



The Effect of Gender Discrimination on Employee Performance: A Case Study of Thyolo District Council of Malawi.

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Abstract.

This paper investigates effect of gender discrimination on employee performance at workplace. The main conclusion can be drawn is that female employee and juniors are receiving discrimination to some extent, which is a serious issue at a work place. The main aim of the research was to illustrate the link between workplace discrimination and the productivity level of workers in a range of Malawian context, precisely in Thyolo District Council. The specific objective of the study was (1) To assess whether there is a relationship between gender discrimination and employee performance in the public sector. (2) To assess the various types of gender discrimination affecting employee performance in the public sector. (3) To identify the possible outcomes of gender discrimination on employee performance in the public sector. 50 participants were interviewed in the study and data was collected through focus group discussion, individual interview, and observation where it was analysed using content analysis and statistical package for social science. The findings of the study about effect of gender discriminations in relation of employee performance at Thyolo district council are mainly due to lack of promotion opportunities, verbal harassment, biased performance evaluations, exclusion from meetings, and unequal pay. The purpose of this study was to raise employees and employer's awareness of the importance of correcting gender discrimination issues at work places as it contributes a lot to the employee performance. Therefore, if there is a law that can confine gender discrimination at work places, then the atmosphere of gender discriminations will be weaker and weaker until it disappears at work places in Malawi (Thyolo).

Key words: Gender, discrimination, performance, employee, work .

I. Background.

Gender discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of members of one gender against members of another one. From a sociological perspective, gender discrimination is the result of the social structure not offering men and women equal opportunities for upward mobility (Sumi, 2012). Social discrimination against women is a result of gender inequality. In our society, discrimination based on gender is a frequent occurrence that frequently takes place in families, workplaces, and educational institutions. The key conclusions of studies on effect of gender discrimination on employee performance in work at Thyolo district council are compiled in this article. This review paper tries to explain the latest developments regarding gender discrimination and employee performance present at Thyolo district council.

Gender discrimination remain widespread in Africa and across sub-Saharan Africa (Yiting Lit, 2021), where many people depend on employment for their livelihood especially in public sector (Jamaica, 2019). Despite the effort by governments in employing its citizens still there is gender discrimination among themselves on human rights stated that discrimination is not defined in the Code but usually include the elements of not individually assessing the unique merits, capacities and circumstances of a person instead, making stereotypical assumptions based on a person's presumed traits having the impact of excluding persons, denying benefits or imposing burdens. OHRC further stated that discrimination roots from tendency to build society as though everyone is the same as the people in power. For example, all young, one gender, one race, one religion or one level of ability. People may be discriminated against because of their age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political believe, race, religion, sex or gender, sexual orientation, language, and culture



(Council of Europe, 2024). Discrimination forms include age, disability, status as a parent, religious, national origin, pregnancy, Sexual Harassment, race, gender, and reprisal or retention (Hemphill and Haines). Discrimination occurs in workplaces, facilities, education, accommodation, insurance, and clubs. Workplace discrimination leads to serious damage to the business hence human resource managers face many challenges while attempting to provide equal opportunities for all employees (ibid). This study therefore will assess the effect of workplace discrimination and its effect on employee performance using the Ghana Police Service as a case study.

Gender discrimination is when someone is treated unequally and unfairly based on their gender identity and is a human rights violation (United Nation, 2018). According to United Nations Member States declaration on elimination of discrimination against women stated that discrimination enacted based on gender has been known as health and human right since 1967, particularly against women, which states that discrimination against women is an offence against human dignity (ibid). However, discrimination hurts everybody in its path. Discrimination diminishes human capital whiles creating a hostile work environment for the employers and employees (Dwomoh & Owusu, 2012). Workplace discrimination is a phrase many Human Resource Practitioners condemn and do not want to hear. It refers to discrimination in hiring, promotion, job assignment, termination and compensation. It must be noted that many jurisdictions prohibit some types of workplace discrimination, often by forbidding discrimination based on certain traits. Workplace discrimination must not be confused with legitimate comment and advice (including relevant negative comment or feedback) from managers and supervisors on work performance or work-related behaviour of an individual or group. Employment Discrimination laws seek to prevent discrimination based on race, sex, religion, national origin, physical disability, and age by employers. A growing body of law also seeks to prevent employment discrimination based on sexual orientation. Discriminatory practices include bias in hiring, promotion, job assignment, termination, compensation, retaliation, and various types of harassment (ibid).

