

The Role of the Workplace Environment in the Creation and Sustenance of the Glass Ceiling in Tertiary Institutions in Uganda

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Abstract The existence of the metaphorical glass ceiling prevents women from attaining top academic leadership positions. Micro-gender drivers, at individual and societal levels, have contributed to the creation and sustenance of this ceiling. The work environment in Ugandan tertiary institutions is characterized by male-dominated structures and norms that make women uncompetitive and unambitious. Further, female leadership is undermined and termed feminine and simplistic. This study aimed at unveiling the role of the work environment in the creation and sustenance of the glass ceiling syndrome in Ugandan universities. A multiple case study design was adopted in this qualitative study and the study sample comprised of purposively selected Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors and Deans from Busitema, Islamic, Makerere, Uganda Christian and Uganda Martyrs universities. Data were collected using document review, questionnaires and interviews. Content and thematic analyses were conducted, and the results presented as narratives and quotations. The work environment, in the form of policies, recruitment and selection practices, and culture, has hindered female staff from ascending to top echelons in university leadership. Work factors that operationalize the glass ceiling in Uganda include: male-dominated structures, unfavorable policies and practices, failure to implement, or selective implementation of, gender-related policies, a taint of favoritism, and male cronyism. Others are limited office space, inadequate provision of sanitary facilities, unfavourable teaching load, and inaccessibility to scholarships. The existing glass ceiling is bound to persist unless discriminative structures are eliminated; clear women-friendly appointment and support systems are instituted; and fair, transparent and equal opportunities policies are instituted.

Keywords: Glass ceiling, tertiary level, women, leadership, working environment

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1. Introduction

This paper is about the underrepresentation of women in top academic leadership positions in Ugandan universities, as a result of the glass ceiling. The "glass ceiling" is a metaphor that denotes the sum total of all the factors that hinder certain categories of people, especially women, from rising beyond a certain level in a hierarchy of power and influence within formally instituted administrative or management structures. Babic and Hansez [1] adds that, it refers to the situation whereby a qualified person is discrimination against, most often based on sexism or racism from advancing the hierarchy of his/her organization and that this frequently affects women. According to Jackson & Callaghan [2], the term "glass ceiling" is said to have been coined by journalists Hymowitz & Schellhardt, in March 1986, to depict the invisible, yet impenetrable, barriers encountered by

women who seek to advance to the uppermost levels of the corporate ladder, traditionally occupied by men. Thereafter, the term 'glass ceiling' resonated throughout the Western world, quickly becoming part of everyday language, and, in time, was incorporated into the title of a United States Commission, the Glass Ceiling Commission (U.S. Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995). Since the publication of Hymowitz and Schellhardt's report in 1986, the metaphor of the glass ceiling has been applied to describe any artificial barrier and insurmountable obstacles that bar certain categories of people from climbing to higher leadership positions.

Such obstacles limit suitably qualified women of diverse ethnic backgrounds, as well as disabled and sexual minority groups, whether male or female, from advancement to management-level positions in organizations, irrespective of their accomplishments or merits [3]. This may have far-reaching consequences for the development of future female leaders in the education sector, especially universities which produce most top

public and private servants. Bulbul [4] in her study conducted in Turkey established that there is gender disparity in academic performances as well as in academic promotions, and that gender is a significant factor in explaining the current situation in academic ranks in Turkish universities. In line with the foresaid, this paper explores the views of various university administrators on the existence of the glass ceiling, the ways in which the workplace environment creates and sustains the glass ceiling, and the initiatives designed by higher learning institutions to address the problem in public and private Ugandan universities.

