in leadership in Tanzania (Bandiho, 2009; Omboko and Oyoo, 2011). Therefore, this chapter intends to explore reasons for female academics' underrepresentation in senior leadership positions in private and public Tanzanian universities. More specifically, this study aspires to:

- a To explore female academics representation in senior leadership positions in Tanzania
- b To investigate factors that hinder female representation in senior leadership positions in HLIs in Tanzania.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality was used as a theoretical and analytical framework that helps to understand how various social identities, such as gender, age, class, sexuality, disability, and others, intersect and interact to shape an individual's experiences and opportunities within society. It was first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar and critical race theorist, in the late 1980s. When applying an intersectionality lens, it was recognized that gender is not experienced in isolation but rather intersects with other aspects of a person's identity. This means that the experiences of marginalisation and oppression are shaped not just by gender but also by factors such as age, religion, sexual orientation, and so on. By considering the interplay of various social identities, we can better grasp the complexity of social inequalities and tailor more inclusive and effective policies and practices to address them (Mendoza and Kim, 2019).

Onsongo (2006) further notes that feminist theories highlight three broad perspectives when trying to explain the general absence of women in senior management or leadership positions. The first perspective is personal factors, in which their paucity in management positions is attributed to psychological attributes including personality characteristics, attitudes and behavioural skills of women themselves. Some of the personal factors that facilitate and/or constrain women to take on leadership positions include self-esteem and self-confidence, lack of motivation, less assertiveness, low emotional stability and lack of ability to handle crises (Ademe and Singh, 2015; Onsongo, 2006). On the other hand, researchers around the world have identified institutional and societal factors like the "glass ceiling", gender discrimination and sexual harassment, organizational culture, work and family balance conflict, lack of

education, lack of mentoring, lack of role models, inadequate knowledge or competence, lack of work support, and lack of equity in pay and training as contributors to women's underrepresentation (Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016; Islam et al., 2018; Mbepera, 2015; Morley, 2014; Rijal and Wasti, 2018; Shepherd, 2017; Tarimo and Swai, 2020).

This theory also examines the intersectionality of social class, race, sexuality, ableism, age, and religion that help complexity and destroy the boundaries of what Martino (2008, p 11) calls "essentialist mindsets". This refers to the belief that certain attributes, behaviours, and roles are inherently and exclusively associated with specific genders. For instance, in this context, there is the assumption that women are naturally better suited for caregiving roles or that men are inherently more competent in leadership positions. These essentialist mindsets reduce gender to an outcome of biology, thereby reproducing patriarchal relations of power. Moreover, it seeks to address structural inequalities (Cumings Mansfield et al., 2010) that produce and reproduce everyday inequities (Branscombe and Smith, 1990). The theory supports the premise that women, particularly those of other minorities, are situated within the gender order in ways that exclude them from the ruling apparatus of society (Connell, 2006).

An intersectionality informed feminist approach was selected to recognize and challenge essentialist thinking, foster critical thinking, and embrace diverse perspectives and identities. Creating an open and respectful learning environment that appreciates individual differences can lead to a more enriching and empowering educational experience for everyone involved.

Methodology

To understand the issues behind the underrepresentation of female academics in HLI, this study employs a qualitative approach. This approach is also guided by interpretivism, which stresses that people have different views of phenomena due to their unique interpretations. In order to capture different views and explain why people think the way they do, a qualitative approach was identified as the best choice to conduct this study, due to its strength to collect in-depth information based on the experiences, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours of individuals (Alase, 2017). This study also adopts a multiple-case study design, as the findings provided in multiple case studies is considered more rich and reliable than single case studies (Yin, 2011).

This research was conducted in Tanzania, which is located in East Africa. Within Tanzania, four universities were included in the study. The selection of these universities considered the following criteria: accreditation status, age of the institution, geographical location, and ownership. Moreover, the reasons for this selection are that, apart from the fact that they are the biggest and oldest universities, number of females in the senior leadership positions were low (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Actual number of senior leaders by gender in selected universities by 2020

<i>Gender</i>	<i>University A</i>	<i>University B</i>	<i>University C</i>	<i>University D</i>
Male	43	35	58	34
Female	11	02	13	6
Total	54	37	71	40

Source: Prospectus of irrespsective university (2019/2020).

Where University A and C are publicly owned; University B and D are privately owned.

The target population for this study consists of all female and male leaders in the respective institutions. This was due to the fact that they were considered to offer relevant information and knowledge on their experiences about the issue that was being studied. The study sample consisted of 48 participants, see [Table 2.5](#).

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants of the study. This technique allows the researcher to select and access participants with an adequate knowledge of the underrepresentation of female academics in senior leadership positions in Tanzanian universities (Yin, 2011). Two types of purposive sampling were used: criterion and convenience sampling techniques. Criterion sampling involved selection of senior university administrators and female leaders who were believed to provide valuable insights or in-depth information on the issue. Criteria set were only those who were in senior leadership positions during the time of the study. Convenience sampling was applied to academic staff based on their availability. It was difficult getting all members of academic staff in a focus group discussion (FDG) as during the time of data collection, universities were on break and field study. So instead of 28 academic staff the researcher was able to get 20 academic staff for group discussion in the four universities.

This study utilized three methods: semi-structured interviews, FDGs, and documentary reviews. Combining semi-structured interviews and FDGs in one research project enhanced the validity and depth of the study by capturing individual experiences and group dynamics, ultimately leading to more comprehensive and insightful findings. All interviews were recorded and

Table 2.5 Sample size of the study

<i>Sample category</i>	<i>Target sample</i>	<i>Actual sample</i>
DVC/Principals	4	4
Deans/Directors/HODs	16	16
Female leaders	4	4
HRM	4	4
Academic staff	28 (7 in each university)	20
Grand total	52	48

transcribed. All in all, the employed methods enabled the collection of complete and reliable information and the obtainment of a clear picture of the study problem.

For the purpose of protecting the participants, this research was subjected to ethical approval and compliant with General Data Protection Regulations and the Research Review Board of the University of Dar es Salaam. Clearance letters helped the researcher get access to the institutions. The researcher prepared informed consent forms to be filled out and signed by the individuals who consented to participate in the study. These forms contained information about the purpose, participant's rights and their privacy. To secure anonymity, participating universities are referred to as University A, B, C, and D where university A and C are public and B and D are private universities. Semi-structured interviews in this study involved the deputy vice-chancellors/principals, faculty deans, directors/coordinators, female leaders, and human resource officers. Before the interview sessions, participants were assured of confidentiality. Each interview session lasted for 20–40 minutes. With the interviewees' consent, the interview sessions were recorded to supplement the manual note-taking. The recorded interviews were then transcribed to safeguard against bias and afford a record of generated data.

Once the dates had been arranged for face-to-face and online interviews, the data was collected until saturation level had been reached. The starting time of data collection in the field depended on getting the approved ethical clearance. All these were done based on the principles of research ethics and the consent given. With regard to the questions, they were prepared in English taking into consideration that the medium of instruction at the HLIs was English and all the participants had good English language proficiency. However, the researcher met some respondents who preferred to use Swahili instead. So the researcher had to translate the questions and the following day the session took place. Communication with the participants was done in person and online mode through Zoom meetings.

The study conducted a thematic analysis of the dataset. Deductive and inductive approaches were used to generate a codebook and later develop the categories. The deductive approach involved developing a list of codes based on the research objectives, literature and theory. In this case, the research questions played a crucial role in the initial development of the deductive codes. The inductive approach was based on rereading the subset of the interviews and Focus Group transcripts and developing codes based on the data. For insightful data analysis, [Braun and Clarke \(2006\)](#) generally recommend that researchers collect data themselves and also participate in transcribing the data. Apart from the collection of data, the researcher in this study also transcribed the audio data herself as another preliminary step in grasping of and familiarising with the data. The researcher then read and re-read the manual-taken field notes and the interview and group discussion transcripts in their entirety numerous times. Finally, this report was written and produced. It is essential to note that computer software that facilitates

the analysis of qualitative data such as NVivo 12 was used during this data analysis.

Findings and Discussion

Female Academics Representation in Senior Leadership Positions

The first objective of the study was to explore the representation of female academics in senior leadership positions. The study findings indicate that 34% of the individuals holding senior leadership positions are female. This means that out of the total number of people in leadership roles, approximately one-third are women. Comparing this percentage to historical data or industry benchmarks it shows that there has been slight progress in promoting gender diversity in leadership positions. This indicates efforts to address gender disparities in the selected universities. However, if this percentage remains low, and it suggests ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity in leadership roles. The government of Tanzania calls for the 50/50 principle in all sectors of development including higher education (TPDP, 2021). See the number of senior leaders in the visited universities in [Table 2.6](#).

During interviews, the female leader in University A commented:

Mmh in the case of female participation in leadership, we are with very few because for one to be a VC, for instance he/she needs to be a professor. Now, how many women professors are there?

– Case 22, University A, Age group: 50–59,
Education: PhD, Sex: Female, Tool: interview

This quotation suggests that low representation of women professors might be indicative of broader pipeline issues within the academic system. It could be a result of various factors, including historical gender biases, lack of opportunities, and challenges in career progression for women in academia. It further implies that the requirement of being a professor to become a vice chancellor creates a barrier for women to ascend to top leadership positions in academia. If there are few women professors, it naturally limits the number of eligible female candidates for the vice chancellor role.

Table 2.6 Actual number of senior leaders in the selected universities by 2022

<i>University</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
A	6	20	26
B	4	12	16
C	12	33	45
D	4	14	18

Source: Field Data (2022).

Factors Affecting Female Academics Underrepresentation in Senior Positions in Public and Private Universities

The second objective of the study was to explore the factors affecting representation of female academics in senior leadership positions. The findings obtained indicated four intersecting categories of factors: systemic factors, institutional factors, individual factors and socio-cultural factors across all universities that is public and private universities.

Systemic Factors

The underrepresentation of females in senior positions in Tanzanian universities is influenced by various systemic factors. These factors are often deeply ingrained in the social, cultural, and organizational structures, and they hinder the progress of women in academic leadership roles. The study found that ever-changing cultural ideologies that ignore women or favour men might have contributed negatively to both access to education among women, as well as educational leadership. The significant gap observed in universities indicates that the progression of females through the education system is hindered at higher levels. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the “leaky pipeline” or “gender funnel”, where the number of females decreases as they advance to higher levels of education as one respondent noted:

The problem starts emerging from our system, when you look at the reality you find many girls and women in the lower levels of education, sometimes even the same number of males and females but when you come to universities you see a very big gap.

– Case 44; University D, Age group: 40–50,
Education: PhD, Sex: male, Tool: interview

This is supported by studies like that of [Garg \(2012\)](#), ([Monroe and Chiu, 2010](#)); which found that leaky pipeline issues hinder female advancement to leadership positions.

These systemic factors impact the equality of academic staff in both private and public universities, leading to disparities in opportunities, career advancement, and representation. These factors create a complex web of challenges that affect academic staff members differently based on their gender, religion, and other demographic characteristics. For instance in private university when responding to a question a director of human resources remarked:

of course it is true as I have given example, our faith for example the catholic faith says a woman cannot be a priest therefore a woman can never be a chancellor.

– Case 22, University B, Age group: 50–59, Education: Masters,
Sex: Male, Position: DHRM, Title: Mr. Tool: interview

This implies that systemic biases in hiring and recruitment processes can result in underrepresentation or marginalization of certain groups within an institution. Discriminatory practices may hinder diverse candidates from accessing academic positions.

Institutional Factors

Thematic analysis found that institutional factors in all visited universities contribute to female academics' underrepresentation. About 26 female respondents out of 35 respondents expressed that a lack of academic qualifications are a major contributing factor to female underrepresentation in senior leadership positions in both public and private Tanzanian universities. The academic cadre in most of universities is made up of junior academic staff mostly holding a Master degree as the highest qualification. For instance, almost a half (47.7%) of all academic staff in Universities hold master's degree as their highest qualification although an Assistant Lecturer is allowed to teach Bachelor's degree students the minimum qualification for university academic staff is a PhD in the relevant field (TCU, 2019). This study has found that 58.6% of academic staff in public universities hold master's degree while 41.1% of academic staff in private universities are master's holders and has the largest percentage of all academics. And the situation is worsened when it comes to female academics as a study participant said:

Retaining staff with highest qualification is a way to get more educators in Higher Learning Institutions, but when it comes to recruiting them, the majority of those who are going to be recruited because there are criteria that have to be followed you find again very few females with the right qualifications.

(sic) – Case 24; University B; Female; 50–59 years;
Director Postgraduate Tool: interview

This response indicates that academic qualifications act as a filtering mechanism that influences the representation of females in senior leadership positions in universities. While academic qualifications are essential criteria for assessing candidates' knowledge and expertise, they can inadvertently create barriers for women to advance to leadership roles. Another respondent further said:

... you cannot promote someone who is not there. To become a Vice Chancellor you need to be a full professor, to become Deputy Vice Chancellor you need to be Associate Professor, to be a Principal you need to be Associate Professor, to be the Head of Department you need to be a Senior Lecturer. If there are no Senior Lecturers you can go for lecturers, but you need a Senior Lecturer, now if I have a Senior Lecturer who is a male and I don't have a female Senior Lecturer what can I do?

– Case 40; University C; Male; 40–50 years; Senior Lecturer

This is in line with literature, which has found that women in academia are more likely than men to be in lower-ranked positions (Adom and Bagilishya, 2019; Basse, 2018; Morley, 2013, 2014). In his article the leaderist turn, Morley calls for a shift towards valuing and promoting specific leadership qualities and styles that align with traditional masculine traits, such as assertiveness, competition, and decisiveness. This shift tends to prioritize individuals who fit these leadership norms, often resulting in a lack of diversity in leadership positions, particularly for women.

Moreover, of the 22 respondents, 14 females said that administrative activities are burdens to their academic career development. Administrative activities the study found in both private and public universities impose burdens on academic career development for faculty members. While administrative responsibilities are essential for the smooth functioning of universities, they can sometimes detract from academics' ability to focus on their teaching, research, and professional growth. Administrative tasks, such as committee work, program coordination, or budget management, can be time-consuming and divert faculty members' time and energy from their academic pursuits. This can limit the time available for research, teaching preparation, and other scholarly activities as one leader with a deanship role stated:

... because of administrative positions that I have been dealing with, I didn't have much time to write papers because to be promoted ... one has to publish and to attend international conferences. Because of this position I do not have time to sit and write books and all that, but within six years I managed to have at least a few papers and two books published internationally. That is when I was promoted as Senior Lecturer, and because I achieved that level I maintained the position of Dean because I then qualified for it.

– Case 2; University D; Female; 40–49 years;
Position: Dean, Faculty of Business

This quote shows that engaging in administrative activities can reduce the amount of time faculty members have to dedicate to research. Consequently, they may publish fewer research papers, which could impact their ability to gain recognition and advance in their academic careers. The focus on administrative responsibilities may not be adequately recognized in promotion to senior roles. The fact that more females 63.6% express concerns about administrative roles hindering their career development suggests that women may face additional barriers or challenges in administrative positions compared to their male counterparts. This could indicate a gender bias in how administrative responsibilities are assigned, perceived, or valued within the institution. The disproportionate complaints from females about administrative roles may reflect specific work-life balance challenges faced by women in academia. Juggling administrative responsibilities with research, teaching, and family commitments can be particularly overwhelming for female academics and it could

further discourage women from pursuing leadership roles. These findings concur with those of [Khan and Siriwardhane \(2021\)](#) and O'Meara et al. (2017), who argue that academics globally have been confronted with workload challenges that have brought significant workload changes. These changes have a great impact on career progression for women.

Additionally, 12 females that is over 60% out of 20 respondents reported poor institutional environment and support as a contributing factor to female underrepresentation in top leadership positions in Tanzanian HEIs. However, the institutional environment varied depending on the university, although there are also some commonalities among institutions. Institutional favouritism and violations of the appointment procedures were observed mostly in private universities. Appointment procedures such as voting can be overturned and votes rejected by top management. The institution may therefore easily appoint a candidate based on personal preferences of those in the board. In other words, qualifications and experiences may be ignored in this case. A study respondent noted:

Sometimes you may be having all the qualifications and experiences and you are capable of working, but someone at the higher top position may not choose you because you are not a friend or you are not from a well-known family or because of any other reason ... In our department we were given the chance to select a Dean. Only four contestants were contesting for that position and the majority of us wanted a particular candidate who was female, but the management wanted a different person. Sometimes they look for someone they know they are comfortable of working with, so we selected a different person but they said we understand that you preferred candidate X but we think we can work with candidate Y. Although they both had the same qualifications, they picked the one that we didn't want.

– Case 28; University A; Female; 30–40 years;
Title: Masters Tool: FGD

As such, senior leadership positions are often influenced by factors other than academic qualifications. Participants mentioned family background and history, and management's interests as factors contributing to whether or not one can become a top leader in academic institutions. This finding is contrary to those of TCU (2021) and [Khan and Siriwardhane, \(2021\)](#), who maintain that the system of academic promotion is merit-based and requires the achievement of adequate research output and performance. Our findings however, show that men are preferred candidates. Nepotism is severe, especially in the private sector.

Furthermore, traditional views of gender roles persist and potential for female leadership is often overlooked leading to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and the overlooking of their potential for leadership. This phenomenon is often referred to as the “glass ceiling”, which is

an invisible barrier that prevents women from advancing to higher levels of leadership despite their qualifications and capabilities. University leadership as seen in [Table 2.6](#) above, positions are often occupied by men, leading to male-dominated decision-making structures. This lack of gender diversity can perpetuate traditional views and limit opportunities for women to influence decision-making and advance into leadership roles. One senior leader reported:

Apart from the services we provide, we also depend on fees for running the institution; I cannot put a female leader in a position, especially when I know she is at the age of marriage or childbirth. That will make me lose her when I need her to perform administrative duties, but when I know she is through with family obligations it is okay.

– Case 19, University D; Male; 40–49; PhD: interview

This shows that structures and practices support male domination knowingly or unknowingly. A lack of diversity and inclusive policies can perpetuate traditional views and inhibit change. This observation was also indicated by [Nielsen \(2017\)](#) who notes that the patriarchal oppression and the mobilization of bias effectively silence women's demands to leadership. Patriarchal societies often perpetuate gender stereotypes that portray women as less capable, emotional, or lacking in leadership qualities. These stereotypes can lead to biased expectations, undermining women's confidence in their leadership abilities and deterring them from aspiring to leadership roles ([Udofia and Arthur, 2018](#); [Yieke, 2020](#)).

Individual Factors

About 20 females out of 27 respondents expressed that unreadiness and a lack of confidence is part of the cause of female academics' underrepresentation in top leadership in HLIs. Unreadiness includes refusal to take up leadership positions because of fear, or a lack of absence or interest in leadership positions:

... I was not ready to take up the position but I told them I will have to take it after they insisted.

– Case 30; University A; Female; 40–50; PhD; Tool: interview

However, academic staff also complained that females refuse to take up positions just because they are not confident enough while they are in fact qualified.

I think the attitude that women themselves have, because I know some women who have been approached to take certain position, but they refused completely so sometimes they need to build self-confidence.

– Case 22; University B; Male; 50–59; Position: Director of Human Resources Management

These findings imply that when women do not feel prepared or confident to take on leadership roles, it can perpetuate a gender imbalance in decision-making processes. This imbalance may result in policies and strategies that do not fully consider the perspectives and needs of diverse stakeholders. Lack of confidence in senior leadership roles can limit women's career progression within the organization. They may hesitate to seek opportunities for career advancement, resulting in slower career growth compared to their male counterparts. Studies have shown that women tend to underestimate their abilities and qualifications compared to men, even when their actual performance is equally strong. These findings correspond with those of [Mukolwe et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Mbogela and Kanukisya \(2021\)](#) who argued that female leaders did not see themselves as leaders, mainly due to low self-esteem and confidence gap between male and female staff. Ironically, self-confidence is a key factor to a leadership journey. If the female academic is not ready for leadership positions, the institution will have a hard time achieving gender equality in positions of leadership.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Socio-cultural barriers significantly impact female advancement to senior roles in both private and public universities. These barriers are shaped by cultural norms, societal expectations, and traditional gender roles, which can create obstacles for women pursuing academic careers and leadership positions. Intersectionality influences cultural expectations and norms regarding women's roles in society and academia. Cultural norms place greater emphasis on domestic roles, limiting women's time and energy for pursuing academic advancement. This study found that the demand for equal distribution of social reproductive activities, which is necessary in order to spend more time on academic qualifications, may lead to disagreements or even divorce. Females often worry about keeping their families intact. A study participant said:

... I have said some of the issues are not solved by the regulations, but if you force regulations on me, that I should divide domestic chores equally with my wife. Then I will divorce her and find someone else because social structure is the most important thing to me. I am the father, you are the mother, it is there and you will never change that ...

– Case 40; University C; Male; 40–50 years;
Senior Lecturer; Tool: FGD

Social structures influence the organizational culture within universities, shaping attitudes and practices that hinder equal representation in senior roles. While institutional regulations seek to promote gender equality and challenge traditional gender roles, the social structures of family and community may adhere to deeply ingrained gender norms and practices. The structures prioritize women's roles as caregivers and homemakers within the family and

community. Conflicts can arise when women face pressure to prioritize family responsibilities over their careers. While the researcher acknowledges that conflicts are inevitable; a nuanced approach that acknowledges the cultural context and the importance of engaging with families and communities to promote gender equality should be applied.

Results in this study signify that societal structures and practices support male domination and silence women's potential aspirations towards leadership. These structures and practices are deeply rooted in historical and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequalities and hinder women's progress in leadership roles. Societal structures often prescribe specific gender roles and reinforce stereotypes about leadership like associating leadership with assertiveness and competitiveness, characteristics that are typically attributed to masculinity, while undervaluing qualities associated with femininity like less capable of handling high-pressure situations, these perpetuate gender biases in leadership roles. As one leader said when responding to a question why females are not in senior positions:

'I had a dean who couldn't manage her office, after her maternity we would call her for different issues that required her attention but her phone was always switched off' with a laughter ...

– Case 33, University D; 50–59; Position: Director; Tool: interview

Therefore, this study discovered that the main causes of low female representation in academic leadership roles include a lack of social support and inspiration, male dominance, traditional gender stereotypes, as well as networking and self-image. These observations align with those of [Tarimo and Swai \(2020\)](#) and [Mbepera \(2015\)](#), who note that socio-cultural factors silence women's demands to leadership.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite attempts to enhance gender equality in Tanzanian HEIs, the total number of women in academic leadership roles remains low in both private and public universities. This study aimed to explore the extent of the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership positions and investigate the factors that impede Tanzanian female academics in their journey towards obtaining high academic status. In order to determine the factors and structures that contribute to the subjugation of women in top leadership positions in HEIs, this study was guided by Intersectionality feminist theory. A multiple case study approach was applied to four universities in Tanzania. At each university, semi-structured interviews, FDGs, and documentary reviews were conducted to capture the perspectives and opinions of male and female academic leaders.

The study found that only 34% of all academic leaders in Tanzanian higher education are female. Factors contributing to the underrepresentation of women include socio-cultural expectations, institutional ethos, individual

factors, and harmful gender stereotypes. The study further observed the mismatch between national policies and their actual implementation at the university level. Although the TCU emphasizes equal participation in tertiary education, national laws and policies that aim to achieve this are not well implemented.

In order to facilitate gender equity in Tanzanian HLLs, we call for a gender sensitive workplace that recognizes the overt and covert, as well as the individual and structural biases that prevent women from assuming leadership roles and reaching their full potential. Universities in Tanzania must go beyond mere acknowledgement of need for attention to existing inequalities, and must instead address the different needs, aspirations, capacities, and contributions of female and male academicians in order to transform in higher education.

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3 Exploring the Gendered Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Academic Staff in Tanzania¹

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Introduction

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 caused a serious interruption to all sectors and communities. The first case of COVID-19 on the African continent was identified in Egypt on February 14 (Ihekweazu and Agogo 2020). It quickly spread to other countries over the following weeks and months; the disease emerged in Tanzania on March 16, 2020 (Masubo 2020). In response to the virus, various African governments took measures to protect their populations by temporarily closing their borders, implementing nationwide lockdowns that closed their public and private industries and services, and establishing systems of isolation and quarantine until the dynamics of the virus were understood and controlled. Educational and research institutions and facilities were also directly affected. To respond to the closures, some universities moved to online teaching and learning, whereas others suspended teaching activities temporarily.

As lockdown measures were introduced, evidence began to emerge about differential gender experiences and effects of the disease and of these public policy responses. Mortality rates seem to be higher among males (World Health Organization [WHO] 2020); yet females were more likely to experience harmful indirect effects of the lockdowns, such as increases in gender-based violence; caring responsibilities, which included home-schooling duties due to the closing of educational facilities; and limitations due to inadequate technological infrastructure (WHO 2020). In the world of science and research, evidence also began to emerge about the ways in which the gender differential impacts of COVID-19 measures affected research capacities, as research outputs from men increased and women's outputs, in many countries, decreased significantly (Pinho-Gomes et al. 2020; Sills 2020).

These gendered differences could be attributed to lockdown and academics moving to a work-from-home model that resulted in both male and female

¹ Permission to re-publish secured from Alliance for African Partnerships, Michigan State University.

researchers facing competing demands between their professional and personal roles. Lockdown directly increased the need to spend time on parenting, home schooling, and other caring duties. Yet persistent patriarchal structures in most counties resulted in women typically providing care in the home and being expected to balance this work with their professional roles. Thus, a narrative swiftly emerged suggesting that female academics were distinctly disadvantaged by COVID-19 lockdowns and closures as public health measures pushed the responsibility for caring and education back into the household. The increase in time women spent caring led to a decrease the time they could spend engaging in their research work and other professional duties.

However, as gender and feminist researchers have argued for many decades, broad generalizations about the situationally sensitive and socially constructed nature of gender norms, values, relations, and regimes can mask the distinct experiences of different populations encapsulated within this simple gender binary. As a result, smaller-scale, in-depth analyses of the experiences of communities is required to unpack and explore the specific gendered nature and characterizations of the lived experiences of active academics through this period. To engage in this work, we explored the experiences of male and female academics employed at two universities in Tanzania. We conducted 15 key-informant interviews with academic staff around two core themes: (1) care and coping mechanisms as they affect research activities, and (2) work-life balance. The goal of this work was to better understand if and how university closures and the public health measures, in particular in the form of the lockdown between March and June 2020, affected academics' abilities to engage in research. In the following section, we provide insights into the Tanzanian education context and how gender affects women's participation in this realm. We follow this with a brief discussion of the theoretical framework and methodological approach used in the study, followed by a discussion of the findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.

The Tanzanian Educational Context

Tanzania's educational context is marked by a distinct gendered imbalance with young girls leaving their studies at higher rates than their male counterparts during secondary school. Their early departure results in a gender imbalance in institutions of higher learning (MoEST 2016; Mwita and Murphy 2017), which in turn results in approximately only 30% of academic posts at Tanzanian universities being held by women. Research on gender in the African educational system has shown that girls and women's experiences in Tanzania's educational sector can be explained by deeply rooted cultural norms and traditions continuing to influence gender inequity and limited female engagement throughout higher education (Mama 2003; Morley 2010). Experiences of sexual harassment and the sexualization of staff and students are common (Morley 2011; Mukama 2017) and norms of patriarchal ideologies often link women to motherhood and care in both domestic and professional spheres.

In contrast, these norms often link men to notions of independence, assertiveness, leadership, and dominance, and women and men reproduce these norms through their practices and values, which as a result shape and influence their self-expectations and behaviour (Murphy et al. 2019).

These norms then play out in the higher education and research spaces. For example, Massawe and Sife (2020) found that gender gaps can be seen across all academic ranks with more women than men occupying lower academic ranks and being proportionality underrepresented at all other levels of the academy hierarchy. Much work has been done on gender mainstreaming (Morley 2011) and targeted initiatives, such as affirmative action (Lihamba, Mwaipopo, and Shule 2006), to address these inequities. Yet it is uncertain whether such initiatives have had a transformative effect on the structure and dynamics of gender relations and expectations within academic institutions (Darkwa et al. forthcoming). This context provides a scene against which the effects of a major event such as COVID-19 can be examined. It also provides insight into the situation-sensitive nature of gender norms, values, relations, and expectations within this space. Rich, context-specific research is essential to inform studies seeking to examine the effects of public health measures and a major public health threat on a population and to devise effective public-health policies in the future.