Discrimination happens when an employer treats one employee less favourably than others. It could mean a female employee being paid less than a male colleague for doing the same job, or a minority ethnic employee being refused the training

opportunities offered to white colleagues. Direct discrimination happens when an employer treats an employee less favourably than someone else because of one of the above reasons. Indirect discrimination is when a working condition or rule disadvantages one group of people more than another (ibid). You have the right not to be harassed or made fun of at work or in a work-related setting (e.g. an office party). Harassment means offensive or intimidating behaviour - sexist language or racial abuse, which aims to humiliate, undermine or injure its target or has that effect. Victimization means treating somebody less favourably than others because they tried to make, or made, a complaint about discrimination. For example, it could be preventing you from going on training courses, taking unfair disciplinary action against you, or excluding you from company social events (Butt and O'Neil, 2004).

Most studies found that discrimination in all its forms prevents individuals from accessing, or progressing within, the labour market (ACAS, 2004; Age Concern Policy Unit, 2004). SEEDA (2006) reported that racial or ethnic discrimination in the workplace has a huge impact both at individual and organization levels. It has been estimated that at any one time around 500,000 people are suffering from work related stress at a level that makes them ill (HSE, 2005).

In other words, discrimination results in and reinforces inequalities. The freedom of human beings to develop their capabilities and to choose and pursue their professional and personal aspirations is restricted, without regard for ability. Skills and competencies cannot be developed, rewards to work are denied and a sense of humiliation, frustration and powerlessness takes over, Channar, Z.A, Abbassi, Z & Ujan, I.A (2011)

Gender discrimination is a global phenomenon, which can be observed at personal and organizational level. Gender gap is defined as deviations from the ideal, which is a genderless society, i.e., a society in which men and women would participate in more or less equal numbers in every sphere of life, from infant care to high-level politics. Gender discrimination is the result of historically generate gender perceptions in which the differentially assigned male female qualities were unevenly designed in layers of privileged and subordinate positions of male and female abilities, Council of Europe (2024).

Gender discrimination is the consequence of persistent inequality between men and women in all spheres of life. The dimension and degree of discrimination against women manifests itself in



different culture, politics, race, region, countries, and economies differently. However, gender discrimination is considered as a tremendous constraint towards the development process and it is found as a causal factor of violence against women (Jannatul K. & Rahman, 2011).

Social gender inequality has numerous dimensions, some of which are less favourable to men while others are less favourable to women. Men are more prone to violence, imprisonment, and disability, while women are more likely to be the victims of domestic violence and sexual assault; in some country's men have lower educational attainment than women, while the pattern is reversed in other countries.

Demographic gender inequality includes the fact that men live shorter lives on average than do women (65 years for men, 69 years for women, CIA 2010), but there is also concern that many women are never given the chance to be born, and in the younger generations men now outnumber women, by large numbers in China and India in particular (with gender ratios respectively of 113 men and 117 men per hundred women in the under-15 age range, CIA 2010). In recent years, gender pay inequity and sexual harassment have moved to the forefront of our collective conscience, shining a spotlight on the injustice women have endured with little recourse for far too long. Though women comprise nearly half of the workforce and are the sole or co-breadwinner in more than half of U.S. families with children, the conditions and practices they are routinely subjected to threaten their safety, their labour market participation, and their economic mobility and security ("Pay Equity"). This is detrimental to women and their families and is bad for our economy.

The public sector is a good research target for studying gender differences in the workplace. In South Korea, public sector workers work in the government, local government, or public institutions (Act on the Management, accessed 2020). In 2018, the number of Korean public sector workers was 2,451,000, accounting for 9.1% of the total employed workforce. Men accounted for 55.0%, and women accounted for 45.0% (Gender Jobs, accessed 2020). Workers in the public sector are hired through open competition that does not discriminate against gender or education. Job security is also high due to guaranteeing retirement age. It is also recognized as a sector with a relatively good working environment compared to the private sector, as it has regulations and systems for work-family balance (Jang, 2019). Thus, the public sector has good working conditions and no

gender discrimination policies (Jang, 2019; Park, 2018).

In the recent decades, some significant progress has been made towards the gender issue. For instance, literacy rate among the women is increasing gradually, gender gap in primary and secondary level enrolment rate reduced remarkably, and women participation in labour force higher than ever before over the world. Despite of considerable progress in reducing gender gap, there still exists huge discrimination against women in different sectors such as women have less access than men to resources and economic opportunity do. Furthermore, they have limited access to a wide range of services and the movement of women is still restricted in many societies (World Bank, 2018).