In the USA, the glass ceiling concept is sometimes extended to refer to obstacles hindering the advancement of minority women, as well as minority men. In the context of workplace concepts, there are similar terms, such as "invisible barriers", for restrictions concerning women and their roles within organizations, and how those roles relate to women's maternal duties. Expressions, such as "invisible barriers" also function as metaphors to describe the extra challenges that women usually face when trying to advance both in their careers and within their lives outside their work spaces. The concept of the glass ceiling has clear, pejorative implications, alluding to the blockage effect that the "ceiling" exercises on women's efforts to advance to higher-level positions of responsibility in organizations. Catalyst [5] and Sabharwal [6] observe a pattern of hidden barriers that prevent women from reaching top academic leadership positions in most public and private organizations, including universities. The concept expresses a consistent and prevalent pattern of bottlenecks that limit the progression of women to top academic leadership positions. In the USA, Beer [7] found that the glass ceiling was correlated strongly with gender.

Since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, arising from the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), the concept of gender mainstreaming has been popularized. Arguments about the position of women in society have evolved from the earlier focus on integration and gender equality to the articulation of women's unique abilities, with potential contributions to a mainstream that is currently dominated by men. Several assumptions related to the gender-mainstreaming methodology play an important role in defining the philosophical grounds for the conception, formulation, and implementation of policies, geared towards eliminating the gender gap, and fostering the empowerment of women, in order to promote their participation in public administration and management. These assumptions include gender assumptions, such as beliefs that integrated gender language, women access to, and control of, resources, and women's involvement in decision-making, would lead to greater women's participation in organizational leadership. However, Shava & Ndebele [8] observe that all that notwithstanding, gender mainstreaming has not proved to be very successful, most probably on account of the existence of the glass ceiling. While one would have expected Ugandan universities, as centers of enlightenment, and bastions of scientific objectivity, to be at the forefront of gender equality and equity, the reality is disappointingly different. According to Kwesiga [9] and Businge [10], this is so despite the fact that affirmative

action in education was intensified in Ugandan universities, beginning in the 1990s. In fact, as the African Development Bank Report [11] indicates, as far as women's representation in top leadership positions is concerned, the business sector in Uganda has performed much better than the tertiary education sector.

According to Government of Uganda [12], Section 28 of the Universities and Other Tertiary Institutions Act, of 2001, as amended in 2006, stipulates that the admission committee of a public university "shall take into consideration affirmative action in favour of marginalized groups on the basis of gender, disability and disadvantaged schools" of origin, implying that the framers of the Act were aware of existing gender-based inequalities that required redressing. In the context of this paper, it is assumed that addressing such inequalities at the admissions level would place women into the pipeline to top academic leadership positions. However, the same Act is silent on the representation of women in top academic leadership. Moreover, Ugandan universities do not all execute the provisions of the Act in the same way: lack or shortage of necessary resources, particularly financial and human resources, leads some universities to execute their mandates less satisfactorily than others. Nakamya et al. [13] note that most of the universities implement the Act in whichever way that suits them. But, according to the Report of the National Council of Higher Education [14], there is frequent monitoring to assess the extent of implementation of the Act by the different institutions, and this has resulted in a number of universities having their licenses revoked while others have been given six months to improve or else have their licenses revoked. The same National Council for Higher Education Report also makes it clear that it is government policy to ensure the inclusion of women at all levels, including top academic leadership ones. As Nakamya et al. [13] further indicate, the ratio of men to women in managerial positions in most universities is still at about 20:1, but not because of lack of efforts to rectify the situation.

Efforts have been made to increase women's leadership representation. For example, Makerere University established a Department of Women and Gender Studies in 1991, which was elevated to the status of a School, under the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, in 2010. By 2001/2002, Makerere University had already developed a Gender Strategic Plan, and incorporated a gender mainstreaming perspective into the Strategic Plans of 2001/2005 and 2002/2020. The University began creating gender mainstreaming support structures to coordinate gender mainstreaming activities in the university under the department of the Academic Registrar, specifically to address gender inequalities in the university [15]. Similarly, Kyambogo University also initiated a gender policy aimed at promoting gender equity in education. This policy stipulates that all the university's policies, systems and programmes should be consistent with the national and international gender laws and policies. The policy also gives a clear mandate to the management of Kyambogo University to mainstream gender in university structures and functions [16]. While these figures represent a commendable effort to empower women, they also highlight the inadequacy of the achievements realized so far.