Literature Review

Work-Life Balance

The outbreak of COVID-19 undoubtedly had an immediate impact on the work-life balance of working populations, causing significant disruptions. According to Kirchmeyer (2000), work-life balance refers to the process of attaining satisfying experiences in both personal and professional domains. It plays a crucial role in personal well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity, whether in market-based or non-market based contexts (McGinnity and Russell 2015). Extensive research consistently demonstrates that work pressure or work stress, which often involves time constraints and job demands, strongly influences work-family conflict (Gallie and Russell 2009; McGinnity and Russell, 2015). Previous studies have also revealed that the presence of children, especially young children, in the family exacerbates work-life conflict (Bianchi and Milkie 2010).

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, when individuals were instructed to work from home, there was an immediate advantage for everyone as commuting time was eliminated from their daily schedules. However, the ability to work from home is contingent upon various non-work factors, such as the availability of a suitable workspace at home, other demands on that space, and the competing demands on one's time by other users of the same space. Consequently, early evidence suggests that COVID-19 has indeed impacted work-life balance, but the specific effects are diverse and multifaceted, necessitating a

comprehensive examination of the interplay between space and time (McGinnity and Russell 2015).

Care and Coping Mechanisms

According to Kitchener's (2020) research, the gendered inequalities associated with the division of care and domestic labour is collective and structural. However, public understanding of this issue in the academic context seems to be focused on how women are individually managing the challenges of COVID-19. Nash and Churchill (2020) conducted a review of public information from 41 Australian universities regarding remote working and care supports. Their findings suggest that during the pandemic, universities have shifted the responsibility of care supports, leave arrangements, and flexible working to individual academics as a "private" matter. This approach places the burden on women to design their own solutions, ignoring the prevailing social structures and norms that allocate a higher degree of responsibility to women and mothers over men and fathers. Nash and Churchill (2020) concluded that universities have evaded their responsibility to ensure women's full participation in the labour force. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided another context in which this issue has been ignored.

Research Capacities and Outputs

Pinho-Gomes et al. (2020) discovered that women are underrepresented in authorship positions and are less likely to occupy the first or last author positions, which are crucial for career advancement. Their analysis of two decades of publications in high-impact medical journals revealed that only 34% of articles had female first authors. Additionally, the study found that the number of female first authors in infectious disease publications decreased by 4% from 1994 to 2014 (Filardo, da Graca, Sass, et al. 2016). During the COVID-19 pandemic, publishers reported an increase in publications from male academic researchers, leading to discussions about gender roles and stereotypes. There is also anecdotal evidence suggesting that women are submitting fewer papers to peer-reviewed journals than men (Kitchener 2020). However, it is unclear whether the disruptions to work-life balance caused by the pandemic have had differential gendered effects on academic researchers. While the narrative in 2020 suggested that women were disproportionately affected, it is important to recognize that gender norms and experiences are socially constructed and situational. Blasko et al. (2020) argue that the crisis presents an opportunity to challenge unequal gender relations, but evidence in the European context has been discouraging. Therefore, this study aims to understand the assumption that female academics are uniquely disadvantaged by COVID-19 measures, resulting in a disruption to their work-life balance care and decreased research productivity.

A Feminist Relational Framework

Focusing on macro-level data and numeric indicators, such as the number of publications and citations, are extremely important to understanding meta-trends. They do not provide insights into the systems of power and hierarchy, oppression, and domination in which individuals are situated and lives are lived. Thus, we employed a feminist relational theoretical approach to “uncover the governing norms and practices that sustain inequalities of various sorts” (Koggel 2013, 249). A relational approach allows researchers to examine the interactions and interconnections between different spaces and dimensions. It allows for the tracing of the effects (work-life balance; care and social relations) following the introduction of specifiable public health policies on a specific domain of activity (research capacity). This requires exploring not only the specific intentions of the policy (increase or decrease in transmission rates of the virus) but also the unintended effects of the policy as it is refracted through pre-existing social structures and systems.

Methodology

Our study sought to understand the lived experiences of academics in Tanzania during the national lockdown and university closures. We selected a qualitative methodology because such an approach allowed us to engage with participants to learn about their experiences through their own voices. Our study sites were two public universities located in densely populated urban parts of Dar es Salaam, in the commercial heartland and capital city of Tanzania. We employed stratified sampling to select 15 participants from those willing to participate to ensure that the diversity of institutional profiles would be reflected in the findings, and to ensure that similar numbers of male and female participants, senior and less-senior academics across all faculties were included. Academic staff from different disciplines at different stages of their careers were invited to participate in interviews to gather insights into the gendered experiences and effects of COVID-19 public health measures on their work-life balance, care and coping mechanisms, and research activities.

Once participants were selected, in-person, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each individual, with each lasting for approximately one hour. Our study had ethics approval from both universities, and we engaged in a thorough informed consent process with each participant prior to conducting each interview. This process was particularly important because the study invited individuals to reflect on how the country’s COVID-19 public health measures affected their personal well-being, work-life balance, and professional capacities – issues that could be highly personal and sensitive. Thus, it was imperative that all efforts be made to avoid being overly intrusive, raising sensitive matters, or underestimating the effects of reliving this experience. Many participants noted that they had loved ones affected

by the virus. Thus, all efforts were taken by the researchers to ensure that participants were supported through the process and harm was avoided as they relived this time. After interviews were conducted, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, anonymized, coded, and then analysed independently by two members of the research team. The researchers then jointly undertook a thematic review of the data and selected key themes for deeper analysis.

Positionality

The research team is composed of a team located across two countries. All data collection was led and managed by the Tanzanian research team. Thus, data collection was undertaken by inside academics who themselves lived through the public health measures. In this respect, the researcher team are very much participants in the research process. The insider status of the research team also ensured firstly, distinct knowledge of the research permissions process within Tanzanian higher education institutions; secondly enhanced access to participants; thirdly, as all had been through a shared experience, this deepened the ability of the research team to enquire more insightful questions due to possession of background knowledge, ability to collect authentic and thick data due to an understanding of the culture, language and non-verbal cues and ability to gain more trust and honest answers (Bourke 2014; Dwyer and Buckle 2009). Sharing similar experience with those of the participants enhanced the understanding of gendered effect of COVID-19 on care and family relation, research, and work-life balance for academic staff.

Results and Discussion

The study explores three themes: work-life balance, caring and coping mechanisms during the COVID-19 crisis, and on research capacities and outputs as explained here under.

Effect on Work-Life Balance

When the first cases of COVID-19 were first declared in mid-March 2020, the government followed the international trend first established in China, or closing schools and universities, and issuing “stay-at-home” orders. All academic participants in the study noted that their children had returned home from their schools, in some cases to continue learning on-line, and in other cases without this option available. The universities within this study brought under-graduate teaching to a stop during this period, but graduate teaching and supervision continued through on line mechanisms. All of the participants in the study noted that they had suitable spaces to work from within their homes, but Internet connection was a significant struggle, thus

interfering in their ability to access online papers and to retain on-going projects and collaborations. All noted that the suspension of undergraduate teaching and the removal of commuting time to the campus resulted in additional time. For male participants in particular, this marked an opportunity to engage in their research and non-teaching and service-related activities. For the majority of female participants, this additional time was spent supporting children and families with their adjustments to the public health measures.

The data revealed clear gender differences in how participants responded to changes in their work-life circumstances with regard to time and space. Two distinct ways were identified: firstly, the ability to separate oneself from daily circumstances and concentrate on academic research and writing; and secondly, in terms of self-regarding and other-regarding concerns, specifically in the area of compartmentalization. Male participants appeared to adapt more rapidly to the new circumstances and take advantage of the additional time and supported spaces available to them, as reported by one participant.

my working routine was disrupted in terms of institutional activities, but I think this was a better time for me to do my person work unlike if I would have come to work every day maybe going to classroom lectures For me it was a kind of blessing.

(M.PAR.8)

For this participant, when everyone had settled into their new routines, they were able to progress with their research.

when I am doing my work, I have given them (family) the directives that when I am working, everyone knows that I am working so I don't get any disruptions I have already put myself away from children's disruptions.

(M.PAR.8)

Another male participant, due their own age and health profile, noted their particular concern to engage in the lock-down to protect himself or herself from the virus. However, when in lock-down, they demonstrated an ability to abstract themselves from fear, stress and concern for their well-being or matters related to the virus, and focus instead on their research activity. When asked what additional activities they undertook during this period at home, the responded "*writing my articles in collaboration with my co-workers, that was the only thing I could do*" (M.PAR.3).

On the other hand, female participants indicated that they were much less likely to compartmentalize in this way, and indeed indicated that they invested this additional time in the well-being of the children, supporting their husbands. In a sense, the female participants seemed to absorb the stress of others, demonstrating tendencies to be other-regarding, rather than using the

additional time to progress their research, and thus their own careers. For example, the following female participant noted,

... after seeing that the pandemic had widely spread A big problem aroused after having heard of people dying ... so, it was like, let us say, the stress level increased ... it really affected me for sure because I had work to do, and every time with that stress it was impossible to work because sometimes I could get a hold of my laptop to at least write something but a few minutes after, I could hear some news, a message pops up and there is something else, so to a great extent it was stress that hindered my working routine.

(F.PAR.6)

Another participant noted how their own well-being was directly effected as they described their “fear” of the virus.

I wasn't going to work and I wasn't able to write due to psychologically affected. There was fear of what is going on. And in domestic activities things were different because it wasn't the same anymore because most of the time I was at home. There was less movement due to fear of the disease and how it spread, also the news heard about the disease and its effects. The major issue was fear the disease that made the daily work routine to be destructed.

(F.PAR.4)

And also how they absorbed the stress, fear, and concern of others affected by the virus.

I was unable to work due to fear and the weight of house duties. I was unable to travel to do this and that, to do the activities I used to. But also my mother was sick ... she was infected by the disease so that condition put me in tension.

(F.PAR.4)

Hence, even though susceptibility to COVID-19 infection is not limited to a specific gender, as highlighted by one participant who stated that, “*it affects both men and women*” (F.PAR.3), our research findings reveal that the impact of this shared disruption on work-life balance differed between male and female participants. The well-being of female participants was directly influenced by their inclination to prioritize the needs of others, their ability to absorb the stress of their surroundings, their dissatisfaction with compartmentalizing various aspects of their lives, and their struggle to focus on their research work. All participants had access to suitable workspaces and encountered challenges with technology and Internet reliability. Additionally, almost all experienced the return of family members or children to their home environment and acknowledged the availability of extra time. However, the utilization of this time and space varied significantly. Existing gender norms appeared to be

intensified during this period, with male participants being more assertive and proactive in claiming their time and space for research and work, while female participants were less inclined to do so as they directed their time and attention towards caregiving and managing the situation for themselves and others. Several female participants mentioned feeling a “responsibility” to support their husbands’ continued work, even if it meant sacrificing their own professional pursuits.

Effect on Care and Coping Mechanisms

As is the norm among the majority of academics within these two institutions, most noted that they did not experience a massive change in household activities and duties as they employ maids or “house-girls”. However, the roles performed by males and females, and the gendered expectations that influenced who would provide what kinds of care were deeply rooted in pre-existing gender norms and regimes. Women were expected, and indeed accepted the responsibility, to step up and ensure that the children and other household members were adequately cared for during this time. The majority of male participants noted that they had defined activities for which their household expected them to be responsible. One male participant noted

we have a care-giver (house-girl) at home but also my wife was at home, so she looked after them [the children] ... and when I get time, during my rest time, I play with them for some minutes, ten to twenty, then I proceed with my work.

(M.PAR.7)

However, there is also evidence of some male participants activity engaging in protective and instructive roles within the family and wider networks. One participant notes “*you know in Africa we have extended families ... so I had to take care of them, giving them some instructions how to make sure they avoid this pandemic*” (M.PAR.1). Another noted that he had to make provisions for care of his mother and father, “*I had to take care of them though they were not here they were back home*” (M.PAR. 3).

Thus, the indications suggest that male participants did take on a “leadership” role of sorts within the organization of care, but not the actual activities of giving care. This seemed to remain firmly within the domain of women, based on the pre-existing gendered division of household labour. For example, this participant notes, “*it is not someone outside our family who cared for us in terms of food and whatever, but actually ourselves in our home with my wife serving us*” (M.PAR.3).

Female participants noted, on the other hand, that they were heavily involved in facilitating others in the household to achieve their objectives. One female participant noted said, “*My children are day scholars so they stopped going to school soon after the outbreak of the pandemic so they were at home. I was*

taking care of the children because most of the time I was at home. And I was very sensitive due to the nature of the disease and its transmission by looking after them. That was my main responsibility. Meanwhile my husband went to work” (F.PAR.4). Another One noted how she prioritized her children’s needs for access to education over her own professional activities “... *I provide them [my children] with the internet because they were still proceeding with classes through ... zoom ... so I had to make sure I provided them with internet, and mostly they used my phone, so this affected me ...”* (F.PAR.6).

This participant further noted that additional help or any change in relations with her husband was not discernible during this period. She notes, “*he was there, he was to go to work on/off, sometimes he went and sometimes he didn’t, but life was normal as any other days”* (F.PAR.6). Several female participants noted how they invested their time in relationships and children, with one respondent noting that she experienced “*poor time management and lack of discipline”* (F.PAR.2). Indeed, this participant invested heavily in nurturing her relationship with her child. “*We cooked a lot. We learned a lot of recipes. We learned to cook so we were just cooking and baking, learning to bake cakes and whatever, doing things that we wished to do but we had no time so this time we had time”* (F.PAR.2).

All female participants who had children noted that they moved back towards the more traditional caring roles, ensuring their family’s needs were met first and were given priority over their professional activities.

First and foremost it was the virus itself that erupted with numerous factors. It forced me to stay at home unable to work because of taking care of my children. Making sure they eat well, stay at home and ensuring their safety With all these activities that consumed my time I was unable to do anything ...

(F.PAR.4)

Thus, throughout the pandemic, these female employees continued to work within the household and took on the extra workload of accommodating the return of children and adults working from home. Indications suggest that male participants did take on a “leadership” role of sorts within the organization of care, but not the actual activities of giving care. This seemed to remain firmly within the domain of women. All participants who had families and children observed the impact of their children’s return from school, such as increased demands for Internet access, additional noise and activity within the household, and the chance to spend more time with their loved ones and friends.

Effect on Research Capacities and Outputs

The findings indicated that the participants encountered several challenges unrelated to gender during the research process. The first challenge was the inability to gather data, which hindered their progress. The second challenge

was related to Internet reliability, which made it difficult to access papers and literature. Finally, many respondents expressed how they missed the opportunity to interact with colleagues, share ideas, and collaborate in person as part of the research production process. Despite these challenges, the research activities and outputs showed that male researchers were more likely to sustain their output during this period and, in some cases, even produced more than their usual output. On the other hand, the majority of female participants reported a decrease in their research output during this period, consistent with the data presented above.

For some, the outbreak of COVID-19 presented an opportunity to break with normal patterns in delves into research activities. According to one male participant, “*I wrote publishable papers, I wrote at least two research proposals in collaboration with other people, but also, I had some papers which were still under review process, so I had to do corrections as well, I also did ... I did other activities as well for example, I went to interview children ...*” (M.PAR.7). Although their home space is shared with an active family, this participant noted that they could pivot their work and attention to their new circumstances and continue to progress their research outputs. Indeed, for them, their research outputs actually increased during this period as they no longer had the distractions of the office or the commute. They note

I saved time from travelling from home to the office, when I am at the office, I get busy with many things such as teaching, preparing lesson notes, and administrative work. Focusing on research was easy for me to utilize effectively my time I was forced to assign myself activities to do so as to keep myself busy, and this helped me very well.

(M.PAR.7)

For others, the experience was more mixed, with some elements of research continuing, but others stalled. However, in both scenarios, progress was maintained.

during the pandemic I wrote a project proposal and I concentrated much on writing one project We won the project

However,

I had written two publishable papers and I wanted to go and collect data, but I was stuck because I wanted my papers to be field-based.

(M.PAR.8)

This candidate noted that their overall output had decreased, but it is clear that they remained research active.

The experiences of female participants in this study are more diverse. Some managed to push forward on research activities. Others decided to suspend their engagement with these activities and to focus on their domestic responsibilities and realm. For example, one female participant notes,

I don't know how to put it but of course it [their research output] may have increased because I got enough time for searching literature although it affected me because I did not perform to the extent that I had expected but by being at home, not coming to work and not having teaching activities, it may have increased but to a smaller extent.

(F.PAR.6)

For others, it decreased, “*I didn't do anything*” (F.PAR.2); “*I didn't do anything! I have told you earlier that all research permit were prohibited*” (F.PAR.5); “*it has decreased*” (F.PAR.4).

The findings provide insights into the differential gender effects of the crisis on male and female academics, and points to specific characteristics of the situated Tanzanian experience. All participants experienced challenges with technology and data collection during this time. The University in which the participants were based suspended teaching rather than attempting to move to online learning, and so the participants all had additional time due to the removal of their teaching duties and commuting time, to focus on research activities. However, male participants indicated a greater capacity to compartmentalize their personal experiences and professional activities, generally indicating an ability to move forward with their research through this time. Female participants, on the other hand, were more likely to indicate feelings of stress, fear and concern for their families and community as barriers to their ability to focus on research. Further, the pre-existing gendered division of labour and hierarchical structures within households emerged unchanged, if somewhat accentuated, during this period.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the findings of a study that investigated the potential gendered impacts of the public health measures implemented in Tanzania between March and June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focused on the experiences of academic staff at two higher education institutions in the country. By listening to the narratives of these academics, valuable insights were gained into the differential effects of the crisis on male and female academics. Moreover, the study shed light on specific characteristics of the Tanzanian context, highlighting the influence of gender regimes and the gendered division of labour on these experiences. Despite the fact that everyone faced an equal risk of contracting the virus and that the public health measures were not explicitly gender-based, the study's findings on work life balance revealed that these measures had a negative impact on female

academics' ability to maintain work life balance and engage in their research work compared to their male counterparts.

Furthermore, a significant number of male participants expressed their ability to compartmentalize personal experiences and concerns related to the ongoing public health crisis. This ability allowed them to continue their research during the lockdown period. Conversely, female participants reported experiencing high levels of stress, fear, and concern for their families and communities. These emotions often hindered their engagement in research activities. It is worth noting that the experiences of the participants varied, as each individual faced different challenges that disrupted their work-life balance. However, the existing gendered division of labour and hierarchical structures within households were prominent themes in the participants' narratives. These factors explained how responsibilities were divided and why female academics were less likely to have the opportunity to dedicate additional time to their research, which was made possible by the closure of universities and work-from-home orders.

Moving forward, it is crucial to conduct similar studies in all universities in Tanzania, other African countries, and globally. This will help gain a comprehensive understanding of the diverse effects of this issue. The findings from such studies can then be utilized to develop policy recommendations for future public health measures, specifically addressing COVID-19 and potential future pandemics, without disproportionately impacting any gender.

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4 Knowledge Mapping of African Theories on Masculinities and Femininities

A Scoping Review

Ikupa Moses and Carlotta Smalen

Introduction

Among the premier reasons why a precise definition for either masculinity or femininity is never conclusive is because men and women are not homogenous groups (Mackay, 2021). What may be considered appropriate behaviour, style or conduct for men and women change depending on culture, place, and historical time periods. Changes or variations may also become pronounced depending on socio-economic and socio-political demands put on or expected of men and women.

As the study of gender and gender epistemologies historically emerged in the Global North, dominant theories of masculinities and femininities have been conceived and defined based on Western understandings and experiences (Ampofo *et al.*, 2004; Mfecane, 2018; Oyěwùmí, 1997). In this context, gender roles and relations are understood as socially constructed and accomplished relationally through social interactions and institutions. Thus, theories of masculinity and femininity are heavily influenced by situated societies and locally embedded cultural practices. As Mfecane (2018) strikingly illustrates, Western gender theory offers inadequate accounts of African constructs of gender. Western understandings of gender, for example, refer to manhood as a particular set of practices in social settings. There is no “inner essence”: masculinity does not exist as a reality inside human bodies. Mfecane stresses that African understanding of gender, on the other hand, should be treated as not only socially constructed, but also as influenced by unseen and inner elements of personhood, as encapsulated in traditional African thought.

Ever since the 1980s, increased questioning of the universal applicability of feminist theories from the Global North has aroused an explosion of women’s and gender research in Africa that is grounded in African knowledge and approaches (Ampofo *et al.*, 2004; Fennell and Arnot, 2008; Mfecane, 2018). Although there is increased research on African feminism and African gender theories written by African scholars, understanding and visibility of this scholarship is low (Fennell and Arnot, 2008). Furthermore, African feminist scholars have addressed various conflicts and contestations regarding the relevance and applicability of concepts related to women’s studies and gender analysis

(Adomako Ampofo, Beoku-Betts, and Osirim, 2008). An example is [Ampofo et al.'s study \(2004\)](#), which carried out a review to broaden understanding of issues and controversies addressed in social science research on women's and gender studies conducted by researchers and activists based in English speaking sub-Saharan African countries. They identified common feminist issues such as health, gender-based violence (GBV), sexuality, education, globalisation, and work; and politics, the state, and non-governmental organisations. Despite its epistemic importance, there have been no further published reviews of African scholarship on gender since this study.

Little has been written by African scholars on how masculinities and femininities are contextually constructed and understood. Hegemonic masculinity – the systematic reproduction of male domination and the subordination of women and marginalised groups of men ([Connell, 2005](#)) – is a global factor, but its manifestations differ from society to society and from culture to culture. Extensive anthropological studies, for example, have been undertaken to explore African life and cultural practices such as ceremonies dealing with initiations into adulthood ([Allen, 2000](#); [Turner, 1967](#)). However, how these fit into broader African understandings of masculinity or femininity remains unclear and inadequately theorised.

With various levels of intensity and purpose, African scholarship on masculinities and femininities map out relations between men and women, between classes of people, among women and among men. However, in order to understand how masculinities and femininities are internalised and utilised in shaping agency and conduct, we need to further explore African scholarship on this matter. In light of the fragmented nature of research on African experiences and perspectives, this chapter utilises the methodology of a scoping review to synthesise the state-of-the-art knowledge on African masculinities and femininities.

This study identifies core themes in published literature on African theories on masculinities and femininities; examines studies which explain how such African gender norms are internalised, explores the main implications of these gender constructs and identifies knowledge gaps to inform a new research agenda. The main objective of this scoping review is to map the landscape of knowledge on African theories of masculinities and femininities, written by African scholars. The study covered published articles in the whole African region to address the following research questions: (i) what core themes are found in published literature on African theories of masculinities and femininities; (ii) how are African masculinities and femininities understood and internalised; (iii) what are their main implications; and (iv) what knowledge gaps should form the basis for future research?

Methodology

This study maps African scholarship on and traditional knowledge of masculinity and femininity; and aims to find out how concepts of masculinity and

femininity are understood and practised in a general African context according to socio-cultural environments. A systematic search strategy was employed to retrieve journal articles exploring African theories of gender masculinities and femininities. We started with a review of all journal articles to determine (sub-)themes, followed by an exploration of how these themes constructed African masculinities and femininities. In addition, we identified how these were internalised, and what socio-cultural effects or implications they had in African settings.

Articles that were deemed eligible for inclusion had to meet the following criteria: (i) the article was published between January 2011 and June 2022; (ii) the article was written in the English or Swahili language; (iii) the geographical focus of the article is on Africa; (iv) the article is a theoretical study; (v) the article is peer-reviewed; and (vi) the article was written by African scholars. To further fine-tune inclusion criteria, five areas of exclusion were specified: (i) the article is not about Africa; (ii) the author(s) or first author are not African scholars, (iii) the article was not published by a peer-reviewed paper; (iv) the article is not about African understandings of masculinity and femininity or not about traditional African knowledge of masculinities and femininities; and (v) the article had to be accessible. The latter refers to search results that only produced titles or brief abstracts, rather than full articles. These articles were classified as “not accessible” and thus excluded.

The search for literature was carried out between 13th June and 23rd June, 2022. We used selected key terms with some variations as shown in [Table 4.1](#). The review process utilised six databases: EBSCOhost, International Journal of Gender (IJG), JSTOR, Google Scholar, African Journals online (AJOL), and ResearchGate (Taylor & Francis online). In addition, snowballing, enabled by the search engines, was of extra value as it brought to our attention other relevant journals missed during the initial search. To further streamline our search, we developed multiple search strings bearing Boolean operators and conditions examples shown in [Table 4.2](#).

It is worth mentioning here that we limited the review by operationalising Africa into Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa and/or Africa south of the Sahara. This increased the likelihood of engines retrieving journal articles that theorised or conceptualised gender and its binaries of masculinity

Table 4.1 Key terms and variations

<i>Key terms</i>	<i>Variations</i>
<i>African theories</i>	Sub-Saharan Africa; Africa; Sub Saharan; Africa South of the Sahara
<i>Knowledge formation</i>	Knowledge, education, belief, orientation
<i>Masculinity</i>	Masculinities, masculine, male, maleness, men
<i>Femininity</i>	Femininities, feminine, female, femaleness, womanly, women
<i>Gender norms</i>	Gender practices, gender values, culture

Table 4.2 Examples of search strings

1	“Africa OR Sub Saharan theories” AND gender norms* OR gender AND masculinities AND femininities in AFRICA*
2	Africa OR Sub-Saharan African theories” AND knowledge formation* OR education* AND gender practices* AND masculinity AND Femininity*
3	“South of the Sahara OR African theories” AND Knowledge” OR belief* AND gender AND masculine AND feminine*
4	“African theories” AND Education* AND gender practices* OR gender culture* AND male AND female studies*
5	(African beliefs OR knowledge) AND gender culture* OR gender value* AND women AND men studies*) AND (about African studies) AND (Written by African scholars) AND (About Africa) AND (Gender studies)
6	“South of the Sahara OR African theories” AND Knowledge” OR belief* AND gender beliefs OR orientation AND masculine AND feminine*

and femininity from an African perspective. We purposely chose to include only articles written by African scholars.

Our search process yielded 1,737 eligible journal articles. After eliminating 56 duplicates and 23 inaccessible journal articles (total number 86), title and abstract scanning excluded a further 56 articles. About 1,592 remaining articles were finally subjected to rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of 45 journal articles were selected for review. Figure 4.1 illustrates the process.

Two researchers did an initial cursory reading of the journal articles. Both researchers tabulated the results of the reading into a list of reviewed articles and indicated if the readings met the search criteria and whether

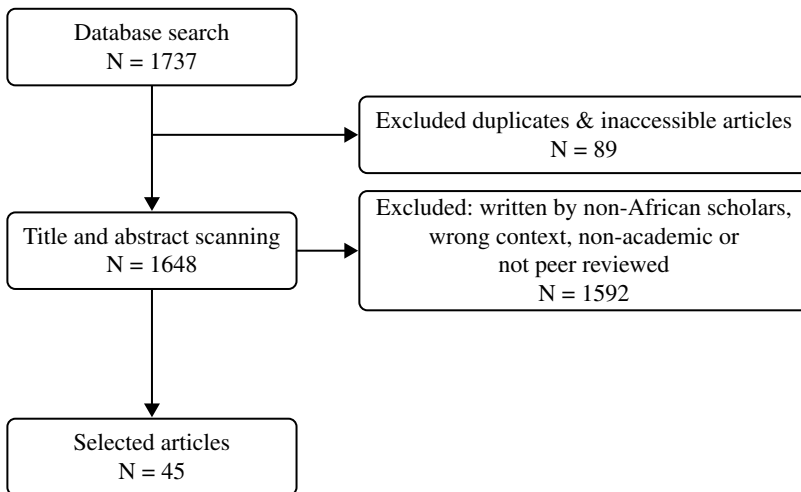


Figure 4.1 Search process and journal article selection framework.

they were in line with the research objectives and questions. Upon variance, the researchers discussed and agreed on a joint position. As the two researchers reached consensus, there was no need for a third reader. The researchers read through the shortlisted journal articles and summarised core study ideas, findings and recommendations and conclusions from each article. They then searched for and determined core (sub-)themes and concepts in the articles.