The evident that the status of women has changed a little, in particular they have achieved a little gain in economic wellbeing due to traditional social structure (Praveen S & Tamale, S., 2016). Thus, evaluation of gender situation and monitoring the effect of some approaches adopted in reducing gender disparity is essential for further social and economic development as a whole. It is stated in Gender Equality in Sector Wide Approaches, that gender differences and inequalities in resources, access, needs and potential contributions should be assessed to form a gender responsive policy framework. Necessarily, the economy and society as a whole sector and its key institutions and households and their individual members should be covered by the assessment to conceptualize how societal, sectoral and household-level conditions shape the relative opportunities and resources of males and females (OECD, 2002). Research on gender discrimination, therefore, has significant importance to the policy makers, social workers, even for the politicians, in the present national and international context.

II. Materials and Methods.

Data collection and sources.

This research study used data that was collected using focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, observations, questionnaires.

Data processing and analysis.

The researcher used thematic analysis to identify, analyse, and report patterns and themes within the qualitative data. Data was recorded, transcribed, and coded using Atlas.ti 8. This allowed us to manage the data and generate themes, codes, and quotations. The researcher initially created a comprehensive list of qualitative data codes, which

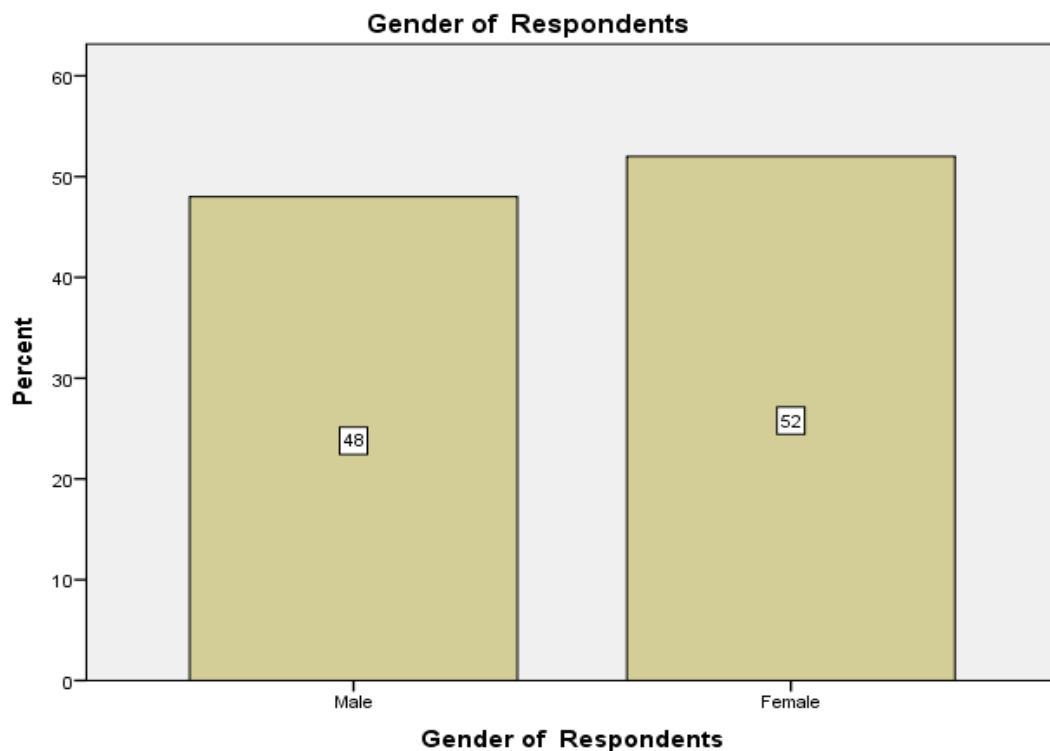


were later merged to identify closely related and similar themes. The development of the codes was an iterative process that involved several code validation meetings by the researcher.

Quantitative data was analysed using statistical for social sciences (SPSS) where the raw data was entered and tables and frequencies were generated and later discussed.

III. Results and Discussions.

Table 4.1.1



Description of the study participants.

Table outlines the demographic information of the employees at the district council. This analysis encompasses a total of 50 participants comprising both male and female employees.