According to Hora [17], the workplace environment has

been defined as aspects embedded within organizational systems that can determine the effectiveness with which organizational objectives are achieved. In the opinion of Howe-Walsh & Turnbull [18], the workplace environment encompasses organizational policies, the organizational environment, and recruitment and selection practices. In the same vein, Armstrong [19] recognizes organizational policies and guidelines for recruitment, reward, supervision, and the entire staff-development structure as having the potential to affect individuals differently. A workplace environment that operationalizes the glass ceiling includes physical and nonphysical aspects of the organizational environment. According to Eagly and Sczesny [20], while the physical environment includes office space, office ambience, and working space, the non-physical environment includes the culture, management style, and organizational policies.

According to a study conducted in Pakistan by Khuong and Chi [21], unfair behavior in the organizational workplace has made it difficult for women to be promoted to higher positions. The same authors note that when more women break the glass ceiling and access top level positions, more women become committed to also struggle to break the class ceiling. The authors recommend that organizations should give proper attention and equal career advancement to female employees so as to increase commitment levels of female workers. It has also been observed that a smart and compassionate work environment empowers employees to perform effectively and enhancing skills and competencies in the best manner, and providing high-quality organizational service with limited available resources. This study established that the work environment of an organization has a great effect on employee performance; and it recommends that organizations should improve their work environments for both females and males in equal measure, depending on their biological needs [22].

For his part, Zainuddin [23], in a study conducted in Kenya, found that promotion policies had a straight and distant impact on the performance of any organization. He also found that policies for employee wellbeing had a considerable impact on the performance of females in different organizations. It was further established that if the work environment supports female employees, the latter will grow, and that if the glass ceiling decreases, and equal opportunities are given on merit, there will be a high chance of female employees performing better, and that will lead to organizational success. Zainuddin [23] further suggests that it is very necessary for organizations to make favorable policies and better work environment for employees, and that the achievement and confidence of female employees will rise if they are satisfied with the organizational policies and work environment.

According to Mousa [24], it has also been observed that the presence of discrimination, an ill-mannered environment, impolite attitudes, and a traumatic and impatient environment are the factors that reduce employee motivation and performance, and disturb the mental health of employees. If female employees are valued as an outcome of their achievements, and get promotions to the higher echelons, they will accomplish the objectives of the organization quicker. For this reason, organizations are advised to institute policies that are

equal for all employees, and are in favour of both males and females, provide equal career opportunities to female employees, involve female employees in organizational decision making, and promote females to senior-level positions. This is because females being great assets to our society, they deserve to be treated equally, and given equal opportunities by organizations.

2. Statement of the Problem

Although the first World Atlas of Gender Equality in Education [25] indicates that there is a significant increase in the number of women enrolling in higher education, the increase in the number of women in top leadership positions in higher education is much less significant. Moreover, as Linda [26] states, women continue to fall behind their male colleagues in progressing towards leadership roles. Furthermore, Airini et al. [27] argue that although a few women do advance to leadership roles in universities, “gender imbalance among top university academics is an acknowledged problem that has persisted for decades in many countries”. Similarly, Morley [28] notes that there are very few women Vice Chancellors worldwide, with Hong Kong, which has no female Vice Chancellor, being the worst performer. Hong Kong is followed by Kuwait (2%), Japan (2.3%), India (3%) and Turkey (7%). And yet universities are among the most enlightened institutions in the world, and are expected to “play a key role in shaping society and building active citizens.”