Findings and Discussion

This research was guided by the four aforementioned research questions that structure the results and findings presented in this section. Before exploring the results and findings in detail, it is important to note that the search found a strong geographical focus among empirical studies on Southern and Western Africa, particularly, South Africa (18 papers), Ghana (9 papers), and Nigeria (8 papers). As a result, the study's theorisation and conceptualisation of masculinities and femininities in the African context is primarily focused on these locations. Much of that theorisation revolves around male dominance that leads to GBV and a general tendency to subordinate females, for example, in decision-making in politics and about their own health (Adjei, 2016; Bhana, 2016; Kanjiri and Nomngcoyiya, 2021; Mbah and Oti, 2015; Sivhabu and Visser, 2019). In these works, main narrative of works on GBV points to the persistence of patriarchal beliefs and structures, hegemonic masculinity, and the conceptualisation of femininity as subservient, passive, and vulnerable (ibid.).

The following sections introduce each theme; outline the conceptualisations of masculinities and femininities within the study and how these are manifested in practice or beliefs; explore the implications of the studies and the methods and methodologies used to guide the research; and identify any gaps that require further research and investigation.

Seven generalised themes were discerned, with several sub-themes. For example, under the general theme of sexuality, there were five sub-themes, including transactional sex, heterosexuality, homosexuality, menopause, and sexual intimacies for disabled women. The generalised themes and sub-themes from the literature reviewed are presented in Table 4.3.

Sexuality

Sexuality was one of the major identified themes, being depicted in ten reviewed articles. Literature covered issues of heterosexuality (Fiaveh *et al.*, 2015), homosexuality (Henderson, 2018; Shio and Moyer, 2021; Tadele, 2011), sexuality in older women and females with a disability (Agunbiade and Gilbert, 2020). The abundance of literature on this topic clearly suggests that sexuality defines the lives of many men and women. We found that notions of masculinity in particular has a major effect on how sexuality affects people

Table 4.3 Themes and sub-themes from reviewed articles

<i>Main theme</i>	<i>Sub-themes</i>
1. <i>Sexuality</i>	Heterosexuality, homosexuality, sexuality among older women and sexuality in females with a disability
2. <i>Women empowerment</i>	Changing gender roles and feminism
3. <i>Gendered violence</i>	Gender-based violence (GBV), female-to-female violence
4. <i>Construction of masculinity and femininity</i>	Womanliness, manliness, hegemony, patriarchy
5. <i>Health</i>	Masculinities and femininities behind health risk behaviour, sexual reproductive health
6. <i>Social reproductive roles</i>	
7. <i>Language</i>	

(Agunbiade and Gilbert, 2020; Mayeza and Bhana, 2021; Mulumeoderhwa, 2018). In the following sections, we will discuss what the sub-themes of sexuality identified in literature can tell us about African concepts of masculinity and femininity.

Heterosexuality and Heteronormativity

Heterosexuality and heteronormativity emerged as dominant accepted cultural norms and expectations that structure sexual relations and relationships in the African context. Both are strongly related to prevalent notions of masculinity that portray men as strong leaders and breadwinners, and women as subservient carers (Fiaveh *et al.*, 2015; Henderson, 2018). Heterosexual relationships on the African continent take many forms, including intimate relationships, but also relationships of transactional nature including sex for money or status (Agunbiade and Gilbert, 2020). In many contexts, particularly in South Africa, axes of power such as race, class, gender, and age are critical factors in understanding sexual practice, as noted by Mayeza and Bhana (2021). This is no surprise, as gender norms and relations are produced, negotiated, contested, and refracted through complex assemblages of power and identity.

Homosexuality

In most African societies, heterosexuality is the only accepted sexual orientation, and is regarded as one of the key elements of dominant masculinity (Henderson, 2018; Shio and Moyer, 2021). As a result, the LGBTQIA+ community remains hidden, marginalised and denied in many cultures in Africa. For example, homosexual Ethiopian men worried that their orientation contravened their culture, which was dominated by heterosexuality (Tadele, 2011). In Ethiopian culture, penetration is believed to make men feminine, which means that men engaging in penetrative sex with other men “lose” their

masculinity. The general implication that emerges from work on homosexuality in African settings is that sexual orientation matters to gender relations, and more specifically, to relations between males, where heterosexuality is an important aspect of hegemonic masculinity. African scholarship of women in lesbian relationships was not identified by this review.

Sexuality among Older Women

Certain African societies hold the belief that sexual longevity should be celebrated in men, but not in women. Also at old age, sexual activity in men is accepted (Agunbiade and Gilbert, 2020), while the same does not apply to women. Older women in Nigeria who were entering or already in menopause sampled by Agunbiade and Gilbert (2020), were being told to retire from penetrative sex – something which appeared to give older men freedom to engage in sex with younger women. Among younger women, on the other hand, sexual activity is often expected and encouraged. Transactional sex was found to be a helpful and encouraged means to financially support women’s families. The money earned could be used to pay for children’s education or other needs of their children and families (Oduro, Swartz and Arnot, 2012).

Sexuality in Females with a Disability

Due to enduring disability stigma, we found that women with a disability often face difficulties establishing long-lasting intimate partnerships. A study conducted in South Africa indicated that women with a disability mainly have difficulties forming lasting intimate relationships because of a general, societal fear that disabled women cannot bear children (Van der Heijden, Harries, and Abrahams, 2019). According to the authors of this study, women with disabilities were also at higher risk of GBV because men displaying hegemonic masculinity perceive them as “needy”, lacking in sexuality and believe they are unable to secure intimate relationships. These men tend to frame women with a disability as mere “recipients of favours” from the men who did briefly partner with them.

Women’s Empowerment

The second major theme that came up was women’s empowerment, depicted in ten reviewed articles. In the reviewed studies, women’s empowerment does not necessarily align with dominant feminist understandings that portray empowerment as the fight for gender equality, but rather as a benchmark for changing gender roles and independence (Khumalo, McKay and Freimund, 2015; Nwokoro and Ogba, 2019). Issues of the changing gender roles and feminism emerged as sub-themes discussed below.

Changing Gender Roles

In the context of the much-generalised gender roles of men as providers, protectors and heads of households, and women as carers and submissive partners, it is becoming culturally acceptable for African women to slip into masculine or even patriarchal roles (Khumalo, McKay and Freimund, 2015). In socio-economic crises, the traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity are re-negotiated, as women become breadwinners and providers, and thereby oppose traditional notions of femininity (Mojola, 2014). Consequently, findings indicate that African women who challenge their economic passivity by engaging in income-generating activities feel a sense of empowerment. Tufuor, Sato, and Niehof (2016) explain how in Ghana, engaging in labour migration can be a strategy for women to demonstrate their dedication towards challenging male dominance and patriarchal structures that have confined women to the domestic spheres. Similarly, Ampofo (2017) noted that the Igbo women in Nigeria started seeking more agency to challenge male dominance in their society.

In order to enhance women empowerment, Nwokoro and Ogba (2019) argue that formal education is an important way to equip women with the skills to challenge discriminatory cultural practices and social norms that disadvantage them. As a result, in their study, Khumalo *et al.* (2015) noted that empowered women in Kwadu Conservancy in Namibia, consider access to education and work as added factors through which women can accord their status as “real” women.

While these examples are intriguing, the challenging of and breaking with traditional gender norms is not necessarily a modern practice in all African societies. In some precolonial African societies such as the Igbo of Nigeria and Kurya in Tanzania, matrilineal lineage prescribed that women could perform masculine roles, which could even lead to having “male daughters” (Abo-sede, 2017). Women in those societies were able to access masculine social status and operate independently in the economic, political, and social sphere. Interestingly though, the acceptance of women taking on the culturally prescribed male gender roles mainly seemed to be justified by the alleviation of the burden on male breadwinners. Men taking on feminine roles, on the other hand, were seen as lowering their status. Hence, men would typically avoid taking on such responsibilities (Dery and Awinpoka Akurugu, 2021). As the section on “social reproductive roles” shows, this is still the case today.

Feminism

African feminism primarily aims at countering male dominance, forms of institutionalised sexism, and oppression against women (Allagbé, Koussouhon, and Akogbeto, 2015). An example of African women challenging male dominance is that of Igbo women in Africa joining an institutionalised protest practice called “Sitting on a Man” (Ampofo, 2017). “Sitting on a Man” is a

shaming spectacle carried out by a collective of women (“sisters”) against a man who may have wronged his wife or woman. The goal of the practice is to make the man apologise or offer restitution.

In addition, we found that the vast amount of scholarly works on GBV in specific has sparked a new African feminist movement: Nego, or “no ego” feminism, which believes that African cultures have the inherent capacity to help resolve disagreements. Nego feminism seeks to dismantle patriarchal traditions and customs and negotiate better positions for women (Muhammad *et al.*, 2019). It postulates that previously confrontational approaches of feminists reinforce defensive attitudes among men (Kanjiri and Nomngcoyiya, 2021). To avoid gender polarisation, nego-feminism seeks to establish peace between men and women through cooperation, negotiation and reconciliation (Nkealah, 2016). Although it is important to recognise that patriarchy is the problem, Nego feminism stresses that men remain integral actors who are needed to dismantle male dominance and achieve gender justice. According to Kanjiri and Nomngcoyiya (2021), Nego feminism promises to help facilitate achieving this goal because compromise and negotiation are important aspects of African cultures.

Gendered Violence

Gendered violence, and GBV in particular, is the third theme that is covered extensively in African scholarship on femininity and masculinity: it is the subject of nine articles. It also permeates other main themes identified in this study, such as constructions of masculinity and femininity, female empowerment, sexuality, and health – whose contexts are not necessarily related to violence.

Gender-based Violence

GBV is any type of harm against a person because of their gender, or violence that affects a particular gender disproportionately (Williamson Sinalo and Mandolini, 2023). It is particularly denoted as violence to gain control over the person towards whom the aggression is aimed at, or to uphold notions of respect from the subject of GBV and the community. Researchers have found that the dominance of hegemonic masculinity contributes to the belief that culture permits men to use physical violence against women for the sake of control (Oduro, Swartz and Arnot, 2012).

A study by Oduro *et al.* (2012) links violence by young men against women in the streets and slums of three sub-Saharan cities (Cape Town, South Africa; Accra, Ghana; and Nairobi, Kenya) as vehicles of retribution and enforcement of respect and control. In some African societies, punishing women is tolerated as a form of discipline. In addition, some men who fail to fulfil certain masculine obligations may strike women because they feel that their manhood has been challenged (Adjei, 2016). Second, as GBV is internalised by young

men as a means to giving them power and rights over women, research has also shown that this may lead them to also use rape as an instrument of oppression (Oduro *et al.*, 2012).

Female-to-Female Violence

Interestingly, Bhana and Pillay (2011) argue that the tremendous volume of research on GBV has obscured another form of gendered violence, which is committed by females themselves. They note that female-to-female violence contradicts cultural, patriarchal notions of femininity, which assume girls' passivity and peacefulness. Bhana and Pillay's study found the existence of conflictual and violent femininities in a single-sex girls' school in Durban, South Africa. In this instance, violence was used as a demonstration of power. Similarly, Oduro *et al.* (2012) discuss violence by women in poor and crowded street and slum settings, where they engage in territorial violence against other females for men, money, drink, or dominance.

Constructs of Femininity and Masculinity

The fourth theme identified by this study is the cultural construct of masculinity and femininity, which was pronounced in eight articles. Adjei (2016) points out that there are cultural notions of what is expected of a person depending on place, time and status. Rites of passage are important African events that recognise a young person's elevation to adulthood. The internalisation of masculinities and femininities starts in childhood at family and community level, is further pronounced during rites of passage ceremonies, and continue being positioned and naturalised within cultural understandings as inherent to gendered individuals during adulthood. Masculinities and femininities depicted in the reviewed literature mostly centred on issues of womanliness/femaleness and manliness/maleness.

Womanliness

Childhood is a phase of preparation for adulthood, where girls learn cultural values from their community through imitation and rearing. Initiation is a stage in adolescence that marks the transition from childhood into adulthood. During this transition, girls are exposed to gender norms, roles and expectations. It is the point at which the dominant social norms are introduced to children, and they learn about their gendered roles and responsibilities. They learn what it means to be a woman, that it is their role to be mothers and how to conduct themselves towards their would-be partners (Fiaveh *et al.*, 2015; Graham, 2016). Women lead the initiation process for girls and are responsible for reproducing these norms. As such, initiation ceremonies are a leading example of the internalisation and naturalisation of social norms and social order.

Throughout the literature, womanliness is described as the ability to manage a home, including the provision and preparation of sustenance; the ability to care and nurture, maintain personal hygiene, and submissiveness to the husband. The mothering ability of a woman is an especially important aspect of the construction of femininity. This not only refers to reproductive ability, but rather to the capability to care and show concern for those in need.

In African societies, the construct of “real women” does not only refer to the capacities mentioned above, but also to physical features and norms regarding sexuality. Physical features such as vaginas and breasts are important aspects that form women’s identities. In [Fiaveh et al.’s \(2015\)](#) study in Ghana, female participants viewed that vaginas are important features of femininity, and that “real women” need a vagina to compliment a men’s penis. As such, without a vagina to attract men, they viewed that one cannot be a woman.

Furthermore, across African cultures, virginity for girls is extolled as virtuous and a respectable entry into adulthood. It is highly valued, as it is an important resource to claim respectability, status and identity; girls who remain virgins until adulthood bring much respect to her family ([Bhana, 2016](#); [Graham, 2016](#)). Many studies have found that female purity and virginity have always been key to the negotiation of bridewealth – a payment made by the groom to the family of his wife to validate their marriage –, a practice that continues across African societies today ([Bhana, 2016](#); [Fiaveh et al., 2015](#)). In KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, young girls and women aged 8–24 are frequently tested for virginity, a practice that has been given much value as a way to ensure girls’ virginity until marriage ([Bhana, 2016](#)). Only women adhering to imposed norms of respectability are in most African cultures referred to as “real women” ([Fiaveh et al., 2015](#); [Khumalo et al., 2015](#)).

Manliness

Similar to girls, initiation rites for boys mark the transition from boyhood to manhood, as this is a time when expectations of maleness are reinforced. At initiation rites, boys attain qualifications of manhood, such as bravery and potency ([Dabiah and Amfo, 2018](#); [Fiaveh et al., 2015](#)). Initiation rites are often a process rather than a single event. Masculinity in Ghana is believed to be achieved, or a place to be arrived at, in stages and over time. It must be won and defended ([Fiaveh et al., 2015](#)).

When taking account of aspects that shape the construct of man- and womanliness, there are many similarities. In many societies, anatomy determines gender identity and sexuality. Like womanliness, manliness depends on physical features: having a penis, the ability to penetrate and impregnate a woman, and phallic competence are all important parts of masculinity. For men, sexual behaviour also shapes manliness. Unlike women, however, who are often ought to maintain their virginity until marriage, sexual activity of (unmarried)

men is culturally accepted. In South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, social constructions of masculinity encourage the idea that men cannot control their sexual urges (Mulumeoderhwa, 2018).

All in all, African thought describes masculinity primarily as being powerful, being able to control and lead (this includes both women and men who are deemed inferior), being able to care for one's family and being capable of procreating. Men are expected to effortlessly conform to these expectations. A boy or a man whose lifestyle does not measure up to the prescribed expectations of maleness, is regarded as "not man enough" or as feminine. In a study on masculinity and men's suicidal behaviour, it was found that the failure to meet societal gender norms such as the loss of patriarchal control, sexual impotence or a wife's marital infidelity, can lead to feelings of being dishonoured, leading to commit suicide among men (Adinkrah, 2012).

Health

Masculinities and femininities in health constitute the fifth theme of this study, and is related to the dominance of masculinity over femininity. The relationship between masculinity and femininity plays a major role in diseases, particularly diseases related to sexual health. We identified two sub-themes: masculinities and femininities' role in risky health behaviour and sexual reproductive health (SRH).

Risky Health Behaviour

Both in men and women, masculinities and femininities were found to be a contributing factor to behaviours that may have adverse impacts on their health. Traditional patriarchal systems of dominance that require total submissiveness of wives to their husbands may be dangerous for women's health, as gender norms prescribe that women cannot negotiate for safe sex (Agunbiade and Gilbert, 2020; Bhana and Anderson, 2013). Mulumeoderhwa (2018), for example, found that Congolese females were unable to negotiate condom use because this meant that they would be accused by their male partners of hiding a sexually transmitted disease, or of being "loose".

Moreover, because hegemonic masculinity requires total adherence to cultural prescriptions of manhood, some men find it difficult to engage in health behaviours that are not culturally approved. In South Africa, studies found that men were considered less of a man if they were found to take medicine for HIV (Gittings *et al.*, 2021), or use condoms when having sex to protect themselves and their partners against sexual-transmitted diseases (Sivhabu and Visser, 2019). In the latter study, men also considered HIV to be a minor disease, such as the flu, and felt like contracting or transmitting HIV was no reason for concern (*ibid.*). Similarly, Mulumeoderhwa (2018) found that it is deemed appropriate for boys in DRC to indulge in concurrent sexual partnerships because boys' sexual urges are considered to be uncontrollable, even though such behaviour has been found to lead to higher risks of transmitting HIV.

Sexual Reproductive Health

Due to prevailing gender norms, young women are not encouraged to have sex before marriage (Izugbara *et al.*, 2017). The social stigma of sexual activity among girls means that unmarried women have difficulties accessing SRH services. Abortion, especially among unmarried girls, is a sign of immorality in African culture. Consequently, Izugbara *et al.* (2017) report that unsafe abortion is common among adolescent girls in Kenya and sought from pharmacists, medicine vendors, traditional healers, teachers, and relatives, often for exorbitant prices. Shame and the wish to hide their perceived immorality often delays in seeking abortions. This delay, in combination with the unsafe abortion methods utilised, often increases the risk for serious and lethal complications.

Social Reproductive Roles

Social reproductive roles have already been discussed as part of the section on “womanliness” but was also found as a separate theme during the search. We found that the widespread cultural expectation of women to take on domestic roles is strongly influenced by men, who through their notions of masculinity refuse to be responsible for social reproduction and chores in the domestic realm. Studies on gender roles show how even among children, such responsibilities typically fall on girls. Helman and Ratele (2016) articulated how in their research on the reproduction of gender in South African households, young boys already assert that household chores are their sisters’ responsibilities. Among adult men, this attitude remains unchanged: Atobrah and Ampofo (2016) found that in Ghana women who were terminally ill were not cared for by their husbands, because this is perceived as “feminine work”. Men found that caring for the infirm is demeaning and emasculating for a man to engage in it. Initially the wives excused their husbands, but later became bitter when their husbands did not even provide emotional support, such as praying with their dying wives.

Language and Linguistics

Language, our seventh theme, is a strong theme found in our review that cuts across other (sub-)themes. The reviewed literature shows how language can be used to perpetuate or sometimes even counter masculine domination.

While referring to African works of fiction, Allagbé, Koussouhon and Akogbeto (2015) cite Simpson (1993), who posits that sexism is encoded in language and thus consciously or unconsciously used to enforce hegemonic masculinity. An example includes the discourse on sex positions for homosexual men. As mentioned earlier, men who are penetrated during sexual intercourse are regarded as feminine in Africa. Henderson (2018) writes about a gay man describing his versatility (choice to penetrate or to be penetrated

during anal sex) citing this narrative from a subject in a study by Lorway (2006, p 441):

I am a man, a homosexual. I'm gay and I am sleeping with men, and I am fucking men. I am fucked by men, also. In some cases, I am a *moffie*.

Henderson explains how in Afrikaans, the word “moffie” is a derogatory term for a gay man who constructs a female identity. The term “moffie” is a linguistic method to assert that gay men who are penetrated – and thus break with the dominant belief that “manly men” should be the ones to penetrate during sexual intercourse – are seen as inferior due to their perceived femininity.

Language can also be a means to assert gender roles and expectations. Mojola (2018) depicts how among the Luo in western Kenya, the words “to cook” and “to be/get married” are the same. Both are seen as feminine. First, cooking is an example of social reproduction which falls within the feminine realm. Second, only women “get married to someone” – men, on the other hand, marry. Interestingly, the dhoLuo word for “to cook” and “to get married” are the same. Mojola (2018, pp 352) gives an example: “Akinyi has gone to cook for Daniel” (*Akinyi odhi tedo ne Daniel*), which means that Akinyi got married to Daniel. It is, however, linguistically incorrect to say the opposite – Daniel cannot cook for/get married to Akinyi. It is an illuminating example of how language can subtly indicate the cultural dominance of the man – one can notice how the prepositions “for” and “to” are used to maintain female submissiveness.

Yet, in the analysis of Allagbé and Amoussou (2020) of African works of fiction, the scholars suggest that language can also be used to question patriarchal ideologies. In a critical discourse analysis of Sefi Atta’s fictional work “Everything Good Will Come” (2006), Allagbé and Amoussou show how language structures are used by characters to defiantly challenge the ‘sacred order’ which has hitherto been used to demean women. Thus, while language can be a powerful instrument to highlight relations of power, it can in certain instances also be utilised to counter such relationships.

Implications

The past few sections have depicted how constructs of femininity and masculinity play an important role across African cultures and societies, and how these constructs dictate the behaviour, gender roles and expectations of African men and women. There are situations, however, when people do not live up to certain gender expectations. We have found that disabled African women, for example, are looked down upon by so-called “able-ists”, who paint negative pictures about people with disabilities and their capacities for sexual intimacy. It is well-known that in Africa, womanhood is typically achieved

through dating, sexual seduction and intercourse, marriage and motherhood (Esmail *et al.*, 2010; Shakespeare, 2000). Unfortunately, disabled women in Africa may face difficulties attaining such status because of the stigmatisation of disabilities.

The literature review showed that disabled women who aspire to be in a heterosexual relationship face stigmatisation with dominant stereotypes that women with disabilities are passive, subordinate, physically weak and dependent continuing to influence perceptions and lived experiences. These intersecting views undermine their human rights and dignity by heightening the risk of GBV and intimate partner violence in particular (Mall and Swartz, 2012; Rich, 2014; and may prevent women with disabilities from engaging in or having healthy, safe, and lasting intimate partnerships.

Ideals around femininity may also have negative implications for women's ability to safely negotiate sex (Agunbiade and Gilbert, 2020; Mulumeoderhwa, 2018). This, in turn, can lead to sexual exploitation (Oduro *et al.*, 2012), engagement in risky health behaviour such as unprotected sex (Sivhabu and Visser, 2019) and a lack of access to SRH services such as abortion (Izugbara *et al.*, 2017).

Likewise, men's strong adherence to prescribed masculinities often result in negative impacts on men's life, health, and social engagement. Adinkrah (2012) found that some Ghanaian men whose wives committed adultery felt so emasculated that they decided to terminate their lives. The infidelity of a woman is widely interpreted as proof of a husband's sexual and material inadequacy. This is because virility, prowess, and economic success define African masculinity. Thus, a wife's unfaithfulness is a public challenge to a husband's masculinity and husbands of adulterous wives are often the subject of relentless gossip, innuendo, and mockery (*ibid.*).

Moreover, it has been noted that perceptions of masculinity has been the cause of risk-seeking health behaviour among men. Examples include men who are not willing to use condoms as HIV/AIDS preventive measures (Sivhabu and Visser, 2019), men not willing to take medicines against HIV (Gittings *et al.*, 2021) and men indulging in concurrent sexual partnerships (Mulumeoderhwa, 2018).

Dominance of men over women and girls, originating from misconstrued notions of masculine superiority, has led to senseless, self-serving violence by men against girls in streets and slums of some sub-Saharan cities. Oduro *et al.* (2012) discovered that some boys intentionally gang-raped girls who were considered to be proud, arrogant, or who were perceived to feel 'too good' or 'expensive' for their male peers. To such boys, girls were supposed to be available to men and be flattered by their advances. If they behaved otherwise, they had to be "put in their place" (*ibid.*).

Knowledge Gaps

While reviewing the literature on African constructs of masculinity and femininity, we found several knowledge gaps. First and foremost, we wish to point

out that relatively little academic research aims to theorise on masculinities and femininities in the African context. Literature that does so, mainly focuses on South Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana. Few other African countries could be included for analysis. This is problematic, for Africa is a large continent with many cultures, subcultures, and religions. All of these spaces have their own unique, indigenous knowledge systems that influence the gender regimes of these communities. In order to meaningfully analyse African concepts of masculinity and femininity, it is vital that authors focus on a variety of cultures and communities, as this can help identify cultural differences and similarities between geographical spaces.

Despite efforts to do so, this study did not find any literature on the “inner essence” of African masculinity and femininity, as described by [Mfecane \(2018\)](#). The reviewed literature all studied African masculinities and femininities in relation to a specific social phenomenon or problem and thereby focused on how these are practiced, rather than encapsulated into personhood. We recommend other researchers to elaborate on this topic to help create a fuller understanding of African masculinities and femininities.

While we hoped that this review would contribute to knowledge on how African femininities and masculinities are linked to higher learning institutions (HLIs), we did not find any articles focusing on this – as opposed to articles on primary and secondary schools. As institutions that play an important role in the cultural transmission of social norms, HLIs are neither free from gender inequities and discrimination, nor from unequal gender relations and power dynamics. As a matter of fact, it is well-known that deeply rooted cultural norms and practices perpetuate gender discrimination in HLIs. In a study that explored the understandings of gender norms and experiences of students and staff in one University College in Tanzania – which was not included in this review – [Murphy et al. \(2019\)](#) report staff and students’ strong adherence to cultural norms of masculinities and femininities that impact their living and interaction at the college, teaching and learning, and ultimately their academic and career progression. While we hope that the findings of this scoping review may equip African HLIs with the necessary information to challenge unequal norms and values, and enhance gender equality, it is evident that more research needs to be on the exact linkages between gender norms, cultural practices and HLIs in the African context.

Apart from the two knowledge gaps described above, we would like to see more research on femininities and masculinities that break with traditional gender norms and expectations, such as the study by [Bhana and Pillay \(2011\)](#). This study challenges the dominant belief that girls are safer in same-sex schools – while female-to-female violence rates can in reality be high in such institutions. In order to do this, we must follow the advice of Dery and [Awinpoka Akuguru \(2021\)](#), who posit that theories of hegemonic masculinity continue to dominate feminist research that aims to deconstruct, disrupt and transform patriarchal ideologies that oppress women. They advise that while femininity cannot be detached from constructs of masculinity, the centre-staging of

masculinity in feminists accounts may unintentionally obscure less traditional femininities, or the intersection of sex and other socio-economic and political factors that shape femininity.

Whatever description is given for the various masculinities theorised in Africa, we did not find account of positive masculinities. This is probably because most of the reviewed studies responded to certain prevailing problems. We hope that future research will acknowledge the need for studies to determine positive aspects of African masculinities so scholars can obtain better understanding of the various aspects of masculinity in the African context.

Conclusion

We conducted this scoping review of African concepts of masculinity and femininity because of the questioning of the universal applicability of Western gender research and a strong need to include African voices in research on African masculinities and femininities. This study intended to map the knowledge of African theories on masculinities and femininities, written by African scholars. Firstly, the study aimed to identify core themes in published literature on African theories of gender masculinities and femininities. Secondly, we wanted to understand how African gender masculinities and femininities are understood and internalised. Thirdly, we identified important knowledge gaps, which will hopefully form the basis of future research.

When conceptualising African masculinities and femininities, we see that there are rigid normative frameworks undergirded by a distinct teleological worldview. This worldview is fundamentally relational and stands in stark contrast with the forms of methodological individualism that influence liberal feminist accounts. The literature shows that the ideals of “good women” and “good men” are related to each other – in a sense, there is a hierarchy, but the co-dependence between what is required of women to be recognised as “true women”, and what is required of men to be recognised by women as “true men” are interdependent.

The rigid gender binary is based on heteronormative principles of sex and sexuality, and clear sets of objectives for male and female actors within this habitus. Such heteronormative principles lead to the marginalisation of disabled women, older women who are discouraged to be sexually active, and sexual minorities, such as homosexual men engaging in penetrative sex. In addition, the review shows that these heteronormative sets of unwritten rules and expectations lead to GBV and exploitative, transactional relationships between men and women.

Cultural concepts of African masculinity are clearly rooted in essentialist ideas of male dominance, strength, violence, control, bravery that encourage male decision-making expect men to perform instrumental roles. Similarly, the construction of femininity is primarily based on ideals that promote subservience to men, social reproductive roles, beauty, and virtue – such as virginity and chastity and avoidance of moral turpitude. Traditional initiation

ceremonies play an important role in the transition from child- to adulthood in both men and women, and are used as an important means to further reinforce notions of masculinity and femininity.