From the data presented in the figure above, it is evident that most employees are females representing (52%) as compared to males (48%). This was also observed that most positions are dominated by female employees. *“despite we are more here but we occupy lower positions like being secretary unlike top positions”* one employee narrated.



Table 4.1.2 Age of the Employees

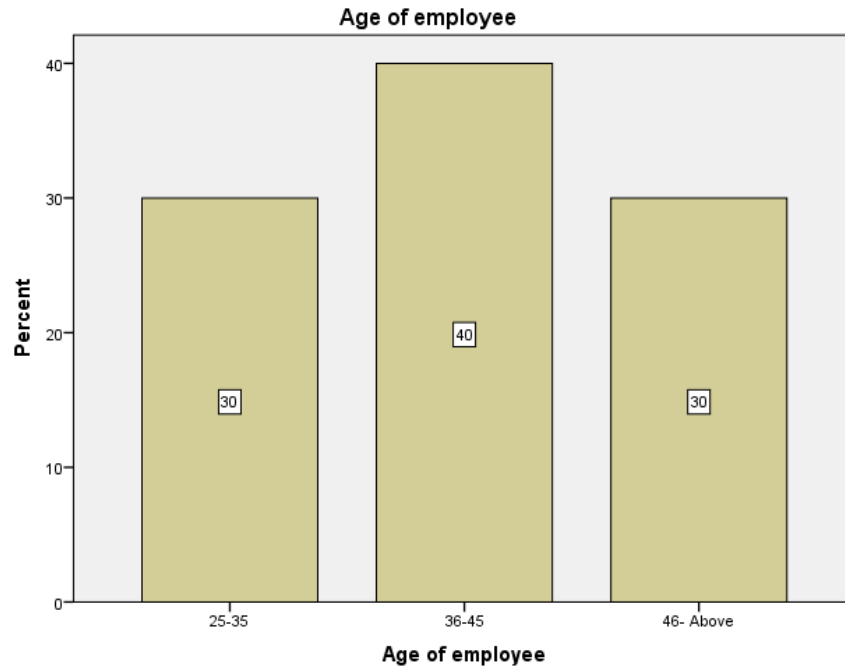


Table 4.1.2 presents the age group of the employees at Thyolo district council. On average, most employees are in the age category of 36 to 45 years which represent 40% of the total participants in the study. Therefore, this gives a narrative that the council comprise of youthful group of employees.

Table 4.1.3 Marital status of the Employees.

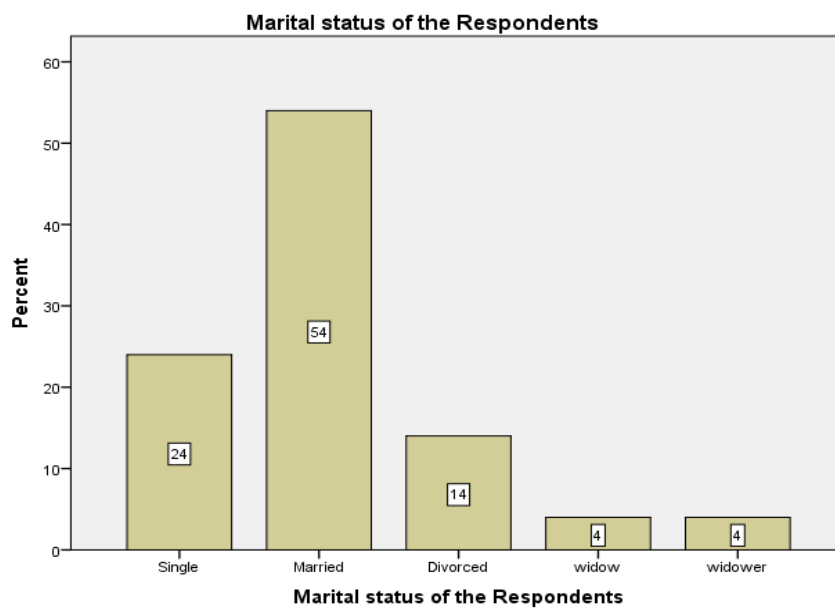


Table 4.1.3 shows that most of the employees at Thyolo district council are married representing 54% of the participants of the study. The table reflect that the council is comprise of most responsible employees.