In Africa, males greatly outnumber females in top leadership positions in universities [29]. Whilst Uganda has made significant progress in improving the lives of women through implementing gender-sensitive policies and programmes, several development indicators show that gender inequalities continue to permeate all aspects of human life, including the academic leadership sub-sector, to the disadvantage of women. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that “today’s situation does not meet the threshold for equal participation of females and males in different stages of a university career” [30], including the top leadership stage. The underrepresentation of women remains highly noticeable in university leadership, with most women being unable to break the glass ceiling that separates them from top academic leadership positions. And yet, as Eagly & Carli [20] argue, “having gender diversity in higher positions of both corporate and higher education sectors should be of high interest to all human society as women combine masculine and feminine qualities more than men do, by adopting a transformational leadership style.” The same authors aver that “transformational leaders are innovative, solve problems successfully and are excellent role models for their people.” This implies that the underrepresentation of women in top academic leadership positions is denying the administration of Ugandan and other universities the potential for growth and development that is associated with transformational leadership which is, in turn, associated with women. It is, therefore, imperative that this underrepresentation of women in top academic leadership positions be urgently addressed in order to break the glass ceiling that bars women from top leadership positions. Interrogatively, the problem that this

paper seeks to solve is: how do prevailing macro gender factors or drivers create and sustain the glass ceiling in Ugandan public and private universities, and what can be done to shatter the glass ceiling?

According to Kumar et al. [31], in their study entitled the impact of the glass ceiling, work environment and organization policy on employee performance, the work environment of different organizations demotivates minority groups, including women, and becomes a factor in their performance. They also observed that the glass ceiling exists in organizations, and that promotions to senior positions are not given on merit. While statistics are rather scattered, according to University World News, as of 2023, there were only 21% female chancellors, 14% female vice chancellors and 26% female academic registrars in a study on 97 universities in Africa [32]. The Nigerian National Universities Commission, reports that as of 2024, of the 274 universities in Nigeria, only 22 had female vice-chancellors [33]. In Uganda, as of the year 2008, there were only 6.5% female Professors, 15.1% female Associate Professors, and 23.2% female Senior Lecturers in Makerere University which is the oldest and largest in Uganda [34] and by 2022, Makerere University had only one female principal in its 10 colleges while in the more than 50 universities in Uganda there were just three female vice-chancellors [35]. Uganda Martyrs University, on its part, has only 37.5% female Deans of Faculty in the entire university.

3. Literature Review

In his situational analysis of Makerere University, Ahikire [36] observes that the “Ugandan university work environment is characterized by physical, language, socio-cultural, and religious structures that are male-dominated, and which present men as super human beings, and women as less competitive and less ambitious human beings who should be submissive to men. Such subtle, yet strong, features have a negative bearing on the efforts of both government and non-governmental institutions to shatter the glass ceiling in institutions of higher learning. Quinn [37], while examining the effects of the glass ceiling in higher institutions of learning in the USA, observes that male-dominated work practices create persistent, social and gender inequalities, making it difficult for women to enjoy their work environment, which in turn hinders the advancement of women to leadership positions. Similarly, in a study of higher education leadership and women Vice Chancellors, Burkinshaw [38] observes that most female leaders are not accorded an enabling work environment by their institutions, which undermines them, referring to their leadership styles as feminine and suitable only for simple situations. In the same vein, Oram [39] notes that, because of a long history of male-dominated leadership, work environments are infused with masculinity, which makes most male workers assume to have power even when they do not have it. The same scholars add that this assumed power is relayed through seemingly trivial incidents and transactions that include “sarcasm, jokes, exclusion and negative remarks”, which creates a favourable environment for the glass ceiling.

Regarding the work environment, Kanter [40] states that it is the position, and not the person, that usually determines whether a manager has productive power. He defines productive power as “the ability to *do*”, in the classic physical usage of power as energy, implying having access to whatever is needed for the doing. The powerful ones are those who have access to tools for action. Power is said to be a function of having open channels to supplies, support, and information. Thus, productive power has to do with connections with other parts of the system. Kanter’s views are complemented by those of Bullough [41] who states that power is derived from two sources: job activities (discretion, recognition, and relevance), and political alliances (contacts with sponsors, peer networks and subordinates). Power relations in most organizations disadvantage women, erecting a ceiling beyond which they cannot advance. According to Bullough [41], power acts to favour some categories of staff who are connected to those in top positions. Given that most people in leadership positions are male, they are likely to favour fellow men at the expense of women.