The aforementioned stereotypes of femininity and masculinity are omnipresent and strongly influence sexuality, women's empowerment, GBV, health, gender roles, and language. These stereotypes are intergenerational and therefore hard to change, although African feminist initiatives do challenge traditional constructs of femininity. Feminists calling women to take charge of their lives by finding employment and fighting GBV directly contend traditional understandings of femininity that expect women to be submissive to men. Yet, more initiatives to confront the issues related to such patriarchal understandings are necessary.

This study also identified a number of knowledge gaps. First and foremost, we noted that the vast majority of reviewed literature focuses on South Africa, Nigeria, or Ghana. Yet, Africa is a continent of many varied ethnicities and as such, it is of utmost importance that more attention will be paid to other countries and cultures obtain a full understanding of how femininity and masculinity are constructed across African cultures and societies.

The studies that were included in this review all focused on masculinity and femininity in relation to a specific phenomenon, such as GBV or gender roles. The focus on how masculinities and femininities are practiced daily unfortunately did not give us any more information on their "inner essence", which plays an important role in African thought and which, according to [Mfecane \(2018\)](#), should give more information about what distinguishes African constructs of gender from Western conceptualisations.

While we did review some articles on the construction of African masculinities and femininities in primary and secondary education, information is missing on what role HLIs play in the conceptualisation of African masculinities and femininities. As institutions of education that are leading in academic research, it is evident that more focus needs to be put on how dominant gender stereotypes are formed, perpetuated, and challenged by HLIs.

Unfortunately, we have detected very little information on unconventional femininities and no research on positive masculinities. Future research on the latter two could especially have a major contribution towards a better understanding of (changing) communal and individual understandings of African man- and womanhood.

There are some limitations to this research. We deliberately chose to only include articles of authors who were African. Yet, we found that it was very difficult to distinguish African from non-African scholars. We had sought to rely on African sounding names and abodes in Africa but found that this was not necessarily a guarantee that the author was indeed from Africa. In order to correct this, we checked for the author's institutional affiliations at the time they wrote their manuscript, their profiles on LinkedIn, and other web sources. Yet, even after having combined these methods to identify African

scholars, we still feel that we may have wrongly categorised some scholars. For example, some African scholars – especially those in South Africa – have European surnames, and may at the time of writing their manuscript, have been affiliated to a non-African university. It was difficult to capture all this information correctly.

Furthermore, the lack of resources on African masculinities and femininities in countries other than South Africa, Nigeria, or Ghana (which contributed to the majority of the articles) makes it difficult to present a theory that is representative of the understandings of masculinity and femininity across African cultures and ethnicities. Yet, the beauty of this research is that whatever information we have found, it is distinctively different from Western gender epistemologies but similar to pan-African thought. A literature-based study such as this could help bring together the various understandings of masculinities and femininities within the very amorphous African culture. Africans used to recognise each other through culture rather than societies. To this day, more parts of Africa than not still identify more with their culture than with their nationality.

The history of Africa teaches us that many African cultures have influenced each other through religion, emigration, and colonialism. For example, the submissiveness of wives to their husbands has strong roots in Christianity and Muslim religions alike. These religions widely connect many Africans, regardless of where they live. Therefore, we are positive that despite the underrepresentation of many nations in the reviewed literature, our review has been able to capture relevant African knowledge systems of masculinities and femininities, which no doubt will overlap between many cultures and communities.

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Part II

Insights from the GATE Project



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5 The Promise and Perils of a Feminist Participatory Action Research Project

Insights from the GATE Project

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Introduction

Educational institutions are key spaces of action, learning, reflection, and progression. As argued in the enduring works of bell hooks, education can be the practice of freedom (hooks 1994). At the same time, higher education institutions can also be sites where power asymmetries and pre-existing inequalities can be sustained and naturalised over generations. Universities, as sites for teaching and research, knowledge generation, and knowledge dissemination, represent distinctly important sites of epistemic power and possibilities for social transformation through critical interrogation and dialectical exchange. Whilst recognising this promise, the prevalence of gender inequality in higher education institutions (HEIs) remains a shared problem globally (Adewale and Potokri 2023; Drew and Canavan 2020; Gaudet et al. 2022; Loots and Walker 2015; Stromquist 2015; Walker et al. 2020). Education institutions tend to reflect the societal structures, values, histories, and norms of the communities within which they are embedded (Bourdieu 2008; Byrd 2019; Gander 2019; Naidoo 2004[1988]). As Rosa and Clavero observe, ‘the persistence of gender imbalances and pay gaps at the top and the bottom levels of the academic hierarchy; gender segregation across academic disciplines and activities; the lack of integration of gender perspectives in teaching and research; and the extent of sexual harassment and assault on campuses ... reveal the extent to which gender still structures, in very significant ways, the divisions of academic labour and capital’ (2022: 1).

Over the past two decades, HEIs in many countries have embraced gender mainstreaming strategies and introduced systems, policies, and processes aimed at improving gender relations within their spaces. Traditionally bastions of male privilege, universities, along with all other sectors of economies, are challenged with transforming their institutions, ethos, and practices to become equitable and inclusive thereby supporting the flourishing of all members of their communities. There are both instrumental and intrinsic reasons to explain this shift. Higher levels of gender equality and inclusivity lead to

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better research outcomes across the sciences, arts, and humanities. Traditional models of excluding female and other voices, histories, biologies, needs, interests, and capacities from research drive the development of products, services, technologies, and solutions that are not relevant or appropriate for the majority of the global population. In terms of intrinsic values, gender inclusivity, and equitable relations ensure the conditions of possibility for flourishing and creativity across all members of the community. Not only is it good for science and research, but it is also, quite simply, the right thing to do.

Given the crucially important function of universities as sites of knowledge generation and dissemination across generations, the reproduction of gender inequalities and harmful gender norms within this space is particularly troubling (Gander 2019), mirroring rather than transforming enduring gender inequalities in the social, political, and economic systems in which they are embedded (Byrd 2019; Hearn 2020). The capacities of HEIs to influence policy at national and international scales, and to influence norms, beliefs, and values through their teaching activities at the level of the individual learner are without parallel. Thus, the persistence of discriminatory gender regimes and the perpetuation of ideas and practices of gender inequality within these sites and through the activities undertaken in these spaces is deeply problematic.

Unfortunately, despite the promise of gender mainstreaming, there is strong evidence to suggest that efforts in many countries and sectors are failing to achieve the core objective of transformative change in gender relations at which they aim (Guthridge et al. 2022), with issues of gender inequalities persisting (Chancel et al. 2022). Different reasons are offered in different places and spaces to explain the slow pace of change. In their systematic review of gender equality interventions, Guthridge et al. (2022) found that although many projects boasted some benefits and small-scale improvements for participants, there was little evidence of sustained change over time. Further, their findings suggest that insufficient attention to change at different levels and scales resulted in the underestimation of the complexity and relationality of interacting and interconnected social systems across micro, meso, and macro levels, thus inhibiting lasting transformative change.

It is within this context, and with this understanding of the gendered nature of HEIs that the idea first emerged to co-design a project to mainstream gender into research and teaching practices in a teacher-training college in Tanzania. The institution at the centre of the study is a public teacher-training university college established in 2008. In 2013, it set up a gender Unit charged with developing a gender policy and mainstreaming gender awareness and considerations into institutional policies and everyday teaching practices.

The context of education in Tanzania is marked by a distinct and deep gendered imbalance (Adewale and Potokri 2023; Nyoni and He 2019), with young girls leaving the educational system at higher rates than their male counterparts during the secondary school cycle, thus influencing the unequal

participation rates of females at tertiary levels (Mwita and Murphy 2017; Unterhalter et al. 2014; URT 2016). The leaky pipeline commences early in the Tanzanian educational system with females occupying approximately only one-third of higher education places and comprising approximately 28% of academic staff in HEIs in Tanzania (TCU 2020). According to the National Strategy for Gender Development (URT 2008) ‘the existing stereotype attitudes still favour boys over girls in most communities’ and, the persistence of harmful gender norms and practices continues to influence human development outcomes in health, education, and employment across the country (OECD 2022).

Recognising our shared experiential knowledge and sense of responsibility to challenge institutional, cultural, and social structures and norms that drive gender inequality in higher education, the academic team within the Gender Unit invited colleagues from an institution in Ireland to support them in their plans to design a participatory action research (PAR) project aimed at transforming gender relations within their HEI. The idea for the project emerged through opportunities nurtured by two independent scholar-friends. The lead researchers came from different countries, Tanzania and Ireland, and academic disciplines, Politics, International Relations and Development, and Education. They met whilst at a seminar on gender inequality in development cooperation and their friendship grew from this shared interest. Some years passed before they had an opportunity to develop a formal proposal to work together. The possibility first emerged in 2013 when the researchers secured support from their respective academic institutions to explore opportunities to develop cross-institutional teaching and research collaborations. This began a ten-year research relationship between the lead researchers, both cis-gender females and both with experiential situated knowledge of gender inequality in higher education systems. The first few years of this collaboration entailed small-scale student-based research engagements to support the Tanzanian institution’s gender unit in gathering data to inform the construction of its new gender policy. Following the success of this collaboration, the team secured a small seed grant to host a workshop that would plan out a more ambitious project. It is at this point that a feminist participatory action research (FPAR) framework emerged as an essential mechanism for supporting the new project.

The decision to embrace a FPAR framework and use this as the foundational framework for the research emerged organically rather than intentionally. The project, Gender Awareness and Transformation through Education (GATE), was designed to achieve two key objectives. Firstly, to strengthen institutional partnerships between HEIs in Ireland and Tanzania on gender equality. Secondly, to support the development of a Centre for Excellence in gender equality through a blend of institutional and individual capacity development initiatives at a University College of Education in Tanzania. As such, it connected principles of reciprocity and partnership with co-learning and

knowledge co-creation across two geographies. Further, in its focus on gender equality, it entailed an examination of gender and power relations within HEIs, requiring deep feminist research methodologies and methods. In operationalising the grounding principles of the relationship, the core objectives of the project, and identifying the methods necessary to answer the key research questions of the project, a FPAR framework emerged as the most appropriate approach for a project of this nature.

Feminist researchers and PAR tends to focus on power relations, systems of oppression and domination in their research (Martinez-Vargas 2022). Whilst PAR highlights the centrality of power in the social construction of knowledge, feminist research explores the gendered nature of power relations and social institutions, the subordinated status of femininities and women's voices and experiences, and the distribution of power based on gender as a factor in the construction of knowledge (Code 2008; Haraway 1988). Feminist research methods and methodology are widely utilised in PAR due to their strength in both examining and actively challenging inequality in its material and symbolic forms through the exploration of gender-regimes, power dynamics, and social norm (Bradbury 2015; Brydon-Miller and Maguire 2009; Brydon-Miller et al. 2020; Hall and Tandon 2017; Reid et al. 2006; Walker et al. 2022). However, perhaps the most compelling reason for selecting FPAR for the GATE project is its practical significance. The GATE project required a methodological framework that could generate knowledge-for-change. As Cornish et al. note, PAR is a process for 'generating knowledge-for-action and knowledge-through-action in service of goals of specific communities' (2023: 2).

From the first meeting, the project team began to document their journey. Project documentation included meeting minutes, annual reports, summaries of regular structured critical reflection and reflexivity activities, annual review sessions with the governance entities, a formal external evaluation report, and a wealth of qualitative data including interviews with key stakeholders and participants, and quantitative data, including surveys and gender action monitoring data. This data was stored on a shared secured cloud-based drive and was accessible to the full project team. This chapter shares insights from this data set. The following section begins with an outline of the guiding theoretical framework and core feminist principles adopted by the project to guide the PAR process of problem definition-action-observation-reflection-problem redefinition-action research cycle. 'The Project Design' section shares a thick description of the project design, work packages and outcomes. We draw upon Cornish et al.'s six core building blocks of PAR – 'building and maintaining relationships; establishing work practices; establishing common understandings of the issue; observing, gathering and generating materials; collaborative analysis; and planning and taking action' (2023: 1). The 'Methodological Insights' section then examines key insights and lessons that emerged from the FPAR methodological approach. Key challenges are outlined in the following section, along with areas for further consideration and research that emerged.

This chapter contributes key empirical and methodological insights into the use of FPAR and the un/doing of gender in action.

Feminist Participatory Action Research

The researchers adapted a feminist relational lens to their work, recognising and examining the embedded nature of gendered power and privilege in everyday norms and practices. As relational feminists, they grounded the project within our situated knowledges and shared relationships at the micro level, and worked from this supportive foundation to analyse meso level institutional structures and policies, and macro level social and cultural factors that interact and influence the everyday experiences of university life. The model of PAR practiced through this project was based upon an explicit set of feminist principles which facilitated reflection on the relationships within the institution, allowed space to reveal new insights into the barriers embedded within systems and experienced on the ground when seeking to enhance gender equality within higher education settings, and opportunities to overcome these barriers. As the idea for collaboration emerged through a pre-existing relationship between two scholars based on different disciplines, different countries, and different academic institutions, but with a shared interest in gender and education, it was essential to establish a shared set of operating principles that expressed our shared understanding and the intentions that would guide all work practices. During the initial set-up meeting, the team discussed and agreed a set of underlying principles that would ground all project actions and guide the learning.

The feminist principles articulated to guide the project included engagement and participation, epistemic inclusivity, transparency and accountability, solidarity, and adaptability. These principles are influenced by [Walker and Loots \(2018\)](#) PAR cube that prompts reflection and action across three key domains of PAR – participation, knowledge generation and public engagement – to achieve transformative change in ‘the direction of more social justice’ ([Walker and Loots 2018: 166](#)), or in the case of this particular study, the promotion of inclusive gender norms and practices at an HEI. In practice, this entailed the project team reaching out to the college community through student leaders, university management, and open invitations to the academic, administrative, and professional staff to attend open meetings and focus groups to explore gaps in knowledge and understanding, identify training needs and interests, and inform in the design of action research initiatives. Thus public engagement was a structural feature of the core design from the beginning of the project and was repeated in annual engagements throughout the project.

The project was informed by a theory of change and targeted a blend of short term changes and longer term impacts. In the immediate to near term, the project aimed to encourage female leadership training opportunities within the institution; building targeted networks and mentoring supports; enhance research supports for female academics through the establishment of

writing groups; increase the number of research outputs that include a gender dimension across the college research community; support research networking opportunities with other institutions across Tanzania and Ireland; formulation of gender-sensitive curricula for undergraduate modules; and, as is necessary within PAR, to gather data on each of these areas and generate knowledge-for-actions.

The long-term effects that the project hoped to influence include increasing the number of female students completing secondary-level schooling, by encouraging teachers to become community leaders and change drivers across Tanzanian communities; Increasing the number of females moving into third-level education within the college – to build a pipeline of future female role models and leadership that can influence national development and progress; Building the capacities of local academics to lead in gender-based research, education, and training; Building transformative relations with the surrounding communities; Building sustainable gender related networks for dialogues and discussion on gender-related issues among academics in higher education across Tanzania and Ireland; and Building an active platform for gender-related forums and discussions among pre-service teachers in higher education across Tanzania and Ireland.

Influenced by [Wood's \(2012\)](#) conceptualisation of transformation as enhancing change in three domains, we aimed for ontological, epistemological, and practical changes. When the project was initially forming, there was a general perception in the institution that 'gender is a women's issue'. However, the project actively sought to include male academics and leadership throughout the process in recognition of the reality that gender equality is a matter of concern and action for all genders. Following on from findings from [Guthridge et al. \(2022\)](#), we also recognised the importance of monitoring the reactions of cis-gender male colleagues to the changes that were happening in their work and professional lives throughout the project. Actions within the project actively sought to challenge and transform how academic staff view the world of gender relations and their place within this. From an epistemological perspective, we encouraged academic staff to think about the role and implications of gender and sex within their own research areas. This was traditionally seen as a matter of concern for gender studies, sociology, or development studies. However, we highlighted the gaps and problems with scientific understandings in multiple fields that arise when gender differences and diversity are not considered. This resulted in a swell of interest in and action around multi-disciplinary academic research at the institution. Finally, from a practical perspective, institutional transformation was a key ambition and area of change targeted by the project team from the outset. We voiced our desire to transform the gender unit from an administrative hub into an academic centre that could lead research and training on gender-related matters. The specific project activity was to draft a strategic plan for a new Centre for Gender Research and to commence the process of shepherding this through the university approval processes. Such review and approval processes can take several years to complete. Thus, our aim for this essential infrastructural enhancement was modest. In the early stages of

the project, but our expectations changed dramatically as the project took hold. From 2018 to 2023 the project enjoyed widespread community engagement and strong University leadership and sponsorship that facilitated the swift approval of the research centre to continue with the task of transforming gender relations through research and teaching into the future.

The Project Design

In their *Nature Reviews Methods Primer* on PAR, Cornish et al. (2023) identify six key building blocks that form the foundations of PAR projects – relationships; work practices; shared understanding of the key issue; shared data collection and data management; collaborative data analysis; and planning and undertaken targeted actions (2023: 1). The following shares a thick description of the design of the GATE project around these core building blocks.

As noted above, the project emerged from pre-existing relationships based upon shared interest, mutual trust, and a strong foundation for reciprocal learning. In order to maintain and sustain strong working relationships within the project team over time, the team agreed a series of regular team meetings, meetings around project activities in institutions in Ireland and Tanzania, and regular stakeholder meetings with the university leadership and funding partners. The core team co-designed vision and objectives for the project outlined in Figure 5.1.

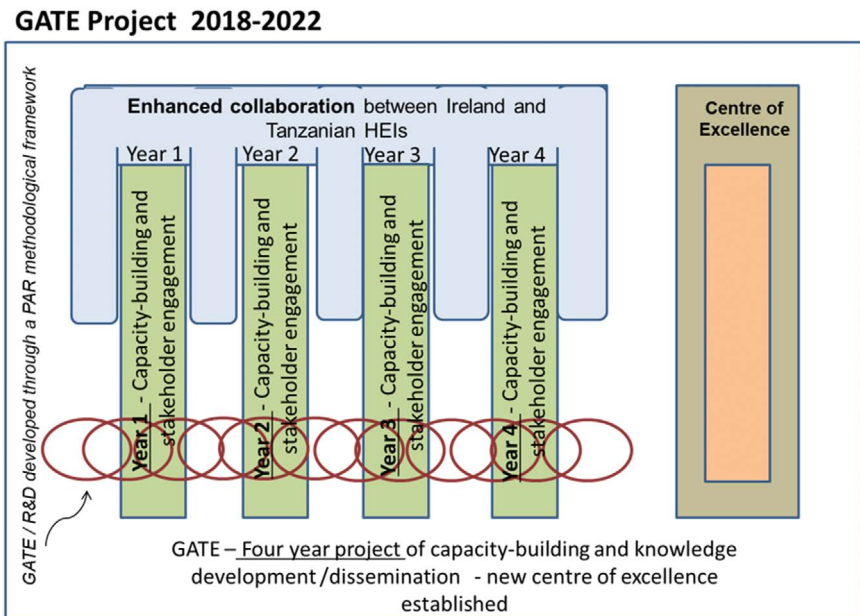


Figure 5.1 GATE project overview, developed with assistance from Trinity research manager George Dunwoody



Figure 5.2 GATE project work packages

The project was structured across six work packages (Figure 5.2). A fundamental objective of the project was to generate knowledge-for-action and to avoid extractive and exploitative research processes and outputs. It intentionally aimed to move research beyond traditional academic concerns focusing on understandings of the circumstances and drivers of inequalities, towards, as Walker and Loots note, ‘enabling those who experience marginalisation or privilege to ask new questions about cultural norms, who they are and what they would like to be’ (2018: 168).

In early baseline work used to inform in the GATE project design, Murphy et al. (2019) found that deeply rooted cultural norms and traditions continue to influence everyday experiences of gender discrimination and stereotyping within the college. Patriarchal ideologies linking women to motherhood and care both within the domestic and professional spheres, and men with independence, assertiveness, leadership, and dominance were naturalised in everyday language and expectations. Unequal gendered norms and beliefs, such as the inferiority of female students to male students, the lower capacities of female academics and the unquestioned biological essentialism of everyday discourse were reproduced and shaped self-expectations and behaviours (Murphy et al. 2019). Such norms fed into practices of hiring and recruitment, progression and promotion with higher numbers of women involved in service and administration roles, and within academia, in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, and higher engagement of males in the STEM areas; and leadership

roles within the institution. Thus, the gendered division of social reproductive labour was evidence in the professional setting. Within this space, a strict and rigid gender binary informed attitudes and practices of teaching and learning. This was found to contribute to heterogeneous forms of gendered domination that were experienced by male and female staff and students within the institution. These findings suggested that stand-alone ‘female only’ gender mainstreaming strategies would not be sufficient to achieve a gender-equitable environment within the HEI context. Rather, it suggested that a whole-of-community approach is necessary to unravel deep-rooted biases and to tackle diverse forms of domination that affect different members of the college community in different ways.

Recognising the limitations and lessons learned of previous gender mainstreaming initiatives, where the focus on gender parity diluted attention from the cultural, historical, and structural barriers that sustain gender inequality and gender hegemony (Breton 2022; Guthridge et al. 2022; Morley 2010; Stromquist 2015; Unterhalter et al. 2014), and critiques of PAR projects that focus on individual development over institutional change (Cole et al. 2014; Greenwood 2007), this project was designed to effect change at three levels – micro level through the development of research skills and capacities within the gender unit; meso level actions aimed at generating deeper awareness among the wider community of academic staff and students and inviting them to critically reflect on their own values, beliefs, wider cultural norms, and how these influence their behaviours in classrooms and through research activities; and macro, structural level changes within the university through gender policy mainstreaming, institutional analysis and the development of a gender action plan that could be monitored and evaluated over time, and the development of an ambitious strategic plan for a new centre focused on gender research and teaching.

Action-Research Cycle

The project team held weekly meetings to manage all of the work packages, to schedule the data collection moments, agree on data analysis plans, review and discuss observations and findings, and plan each round of actions. There were three large-scale data collection events during the project – the baseline survey at the beginning of the project, the institutional analysis midway through the project, and the endline survey to examine trends and changes evident over the project at the end of year 3. Data was also collected through qualitative tools for each activity undertaken during the project. The team reviewed the findings and reported on the outcomes from each activity, gathered additional feedback from participants, and planned the activities for the following quarter.

Further, the team held annual meetings with a non-executive external advisory board (EAB) that they established to ensure good governance and oversight of the project. The EAB included expert academics and practitioners

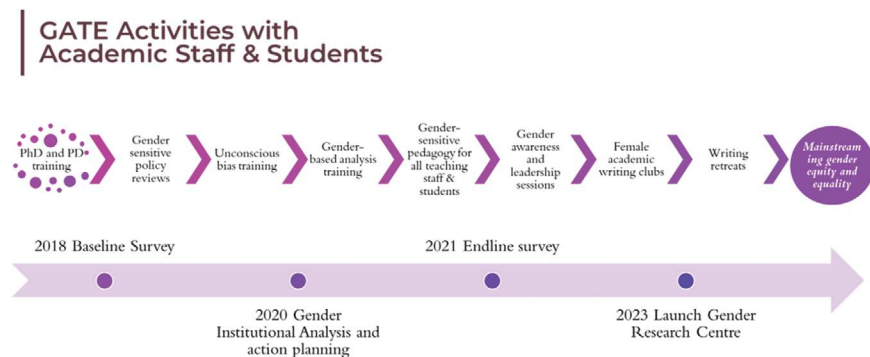


Figure 5.3 GATE action-research cycle

from HEIs and policy institutions in Tanzania, Ireland and South Africa. The project team assembled this group each year, presented their progress, findings and plans, and sought critical evaluation, interrogation and feedback. This process of structured critical review provided important moments for thinking, reflection and adaptation.

The action-research cycle outlined in [Figure 5.3](#) was designed to be rigorous, reflective and adaptive as our collective knowledge deepened. The project aimed to develop knowledge of the context to inform actions rather than for purely academic purposes of scientific paper outputs. Engagement with the project aimed towards transforming gender relations through the empowerment of the project team as a team of feminist researchers, teachers, and academic community members, with expertise in different disciplines including education, geography, and politics. Finally, the project actively utilised democratic processes of public deliberative and critical dialogue with the wider college community, establishing regular meetings spaces and open forums to facilitate active listening and learning. These sessions supported the team in reflecting on the nature of the problems and adapting new actions and interventions to address new challenges as they arose.

Project Outcomes

The project generated rich qualitative and quantitative data that was used to develop activities to drive transformative change at micro-meso and macro levels. It recorded strong success. At the micro level, gender expertise was developed through doctoral training and post-doctoral mentoring of key staff. Within the wider college community, the majority of staff engaged in one of the workshop and training opportunities; several hundred students participated in project events and activities; female only writing groups were meeting regularly; staff were engaging with leadership opportunities and supporting the project team and gender unit to expand their activities; the project team used the training sessions to develop formal training modules that could be

reused in future training for staff and students; and it developed a formal undergraduate module in gender sensitive pedagogy. At a macro level, the project resulted in an infrastructural enhancement with the formal establishment and launch of a new Gender Research Centre at the university that is responsible for maintaining and growing gender-sensitive teaching and research activities into the future. Overall, the end-of-project independent evaluation report found that the project had achieved its objectives and fundamentally changed perceptions and attitudes at the university.

Methodological Insights

Following Walker and Loots (2018), the following reflects on Wood's (2012) conceptualisation of transformative action research that enhances change in three domains, practical, epistemological and ontological, to assess the extent to which the project could be defined as transformative in nature.

Practical Enhancements

From the outset the project was intended to be practical and to design and deliver actions to service the specific needs of a specific community. Perhaps one of the most surprising achievements is the establishment of the Gender Research Centre as a formal, embedded, structural enhancement to the teacher-training college at the centre of the project. In the initial project proposal, the intention was more modest – to devise a strategic plan for the development of a Gender Research Centre of Excellence. However, as the project progressed, the formal establishment of this centre became a priority for the University leadership. At least three reasons can be identified to explain this acceleration of ambition. Firstly, the funding, governance structures, and general project management framework established by the project team. As a PAR project involving researchers and academics from two institutions in two countries, the team agreed full transparency and parity of esteem in the management of the project, the distribution of time for co-principal investigators, funding for all activities, and overhead supports to the respective universities. Back-to-back contract agreements were established between the universities to support this objective. This included a formal governance structure linking leadership in both universities with the relevant governance, finance, and administrative divisions. The project team then ensured all reporting and auditing was compiled into a single set of narrative and financial reports for the funder. For both universities, this was a novel arrangement that supported relationship-building across different units including academic, administrative, and professional staff.

Secondly, the whole-of-community participatory approach adapted by the project team. As noted above, when the team first proposed the idea for this project it was widely articulated that 'gender is a women's issue'. However, as the project succeeded in securing funding, and setting up its formal governance

structures with external advisors and internal leadership representatives, interest in the project grew. Additionally, the project team explicitly and actively invited participation from all interested parties in the college for the majority of activities. As the opportunities emerged to participate in information or training sessions, there was strong attendance from staff across different units. The project team explicitly targeted human resource units and faculty Deans to undertake unconscious bias training, for example. We engaged with all participants before and after the activities to gather their feedback, insights, and suggestions for future actions. This approach ensured that our actions were relevant and interesting, explicitly meeting the needs and interests of our participants.

Thirdly, the university took the opportunity presented by the project to organise conferences and workshops with sister universities across the country on the topic of gender and education. Thus, the project generated networking and relationship-building activities with other research entities across the country. In so doing, it attracted the attention of potential future funders, political leaders, and policy-makers. As PAR projects are designed to be iterative and flexible, this facilitated novel kinds of public and wider engagement. The energy and interest generated by the project were critically important to the decision to progress with the formal establishment of the Gender Research Centre to ensure that the research and engagement could continue. In accelerating the approval for the establishment of the centre, the University committed budgetary support for the centre into future years.

Epistemological Enhancements

From an epistemological perspective, the PAR approach created space and time for at least three important insights to emerge. Firstly, the training sessions on gender-based analysis and research methods gave rise to a strong interest among the academic participants in exploring gender dimensions within their fields. Approximately 25 research papers were drafted for sharing at a workshop by participants to the training. Additional writing and research supports were given to interested researcher to develop their studies and present their work. Two special issues of the local university journal were organised to publish the research. Thus, recognition of the cross-cutting relevance of gender-based analysis to scientific research and across multiple disciplines gave rise to several new research projects integrating a gender lens.