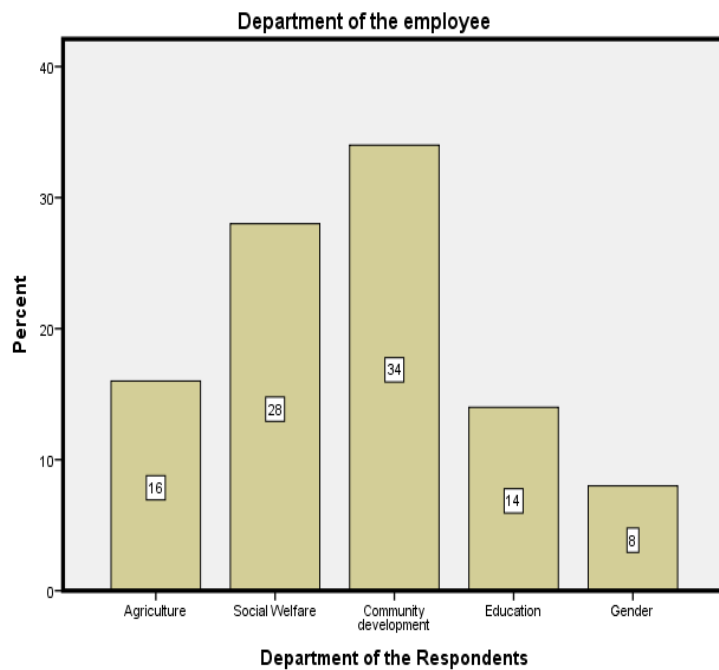


Table 4.1.4 Education levels of Employees.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Primary	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
Secondary education	14	28.0	28.0	30.0
University or College level	35	70.0	70.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

From the table 4.1.4, it shows that most of the employees they have attended university level representing 70%. This shows that Thyolo district council comprise of employees with majority having diplomas and degrees. This shows an indication that employees are equipped with skills and knowledge and given right materials and time they have ability to perform better.

Departmental number of Employees



From the table, it shows that community development department has more employees than any other department (34%) based on the participants in the study.



Gender perception and Employee performance.



Table shows that most of the employees agrees that there is discrimination at Thyolo district council (44%). The employees explained that they are being discriminated in many forms such as unequal pay with the same qualification, promotion opportunities, Verbal harassment, exclusion from important meetings, biased performance evaluations. On average, through interaction with employees they mention that common kinds of discriminations among all is verbal harassment and lack of promotion opportunities.

Impact of gender discrimination on employee performance and productivity.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Low performance	1	2.0	2.0	2.0
Low productivity	23	46.0	46.0	48.0
None	12	24.0	24.0	72.0
Poor performance	13	26.0	26.0	98.0
Under performance	1	2.0	2.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Table above, outline the impact of gender discrimination effect in relation to employee performance where it was analysed that gender discrimination has negative impact on the performance and productivity of an employee as evidenced at Thyolo district council as highlighted in the table above. The table shows that employees are affected in many ways such as emotional and psychological effect which later affect the performance of employee and productivity at work place.

Explanation on the Relationship between Gender Discrimination and Work performance

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Mental health disease	5	10.0	10.0	10.0
1 low productivity	4	8.0	8.0	18.0
1 Low self esteem	4	8.0	8.0	26.0
1 low Self Esteem	4	8.0	8.0	34.0
Valid 1 Women being given extra allowances for sexual relations	4	8.0	8.0	42.0
1Less participation 2 Low self esteem	4	8.0	8.0	50.0
Discrimination	3	6.0	6.0	56.0
Less productivity	4	8.0	8.0	64.0



Less Promotion Opportunities	3	6.0	6.0	70.0
Low self esteem	4	8.0	8.0	78.0
None	11	22.0	22.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

From the table above, it shows that gender discrimination contributes to mental illness which leads low productivity of employee at work place, hence having negative impact on opportunities of an employee.

Organisation culture and gender discrimination perception



IV. Conclusions.

This research study investigates the effect of gender discrimination on employee performance at work place a case study of Thyolo district council. The findings suggest that there is lack of promotion opportunities, Unequal pay, verbal harassment, biased performance evaluation among employee, and exclusion from meetings. Furthermore, female employees face gender discrimination more than male employee despite having same qualification and same department.

From perspective of workers at Thyolo district council, female and junior employees can protect their rights and interests at work place through laws and seeking other help from different institutions be it private or public. Therefore, for future researchers are encouraged to research more on eliminating gender discrimination at work places especially in public sectors like Thyolo district council.

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