Although less widespread than societal issues, issues related to corporate structures significantly affect women’s potential in a more direct way. Organizational structures can interfere with, and inhibit, female advancement. These structures include male-dominated “old boys’ networks,” increased ambiguity about advancement, and glass cliffs. The glass ceiling cliffs which refers to a situation in which women are promoted to higher positions during times of crisis or duress, or during a recession when the chances of failure is more likely. In this connection, Diko [42] observes that since higher-learning institutions were established by men, they tend to have processes and structures that reflect male values and life styles. Teelken & Deem [3] concur with Diko’s views when they observe that existing networks in organizations can often be homogenous and long-standing, and therefore difficult for women to break into. This is partly because women are often uncomfortable with networking in the social context of these settings, and are also unable to commit extra time outside of work hours due to their home commitments. Moreover, generally, men also have little interest in welcoming new female members (Teelken and Deem, 2013). Because of these factors, the support network around women at higher levels of leadership is limited and unhelpful to women.

In addition, women in high-visibility roles are often stereotyped into “role traps” which include the mother, the seductress, the pet, and, for those whose management approaches are more directive than collaborative, the iron maiden [43]. Due to the relative paucity of female colleagues in management, women leaders are also isolated and often subconsciously viewed by others in the company as symbolic gestures of the company’s goodwill efforts to promote gender equality. The advancement of a limited number of women into the upper echelons of power has thus created a dynamic labelled “tokenism.” This is the interpretation that these few women in positions of power demonstrate equality of opportunity, when in reality, this is far from the truth [6].

In a related view, researchers who compared current successful women to the homemakers of the past found

that news articles sometimes tout examples of successful women as evidence that the glass ceiling is shattered when actually gender inequality persists. In some ways, discrimination has become increasingly subtle and hard to detect, creating a more complex environment that women need to navigate [44]. The current organizational, political climate also influences the response of both men and women to certain situations. For example, in some instances, the fear of losing their jobs has forced women to fear making statements about their intentions. While it is true that men also find themselves with such fears, more men than women feel that they can get jobs elsewhere, and, generally, women do not wish to move because of their other obligations, especially family ones [45]. In a discussion of the work environment and discrimination against women in universities, Mulyampiti, Muriisa and Kanabahita [30] note that there are a number of existing networks, which include the globally known Association of University Women, that leaders can utilize to access leadership positions; and Makerere University has for a long time been running the Ugandan chapter of this association. An earlier emphasis on formal and informal mentoring programmes to counteract the barriers to women's advancement has now been overtaken by an increasing focus on the establishment and operation of networks to increase women access to higher positions of leadership. According to Cundiff et al. [46], while the opportunity to develop networks was initially seen as an ancillary, albeit noteworthy, benefit of mentoring programmes in universities, increasing attention is being given to the significance of informal networks and channels of communication to help women to also access leadership positions.

Much as higher learning institutions are expected to provide a level playing field for both men and women, and are responsible for training future policy makers, as well as leading innovation and development, women are grossly underrepresented in Ugandan top university leadership positions. Kandiko [47], Tibatemwa [34], Kabonesa and Kaase-Mwange [61], Nothouse et al. [48], Ahikire [36] and Odhiambo [47] note that it is particularly worrying that, of the more than 50 public and private universities in Uganda by 2017, only 3 (6.9%) had a female Vice Chancellor in 2001. They further note that men outnumbered women by about 5:1 at the middle management level and by about 20:1 at the senior management level. This indicates that, in spite of the affirmative efforts made so far, women remain excessively underrepresented in all managerial positions in Ugandan universities.

As Uganda's vision for higher education and the Higher Education Strategic Plan, 2012-2022 indicate, the Government of Uganda is committed to addressing the glass ceiling syndrome, and has instituted a series of strategies to promote gender equity through the establishment of bodies that promote gender equity in education, employment and political representation. And, as already noted, initiatives, including women scholarship schemes, quota systems, financial assistance to female students, and other forms of affirmative action in favor of female applicants for admission into university study programmes and academic positions, have already been undertaken to reduce the gender imbalance in universities. This has been done because it is generally agreed that the

quality of higher education in Uganda can be enhanced when both men and women are equitably represented in top leadership positions [49]. However, as Kandiko [47] and Tibatemwa [34] note, despite these efforts, often more women remain stuck at the middle level of university leadership positions because the glass ceiling is still intact. Given the socio-cultural and numeric significance of women in Uganda's national development, unless this imbalance is rectified, Uganda's universities will continue missing the unique managerial attributes associated with gender diversity in general, and women in particular.