Secondly, the strict research ethics protocols and the FPAR framework created space for participants to share their perspectives and experiences. It sought to establish safe spaces for female-to-female engagement to explore women's experiences of challenging patriarchy. It also established spaces for the wider community of staff and students to reflect on how different forms of patriarchy create domination and resistance; to co-construct key research priorities; and to reflect on the risks and benefits of action research with male, female, and non-binary members of the college community. Social relations

are embedded and embodied in women's everyday activities, and rendering them visible can become a starting point for political action.

All data collected was immediately coded and anonymised to ensure complete confidentiality. In the safe environs of one-to-one interviews, staff shared more widely on how women's everyday lives were tied to patterns of subordination within their families, workplaces, communities, and society at large. The centring of gender and women's experiences through the research activities found opportunities to challenge dominant hegemonies and the 'patriarchal truths' that dominated group discussions of women's presumed 'natural inferiority to men' within Tanzanian culture, traditions, and social practices. Thus, although based upon relationships and networks, the approaches situated understanding in the larger historical, cultural, and social context of the study and the implications of this for action research. The process then explored how the identified issues could be uncovered, interpreted, and collectively analysed. The methods also focused on identifying any forms of patriarchy that shape/challenge researcher/participant worldviews and whether challenges to dominant patriarchal norms could put participants and/or researchers or others at risk, and what could be done to protect against any harm.

Thirdly, the FPAR methodology facilitated exposure of reasons for resistance to change in gender relations, without fear of repercussion through active encouragement of open dialogue and dialectical engagement with opposing positions. Throughout the project and in many public meetings, matters of history, imperialism, and colonisation emerged as some participants argued that gender equality is non-African, that concern for gender relations is based on privileged Western ideologies that have no or little application in an African context, essentially seeking to silence African researchers who chose to engage with the topic. These positions were expressed by some male and female participants, pushing other participants to reflect on their assumptions and beliefs. It also created important space for rich debate and discussion on gender in pre-colonial times, the position of women and girls across Tanzania's 120 ethnic groups, and the depth and richness of African feminism. This did not necessarily result in a change of attitude of all participants, but it did permit respectful dialectical engagement.

Ontological Factors

From an ontological perspective, a multiplicity of ontologies emerged concerning the content and focus of gender-based analysis, from a focus on women and girls, biology and sex, to power relations, dominance, control, and gendered expectations. The initial perspective of most participants was that gender is a women's issue and that there is no need or requirement to consider relations with men and boys, or to reflect on the gendered divisions of labour and care. This shifted significantly throughout the course of the project. However, the continued focus on biological capacities, the gendered division of social reproductive labour, and a rigid male-female gender

binary remained strong and largely uninterrupted through the discussions and debate, thus pointing to areas for continued research and action. Thus, there is some evidence to suggest that the methodological approach supported some specific transformative practical, epistemological and ontological outcomes. However, challenging and transforming gender relations is an ongoing process and thus the establishment of the centre for gender research to continue with action-research efforts represents an important structural condition of possibility for further transformative outcomes over time.

Key Challenges

Three key areas of challenge emerged related to the practice of FPAR on the GATE project: uncertainty; conservative nature of academic institutions; academic life, competing and conflict interests, coping and caring.

Uncertainty

As an iterative adaptive process, PAR is time and labour intensive, and marked by deep uncertainty. There is simply no assurance that a change will happen. Attempting to measure change in attitudes and relations, that is, not only how people think things are but how they actually are, is extremely challenging in a short project cycle. Measuring change in gender relations during a global public health pandemic is also almost impossible. When COVID-19 emerged in February 2020, approximately 14 months into the project, everything had to be adapted. However, of deep significance to the area of study, gender relations themselves were abruptly affected by the Pandemic and by government policy responses, including the closure of schools and childcare support facilities and workplaces and requirements for staff to ‘work from home’. The knock on effect to gender relations and dynamics was swift and is well documented (Urio et al. 2021). This had a double effect on the GATE project. Firstly, the topic of our study was pushed into a period of flux, with the gendered division of care and social labour rapidly emerging as a challenge, in particular for working women. Secondly, our research team and participants were all effected by the pandemic, at a minimum, through disruptions to their work patterns and capacities, and maximally, through the loss of loved ones. We had the further complication of dealing with different public health regulations in different spaces complicating what activities could be undertaken, where, and by whom. However, precisely because a PAR project is iterative and adaptive, the team were able to adjust the planned activities to ensure that the project could progress. We also secured an additional no-cost extension from the funder to complete the activities. In terms of adaptations, everything moved to an on-line forum for a temporary period and the team concentrated on writing workshops and data analysis. However, the need to respond, the ongoing disruptions, the shifting sands of the phenomenon under investigation, the need

to support relationships and well-being, and the situated experiences of all of the team influenced our time and space for reflection in particular.

Conservative Nature of Academic Institutions

Universities are notoriously conservative spaces (Bourdieu 2008[1988]). They are deeply hierarchical spaces, embedded in social, cultural, and political systems, and as such are reflective and protective of the communities that they serve and the socio-cultural knowledge they protect. As such, single actions and interventions are insufficient to drive deeply rooted normative change across the system and in the everyday understandings, beliefs and practices of the population. Through an analysis of the staff surveys at the end of the project, and reflections on the final dissemination event that took place in 2023, it is clear to the team that more effort and ongoing actions and reflections are required to unpack internalised norms and values, and to embed gender equality and respect for diversity within classrooms and institutional spaces.

As participation in action and engagement is self-selecting, at least half of the academic community chose not to engage. Further, our survey in 2020 indicated that despite the existence and formal launch of the gender policy, less than half of all staff were aware of its existence. Close to half of the university staff feel that there is an insufficiency of discussing and taking gender issues seriously among men and women in the university. Most staff believed that efforts being made to support female students are sufficient, yet sextortion is a recognised problem nationally (Mukama 2017) and data on sexual harassment and bullying within the institution itself was a recognised practice and problem. As sites responsible for the generation of transmission of knowledge, the lack of concern for persistently unequal outcomes for males and females remains troubling. Despite a ‘whole of community’ action research initiative, the perpetuation of gender norms and stereotypes continues.

Time, Tensions, and Academic Life

As noted above, PAR projects are time and labour intensive. Academic life is also time and labour intensive. Time is split between teaching, research, service, and consultancy. In our survey of staff at the beginning and end of the project, all staff at the institution noted that their teaching workload was too high, and their research time was too low. In the specific context of this teacher-training college, where class sizes are regularly more than 1,000 students and the number of fully trained academic staff is low, the workload is extremely high so securing time for staff to attend training, provide feedback, engage in interviews and workshops, and to prioritise time for critical reflection and thinking was extremely challenging. As this project involved a team of practicing academics, protecting the time for problem definition, action, research, observation, and problem redefinition was extremely challenging and at times became a source of tension and delay. Further, bringing in support

for the research team to cover some of their regular academic responsibilities was difficult. There is simply a very limited resource pool available to provide cover staff. Thus, those activities that require clear space and thinking time took longer than anticipated and were often lowest on the list of priorities to complete. From a project perspective, all practical matters were attended to promptly, but the academic task of data analysis and paper write-ups were slower. This created some tensions within the team between the collective and practical interests of the project and the individual needs of academics to produce papers and publish work. As PAR is focused on knowledge-for-action and in this case knowledge-for-change, publication through the peer review process in high ranking journals can be difficult, slow and expensive. All the whilst, female staff continue to struggle under the weight of their triple roles as workers, carers, and community organisers.

Conclusion

The chapter shared insights into the process, practice, learning, and insights of a FPAR project, GATE, in a teacher-training college in Tanzania. The FPAR methodology utilises throughout the project allowed for extensive practical and epistemological enhancements within the college. Adapting Wood's conceptualisation of transformative action, the paper evaluated the process and approach, the outputs, and the insights. It found that this project can be described as transformative in specific areas, but that further action and research is required. Through the establishment of a new Centre for Gender Research at the institution, it is hoped that the project has built a strong foundation for continued work in this area.

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6 Case Study: Disruptive Development

Exposing and Unpacking Accounts of Gender Stereotyping in a Teacher-Training College – Tanzania

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Introduction

With an average gender gap index score of 0.72, Tanzania is currently ranked among the best-performing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa for gender equality (World Economic Forum 2022). Following over three decades of gender mainstreaming policy architecture at the national level, Tanzania has improved access for all children and citizens to all levels of education. Although gender parity has been achieved at the primary level, a large gender gap persists at the secondary level (Mwita and Murphy 2017). This has a knock-on effect at tertiary levels and the low pipeline of young female academics entering higher education institutions. Persisting inequalities continue to disadvantage Tanzanian women and girls where they are still less likely to be enrolled in tertiary education than their male peers, they are still less likely to receive the same wage for similar work, they make less income, and they are still less likely to occupy a managerial, parliamentary, or ministerial position (Chan et al. 2016; World Economic Forum 2022). Additionally, rigid patriarchal gender norms, particularly in rural areas, continue to marginalize women in terms of access to productive resources and participation in decision-making (Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) 2022; The Ministry of Community Development, Gender, and Children [MCDGC] 2012). Women continue to shoulder the highest burden of reproductive responsibilities, and gender-based violence remains a particular concern in the country (OECD 2022; World Bank 2022).

The processes that produce inequalities within societies are deeply embedded within the relationships between institutions and their socio-cultural context (Dick and Nadin 2006). Concerning gender, evidence suggests that what people can do, get, plan, or execute in life is fundamentally linked to their social categorization into ‘men’ or ‘women’ (Unterhalter et al. 2013, 2014; West and Zimmerman 1987). This social categorization process is essentially based on the socio-cultural perspective that views women and men as fundamentally different with distinctive psychological and behavioural

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propensities directly linked to their reproductive natures (Garfinkel 1967, 116–118). An examination of African scholarship on this subject finds normative understandings of masculinity and femininity which assume fundamental biological differences between male and female human nature corresponding to distinct behavioural prescriptions (Adinkrah 2012; Khumalo et al. 2015, Atobrah and Ampofo 2016)). Behaviourally, men are expected to be active, assertive, daring, tough, and dominant while women are expected to be gentle, passive, submissive, and nurturing (Adinkrah 2004, 2014). It also finds extensive studies in the context of Ghana and West African countries (Atobrah and Awedoba 2017), but less on gender in Tanzania and East African states.

Whenever a social category is activated, the stereotypes associated with it are also automatically activated (Deutsch 2007). Correspondingly, and according to multi-cultural evidence, those who are categorized as men are cast as more agentic (e.g., competent, ambitious, assertive, and competitive), and those who are categorized as women are cast as more communal (e.g., supportive, caring, warm, and emotional) (Rudman et al. 2012b). Due to the biased perceptions that are associated with gender stereotyping, men are viewed as being more competent, giving them advantages that can create and sustain a system of inequality between men and women (Lorber 2005; Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Risman 1998; West and Zimmerman 1987).

Adhering to and reinforcing gender stereotypes have been repeatedly identified as major causes for the persistence of inequalities within societies (UNDP 2022). For instance, Glick et al. (2000, 2004) verified that countries that scored high in sexist attitudes had worse indicators of women's equality, such as developing a professional career. Similarly, in a cross-country study, Breda et al. (2020) revealed that female underrepresentation in maths-intensive fields is directly related to the stereotype that associates mathematics with men. Equally, and concerning women's representation in leadership positions, Cabrera et al. (2009) concluded that the perceptions of women's attributes as incongruous with those of leaders result in lower expectations of women's potential for leadership and lower evaluations of female leaders' behaviours.

Gender stereotypes are argued to be flexible and constantly changing depending on the studied contexts (Biernat and Thompson 2002). To that end, they are not merely influenced by national laws and policies (Cook and Cusack 2010) but also by places and spaces (Solbes-Canales et al. 2020). Educational institutions represent an important example of such spaces where stereotypes can be nurtured and reproduced (Blumberg 2007; Chisamya et al. 2012; Stromquist et al. 1988; UNDP 2022). They can also act as critical sites for social change by challenging and disrupting prevalent gender stereotypes and perceptions (Nonaka et al. 2012; Unterhalter et al. 2022). Of all educational institutions, teacher-training schools form distinctly unique and vital sites where gender stereotypes can be challenged, as it is in these spaces that future teachers are prepared to undertake their epistemic roles in societies (Murphy et al. 2019; UNDP 2022).

It is within this context that a partnership project between a teacher training college in Tanzania and a university in Ireland was designed and implemented to support the development of gender capacities and expertise in research and education. The project is one of the many development cooperation examples of Tanzania and Ireland's active commitment to achieving gender equality within and through education. The project ran for a period of 4 years, supporting the design, development, and implementation of a university-wide gender policy, building general gender awareness and sensitivity across all teaching practices, supporting institutional transformation, and developing knowledge of gender issues in this unique context.

This study is part of the knowledge production efforts of this project. It aims to understand how gender categorization is activated within this context and how gender stereotyping manifests in relation to the activated gender categories. Recognizing that interventions do not operate in a vacuum and that there are often personal, institutional, and societal barriers to change, this study helps to unpack the relationship between institutions and their socio-cultural context, shedding light on the complex barriers to achieving gender equality within this context and the opportunities for overcoming these barriers.

The following section outlines the theoretical framework that guides this chapter. This is followed by the guiding methodology and methods, presentation of the results, and a discussion of these findings.

Literature Review

Psychological Essentialism and the Process of Social Categorization

Psychological essentialism is a theory that explains the process of creating different categories, including social categories. The theory is based on the idea that people tend to categorize many objects depending on an essentialist perspective (Medin and Ortony 1989). This perception is based on two related views. The first is that those who belong to an essentialist category share an underlying similarity that naturalizes certain assumptions and beliefs and limits many of their visible features (Medin and Ortony 1989). The second is that this shared essence is absolute, and so are the attributes defined by it (Medin and Ortony 1989).

The most substantial evidence for the psychological essentialism of social categories comes from research on gender. From early in life, children were found to draw social inferences depending on belonging to an essentialist gender binary (men, women) generalizing within, but not across, these categories (Gelman et al. 1986). Moreover, children were also found to believe that infants grow to have personality traits associated with their gender category regardless of the environment they grow in (Taylor 1996). Adults, too, were found to essentialize gender. For instance, studying adults' representations of 40 social categories, Haslam et al. (2000) found that gender

categories were ranked highest among the characteristics associated with natural kinds.

Passage rites are important African events that recognize a young person's elevation to adulthood (Mwita and Murphy 2017). It is at adulthood that masculinities and femininities are then recognized as being inherent. In Namibia, for example, Khumalo et al. (2015) found that a woman attaining norms of respectability was known positively as a "real woman". Constructs for the real woman incorporated meeting basic household needs by getting income from respectable activities, nurturing cooperation with other people, and performing the roles of mother and wife (Khumalo et al. 2014).

The essentialist concepts upon which the explanations of gender differences reside are based on the belief that the differences between women and men reside in an essence (Manicom 2015). This "inner essence" (Mfecane 2018) is often associated with the biological differences between men and women. In his book *Engendering Modernity* (Marshall 1994, 104) argues that all types of essentialism within the feminist theories, whether it be biological, philosophical, or historical, relate the female body to its reproduction nature. The connection to biological differences is also explained by Alsop et al. (2002, 65). In their book *Theorizing Gender*, the authors initially argue that not all essentialists' notions are necessarily biological in nature. They make the distinctions between biological and social essentialism by arguing that while biological essentialists believe that men and women have an essential biological feature that explains psychological and behavioural commonalities, social essentialists link the beliefs of such communalities to adopting specific social roles or being part of a specific social structure (Alsop et al. 2002). From there, they explain that although social essentialist accounts of gender differences are distinct from biological essentialist accounts, many social constructionist accounts of gender differences rely on residual biological essentialism. They argue that the "accounts of gender which focus on how men and women learn to be masculine or feminine assume a priori that the human species is unproblematically divided biologically into men and women. Thus, while such approaches stress that what constitutes masculinity and femininity is socially constructed, they do not question the binary division of people into two sexes" (Alsop et al. 2002, p 65).

The distinction between the different accounts of gender essentialism is also explained by Grosz (1995). Like Alsop et al. (2002, p 65), Grosz argues that essentialism usually, but not necessarily, entails biologism and naturalism (Grosz 1995). Grosz explains that there are cases where "the women's essence is seen to reside not in nature or biology but in certain given psychological characteristics – nurturance, empathy, support, non-competitiveness, and the like" (Grosz 1995, p 47). Further, Grosz suggests that an element of gender essentialism relates to performing certain activities – "women's essence may be attributed to specific activities and procedures (which may or may not be dictated by biology) observable in social

practices – intuitiveness, emotional responses, concern, and commitment to helping others, etc” (Ibid.).

Gender Essentialism and Stereotyping

In *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), Allport proposed that a belief in category essences is a fundamental cognitive ingredient of the rigid style of thinking that underpins prejudice. Similarly, [Yzerbyt et al. \(1996\)](#) and [Myron and Taylor \(1992\)](#) theorized that essentialist thinking emphasizes differences between categories, fixating and normalizing the existing social arrangements. [Myran and Taylor \(1992\)](#) further argued that essentialist thinking encourages the drawing of promiscuous inferences about people’s underlying natures based on their visible differences as members of particular groups.

Empirical evidence further supports this theory. Concerning the research on gender, research on adults suggests that essentialist beliefs can promote stereotypes. For instance, evidence indicates that those who essentialize gender are those who more frequently amplify group differences ([Myran and Taylor 1992](#)), rationalize gender inequalities ([Hoffman and Hurst 1990](#)), prefer male leaders ([Hoyt and Burnette 2013](#)), and impose more significant penalties for stereotype violators ([Dweck et al. 1995](#); [Shio and Moyer 2021](#)). The relationship between gender essentialism and gender stereotype endorsement also extends to self-stereotyping. For example, [Coleman and Hong \(2008\)](#) found that women who essentialize gender were likelier to endorse stereotypically feminine traits and less likely to deny them. This evidence clearly links gender essentialist thinking and strengthens gender stereotypes.

Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotypes are preconceived beliefs of attributes and roles assigned to women and men determined and limited by their sex ([European Institute of Gender Equality 2022](#)). Gender stereotypes are argued to have both descriptive and prescriptive components, each serving distinct functions ([Eagly et al. 2004](#); [Fiske and Stevens 1993](#)). The descriptive gender stereotype component alludes to how men and women typically act ([López-Sález and Lisbona 2009](#); [Koenig 2018](#)). The prescriptive stereotype component, on the other hand, refers to beliefs about how men and women are expected to act within a specific cultural context ([Cialdini and Trost 1998](#); [Fiske and Stevens 1993](#); [López-Sález and Lisbona 2009](#)).

As gender stereotypes tend to focus on what differentiates men and women, they can manifest in many forms ([López-Sález and Lisbona 2009](#)). Though the literature identifies many ways in which gender stereotyping materializes, two ways received special attention from researchers: trait stereotyping and role stereotyping ([López-Sález and Lisbona 2009](#)).

Trait Stereotyping

Trait stereotyping reflects the behavioral and psychological attributes most associated with men or women (López-Sáez and Lisbona 2009). The agency and communion divide forms the core of gender trait stereotyping (see, for example, Sczesny et al. 2019). Communion orients people to others and their well-being and is most commonly associated with women; agency, on the other hand, orients people to the self and goal attainment and is most commonly associated with men (Abele and Wojciszke 2014; Eagly et al. 2020).

Williams and Best (1990), for instance, described two imaginary people: one is said to be more adventurous, independent, coarse, dominant, capable, forceful, and strong. The other is more affectionate, dependent, shy, dreamy, emotional, sentimental, submissive, and weak. In a cross-cultural study that involved 25 nations, Williams and Best (1990) validated that the former personality was associated with males and the latter with females. In a more recent pancultural study, ; Best and Foster Dustin, 2004; Kimmel et al (2005) identified the male stereotypes as being higher on extraversion, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness, and the female stereotype as higher on agreeableness. Similarly, Rudman et al. (2012a) identified agentic traits (e.g., being career-oriented, having leadership ability, aggressiveness, assertiveness, independence, competence, and intelligence) as more desirable for men than women. Traits that reflect vulnerability (e.g., weakness, insecurity, uncertainty, and indecisiveness) were considered undesirable traits for men and more associated with women. Communal attributes, on the other hand, including being emotional, warm, a good listener, and having an interest in children, predominated desirable traits among women (Rudman et al. 2012a). Other desirable traits for women include loyalty and dedication (Dietrich et al. 2021).

Role Stereotyping

Role stereotyping comprises beliefs about the activities considered more appropriate for men and women (López-Sáez and Lisbona 2009). As Blackstone (2003) argues, gender roles are determined by the individuals, groups, institutions, and societies' expectations of individuals based on their sex, and based on the specific society's cultural values, norms, and traditions. Role stereotyping has elements relating to the private and public realms. Within the household, role stereotyping manifests in relation to the traditional view of women as nurturing and men as leaders (Blackstone 2003) and informs the division of labour. Consequent to this view, women are expected to engage in nurturing activities by being dedicated mothers and good wives and carrying out domestic activities, including caring, cooking, and cleaning (Blackstone 2003; Dietrich et al. 2021). Conversely, men are expected to be the heads of their households, protecting their families, providing financially, and holding positions of authority and leadership (Blackstone 2003; Dietrich et al. 2021).

Gender roles can also be linked to expectations of men and women in realms outside the family, such as work (Williams and Best 1990). Gender role stereotyping in the workplace manifests clearly in the rigid division of labour by gender (Dietrich et al. 2021). In the workplace, men and women are often expected to perform different tasks and occupy different roles based on their sex (Kanter 1977). In less advanced economies, this can manifest in women carrying out economic activities confined to their households, such as sewing, farming, and embroidery (Dietrich et al. 2021). In more economically advanced societies, it can be reflected by women being more likely expected to work as secretaries and men more likely expected to work as managers and executives (Blackstone 2003).

Methodology

The study utilizes qualitative research methods that employ a secondary data analysis methodology within an inductive methodological framework.

Secondary data analysis is the process of re-analysing data originally collected for other purposes (Glaser 1963; Heaton 2004). In this study, we utilized qualitative data collected as part of the reporting process for two gender-based capacity-building workshops conducted as part of a gender equity awareness raising project at a teacher-training college in Tanzania. The first workshop was a Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) Training Workshop conducted in April of 2021. The second workshop was an Unconscious Bias Workshop conducted in June 2021.

As part of the GRP training, participants were asked to reflect on the meaning of gender and sex roles. During the Unconscious Bias training, participants were asked to discuss and share their perspectives on the main characteristics of men and women. Reported participants' responses were analysed thematically to understand how gender was essentialized within this context and to identify the stereotypes that are activated in relation to the essentialized gender categories.

All aspects of this project were subject to a full research ethics review process in both collaborating universities. All participants were fully informed of the project and training objectives. All participation was entirely voluntary and formal written consent was secured from each participant. Data protection regulations have been carefully managed to meet the requirements for Irish and Tanzanian public higher education institutions, with all data fully anonymized and securely protected. Results have been shared with participants and these are being used to review and update the institutional gender action plan and gender policy.

Results

This section presents results obtained from participants during the GRP and the Unconscious Bias training. The GRP training was targeted towards

academic staff at the institution and involved 75 participants, including 38 female and 37 male participants. This unconscious bias training was targeted towards the management and leadership staff at the institution and involved 40 participants, 16 of whom were females and 24 were males. Participants included the senior management team of senior academic staff, the project officials, and professional staff, including human resource management and senior administrators.

GRP Training

During the GRP training, the facilitator asked the participants to reflect on the meaning of gender and sex roles. Concerning women, participants expressed that women get menstrual cycles, and their sex roles are to get pregnant, give birth and breastfeed. Participants' views suggested that the men's sex role was confined to impregnating women.

Concerning the gender roles, participants shared that female gender roles include fetching water, cooking, washing clothes, washing utensils, cultivating, sweeping, mopping, preparing clothes for their husbands, and looking after children. Male gender roles mentioned were digging the grave, being head of the family, security, building the house, and farming/cultivating.

Unconscious Bias Training

As part of the unconscious bias training, participants were asked to discuss and share what defines men and women. The participants defined men as leaders and decision-makers at all levels (national, family, religion, and community). They also viewed men as strong and clever and as providers for their families, both economically and socially. Men were also defined as being assertive and not liking to be questioned on what they say or do. To the participants, men were also linked to demanding obedience and respect from women. Women, on the other hand, were characterized as caretakers of the children, husbands, and extended families. Women were also defined as loving and sincere in the relationship. They were also seen in relation to bearing children, breastfeeding, and looking after their families. They were also described as peacemakers, soothers to men, good investors through the local revolving fund credits Village Community Bank (VICOBA), and as critical, not easygoing, and hard to be convinced for an affair.

Discussion

How Is Gender Essentialized Within This Context?

The above result shows that three types of gender essentialism explain the binary model of differences between men and women. The first one is biological,

or naturalistic linking the women and men to their respective reproductive natures. We can see this represented in how participants associated women with having menstrual cycles, getting pregnant, giving birth, and breastfeeding their children, and men with their reproductive capacity of impregnating women.

The second type of identified essentialism is linked to possessing specific psychological characteristics. For instance, results from the unconscious bias training show that participants associated women with being loving, soothing, sincere in relationships, good at investments, and critical and hard to be convinced of an affair. Men, on the other hand, were identified as being strong and clever, demanding obedience and respect from women, and disliking criticism of what they say or do.

The third type of essentialism that emerges from the results is associated with performing certain activities. The results show that participants mainly associated women with doing house chores, e.g., fetching water, cooking, cleaning, and providing care for their husbands, children, and extended families. Women were also associated with peace-making and cultivating crops. Conversely, men were associated with protecting their families, providing economically and socially, digging graves, building their houses, and carrying out farming activities. They were also linked to leadership and decision-making roles at all levels.

This typology extends the work of other scholars (for example, [Alsop et al. 2002](#); [Marshall 1994](#), 104). The findings also align with the work of [Grosz \(1995\)](#) and put extra emphasis on the presence of an essentialized belief of gender differences that are based on performing certain activities, with women mainly being associated with performing reproductive roles and men with performing productive roles.

Activated Stereotypes

The binary division into men and women activates certain traits and role stereotypes that are generalized within but not across these gendered categories. Concerning trait stereotypes, the result reveals that Tanzanian women are associated with traits related to sensitivity, sincerity, criticality, and being good at investment. Tanzanian men, on the other hand, were associated with intelligence, strength, and assertiveness. The result also shows a trait that participants thought men desired in women: obedience.

Although female traits such as being affectionate and sincere; and male traits of being intelligent and assertive are reminiscent of the agency and communion divide mentioned by the literature, traits of criticality and being good at investments are certainly new insights into existing understandings of gender stereotyping. The finding related to being critical and not easily convinced specifically contradicts the assumption that women are agreeable, submissive, and weak identified by [Williams and Best \(1990\)](#) and [Best and Foster Dustin \(2004\)](#).

It is also interesting that participants expressed that Tanzanian men desired women to obey them. This, when paired with the identified female trait of being critical and not easily convinced of an affair, uncovered an exciting shift in the power dynamic specific to the Tanzanian context.

Concerning role stereotyping, the results align well with the traditional views of women as nurturing and men as leaders discussed in the literature (Blackstone 2003; Dietrich et al. 2021; Unterhalter et al. 2014). The results indicate that participants viewed Tanzanian women in line with their traditional feminine role and Tanzanian men in line with their traditional masculine role. The female role was linked to doing house chores, and caring for children, husbands, and extended families; the male role was linked to providing financial security for their families, holding authoritarian positions, and protecting their families.

Interestingly, the only economic role associated with women was cultivating, which aligns with the findings of Dietrich et al. (2021), confining women's economic activities to their homes. A noteworthy finding uncovered by the result but not mentioned in the literature is that participants viewed women in the Tanzanian context as peacemakers. This finding reveals an important context-specific understanding and highlights the crucial role that Tanzanian women can play in peace-building processes and in facilitating harmonious social relationships.

Although we cannot infer a causal relationship between trait and role stereotypes, the result indicates that the stereotyped roles for men and women are directly related to their stereotyped traits. We argue that because women are viewed as loving and soothing, they were associated with reproductive and nurturing roles. Similarly, since men were viewed as strong, clever, and assertive, they were associated with productive and leadership roles both in the private and public realms. The idea of an 'inner essence' (Mfecane 2018) seems to inform specifiable traits that influence specifiable activities and behaviours (Prentice and Miller 2006).

Conclusion

This chapter explored the relationship between institutions and their socio-cultural context regarding advancing gender equality. Specifically, the chapter examined how gender categorizations inform everyday thinking and practice at a Tanzanian teacher-training college, and how gender stereotyping manifests in relation to the activated gender categories. The chapter shared insights from staff collected as part of two gender capacity-building workshops. The findings reveal a priori assumption among the academic staff of the existence of a rigid gender binary entailing two distinct sexes (women and men). The assignment of individuals into either one of those categories seems to be primarily based on biological bodily differences linked to their respective reproductive functions. This categorization also plays a crucial role in the participants' sense of who they are and how they are expected to be. With the emergence of these

social categories, the gender stereotypes associated with these categories were also automatically activated, clearly disadvantageous to any person that does not easily fit within these categories (Murphy et al. 2019; Shio and Moyer 2021). These results shed light on the complex barriers to transformative social change within this context and highlight the need for innovative bottom-up approaches to disrupting the internalized gendered norms.

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7 To What Degree Do Students' Perceptions of Gender Norms Influence Their Participation in Higher Learning?

Case Study of Trainee-Teachers
in Tanzania

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Introduction

Studies on students' voices and participation in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) have received attention from stakeholders due to their commitment to addressing the role of students in realising change in tertiary education. Such changes are multi-faceted: in the past few years, authors have written about the effect of the decolonisation of education and the resultant re-emergence of African languages in teaching and learning (Mayaba, Ralarala, and Angu, 2018); the unique set of skills of students that can meaningfully contribute to quality and knowledge enhancement (Garwe, 2015); and the need to address the lived experiences of young people to end exclusion, marginalisation and injustice in HLIs (Ngabaza, Shefer, and Clowes, 2018). However, while these studies underscore the importance of students' empowerment to realise the change in universities, an important aspect of such development remains relatively unexplored. Although prevalent, traditional gender norms greatly affect students' participation and resultant empowerment in HLIs. Unfortunately, though, the vast majority of authors writing on student participation fail to address the role of gender regimes in tertiary education.

The achievement of gender equality in education has been on the international agenda since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. Many more international efforts have followed. At a time when Sub-Saharan Africa displayed disproportionately high numbers of out-of-school girls, the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) called for access to primary education for every child, leading to the Education for All Initiative (EFA) of 1990, which focused on the enrolment of girls in primary education. Ten years later, the Dakar Framework for Action also aimed to eliminate gender disparities and achieve gender equality in basic education by 2015. This was succeeded by the Millennium Development Goals (2000–2015) and the Sustainable Development

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Goals (2015–2030), which further focus on increasing access to schooling and ensuring women’s full and effective participation as well as equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life by 2030 (Bivens, Moriarty, and Taylor, 2009; Chisamya et al., 2012; Morley, Leach, and Lugg, 2009; Saini et al., 2023).

Aforementioned international efforts have been fruitful: in recent years, there has been a significant increase in access to education among women and girls. One of the countries that has achieved major milestones in terms of expanding access to education is Tanzania, whose constitution affirms the right of all citizens to education at the highest level, as well as a commitment to a number of international agreements to improve gender equality and educational opportunities (Sitta, 2007). In 2001, free education was introduced, which led to an increase in enrolment from 54% in 1990 to 99% in 2019 (The World Bank, 2022). In 2015, secondary school tuition fees were removed and the transition rate from primary to secondary school rose drastically: in 2017, 71% of Tanzanian teenagers were enrolled in secondary education, compared to a mere 20% at the beginning of the 21st century. This increase simultaneously led to the growth of Higher Education (HE), as more students completed the secondary level of education and thus sought entry to third level education (Memba and Feng, 2016).

While enrolment for boys and girls in primary school is similar, gendered divisions emerge in participation in both secondary and HE. UNESCO (2019) states that in 2019, 3.7% of Tanzanian males were enrolled in tertiary education, compared to 2.5% of all females. Research conducted by USAID (2021) found that only one in three girls who start secondary education in Tanzania will complete their education due to economic hardship, pregnancy, or school-based gender violence. This, in turn, contributes to lower rates of university enrolment in girls.

Tanzania acknowledges these challenges and as such, it has made policy commitments for increasing participation in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), such as providing access to loans financing enrolment in HEIs and investing in infrastructure. This has accelerated growth in both the number of programmes and students population enrolled in universities (TCU, 2020). The increase in access to education in recent years is widely welcomed and well documented. However, due to the early stages of this development, there is a dearth of research into the experiences of students entering HE spaces, and more specifically, on how this increase in access is translated into meaningful participation for girls and women (Msigwa, 2016).

Academics warn that globally, it is not clear whether an increase in access also translates into an increase in participation among female students in domains that are traditionally dominated by male voices (Durrani and Halai, 2020; Mumporeze, Han-Jin, and Nduhura, 2021). In this context, meaningful participation refers to the ability of students to activate capabilities and freedoms such as affiliation, practical reason, and bodily integrity, and to exercise agency in the pursuit of objectives they value (Hart and Brando, 2018;

Nussbaum, 2003). Research on the subject of participation in HE points to a range of structural, yet non-gendered issues. As a result, less research is available on the influence of hidden gendered barriers on participation and student learning (Thomas and Rugambwa, 2011; Unterhalter, 2012).

Gender is defined as the socially constructed norms and values that assign roles and influence power relations between men and women. Gender roles, norms, and expectations are learned, internalised, and reproduced within communities, and are influenced by national laws, spaces and places as well as through social and intergenerational relationships (Code, 2014; Murphy, 2015). Norms are the shared values, beliefs, traditions, practices, and ideologies of a community (Stromquist, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). In Tanzania, where this study takes place, societal gender norms associate women with motherhood and social reproductive labour, while men are linked to power, assertiveness, and leadership, both within the household and the marketplace (Connell and Pearse, 2014; Morley, 2006; Stromquist, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Unterhalter *et al.*, 2014). Although Tanzania is a culturally rich and diverse country with over 120 languages, ethnicities and cultures, many communities expect that girls will grow up to marry and bear children, leaving their home to join the family of their husband. As such, from an educational perspective, greater emphasis is given to the education of boys as they will support the household overtime and take up roles as providers and heads of household. Especially for households facing constrained financial capacities, there is a greater return on investment in boys' education over girls (Chisamya *et al.*, 2012; Mwita and Murphy, 2017).

While increased government investment in education, the introduction of free education for secondary level students, and targeted government policy aimed at increasing the education levels of the entire population of Tanzania did result in a significant increase in the number of girls attending secondary school and entering third level institutions, it is critical to note that access to schooling among girls is only one indicator of a shift in traditional gender norms. When Tanzanian families invest in girls' education, as is the case with the participants in this study, research conducted by Chisamya *et al.* (2012) shows that there can nonetheless be tensions between societal expectations on the one hand and norms of HLIs on the other hand. While societal norms often prescribe girls to 'be seen and not heard' and to be submissive to her family, educational norms often recognise and reward excellence and merit on the bases of active engagement in class, leadership roles, and in student life. It is the tension between these two spaces – home and HLI – that is challenging for all: for females to ignore societal norms and raise their voice, and boys and teachers to listen to women and to encourage them to participate (Ibid.).

It is alarming that research shows that HEIs can act as spaces where harmful gender norms are often reproduced rather than challenged (Thomas and Rugambwa, 2011; Unterhalter, 2012). In an effort to explore and address the conflict between societal and institutional norms in HE, this study aims

to contribute to the enhancement of this topic by (i) examining the internationalisation of gender norms among students in HLIs; (ii) analysing how these norms are reproduced and/or challenged in everyday student life; and (iii) exploring how these norms influence participation in learning and student life.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the Capability Approach (CA) to examine female students' capabilities to participate in Tanzanian HLIs. The CA was originally developed by Amartya Sen (1974, 1979a, 1979b) as an alternative approach to welfare economics. Sen broke with the omnipresent idea that economic growth is the final ends to development. By pointing at misleading informational bases that conventionally evaluate communal prosperity, Sen posed how the CA is better suited to achieve well-being (Kimhur, 2020).

According to the CA, one's well-being is dependent on the capabilities and freedoms available to them, as well as one's ability to activate, or to choose to use these capabilities and freedoms (agency) in order to live a life one has reason to value (functioning) (Nussbaum, 2003; Sen, 1985). This chapter focuses on five out of ten capabilities which Nussbaum (2003) argues are essential for analysing the educational context, as they can be used to examine the disconnection between enjoying rights and freedoms, and not being in a position to activate them in a meaningful way. These five capabilities are as follows:

- Bodily integrity:** the ability to move freely and to be protected against harassment and assault.
- Senses, imagination, and thought:** the ability to use one's mind to receive an adequate education, including access to all resources and the guarantee of freedom of expression and voice.
- Practical reason:** the ability to form a concept of what is good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
- Affiliation:** the ability to live with and among others and to be treated as a dignified human-being whose worth is equal to that of others.
- Control over one's environment:** the ability to participate effectively in the choices that govern one's life and enter into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with others.

Barriers to Participation

Having introduced the theoretical framework underpinning this study, we wish to draw attention to several structural norms, expectations and practices that restrict female students' capabilities and freedoms in the Tanzanian context. An understanding of these structural barriers to female participation in

HLLs was used to inform the methodology of this study and acquire insights into the factors that complicate female participation at our case study.

Gender Norms as Barrier to Participation

There is a wide consensus among academics that a focus on numerical parity, driven by reporting systems and metrics, is not a sufficient indicator for measuring gender equality. [Durrani and Halai \(2020\)](#) and [Mama \(2003\)](#) argue that simply looking at rates of female students wrongly implies that institutions are gender neutral and that women do as well as men. They hold that a too narrow focus on numbers fails to question or challenge the gendered structures, ethos and underlying assumptions of institutions and systems into which female participants are now permitted. As such, it is evident that there is a need for qualitative analysis to explore the extent to which traditional cultural gender norms influence participation in HE.

Researchers who have applied a qualitative approach to participation in learning spaces, have found that institutions are often oblivious to the burden of additional care responsibilities, which traditionally fall on the shoulders of women ([Morley, 2013](#)). [Mumporeze, Han-Jin, and Nduhura \(2021\)](#) found that women in universities are entering highly masculine cultures in which there are different expectations for men and women. Gender norms in some contexts tend to equate men with technical and maths-intensive fields, whereas women are equated with human-centred care and service fields ([Chua, 2017](#); [Morley, 2011](#); [Mumporeze et al., 2021](#)).

[Loots and Walker \(2015\)](#) argue that from a capabilities perspective, deeply embedded gender norms limit students' ability to challenge and transform these restrictive expectations. Doing so often leads to experiences of 'othering', which can be described as the process in which individuals or groups are labelled as not fitting in with the norms of a social group, leading to feelings of exclusion (*Ibid.*). [Nussbaum's \(2003\)](#) capability of affiliation stresses the importance of being treated as an equal, yet dominant gender roles position women as 'lesser' and thus conflict with this capability. Thus, traditional gender norms often severely impact women's ability to participate or obtain leadership positions.

Leadership Practices as Barriers to Participation

According to [Bush \(2007\)](#), leadership involves the process of influencing others' actions in achieving desirable ends. [Morley \(2013\)](#) asserts that leadership is often an important ingredient in achieving meaningful participation and gender transformation in HEI. [Hill et al. \(2016\)](#) note that in most cases, women are less likely than men to be considered leaders, and HLLs are no exception to this. [Chua \(2017\)](#), for example, found that in Tanzania the gender gap in student leadership is wide due to lower numbers of university enrolment in women, displays of hegemonic masculinity at the institutional level, and pervasive social norms. [Mbilinyi \(2000\)](#) also found that the gender gap in university leadership

positions is especially significant, persistent, and systemic. She points out that in the past, women at the University of Dar es Salaam were excluded from top student leadership positions, and those who sought leadership posts were harassed. Male students perceived themselves as superior and wanted women to consider them as such. Male students who felt threatened by high performing women reacted with violence and harassment. Fortunately, we know that equipping girls with leadership skills, knowledge, aptitude, and courage to compete with men will eventually strengthen their argument skills, build their confidence, and eventually make them ready to occupy leadership positions in the society and in politics as opportunities arise (Chua, 2017).

Pedagogical Practices as Barriers to Participation

The role of teachers and curricula are important factors to take in mind when examining the effect of gender norms on participation in education, as knowledge and understandings of gender are contextually grounded and realised through these pedagogic practices (Aikman, Unterhalter, and Challender, 2005). Curricula are formed through national legislation and are determined by social, cultural, political, and economic circumstances of a society. They can be a systematic source of both perpetuating and ending gender oppression (ibid.).

Loots and Walker (2015) argue that students must have the capability to have a voice and to have the freedom to participate in class. This entails female representation through pedagogical and curricular content, as this expands the capability of female students to engage with teachers, as well as acquire other capabilities such as confidence, critical thinking, and a sense of agency (Ibid.). Yet, women's experiences, voices and needs are often excluded from historical records and often not considered in curricula (Ibid.; Mihajlović and Hofman, 2015). When women are featured in HE modules and curricula, traditional gender stereotypes are pervasive and limit the capabilities of female students (Calitz, Walker, and Wilson-Strydom, 2016; Klees *et al.*, 2019; Loots and Walker, 2015). As teachers are central to the delivery of curricula, their own biases and beliefs of may also lead to either the perpetuation or challenging of gender expectations and norms (Murphy *et al.*, 2019). Aikman, Unterhalter, and Challender (2005) found that when teachers have low expectations of the intellectual abilities of girls, girls correspondingly have low expectations of themselves.

Sexual Harassment as a Barrier to Participation

There is a widespread consensus in literature that girls in sub-Saharan Africa suffer disproportionately from sexual harassment and violence at school. This is problematic, for it can impede their participation and satisfaction with their studies, as well as seeking extra support from male tutors (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2013; Mumporeze *et al.*, 2021; Vuckovic *et al.*, 2017).

In the Tanzanian context, sextortion – corrupt conduct in which the currency is sex – is endemic at all levels (Eldén *et al.*, 2020; Mumporeze *et al.*,

2021; Vuckovic *et al.*, 2017). According to Mumporeze *et al.* (2021) and Vuckovic *et al.* (2017), sextortion in HEIs reflects the wider patriarchal system of gender relations in which women are viewed as objects of men's desire, leading to marginalisation and exposure to sexual harassment and violence. Morley (2011) found that sexual harassment in Tanzanian universities was equated with power rather than sex and that it is often hidden and silenced. The author also indicated that rumours of sexual exchanges may serve to denigrate women's academic achievement, as many male students accuse females of engaging in sexual activity in return for high grades.

Experiences of sexual violence can seriously affect the participation of female students. From a capabilities perspective, sexual harassment limits women's capability of affiliation and bodily integrity and positions women as being 'lesser' than men. Failure to address these harmful gender norms limits women's capabilities to fully participate in the learning process, leadership roles and to exercise agency in pursuit of goals and objectives that they value (Chua, 2017; Hart and Brando, 2018; Klees *et al.*, 2019; Loots and Walker, 2015; Wilson-Strydom and Walker, 2015).

In response to research and rising awareness of the widespread scale and practice of sextortion, a number of interventions and policies have been developed at the government and institutional level to address sexual harassment. Examples include the Sexual Offences Act of 1998, the Code of Ethics and Conduct for the Public Service Tanzania (Vuckovic *et al.*, 2017), and directives to require institutions to establish gender units and gender desks. Eldén *et al.* (2020) and Vuckovic *et al.* (2017) argue, however, that there is still a large gap between legislation in Tanzania and the lived experiences of sextortion. This hinders the possibility for transformative change.

The literature review has shown that societal gender norms continue to influence female students' participation in HLI, and that a tension exists between norms within the home, and norms and expectations within educational spaces. Additionally, the literature has indicated the importance of engaging with both students and teachers, as both can take essential epistemic leadership roles in guiding the learning and development of college students.

Methodology

This chapter draws on the epistemic inclusion of students' voices in HE, for they play an important role in the transformation of gender relations. Hara-way (1988) argues that voice and situated knowledge could facilitate greater insight, as they recognise the capacity of all persons to be knowledge-holders. In turn, Garwe (2015) asserts that student voice is paramount in HLI, as it provides students with an opportunity to reflect, articulate their views and become partners in the planning and implementation of their learning experiences.

This study uses an inductive approach to gather student input, analyse students' responses, and inform the development of a framework for enhanced

students' participation and voice. Two sets of data were collected through six focus groups discussion with students and 14 semi-structured interviews with staff at the College, which included staff across three faculties. The six focus groups consisted of between six to ten students and were composed of two all-female groups, two all-male groups and two mixed gender groups. A total of 50 students took part in the focus group discussions. The participating students were mainly drawn from second- and third-year students who were members of the Gender Club at the university and the Dar es Salaam University Student Organisation (DARUSO). The first data set was collected in 2015 and was reviewed to understand the baseline construction of gender and gendered challenges at the university.

The second data set was collected in 2020 and 2021. This data set forms the primary source of data for this chapter. The three focus groups included Gender Club leaders, Gender Club members, and students who were not members of the Gender Club to gather a range of voices and perspectives. Snowball sampling was used to get access to students who were not linked to the Gender Club. In 2021, we further explored if there were indications of changing attitudes and perceptions after the election of a female leader of the Gender Club.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Once the data from 2015 and 2020/2021 had been transcribed, colour coding was used to identify themes, compare datasets, and cross-check the findings with the literature examined in the literature review. The CA was applied to the datasets for analysis.

The study received ethics approval from the university to ensure no harm to participants. Before the study began, participants were given a consent form to ensure they were informed about the process, risks and benefits of the study. Participants were also informed that the data was anonymised and stored in a password protected Google Drive, and that they could end participation at any point. To overcome positionality bias, the researcher undertook the process of prospective reflexivity (an analysis to assess the effects of the researcher on the study) to become aware of her position as a researcher and to ensure that the study was directed by the students' voices and not the researcher's. This was done by allowing the students time to answer questions and by not interrupting interviewees. Unfortunately, this process was sometimes challenged by distance and online communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, which at times was not very good for interviews. This was overcome by rescheduling meetings to a time that was more convenient to the responder.

Findings and Discussion

Challenging Dominant Gender Norms

With regard to dominant gender norms, data from 2015 and 2020/2021 indicate that traditional gender norms are dominant at the university. Students repeatedly referred to men as 'superior' and more comfortable in activities that

require voice and dominance, while women were seen as 'shy' and 'lacking confidence'. One of the male respondents said the following:

Females are subordinate and males are superior to females. And another point is that they are always quiet. Men are always superior. They will discuss, they will lead the discussion.

(FG1, M, 2015)

This was echoed by both male and female students in 2020, who said that women are 'inferior' and 'lack confidence' to contribute to class discussions:

Women tend to feel inferior in group discussions and do not contribute as much. In some societies, men are preferred and there are certain gender roles. Men are more comfortable in leadership activities, whereas women are more comfortable in domestic activities.

(FG2, M, 2020)

I think girls have a lack of confidence and they aren't considered in a positive way in some African cultures. Girls have an inferiority complex, and we don't appreciate ourselves the way we should.

(FG2, F, 2020)

The students' answers show heavily gendered language in which men are consistently described as being 'superior' to the 'inferior' women. The students' answers in 2020/2021 echo the findings in 2015, which indicates little change in dominant gender norms at the university over the five-year period.

The capability of sense, imagination, and thought highlights the importance of being able to use one's mind to achieve meaningful participation, including access to all subjects and resources, as well as being able to guarantee freedom of expression and voice. However, the students' answers show how traditional gender norms in Tanzania are operationalised at the institutional level and portray female students as 'lacking confidence' and 'quiet' in class discussions. This indicates that female students at the university are being limited by traditional gender norms, which are being reproduced and carried into the HLI space.

The capability of affiliation also stresses the importance of being able to live with and among others and being treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. Yet the students' answers above show that dominant gender roles position women as 'lesser' to men. As a result, these deeply embedded gender norms limit students' ability to challenge and transform restrictive expectations. This shows the disconnection between having the rights and freedoms to participate, but not being in a position to activate these in a meaningful way due to dominant gender norms. The above findings are in line with the literature examined earlier, which has found that while access to

education is essential, it does not automatically translate into meaningful participation for women when schools reproduce, rather than transform existing gender norms and power relations (Chisamya et al., 2012; Durrani and Halai, 2020; Morley, Leach, and Lugg, 2009).

Yet, our research shows that while pervasive, gender norms were also to some extent challenged over time. The 2020/2021 data set provides an original epistemic contribution, as it shows evidence that some female participants had become frustrated with dominant norms at the university – which was not at all the case in 2015. As such, female students had become more aware of the endemic gender norms restricting their voice. In 2020, a female student noted that a main barrier to gender equality at the university is that

women need to be educated and empowered to know that they can do the same as men.

(FG2, F, 2020)

Similarly, a second female participant said:

We see that women don't talk in class because they think they can't compete with men. Women need to be strong and confident so that they can do what men can do. Culture tells them they can't be, so we need to educate women that there is no difference between men and women.

(FG1, F, 2020)

These points were echoed throughout the 2020/2021 dataset and suggest that female students have become increasingly frustrated with dominant gender norms and that they seek to challenge, rather than internalise them. While gender norms were still pervasive in 2020/2021, more women had adopted a new attitude towards these structural beliefs, and were committed to change. This has implications for gender transformation at the university, as challenging these dominant norms allows women to break with harmful norms that prevent them from participating in classroom discussions.

Sextortion

When examining the dominant gender norms surrounding the female body in 2015, we found that women were using their bodies to overcome educational challenges. Women were clearly stuck between being portrayed as vulnerable due to their reproductive capacities, and their portrayal as cunning because they may use their bodies for academic enhancement. One male student in 2015 stated that both men and women experience financial problems but that women

tend to sell their body at least to get money and afford it.

(FG1, M, 2015)

This narrative was echoed by a male staff member in 2015 who stated that female students are less likely to seek extra academic support from male staff due to allegations of sextortion.

Female students are more comfortable when they just face the female lecturers. What I came to realise is, if they have some problems sometimes after the lecture they can just, “Madam, can I come to your office?” But they can’t do it to [males], I don’t know why. But they understand, okay sometimes if I go for male, they just might ask for a sexual bribe if it is a thing. They feel like that.

(Staff interviews, M, 2015)

The students’ answers in 2015 indicate that sextortion undermines meaningful participation due to the absence of policies at that time to report and challenge this behaviour at the university. The data also indicates a persistence of the patriarchal system in which sexual harassment is equated with power, and that this behaviour is often hidden and silenced. The topic of sextortion did not emerge in 2020/2021 when students were asked about challenges to gender equality and barriers to participation at the university. This indicates that this harmful practice has been challenged by the university. From a capability perspective, this has huge implications for achieving meaningful participation, as students should be able to move freely and be protected against harassment and assault at the university.

Leadership and Pedagogical Practices

Both in 2015 and 2020, participants felt that while universities provided men and women with equal opportunities to obtain leadership positions, women lacked the confidence to compete with men for formal and informal positions. Our data shows that some participants had internalised rigid ideas of gender and leadership, as women were referred to as ‘shy by nature’. In addition, participants said that women do not put themselves forward for elections as ‘they fear they are inferior to men’. However, the data also shows how some 2020/2021 participants are challenging these rigid understandings, which indicates a shift in attitudes and behaviours.

Despite some students stating that women are not putting themselves forward for leadership roles, there seems to be awareness among participants that these positions influence both formal and informal learning at the university, and provide a platform to challenge existing stereotypes and norms. The students’ union (DARUSO) was identified by students as a key agent of both knowledge and change, and thus important to challenge the conceptualisation of leadership as being more suitable for males. A female student in 2015 echoed the importance of DARUSO by saying that being part of the union allows her to increase her opportunities in life. It is

worth noting that she did not mention any challenges to being elected for the role.

I am a DARUSO leader, so I can have something through that leadership. All these aimed at increasing my chances in my life, I can do several things through that.

(FG2, F, 2015)

However, a second female student, who was not a member of DARUSO, said that she felt that women were not in leadership positions at the university because of a ‘lack of confidence’:

Another problem is lack of confidence. It is a big problem at DUCE, especially for female students. Because they are not believing on their own that they can do it. For instance, in the age of competition of leadership at DARUSO, the number of female students is very low compared to male students, because female students they thought that if maybe I take a form to compete for a certain position and then I fail to win the position, so what can I do? So this let them not take a form to compete for a certain position.

(FG2, F, 2015)

The students’ answers above highlight the importance of challenging gender stereotypes which portray men as leaders and women as passive followers. Within this normative structure, it is more difficult to have a ‘good female leader’ as the ideals of femininity do not permit women to be assertive, organised, or be in positions of leadership. These are roles which have been taught at a young age both within and outside the home and which are hard to challenge. We found that some students have internalised these gender norms, while others are challenging them and competing against men for leadership positions. Our study indicated that although there have been some shifts in attitudes towards gendered expectations since 2015, pervasive stereotypes were still prevalent in 2020/2021. As a matter of fact, the 2020 dataset revealed a tension between students who had internalised these stereotypes and students who called for change. While a male student asserted that a general feeling of inadequacy among women impedes them from competing for leadership roles, as ‘women cannot compete with men’, a female student, on the other hand, asserted that the wider community is needed to help challenge such beliefs:

I think the problem facing girls when it comes to leadership is that there are few girls willing to put themselves forward for elections. Recently in the election for the student unions’ president, there were 10 candidates, and nine were men. There is definitely an attitude on campus that

women cannot be president, maybe vice president, but not president. Women need to be taught that they can be our leader.

(FG2, F, 2020)

In 2021, however, an important change occurred: a female student was elected as the leader of the Gender Club. Evidently, perceptions of gender roles and norms had contributed to that change. When asked if this was a reflection of Tanzania having its first female president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, a student referred to gender equality workshops at the college level instead:

The chairperson is now a female, but the last chairperson was a male because many females fear to be a chairperson due to a lack of confidence. This year, there was more awareness of gender equality due to seminars and events which awakened us. There is a traditional perception that a woman can't be a leader because this position is special for men, but the presence of gender workshops awakened many females to know their rights and that God created men and women equally.

(FG1, F, 2021)

Clearly, internal gender equality workshops that equip students with self-reflection skills had strongly contributed to the transformation of gender norms. Rather than accepting rigid gender norms, the workshops helped female students challenge and shift ideas that women cannot be leaders. From a capabilities perspective, the capability of practical reason shows how the ability to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life is critical to ensuring meaningful participation at university. The capability of having control over one's environment is also crucial to being able to participate effectively in the choices that govern one's life and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite an increase in women's enrolment at Tanzanian universities, rigid understandings of gender still limit the full participation of females in HLIs. Traditional gender norms, a wide gender gap in student leadership, sexual harassment, and pedagogical barriers such as biased curricula and teachers maintaining harmful gender stereotypes all have a significant impact on female students' ability to meaningfully participate in HE spaces.

Using the CA, this study aimed to address the conflict between societal and institutional norms challenging participation and leadership among female students. This was done through the examination of the internalisation and challenging of traditional gender norms among students. Between 2015 and 2021, multiple groups of students and staff were invited to discuss their understanding of gender and the impact of pervasive gender norms on the

ability of students to participate. We were particularly interested to see if gender norms had shifted over the years.

Each year, a number of students showed that they had internalised traditional stereotypes that hindered female students' participation at the university. However, both in 2020 and in 2021, we found shifting perceptions, growing frustrations, and a challenging of traditional views, as female participants in particular were contending norms that prescribe women to be shy and expect them to lack confidence. Female students were also calling for more education and empowerment opportunities for women at the university to challenge the conceptualisation of leadership roles. This implies that female students understand the need for meaningful participation and gender equality at the university. Among male students we did not, on the other hand, find much change in attitudes towards female participation and leadership.

This chapter shows how the CA can be a critical tool for examining the experience of students. Understanding and listening to student voices can help unpack the lived realities of students and reduce the epistemic harm of speaking for others. Engaging with student voices allows pupils to develop the capabilities to examine and unpack the barriers to their participation and to become self-reflective and critical of their actions, as well as becoming meaningful participants, rather than a symbol of tokenism in HLIs. Thus, there is a need for a proper avenue where students can voice their concerns and demands. Clearly, these need to be taken into account by HLIs to improve policies and the overall environment for effective student participation in core and extracurricular activities.