Scholars, such as Ojwala, Neat, and Kitanda [50], note that gender policies are among the variables that make the work environment. They further assert that policies are considered adequate if their outputs have contributed to achieving their intended objectives. However, they observed that while most policies look good on paper, their implementation did not translate into successful gender balanced environments in the Kenyan public universities that they studied. According to the same scholars, gender-neutral policies for a work environment can consolidate gender norms and power imbalance to exploit the underrepresented females. For example, a work environment that is characterized by policies that do not have parental leave protection or flexible working arrangements may end up affecting females in an African set up where all the home chores are regarded as female responsibility [50]. The same authors further note that there are work environments with policies that tend to encourage women to apply for senior management positions, but fail to address the stereotypes hindering women's attainment of those positions, and they considered such work environments as defeating their own policies.

4. Methodology

This paper adopted a qualitative research approach in which according to [51,52] involves the researcher socially constructing reality in a natural setting, in a systematic interactive approach which is best for gathering feelings, attitudes and values, with superior results, because of its multiple realities where each individual is able to produce his/her reality. Therefore, a multiple case study design involving 15 participants from five Ugandan public and private Universities was involved to unveil the role of the working environment in the creation and sustenance of the glass ceiling in Ugandan universities. This multiple case study design specifically involved five public and private universities of (Busitema University (BUS), Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), Makerere University (MUK), Uganda Christian University (UCU), and Uganda Martyrs, universities UMU), and was meant to offset the disadvantages intrinsic to a single case study by optimizing the representativeness of the study sample. The dimensions of the work environment studied included the legal/policy framework, physical, material, and human resources; and organizational culture. The participant population comprised of purposively selected male and female Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors, and Deans of Schools and Faculties. Primary data was collected through interviews administration, and secondary data was gathered by means of document

review. Content and thematic analyses were conducted, and the results were presented in narrative form and quotations. The interview with each respondent lasted at least thirty-five minutes and the interview sessions were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. For ethical reasons, names of participants were not disclosed, save for the numbers of people interviewed and the universities from which they were selected. The analysis of data was done using thematic coding in line with the research question. Table 1 shows the disaggregation of participants by university and gender.

5. Results

The study established that, the work environment in the form of the legal framework (organizational policies and attendant practices, including employee recruitment and selection) and organizational culture, have hindered female staff from ascending to the top echelons in university leadership. Further, the work environmental factors that operationalize the glass ceiling in Uganda were found

to include male-dominated structures, unfavorable policies and practices, failure to implement, or selective implementation of, gender-sensitive policies, and inadequate physical resources, especially office space and equipment. Respondents' views were that, generally, women are under-represented in top university leadership positions, largely on account of the negative stereotypical perceptions that most people, including some women, have of women. Most universities were reported to have inadequate office space and inadequately equipped offices, which was reported to demotivate workers, specifically women, and limit their productivity in terms of research and publication. The opinion of one of the participants was,

In spite of the existence of a supportive legal framework, policies and actions meant to engender gender equality in Uganda, as long as patriarchy and systemic and institutional factors continue to hinder the advancement of females into leadership positions, gender equality in universities and elsewhere will remain elusive. (Interview,)

Most participants noted that their respective universities had not paid sufficient attention to the provision of

sanitary facilities for their female staff, leading to inadequacy of such facilities, and resulting into many female staff contracting infectious diseases. It was established that the existing glass ceiling cannot be broken down since most work environment policies are either never implemented, or selectively implemented; and also, because as much as the universities have gender-sensitive policies, the implementation of those policies is marred by favoritism, and male cronyism. Moreover, the absence of favorable conditions, such as a reasonable teaching load, study leave and scholarships, limit female career development opportunities. These views were supported by the interview responses as one participant testified,

"Many female staff have contracted infectious diseases from un-hygienic places of convenience at my university campus, thereby compromising the health of the victims and their colleagues, which ultimately affects their productivity and academic progress." (Interview,)

"It is true the university policies are well documented and gender-sensitive, but they are not implemented to the letter, and sometimes favouritism and nepotism triumph over established policy." (Interview, 20 July 2018).