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8 Transforming Gender Relations and Dynamics Through Active Learning

A Case Study of the Effects of Gender Responsive Pedagogy Training at Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) in Tanzania

Perpetua John Urrio and Ikupa Moses

Introduction

Research indicates that the teaching and learning environment in higher learning institutions (HLIs) is not gender neutral (Aina, 2013; FAWE, 2015). Ensuring equal access to education for all students regardless of their gender and applying gender sensitive education methodology to teaching is essential in addressing existing gender inequalities, as well as ensuring that all students have equal opportunities in education and employment in the future (AQU Catalunya, 2019). Gender sensitive pedagogy creates a safe and accepting environment for students to learn. Students are encouraged to question existing gender stereotypes and follow their interests regardless of prevailing gender roles in their society (Ablaza, 2021).

The provision of a safe and inclusive environment is the responsibility of every university, as it allows all members of the community, especially students, to achieve their potential. This is put forward by Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which build on the principle of “leaving no one behind,” and thereby emphasise a holistic approach to achieving sustainable development for all (United Nations, 2016). SDG number 4 calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, and gender equality is one of its key features. Accordingly, gender equality in education is on the global public agenda and accepted as a global human right (David, 2015). As a result, gender equality in education has become an important focus for practitioners and researchers. However, the efforts to reduce gender inequality in access to education and advocacy to gender sensitive teaching has unfortunately had more success in primary and secondary education than in higher education (Aluko Ordoho, 2014).

There is a growing body of research that addresses gender sensitive pedagogy as a means of change in university teaching (Bromseth and

Sörensdotter, 2012; Lykke, 2012). Pedagogy embraces all teaching and learning processes. Within the classroom context, pedagogy is a term that includes what is taught (the content), how teaching takes place (the teaching process) and how is taught (the teaching methods). Mluma et al. (2005, p 3) define gender responsive pedagogy (GRP) as “the teaching and learning processes that pay attention to specific learning needs of males and females.” Chapin, Skovgaard and Warne (2020) see GRP in two ways. The first frames GRP as the addressing of learning needs of male and female students in teaching and learning processes. The second encompasses teaching staff who are gender aware and gender responsive in their planning and facilitation, while continuously reflecting and adapting. In advocating a gender dimension, Metz-Göckel (2012, as cited in Ananga, 2021) insists on considering university pedagogy so that ideas around gender mainstreaming and sensitivity can be integrated into university teaching. For gender sensitive teaching and learning to be ensured, it is important to deliberately and strategically incorporate gender discourses into the pedagogy of HLIs programmes (Kreitz-Sandberg, 2016).

Rosa and Clavero (2022) identified HLIs as basic instrument for empowerment and social change. They can be powerful institutions for creating awareness on gender sensitive teaching and promoting gender equality, diversity, and inclusion – not only in the higher education context, but also in society at large. In their study on awareness and practice of GRP in HLIs, conducted in the Tanzanian Sokoine University of Agriculture, Kahamba, Massawe, and Kira (2017) showed that academic staff only has a partial understanding of the meaning of gender sensitive teaching practices. Thus, the practical part of applying the GRP practices was found to be very low. It was concluded that the low application of gender-sensitive teaching techniques was attributed to the low level of skills to apply techniques, which are important in reducing gender bias in teaching. Moreover, the authors argue that the ability of academicians to adopt and practise GRP starts with their understanding and knowledge level of the concept itself, and the skills to apply the concept.

Similarly, a report by BAPPENAS (2013) on Indonesia, found that the teaching and learning processes had not adequately paid attention to specific learning needs of girls and boys, since their equal participation was not encouraged. The author indicated that such outcome was caused by the teacher’s inadequate knowledge and awareness of gender responsiveness and gender-responsive methods. A study in Ghana by Boachie, Quansah, and Oppong (2021) had observations on classroom practices that showed that teaching and learning were largely gender biased, as many teachers apply teaching methodologies that do not give girls and boys equal opportunities to participate. Chapin, Skovgaard, and Warne’s report (2020), which covered five countries, identified a number of discriminatory practices

against female students and staff which included gender-insensitive pedagogical practices.

Regardless of low understanding and awareness among academicians in HLIs, some institutions have taken more steps towards applying a GRP. [Abraha, Dagneu, and Seifu \(2019\)](#) wrote a report on General Science teachers in North Wollo Zone, Ethiopia, which declares that teachers had facilitated GRP well. The reason behind the success was the availability of qualified supervisors and the realisation of the New Education Training Policy (NETP). [Chapin and Warne \(2020\)](#) reported that after the awakening of awareness of the necessity to include GRP practices in teaching and lesson plans, academicians developed knowledge and awareness of gender in teaching and learning. [Chapin, Skovgaard, and Warne, \(2020\)](#) also ran a support programme in four universities and after a 5-day workshop for HLI academicians, they found that their training had led to change in teaching and learning practices. This success was mostly enabled by the provision of awareness seminars and workshops that equipped academicians with the intended practices and methodologies.

Providing an opportunity for academicians to learn how to engage students in positive practices in classrooms that accord change is important ([Loughran, 2002](#); [Rodgers, 2002](#)) as these practices always determine how social life is shaped and how it develops and unfolds in academia. Many studies show that classroom teaching is gender biased and promotes gender stereotypes. This is problematic, as quality education cannot be achieved without addressing gender dimensions inside and outside the classroom setting ([Dorji, 2021](#)). Teaching methodologies or strategies applied in the classroom often do not give equal opportunities to males and females to participate in the teaching and learning process ([Mlama et al., 2005](#)). In other words, many teaching pedagogies do not provide equal needs for students, especially females and disadvantaged males.

It is not exactly known what attitude academicians are holding in Tanzania with regard to practising GRP in HLIs, and whether utilised methods/pedagogies are gender sensitive and help all students to participate and enjoy the needed conducive learning environment. The latter is possible through the use of GRP in HLIs, as this chapter will show. Our findings are based on a series of trainings conducted by the Gender Awareness and Transformation through Education (GATE) Project on gender awareness and GRP. The trainings were offered to academic staff at Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE) in Tanzania.

The Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to provide insights on the transformation of gender relations and dynamics through active learning. The chapter addresses the following research questions: (i) what understanding do academics have about GRP in HLIs?; (ii) How do academicians practise GRP in teaching and

learning processes in HLIs?; and (iii) What challenges do academicians face in implementing GRP in the HLI teaching and learning environment?

The Context of the Study and Conceptual Framework

The Tanzanian government has made policy commitments for widening participation in HLIs, such as providing access to loans to finance higher education and investing in infrastructure. This has accelerated growth in both the number of programmes and students' population enrolled in universities (TCU, 2020). This has resulted in an increased enrolment of both male and female students at the university level. However, it has been noted that while much attention is focused on access to education, classroom experiences to enable female ability to learn and progress in their studies, and their future employability are often ignored (Chapin and Warne, 2020).

Tanzania's educational sector can be explained by deeply rooted cultural norms and traditions continuing to influence gender inequity and limited female engagement throughout higher education (Mama, 2003; Morley, 2010; Urio et al., 2021). A study by Murphy et al. (2019a, 2019b) conducted in Tanzania observed a strict and rigid gender binary, which informed attitudes and practices of teaching and learning; idealised norms of femininity that prevent female students' full participation in classroom discussions; and idealised norms of masculinity associated with males' independence, strength and voice. Apart from institutionalised gender discrimination towards female students, idealised norms of masculinity also subject males to a range of hidden forms of discrimination.

At the university level, academicians often use pedagogical practices that reinforce gender inequalities in the classroom. Consequently, student's choice of study remains highly gender-based, with females often concentrating on "people-oriented" careers such as nursing, teaching and others of the same nature, which results in significant gender wage differences (Vincent-Lancrin, 2008). In addition, female students' low participation and achievement, particularly in STEM courses, is linked to poor teaching practices: female students report that their achievements and abilities are routinely under-estimated by male academicians and fellow male students (Morley, 2006). GRP in Tanzanian HLIs aims to develop academicians' awareness and build skills on how to be more gender responsive in teaching and learning. Furthermore, it aims to support students to become more gender aware members of society. The role of HLIs is to ensure the aforementioned cultural practices are lowered to ensure an equal and conducive learning environment. Despite the advocacies and the efforts from different actors and the government to address gender inequality in the various places especially at institutional level, academicians are still marginally aware of gender responsive methodology, leading to inequality in classrooms.

This chapter is guided by the GRP model, developed by the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in 2005, which addresses the quality

of teaching in African schools. It advocates for classroom practices that ensure equal participation of girls and boys, including a classroom environment that encourages both to thrive. The GRP model trains teachers to be more gender aware and equips them with the skills to understand and address specific learning needs of both sexes. It develops teaching practises that engender equal treatment and participation of girls and boys in the classroom and in the wider school community. Teachers are trained in the design and use of gender responsive lesson plans, classroom interaction, classroom set-up, language use in the classroom, teaching and learning materials, management of sexual maturation, strategies to eliminate sexual harassment, gender responsive school management systems, and monitoring and evaluation. The GRP model has had good practice in lower levels of education due to its flexibility and setting. The same model is used to reflect on gender inequality in higher learning educational space to determine academics' understanding and practice towards GRP and challenges experienced in practising GRP in their teaching and learning environment. This study focuses on four packages that were dominant in our reflection session: levels of students' participation, classroom interactions, gender sensitive language and selection of teaching and learning materials.

Methodology

The chapter utilised a qualitative research approach to enable the development of richer and more meaningful data to inform the objectives of the study. The researchers intended to get access to in-depth information on the effects of GRP among beneficiaries. The study was conducted in the public HEIs DUCE, the institution covered by the GATE Project. Academic members from three faculties (Education, Science and Humanities) were involved in the study to get insight on gender equality awareness and practices through GRP in HLIs.

Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to recruit academicians for the GRP training. A sample of 12 informants was selected to participate in the study. Semi-structured interviews with guiding questions were used to interview each selected academic staff member across three faculties. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because of their flexibility, which will provide opportunities to ask, question, seek clarifications and allow both the interviewer and interviewees to raise and pursue issues that cannot be included in a highly structured schedule (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Moreover, it is appropriate in this context because of the need to capture feelings, views, opinions and practices. The interviews lasted 40 minutes each. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to obtain information on the research subjects. The data were analysed thematically and independently by two members of the research team. The researchers undertook a joint thematic review of the data and selected key themes for deeper analysis. Themes were established, defined, reviewed and finally analysed and reported (Braun

and Clarke, 2006; Denscombe, 2010). The voices of the participants were also reflected upon and further discussed using relevant literature.

The research ethical approval was secured through the GATE Project and granted by the University of Dar es Salaam. Prior to conducting each interview, we engaged in a thorough informed consent process with each participant. This process was particularly important because the study invited individuals to provide their understanding on GRP. Thus, it was imperative that all efforts were made by the researchers to avoid being overly intrusive, raising sensitive matters, or underestimating the effects that experience may have on participants.

Results and Discussion

The Understanding of Gender Responsive Pedagogy

The researchers wanted to know how participants understood the concept of GRP after their training. We found that each informant explained GRP differently. Common themes came up in their definitions include GRP as a system, strategy and methodology. One interviewee said:

GRP is a teaching methodology which considers gender when delivering knowledge or during interaction between teacher and students.

(M-RESP. 2)

Another participant saw it as:

A strategy that requests teachers to implement their tasks with a focus on equality between males and females.

(F-RESP. 4)

Another one defined it as

... a system or learning that considers gender equality and equity as from the preparation of contents to teaching, methodology as well as gender sensitive teaching environment and that observes equality to all students.

(F-RESP.5)

These statements show a general understanding of what GRP is, indicating the need for instructors to be sensitive with teaching practices that can lead to inequality. Kahamba, Massawe, and Kira (2017) argue that the ability of academicians to adopt and practise GRP starts with their understanding and knowledge level of the concept itself, and the skills to apply the concept. Thus, much effort is needed to ensure everyone who is charged with teaching responsibilities in HLIs understands the concept before they can apply it in the teaching space.

When the interviewees were asked about how they felt about the introduction of GRP in higher learning lecture rooms, Most of them showed a positive response and insisted that other academicians should also receive such trainings, because it helps to change the way the interviewees perceived students and the way they treated them in classrooms and even outside classes. One of the respondents (female) admitted the training was very useful, as it had increased her motives and brought change to herself. Others supported that the introduction of GRP in the teaching process should continue, and admitted that before the introduction of this methodology, male students were seen as capable and female incapable. As one said;

Females just escorted male students in learning which I believe was not the case. The thinking was accelerated by the kind of pedagogy used by academic staff in classrooms.

(M-REPT.2)

Another respondent added that gender sensitivity in teaching would ensure that everyone could participate and receive the best quality education.

These statements indicate a reception of the methodology as a strategy to unpack the negative perception about female students learning in the academic space in HLIs. They are also a call to have more awareness among academicians to ensure gender equality in teaching and learning. These findings are in line with [Chapin and Warne \(2020\)](#). As they reported that after spreading awareness of including GRP practices in teaching and lesson plans, academicians developed knowledge and self-awareness about the impact of gender on teaching and learning. Thus, when awareness is raised about gender equality to the key implementers of the curriculum, it is likely that teachers transform the way they approach students – regardless of their gender.

The Practice of Gender Responsive Pedagogy in Teaching Learning Process in HLIs

The researchers wanted to know whether the academic staff after they were able to practise GRP in their usual classes after they had finished the training. One of the respondents said:

... since I was trained on GRP it was like an eye opener and I have been observing different forms of gender insensitivity among both academicians and students and I find that one has to have a kind of knowledge to be really sensitive.

(F-RESP 9)

Themes evolved focused on four key GRP areas of sensitivity: participation, interaction, language use, and selection of materials for teaching. Academics

explained changes by observing language they use, increasing interaction with students, increasing participation of students of both genders, and having a gender lens when selecting teaching materials. These will be discussed separately below.

The Use of Gender Sensitive Language

The present study found that if the language used in classrooms is not carefully chosen, it can create discomfort in classroom participation. Most of the respondents admitted using language without being gender-sensitive due to inadequate knowledge of to what extent students are affected by the way they are addressed. One respondent said:

Yes, when I teach I see discrimination is real through language use. The language use contributes dearly to gender inequality. For instance, I am teaching language. If you ask students to write bad names for both males and females you can see clearly that those related to females are many and are few the ones related to male. Those bad names sometimes are used in classrooms to intimidate one sex over the other.

(F-RESP 5)

After training however, participants started using more gender sensitive language: a clear transformation. The lecturers tried to ensure they observe the way they speak and address students in their classes. As F.RESP 5 noted: “*I have tried to change the way I see and address students.*” Most of the respondents admitted to being more careful when teaching, paying attention to the involvement of both male and female students and directly asking questions directed to everyone in their class.

I have changed how I ask questions and the way I address each student. A good example is in answering questions and avoiding words like a female may try or call names, which is not proper and the likes!

(M-RESP 2)

The findings indicate a transformation has taken place among the academic staff attended the workshop. However, the participants indicated the problem of gender insensitivity is still considerable among other academicians.

Gender Sensitive Classroom Interaction

It is important that teachers recognise in the classroom, matters such as sexual experimentation, sexual harassment, male domination and female passivity come into play. When asked how they interact with students, the findings

indicated a shift in the way teachers used to interact with students while ensuring a safe environment. One stated:

For me the level of interaction has increased while observing sensitivity on gender issues. I allow students to come in my office if they have something to ask about lessons or even other matters that can hinder their learning.

(F-RESP-12)

Another participant (male) added that the interaction with students increased after gaining through the GRP sessions. Others indicated that they had started acting more professionally to ensure that interaction is only for learning purposes by considering the gap between students and teacher. Teachers are now more likely to encourage leadership skills between both sexes:

In my class we have class representatives (male and female), but the male student is more active than the female student. From the first day I used to ask for someone to volunteer, for instance the second year class three male students raised their hand for the position, and I told them I also need a female student as a class representative because normally they never volunteer, I then insisted until when (*sic*) one female student decided to take roles. After learning that only a male class representative was active, I shouldered more activities to a female representative, just to make her active, then, she became active.

(M-RESP3)

These statements show that academicians who received GRP training have acquired the right skills to ensure they are gender responsive. This means they help both male and female students achieve their potential. However, the extent to which teachers apply their newly gained skills differs between individuals. For example, one respondent said that she prefers to talk to class representatives:

I think the interaction with students at the university is a difficult thing; thus, I usually interact more with class representatives than with most of my other students.

(F-RESP 1)

This shows the different understandings of how to interact with students in and outside the classroom. Some teachers allow more freedom for dialogue, while others limit themselves to class representatives without allowing space for other students to talk. It must be noted that teacher–student interactions are emphasised during teacher training, but in practice, most lecturer–student

interactions are not always beneficial to effective learning. This makes it difficult for learners, especially girls, to seek guidance and assistance from academicians for either academic or personal problems.

Gender Sensitive Classroom Participation

The researchers wanted to know whether the respondents had practised any strategies that aim to enhance equal student participation in learning. When asked whether students have more opportunity to participate in class, one interviewee indicated that there were opportunities for them to engage, but that due to the nature of big university classes, very few students get a chance to do so. The few who do, are usually male students.

Students are given a chance to participate although classes are big and the time is limited. But with all the raised voices for female students' participation still most of them feel shy to respond to asked questions and thus you can find only male students are responding.

(F-RESP 10)

Apart from female students' shyness, the findings show that the way lecturers ask questions in lecture rooms can hinder students from fully participating. In order to enable all students to participate in the classroom, lecturers can alternate the questioning strategy and ensure both female and male students feel comfortable to respond. Calling students by name before asking questions, for example, can limit others' ability to think and participate fully. Additionally, we found that to ensure participation, change of teaching strategies, motivation and encouragement can help students to engage in the lessons. Strategies such as group discussion can offer more opportunities to all students, regardless of their gender. One respondent shared his experience with this:

In seminar rooms, I have group discussions with my students. I always consider the aspect of gender as you know that still some of the male students feel that females are weak, but when you make some groups and mix them I see them doing a good job and in doing so it encourages each one to participate in discussion.

(M-RESP2)

Sometimes it is better to have a kind of arrangement in place to make students participate; this was not clear to many respondents and hence led to some failure to encourage students' participation during seminars. Tokas (2014), advocates that through group work, group tutorials and other interactive activities that help students achieve their full potential, teachers can support non-stereotypic roles and hence be more gender sensitive. Some of the

respondents mentioned the benefit of the GRP training and regularly make use of discussed techniques:

Now when I enter my class I also take care of classroom arrangements to ensure everyone has a chance to participate. Female students seem to isolate themselves and it is like they need awareness all the time while male are always active. With my knowledge now I make sure everyone participates and even in grouping them for any class activity everyone gets the opportunity to present.

(M-RESP-7)

Again, these findings indicate clearly that there are some changes observed among academicians who took part in the training. Originally, students were expected to participate on the basis of their gender. This marks a clear bias towards male students, while female students were discriminated against because of traditional gender stereotypes that promote female submissive- and passiveness. These findings are in line with a recent study by Murphy et al. (2019a, 2019b), which also observes a rigid gender binary in Tanzanian HLIs. This binary informs attitudes and practices of teaching and learning by promoting idealised norms of femininity that prevent female students' full participation in classroom discussions, and ideal norms of masculinity associated with males' independence, strength and voice that subject gender nonconforming males to a range of hidden forms of discrimination. After the GRP-trainings however, beneficiaries had become more aware of these hidden forms of discrimination, and changed the way they approached their students. Changes in teaching practices were especially evident with regard to the ways lecturers addressed questions during lectures, which allowed all students to participate, regardless of their gender identity.

Use of Gender Sensitive Teaching and Learning Materials

Teaching and learning materials that are used in classrooms can be a tool for inequality. For example, some materials are written in a way that portrays the superiority of one gender and subordinates the another, for example by portraying men as leaders and women as helpers.

Look, if the writer wants to talk about engineers obviously they will use male images but when they want to explain about cooks the image will be a female/woman. This indicates role stereotyping.

(F-RESP8)

These stereotypes affect the perceptions and understanding of both male and female learners. GRP knowledge and skills can help to decrease the number of these resources, and replace them with gender sensitive and more

nuanced versions. When asked how they select gender sensitive material, one respondent said:

The training has helped me to understand how to select and prepare subjects teaching materials which are not gender biased by using examples which are neutral although others are difficult to detect.

(M-REPT2)

A good number of respondents indicated that after getting training, they started reading books and articles with a gender lens. It was found that before the training, academics – especially those in STEM – used books that promote idealised norms of masculinity. Yet, after participation in the GRP workshops, we have been able to observe some interesting changes. As one of our respondents said:

As for now I cannot use the materials blindly. I try to find examples that can help me to teach the concept if I feel it has some gender biases.

(F-RESP 1)

Participants have also changed the way they prepare for classes and are more careful when selecting teaching materials so as to not perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes. After the training, beneficiaries started to scrutinise the portrayal of gender stereotypes in teaching materials. This is important, as it is crucial for teachers to review and adopt lesson plans and teaching materials that are free of gender stereotypes (Mlama et al., 2005).

Challenges in GRP Practice

Despite the aforementioned changes in attitudes among beneficiaries of the GRP-trainings, our findings have also indicated some important challenges to the implementation of GRP in the HLI's space. During data analysis, three themes were identified that affect the successful practice of GRP: structural (lecture room set up) challenges, time available for implementing GRP and inadequate knowledge of GRP among the majority of academics.

Lecture Room Set Up

Our informants mentioned some challenges that can hinder the practice of GRP in classroom settings. First and foremost, the HLIs' classes are big, which in one way or another can hinder the participation of all students. One respondent said:

Sometimes students fail to recognise a teacher due to big classes and even the seminar classes are bigger to allow health participation by all students equally.

(M-RESP 7)

In addition, the quality of audiovisual equipment is often low. As a result, lectures are sometimes not clear to everybody; especially echoes caused by the size of the class and sometimes-unreliable power can affect GRP practices. This is an important observation to address if HLIs want to effectively promote gender sensitivity and maintain a conducive environment.

Time Available for Implementing GRP

It was also found that big classes sometimes-engage different academics in which all have to complete their module within a limited timeframe. This can affect the implementation of gender sensitivity in classroom practices. As one participant said:

You teach according to time- you have to deliver and complete your module.
(M-RESP 4)

Although some have limited time in class, the instructor is required to observe and be gender sensitive regardless of the time they have. It is advised that in order to consistently implement GRP practices and observe the changes, one must have enough time to understand students they are teaching.

Inadequate GRP Training

It is important to note that very few academic staff had the opportunity to participate in the GRP training. Therefore, those who missed the opportunity to participate due to resource constraints may not be aware of GRP practices. As insisted by Skovgaard, Warne, and Chapin (2020), the most important challenge with regard to ensuring successful GRP practices is the provision of awareness seminars and workshops that equip academics with the intended GRP practices and methodologies. For gender sensitive teaching and learning to be ensured, it is important to deliberately and strategically incorporate gender discourses especially GRP into HLIs programmes and ensure the training of actors. ([Njambi Wanjama and Wanjiru Njuguna 2016](#)).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was about transforming gender relations and dynamics through active learning with reference to the effects of GRP training conducted at HLIs in Tanzania. The objectives were to explore understanding, practice and challenges of GRP implementation among academic staff. The findings have indicated that most participants of the GRP training developed a considerate understanding of GRP. Similarly, they started viewing the GRP as a methodology and strategy to unpack the negative perception about female students learning in the academic space in HLIs.

It is evident that those who received the training tried to practice GRP in selective packages, including gender sensitive language, interaction, participation and resources. We found that initially the language used in classrooms was not gender sensitive, yet after training we observed some major challenges. For example, participants now refrain from using language that offends or intimidates any of their students. As for interaction, some academics are found to allow more freedom and others limit themselves to talking to class representatives without having space for other students. Teacher-student interactions are emphasised during training to make sure learners can benefit from effective learning. This helps students, especially female, seek guidance and assistance from academicians for both academic or personal problems.

With regard to participation, we found that changes can be observed among academicians with regard to involving students in teaching and learning, male and female students were given equal opportunities to participate although classes are big and the time limit. After the GRP-trainings however, beneficiaries had become more aware of these hidden forms of discrimination, and changed the way they approached their students. Changes in teaching practices were especially evident with regard to the ways lecturers ask questions during lectures, which allowed all students to participate, regardless of their gender identity. Furthermore, the teaching and learning materials showed that most of the time, textbooks and other materials are written without applying gender sensitivity. This means that instructors are solely responsible for interpreting these materials in a gender sensitive and non-discriminating way. Often, teaching and learning materials are not scrutinised for gender biases. Many books and teaching aids reinforce attitudes and beliefs that men are superior to women by portraying men in lead roles and women as helpers.

The GRP training has been highly effective, yet certain challenges remain important to address in order to ensure effective implementation among those who did attend the workshops. Lecture room setup, time available for GRP implementation and inadequate training to still hinder smooth implementation of GRP in HLIs. We therefore recommended that colleges enhance the lecture room environment to be more gender sensitive.

Although we have observed promising changes among academics who participated in the GRP training, it must be noted that challenges that prohibit gender equality in the classroom are still prevalent among most academicians. More recommend that more academic staff will be offered the opportunity to receive GRP training so they can benefit from awareness and knowledge of gender sensitivity. Moreover, there is a need to integrate GRP in the college curriculum. This helps to maintain continuity and sustainability. The HLIs that train teachers are perfect spaces to initiate the process to ensure that academic staff, students and the community at large become more gender sensitive. The efforts initiated by the Tanzanian government, will no doubt help address gender policies that can create a gender sensitive community at various educational levels.

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9 The Slow Path of Progress from Institutionalising Gender Mainstreaming to Internalising Equitable Gender Norms

A Case Study of a Tanzanian
Higher Education Institution

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Introduction

The pursuit of gender equality and the dismantling of gender bias, stereotyping, and discrimination is a key concern and focus of action in the field of higher education internationally. At least two primary reasons inform this focus. Firstly, from an instrumental perspective, it is recognised as a necessary step to improving scientific research and developing science-based solutions to urgent and pressing global issues (Drew and Canavan 2020: 7). Quality educational institutions and practitioners from pre-primary through to tertiary levels are directly linked to improving human development outcomes (Chan 2018; Sachs 2015; Sen 2001; World Bank 2011). Secondly, from an intrinsic perspective, education is understood to be essential to human flourishing, the practice of agency, and freedom (Nussbaum 2009; Sen 2001).

Gender mainstreaming emerged as a key instrument designed to drive gender equality of opportunity and to transform gender relations in national and international institutions, policies, and practices in the 1990s. According to True, 'it is conceived as a strategy to re-invent the processes of policy design, implementation and evaluation by taking into account the gender-specific and often diverse interests and values of differently situated women and men' (2003: 371). Since its inception, it has been a deeply contested concept and practice (Abou-Habib et al. 2020; Højlund Madsen et al. 2021; Murphy 2015; Walby 2005). Following decades of action and advocacy, indicators of change in practices and lived experiences of gender inequality and inequity remain weak and inadequate (Guthridge et al. 2022).

In a 2022 *UNESCO-Times Higher Education* (UNESCO-THE) Report ranking universities on their performance against the targets and indicators of UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), indicators on the performance of female academics within academic institutions point to continuing trends of underrepresentation in the areas of research and leadership,

with the report finding that more needs to be done to support women in academia (UNESCO-THE 2022: 17). There is extensive research exploring gender mainstreaming and barriers to female academic progression in high-income states in the United States, Europe, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Breeze 2020; Drew and Canavan 2020) however, less research is available on the context of East Africa which is home to a relatively young higher education sector due to its history of colonisation and conquest by imperial powers up to the mid-twentieth century. Beyond the statistics, which are weak and patchy in the African context, there is a lack of up-to-date research exploring institutional gender mainstreaming efforts, the experiences and expectations of academics, and how these are influenced by the gendered social structures in which they are embedded (Semela et al. 2020). This chapter addresses this gap. It makes an empirical contribution to the literature on gender mainstreaming and gender transformative actions in Tanzanian higher education as it shares insights into the journey of one institution in its quest to mainstream gender and institutionalise gender equality across its administration and academic units. Our results point to the persistence of differential gendered experiences of everyday academic life, but also to some interesting and important changes in the perspectives of female academic staff and their of motivation and belonging.

As the producers and disseminators of knowledge (Chan 2018; Okech 2020), and the guardians and gatekeepers of what Bourdieu terms ‘the legitimate vision of the social world’ (Bourdieu 1985: 731), higher education institutions perform a central role in either tackling or sustaining the root causes of gender inequalities (Gander 2019). As centres of epistemic power (Okech 2020) and socio-cultural capital (Byrd 2019), the struggle for gender equality within this specific field is a struggle over social norms and values, competing for world views, and fundamentally, a struggle of power relations. Power here is understood in a Gramscian sense where the study of power requires an understanding of how persuasion and internalisation are used to legitimate and naturalise social structures and socio-cultural values rather than as *power-as-domination* in a Weberian sense (Statham 2022). Gender equality refers to equality of opportunity within higher education institutions, in terms of both access and progression.

The role of universities in driving human development and social change remains deeply contested in the twenty-first century. On the one hand, capability theorists and human development practitioners, building on Western development traditions, histories, and norms, point to the liberating, enriching, and empowering aspects of education, where educational systems are fundamental building blocks to the enhancement of human agency, economic development, and growth (Calitz, 2018; Chankseliani and McCowan, 2021; Lopez-Fogues and Melis Cin 2017; Okkolin 2017; Sen 2001). On the other hand, while recognising the intrinsic value of education, critical social theorists point to the fundamentally conservative nature of educational institutions, essential to the maintenance of social order, unequal power relations (Bourdieu 2001; Byrd 2019; Chan 2018; Schirato and Roberts 2020), and enduring intersecting inequalities across the domains of class, gender, race, and geography (Breeze 2020: 1; Mama 2006; Rosa and Clavero 2022: 1). Regardless

of where one falls within this debate, it seems clear that as sites of significant social and cultural struggle, marked by epistemic power and privilege, the will and capacity of higher education institutions to drive transformative change in gender relations present an important and pressing area of study.

Although often claiming to be gender-neutral in its operation, the field of higher education is deeply gendered (Bourdieu 2001; Hearn 2020; Mama 2006; Morley 2010; Odhiambo 2011). A shift to transform the social and cultural norms of universities from traditional male-dominated spaces of masculine power and privilege to spaces where gender equality and equity are accepted and operationalised represents a significant site of struggle (Gander 2019; Mwaipopo 2011; Naidoo 2004; Tarimo and Swai 2020). As Drew and Canavan note in their analysis of gender equality initiatives in universities across the European Union, ‘gender equality has become an increasingly important policy requirement for academic institutions ... [as] gender regimes continue to impact on who is recruited to do what work; what social divisions exist in the workplace and away from it, particularly in the domestic sphere; how emotional relations are conducted in the workplace; and how institutions relate to one another in relation to gender sensitivity’ (2020: 1–2). Holding a privileged social status in most societies, as key sites of epistemic and socio-cultural power, higher education institutions have a critically important potentiality to drive social and cultural norm change in pursuit of gender equity, or as a force sustaining and conserving unequal social relations (Hearn 2020). There is an extensive and expansive body of research exploring the barriers to gender equality and female empowerment in higher education in high-income states (Breeze 2020; Drew and Canavan 2020), but less consistent and systematic analysis in lower-income, resource-constrained states (Kambuga 2016; Mukama 2018; Semela et al. 2020). This chapter addresses this gap. It makes an empirical contribution to the literature on gender mainstreaming and gender transformative actions in Tanzanian higher education as it shares insights into the journey of one institution in its quest to mainstream gender and institutionalise gender equality and female empowerment across its administration and academic units.

The following section provides an overview of the background and the context of this study. It introduces the university at the centre of the analysis, the wider context of dynamic gender relations and structures in Tanzania, and a brief overview of the historical experiences of gender mainstreaming in Tanzanian higher education institutions. Section three introduces the research methodology and methods used to conduct the empirical analysis. Section four provides an overview of key results emerging from this analysis and a discussion of these findings. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the key contributions of these findings from an empirical and theoretical perspective, and points to areas for further research to which these findings point.

Background and Context

In 2022, the OECD’s *Social Institutions and Gender Index Country Report for Tanzania (SIGI)* points to a complex context where ‘deeply entrenched barriers to gender equality manifest in the form of girl child marriage and

bride price, unequal intra-household dynamics, violence against women, and lack of reproductive autonomy, access to agricultural land, freedom of movement and access to justice' (OECD 2022: 13). The report finds that over 90% of marriages continue to involve a bride price, and 75% of the population believing that this entails some form of ownership over the woman. It finds that decision-making and income generation continue to be the purview of men and fathers as heads of household, with permission to leave the household still required for many women for certain forms of activities including social, cultural, and economic activities. However, the context is complex and uneven, with highly differentiated expectations and experiences of women in urban contexts compared to rural contexts, and across Tanzania's 31 regions. Ethnicity, dis/ability, and social class also deeply influence life experiences and expectations (World Bank 2022, World Economic Forum 2022). It is within this complex and contested context that the university at the centre of this case study is responsible for the training of secondary school teachers who will engage in teaching practice across the country. This institution has an unprecedented opportunity to influence the progression rates and educational experiences of students at secondary levels. Tanzania has made strong progress in achieving gender parity at primary school level, but the progression rates of girls at second levels remain problematic (Mwita and Murphy 2017; Oppong et al. 2022) with puberty, expectations of marriage, pregnancy and childcare, and socio-cultural expectations on the role and place of women and girls in society complicating the lives of young women. Graduates from the university at the centre of this study take up important public roles as educational leaders in communities and have an opportunity to influence social norms, values, and beliefs at multiple scales, from the main campus to rural classrooms, to individual households of young learners and their families. Thus their capacity to reproduce social norms, or challenge enduring inequalities, reaches considerably beyond the privileged spaces of academic institutions.

At national and institutional scales, Tanzania has made significant strides in shaping policies and legislation to drive gender equality and women's empowerment in the pursuit of the targets and indicators of SDG 5 across multiple sectors, including the higher education sector. It has actively engaged in building the systems and skills to the relevant educational development goals (Murphy et al. 2019) including SGD 4 which aims to 'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' (United Nations General Assembly, 2015: 14). With its first university established in 1963 (the University of Dar es Salaam, UDSM) following independence, Tanzania has traditionally had one of the lowest gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education, with approximately 4% enrolled in higher education institutions based on 2019 data (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). Figures from UNESCO Institute for Statistics indicate that total enrolment rate increased from 4% in 2019 to 8% in 2020, with the gross enrolment ratio 7.1 female, and 8.5 male (<https://uis.unesco.org/en/country/tz>). This indicates a significant increase and investment in building the educational

capacities of the population. With a young and vibrant population, demand for access to higher education is likely to continue to increase in the coming years. The instrumental benefits of gender equality to Tanzania's development path are widely recognised and incorporated into government planning efforts including the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, and the National Five-Year Development Plan (2021/2022–2025/2026).

Under the University Act (2005), the Tanzanian ministry of education set out a mandate for mainstreaming gender across all aspects of higher education institutions. The Tanzanian Commission for Universities (TCU), established under the Universities Act (2005), is the primary body responsible for recognising, approving, registering, and accrediting universities operating in Tanzania, and for overseeing gender mainstreaming efforts within this field. In their handbook for standards and guidelines for universities (2019), the TCU explicitly mandated that 'every University shall establish clear policies and procedures ensuring equal opportunity and gender equality and equity in the institution and in staff recruitment, retention and promotion based on consideration of qualifications, competence and skills' (TCU, 2019: Guideline 1.7.1); that 'every University shall establish a gender policy framework that spells out the institutional gender equality and gender equity arrangements' (TCU, 2019: Standard 1.13); and that 'every University shall strive to establish affirmative strategies for the achievement of at least 50% gender parity' (TCU, 2019: Guideline 1.13.2). Thus, at the national scale, there are clear and explicit governance instruments and oversight bodies to support the transformation of gender relations in the Tanzanian Higher Education sector.

At the higher education institutional scale, individual universities in Tanzania have been active in shaping and implementing gender policies within their contexts for many decades (Morley 2010; Mukangara and Shao 2007; Mwaipopo 2011; Onsongo 2009). The UDSM is home to a thriving institute for gender studies. It has supported leading feminist researchers and theorists to explore the nature and challenges of gender mainstreaming in this institution since the 1970s (Lihamba et al. 2006; Mukangara and Shao 2007). In a study of affirmative actions aimed at increasing female student enrolment rates at UDSM, Lihamba et al. (2006) found that although the actions had met the objective and female enrolment rates had increased, 'qualitative factors such as participation in academic life as students or staff within and outside the classroom, the living environment, pedagogy, and institutional micro-politics continue to pose challenges for gender equity and equality' (Lihamba et al. 2006: 81). Thus, the gap between institutionalisation and internalisation of gender equitable norms and behaviours has been a feature of the academic landscape in Tanzania for some time.

The university at the centre of this case study was established as a public institution in 2005 with a specific mandate to train secondary school teachers to graduate level. It formally introduced a gender policy in 2018, an anti-sexual harassment policy in 2019, and engaged in mainstreaming gender across its wider organisational policies between 2018 and 2020. It also led a project

designed to support the development of gender expertise and capacities in research and teaching through the training of early career and experienced academics in gender-based research and gender-sensitive pedagogic practices; to augment the skills and resource-base of the gender unit with responsibility for mainstreaming gender across the institution (established in 2013), and to assist in building a network of gender expertise across higher education institutions nationally. Gender institutional analysis was undertaken to support the implementation of the gender policy and develop a Gender Action Plan, adopted in 2020. Between 2018 and 2021, all academic staff and targeted professional staff were invited to participate in professional development activities including training in unconscious bias, gender-based research methods, and gender-sensitive pedagogy and teaching practice. Over the course of the project, there were over 241 unique staff training instances and 158 student training instances. Due to the young nature of the university and the higher education sector more broadly in Tanzania, the majority of staff trained were junior academics. The category of senior lecturer is the smallest group within the academic staff, with no full professors active in the university at the time of the study. The following sections will share the results of survey data collected at the beginning and end of the gender mainstreaming project to analyse any changes in staff experiences, attitudes, barriers, and opportunities for progression over the period of the project.

The survey also asked a series of question on the institutional ethos to examine not only what has been done to mainstream gender equity but also how this has been done. As such, it draws upon Bourdieu's concept of habitus to explore the relations between individual perspectives and embedded social structures which influence everyday practices and expectations. In examining how the institution privileges and protects behaviours and norms that reproduce traditional gender norms and structures, the chapter also makes a theoretical contribution as it unpacks the relationality of institutional habitus to individual experience and exposes the internal and enduring barriers to transformative gender relations in this institution. In exploring both what experiences and expectations staff have, and also how staff interact and relate to one another in their everyday practices, the following explains why institutionalisation of gender policies in higher education institutions is not sufficient to drive the internalisation of gender equitable norms and behaviours.

Methodology and Methods

A critical realist methodological approach guides this chapter. In examining the real, the actual, and the empirical, the chapter will present results from survey data of a representative sample of staff at the institution collected in 2018, following the publication of the gender policy and the commencement of the gender awareness and transformation project, and in 2021, at the end of the project activities. These results will be situated within and analysed through a feminist relational lens (Murphy 2022) that examines the socio-cultural

landscape of gender relations at the national scale and within which this institution is embedded, as well as the gender mainstreamed institutional architecture that the university has adopted. The normative landscape of gender relations and power structures helps us to understand how specific norms are internalised through early socialisation and reproduced through everyday practices and behaviours within the institution (Koggel et al., 2022; Murphy 2022). This critical realist relational approach helps to expose the gaps between policy (the real), the perceptions of staff (the empirical), what happens in everyday practice (the actual), and the implications for understanding why gender mainstreaming through the institutionalisation of gender policies is not sufficient to drive the internalisation of gender equitable norms.

Data Collection and Analysis

Primary data was through a paper-based survey that was distributed to all staff at the beginning of the project and the end of the project (2018 and 2021). The team piloted an online survey form however this was not deemed feasible in the context where access to secure and reliable digital infrastructure was challenging. Data was collected on staff experiences, attitudes, barriers, and opportunities, with all academic staff in the three core faculties were invited to participate. The survey used Likert scales to ask a series of questions on the institutional ethos to examine academic’s perspectives on their sense of belonging and motivation within the institution.

There were six core categories of questions – time distribution, career progression and promotion duration, work-life balance, leadership roles, experiences of sexual harassment and bullying, motivation and sense of belonging. There was a response rate of approximately 50% of academic staff to the first survey ($N = 113$) and approximately 40% to the second survey ($N = 92$). The gender split in both surveys is approximately 60% male and 40% female. Given that the overall gender split in academic staff is approximately 70% male 30% female, the survey represents a slightly higher proportion of the female academic community (Table 9.1).

Response rates were slightly higher from staff in the faculty of social sciences in the first survey, and the faculty of sciences in the second survey. In both instances, there was no significant differences in the number of male and female respondents working within each of the faculties.

Analysis of each survey was undertaken using R-studio to get a sense of the perceptions and attitudes of staff at each time point. This was followed by

Table 9.1 Survey respondents, 2021

	<i>Tutorial assistant</i>	<i>Assistant lecturer</i>	<i>Lecturer</i>	<i>Senior lecturer</i>	<i>Professor</i>
F	3	33	15	2	0
M	13	27	15	5	0

followed by a comparative analysis using R-studio and Tableau on a total of 41 variables across the observations from the two surveys to examine any shifts or changes in attitudes overtime. Fisher's exact tests were used for statistical analysis across all variables to examine the association between gender and the full range of independent variables assessed.

Limitations and challenges: Two key constraints require noting. Firstly, this project took place during the COVID-19 pandemic period. African Universities, like all universities, were directly affected by this public crisis (Babalola et al. 2021; Kaaya et al., 2021). As care needs increased and working from home offices became the norm, the roll-back on gender equality initiatives and the return to a traditional gender division of labour quickly emerged in Tanzanian institutions causing challenges for female academic staff who were expected to resume a high degree of caring and social reproductive labour in addition to their academic duties (Urrio et al. 2021). Secondly, legal constraints regarding LGBTQ+ recognition prevented us to gather specific data on the lived experiences of gender and sexuality minority populations. The research reflects a deeply embedded heteronormative gender binary at multiple scales from national policy to institutional levels to everyday life. This undoubtedly excludes specific experiences, challenges, and concerns of a diverse range of voices. Further research is essential to ensure that these voices are included and amplified if gender equality objectives are to be achieved.

Results

The following provides an account of the results of the survey across six categories – work-life balance; workload and time distribution; research and service contributions; promotion duration and career satisfaction; experiences of sexual harassment and bullying; perspectives on the sense of belonging – being recognised, valued, and respected in the workplace.

Work-Life Balance

Participants were asked to rate their degree of satisfaction with the current professional/personal life balance at baseline and end line using a Likert score from (1) very dissatisfied to (5) very satisfied. We found that the level of satisfaction was higher than average at baseline and end line for both males and females. Comparing males and females, we can see that at both timelines, males were more satisfied compared to females (4.02 compared to 3.85 at baseline, and 3.82 compared to 3.64 at end line). Comparing end line to baseline for each gender group we find that for both males and females, the degree of satisfaction at baseline was higher than end line (3.85 compared to 3.64 for females, and 4.02 compared to 3.82 for males). As noted above, the endline survey was conducted in 2021 following a very challenging wave of COVID-19.

Table 9.2 Motivation to work at the university (in percent)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Baseline	95%	91%
End line	85%	94%

In contrast to this sense of declining satisfaction with work-life balance, when asked about motivation to work for the university, the self-reported responses point to an interesting shift that may be more appropriately linked to the gender mainstreaming and equality project running at the university during this time. [Table 9.2](#) points to overall high levels of motivation among all staff; however, it is interesting to note that as female levels of motivation increased over this period, male levels of motivation decreased substantially.

Workload and Time Distribution

The survey gathered data on how academics distribute their time across the core domains of their activities – teaching, service, research, and consultancy. We also asked how much time academics would like to spend on each activity. Overall, we found no significant differences in workload distribution across the academic community at baseline and end line. Most staff spend most of their time on teaching activities and would strongly prefer to reduce their teaching workloads. They spend less time on research and consultancy and would like to spend more time in these areas. When asked about the barriers to reorganising time distribution, again, there was a general consensus among all staff at baseline and end line – high workload, lack of resources and infrastructure, lack of funding, lack of required knowledge and skills, and social factors. The main identified facilitators for time distribution were the reduction in workload, the availability of resources and infrastructure, training and career development, the availability of funding, and a positive work environment.

Research and Service

As noted above, the self-reported perspectives of staff regarding core academic activities are very similar. There is an overarching narrative within the institution that the teaching workload is too heavy, that the workload distributions are similar, and that each individual academic is involved in all activities of academic life in similar ways. However, an analysis of research outputs by number of publications points to gender differentials, with female members of staff publishing less than their male colleagues.

Comparing the mean number of publications at the end line and baseline for each gender subgroup revealed that the number of publications for both groups increased at the end line compared to baseline (from 3.3 to 4 for

females, and from 3.7 to 6 for males). Although research outputs increased overall, the gender gap between male and female publication rates increased during this time. This is consistent with international trends (Urrio et al. 2021).

An examination of service roles in higher managerial positions also pointed to some interesting shifts over the course of the project. The results show that the odds of serving at a higher managerial position for females at baseline was 1.3 that of males, i.e., a slightly higher proportion of females served in senior managerial positions at baseline compared to males. We found the opposite at end line, i.e., a higher proportion of males served in a senior managerial position at end line compared to females. At baseline, for those aspiring to undertake higher managerial positions, many female academics identified the opportunity for professional development and experience. Male participants, on the other hand, viewed such roles as service to the college. This suggests differences in levels of confidence and self-belief. Female academics were seeking to learn, male academics believe they have the relevant skills and are willing to give back to the college. Interestingly, at the end line, of all those who had served in a senior leadership position now described their role as ‘service’ rather than professional development. Further, the number of female staff aspiring to serve in a senior management position decreased over the course of the project as female staff expressed their preference to use their time on research and consultancy, which carry greater weight in their applications for promotion.

Promotion Duration

Comparing the mean promotion duration at endline and baseline for each gender subgroup separately we found that the promotion duration for both groups was higher at endline compared to baseline (from 5.8 years to 6.2 years for females, and from 4.4 years to 5 years for males). A significant gender gap is noted in time to promotion across both periods with female staff taking longer to secure promotion than their male colleagues. One important factor that emerged that might help us to understand the time differences in career progression is family-related leave. There was no statistical difference in the data at baseline and endline. For both timelines, the odds of taking family-related leave for female academics was 3 that of males, a result that is statistically significant for both timelines. Importantly, this referred to all types of care-related leave, and not only maternity leave. Equally important to note, only 50% of care leave for females was related to maternity leave. The remaining 50% was linked to other care responsibilities clearly indicating that although academic staff carry similar workloads, have similar expectations, and are assessed using similar criteria for advancement, female academics continue to maintain their socially ascribed roles in the areas of care and social reproductive labour. This is not to say that male academics did not take care leave, only that the numbers taking leave for care responsibilities, including paternity leave, parental leave, and other caring responsibilities, are significantly lower than their female colleagues.

Table 9.3 Satisfaction with and sense of career progression (in percent)

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Base line	98%	87%
End line	88%	92%

Despite the slower time to promotion and the multi-tasking involved in balancing professional duties and care responsibilities, this period is marked by an increase among female staff of a sense of career progression as outlined in [Table 9.3](#). Notably, there is a distinct decrease in male satisfaction with and sense of career progression over the same period.

Experiences of Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Violence, and Any Forms of Bullying

The survey collected key data to help us better understand gender relations in the workplace. We examined the differences in experiencing or observing sexual harassment. As noted in [Table 9.4](#), in both timelines, female members of staff were more like to witness or experience sexual harassment or gender-based violence.

Notably, for each gender subgroup, we found that the odds of experiencing or observing sexual harassment at endline were less than at baseline (0.4 for females and 0.6 for males). Further, our study also found that women were more likely to seek support or advice in such cases and that this increased at endline. Comparing seeking advice/support at baseline and end line for each gender subgroups we found that for both males and females, the odds of seeking advice/support after experiencing or observing sexual harassment at end line was more than that at baseline (4.6 for females and 1.2 for males). Though all results were not statistically significant, the overall pattern that is detected is that females were more likely to experience or witness sexual harassment and seek advice/support after experiencing or observing sexual harassment compared to males. As noted in [Table 9.5](#), the odds of seeking advice/support also increased significantly for females at end line compared to baseline. The primary source for advice/support at both timelines was a colleague. Other significant sources of support include a respected person, a contact person, and the gender office.

Table 9.4 Experience or witnessing of sexual harassment or gender-based violence

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Baseline	38%	52%
End line	29%	33%

Table 9.5 Seeking advice or reporting sexual harassment or gender-based violence

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Base line	29%	33%
End line	33%	71%

Female staff were also more like to experience bullying than their male colleagues at baseline and at end line, although there again seems to be a declining trend in the incidence of bullying over the course of the project. The result shows that the odds of experiencing bullying behaviour at the work at baseline for females was 2 that of males, i.e., a higher proportion of females at baseline experienced bullying compared to males. At end line the odds had dropped to 1.6 that of males. Thus, in both time periods, females were more likely to experience bullying behaviour.

Sense of Belonging

At the end of the survey, we asked participants to rate their responses to a series of questions using a Likert scale rating responses from (1) very dissatisfied to (5) very satisfied. The following shares the results of staff perspectives relating to their sense of belonging within the institution – sense of being valued for your contribution; recognised for your contribution; and related to the institutional ethos.

Responding to the statement ‘*The sense of being valued for my research, scholarship, or creativity by members of my faculty*’ there is a high level of self-reported satisfaction with the sense of being valued by faculty members. However, there is a gentle shift in attitudes evident. Comparing end line to baseline for both, we find that for both males and females their sense of being valued increased over time (3.53 compared to 3.89 for females, and 3.77 compared to 3.98 for males). Digging into each of the core academic areas, when asked to rate their ‘sense of satisfaction for teaching’ at faculty level we found that at baseline, females were less satisfied with the sense of being valued for their teaching by faculty members compared to males (3.91 compared to 4.11). However, the opposite is true at end line as females were more satisfied than males (4 compared to 3.89).

To examine perspectives on institutional ethos, participants were invited to respond to the following statement ‘*My department is collaborative*’ on a scale of (1) completely disagree to (5) fully agree. Again, there is a consistent narrative within the institution where the vast majority of academics agree with the statement, setting an expectation that this is a highly collaborative space of work. However, we can also see gentle shifts of attitude occurring over time. Comparing male and female responses, we can see that at baseline, more females agreed with the statement compared to males (4.34 compared

to 4.18). However, the opposite is true at end line, as more males agreed with the statement compared to females (4.23 compared to 4.06). When asked to comment on the statement '*My department is transparent*, again, we find gentle shifts away from the dominant narrative. Comparing males and females, we can see that at baseline, more males agreed with the statement '*my department is transparent*' compared to females (baseline splits – 4.09 for males compared to 3.91 for female). The opposite is true at end line (end line splits 3.88 male compared to 4.03 female). Consistent with this shift in perspectives of transparency, when asked to respond to the following, '*there are many unwritten rules concerning how one is expected to interact with colleagues*', again we find a similar trend. For all survey participants, this is one of the lowest-ranking questions. Comparing end line to baseline for each gender group, we find that for females, more participants agreed with the statement at baseline compared to end line (2.83 compared to 2.50).

Despite the distinct dominant narrative within the ratings across most areas, there is evidence of some critical reflection and divergence from this over time among a small population of the academic community. For example, a lower rating emerged to the following statement, '*I am reluctant to bring up issues that concern me for fear that it will affect my career/promotion*'. Comparing end line to baseline for each gender group, we find that for females, more participants agreed with the statement at baseline compared to end line (2.38 compared to 2.08). The opposite is true for males (2.03 rising to 2.23). Somewhat consistent with this shift, we also found that when asked to respond to the following statement, '*I do not feel able to express my preferences in relation to my research interests and career choices*' comparing end line to baseline for each gender group, we find that for females, we saw a strong improvement from baseline to end line (2.23 dropping to 2.06). The opposite is true for males (1.97 increasing to 2.05).

Discussion

The results are striking for their consistency in views, with high levels of staff satisfaction, motivation, sense of respect, and being valued emerging from the data. There seems to be a deep loyalty to the institution, to protect the status and reputation of the institution, and to establish a dominant narrative of gender neutrality. The variety and range of questions we explored enabled us to examine the 'system of implicit and deeply interiorized values' (Bourdieu 1985) of institutional habitus. There is a high degree of belief in the transparency of the institution, yet also a strong understanding of the existence of 'unwritten rules'. There is a general sense that the academic staff are committed to gender equality with staff indicating similar workloads in the areas of teaching, service, research, and consultancy. There is also a strong sense that the promotion criteria and mechanisms for assessing staff are gender-neutral. Women tend to outperform men in the area of consultancies, yet male colleagues outperform female colleagues in the research publication rankings.

Both feel that their teaching workload is too high and that they lack sufficient research support (infrastructure, funding, and opportunities). The ‘what’ of academic life emerges very powerfully in this study.

Yet, underlying this dominant gender-neutral narrative is a very different picture. Female members of staff are three times more likely to take time out for care leave, they are twice as likely to experience bullying, and are more likely to experience or witness sexual harassment. Further, their advancement through the promotion scales is significantly longer. The ‘how’ of academic life appears to be highly gender differentiated with female academic members of staff continuing to sustain high levels of care and social reproductive labour; high levels of objectification and subordination through direct and indirect forms of violence from sexual harassment and gender-based violence to bullying.

Further, the findings point to quite striking power dynamics embedded within the gentle shifts noted in the results. As female staff amplify their voices, male satisfaction levels drop in almost equal measure. This is most striking in the data on the ‘sense of belonging’. As female staff feel more confident to express their preferences, male staff seem less so. As female staff expresses increasing levels of satisfaction related to feeling valued for their contributions, male colleagues express increasing levels of dissatisfaction. As female members note increasing levels of motivation to work within the institution, male members indicate declining rates of motivation. The results also show a relationship between increasing reporting of sexual harassment and gender-based violence with a decreasing level of incidents. An emerging trend of accentuating female voice in critical areas of oppression point to a declining trend of male satisfaction levels.

As these gentle shifts in expectations and self-perceptions challenge traditional norms and social practices with the institution, there remains strong commitment to protect the institution’s social status and influence. Evidence suggests that the celebration of female scholarship, leadership, and contribution is influencing the distribution of power and influence. This seems to be pointing to a zero-sum game, as females experience an improving work environment, male experiences and expectations decrease. However, it is too early to say if this is a permanent change or a transient shift.

To fully comprehend the tensions that this data points to, we suggest that it is necessary to consider the landscape of gender relations outside of this institution, but within which the individual actors are embedded. As noted above, gender relations within the wider socio-cultural context are marked by high levels of gender-based violence, the uneven distribution of care and social reproductive responsibilities, continued practices of bride price, and associated assumptions of ownership over a woman to which this practice gives rise (OECD 2022). As academics engage in their professional practice they continue to be socially located in basic social institutions of family and community. As expectations between these institutions come into conflict, this seems to be leading to a sense of dislocation, and resentment among some of our survey participants, with a sharp increase in male participants indicating a lower sense of belonging within

the institution. This is not a reason to avoid mainstreaming gender equality expectations and practices, but to recognise that the effects of this change do not necessarily result in a causal outcome of perfectly internalised values of gender equality.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the relationship between institutionalisation and internalisation of equitable gender norms through a comparative analysis of academic staff experiences and attitudes over the course of three years. The implementation of an institutional gender policy was supported by a collaborative project aimed at generating gender awareness and transformation through education and entailed extensive staff training and communication. The chapter shared insights from staff surveys at baseline and end line on their experiences of academic life over the course of the project. The study found evidence of slowly changing attitudes and expectations of female and male academic staff in relation to their own expectations of their professional experience and institutional support. Female academics seem to have become more comfortable expressing their preferences in relation to research interests and career choices, seeking recognition for their contribution, and questioning enduring norms and inequalities. In almost equal measure, we found declining male satisfaction across key indicators. We examine the role of habitus in resisting transformative social change in this context and find that although necessary, institutionalising gender policies and gender mainstreaming is not sufficient to drive transformative change and to disrupt inequitable and unjust internalised gendered norms. Ongoing training, discursive challenge, and awareness raising are required to challenge the doing and being of academic life, the hidden gendered norms and barriers, the ongoing objectification of female bodies, and the subjugation of female excellence.

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