As she explained, "It is true the university policies are well documented and gender-sensitive, but they are not implemented to the letter, and sometimes favouritism and nepotism triumph over established policy." (Interview)

"Much as it may be true that policies are fair to both males and females, the patriarchal nature of Ugandan society creates an operational framework that is unfair to females" (Interview).

In addition, junior, female staff members have fewer chances of advancing due to limited office space and facilities at their disposal. Further, universities do not pay sufficient attention to the provision of sanitary facilities whose absence or total inadequacy erodes the morale of female staff.

Most private universities had recruitment practices that were contrary to relevant National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) guidelines one participant verbally noted that.

"Not having decent working space has the potential to increase absenteeism among staff, which ultimately hinders their academic progress." (Interview).

Table 1. Disaggregation of participants by University and Gender

SN	Universities	Vice Chancellors		Deputy Vice Chancellors		Faculty Deans				Total
						Science		Humanities		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1.	BUS	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	3
2.	IUIU	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	3
3.	MUK	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3
4.	UCU	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	3
5.	UMU	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	3
Total		1	1	4	0	3	2	2	2	15

Key: BUS= Busitema University; IUIU - Islamic University in Uganda; MUK = Makerere University; UCU = Uganda Christian University; UMU = Uganda Martyrs, universities.

Source: Author

6. Discussions

The findings that the legal framework and organizational culture, have acted as barriers against female staff ascending to the top echelons in university leadership implies that they need to be revisited to deliberately address this concern. These results agree with the assertion by Schwanke [53] that barriers that keep women from leadership roles impact negatively on gender diversity and ethical approaches, and limit women opportunities. The results also support the view by Malin, [54] that, the negative effects of these barriers are that there is defiance of gender representation in top management and also occupational segregation. The male-dominant work environmental factors in the form of structures, unfavorable policies and practices as established by this study imply that the glass-ceiling in universities in Uganda will linger on for many years to come unless addressed. The findings that most work environment policies are either never implemented, or selectively implemented or marred by favoritism, and male cronyism, contradicted the argument by Kyambogo University [8] and Makerere University [34] that universities have in place gender-related policies that consider equity in accessing leadership positions. The understanding here could be that, it is their implementation then that is lacking.

The findings that there are negative stereotypical perceptions about women leadership in universities hence the under-representation of women in top university leadership positions, largely on account of the current undesired situation. These findings seem to go against the efforts of the Government of Uganda of raising the representation of women at all levels through the implemented the affirmative action strategy at the enrolment level [55]. The finding of this study agrees with those of Ghundol and Muthanna [56] who in their study "Perceptions and experiences of female academics on barriers in obtaining and continuing leadership roles at higher education" established that the main barriers for obtaining leadership positions are traditional gender roles, societal stereotypes and patriarchal norms. Morley [28] adds that, gendered stereotypes create a persistent bias for women to counter, while Blackmore [57] opines that despite being qualified, women are overlooked due to prevailing gender norms and biases.

This study had also established that most universities do not have adequate office space and office equipment, including not paying sufficient attention to provide sanitary facilities for their female staff. As was observed, this demotivates the female staff and limit their productivity in terms of research and publications, and in a way act as a barrier to their upward progression. The unavailability of female-specific sanitation and health facilities was also found to play a role in the sustenance of the glass ceiling in Ugandan universities. It was observed that, by virtue of their biological make-up, women require certain facilities, such as sanitary towels, at certain times, and if those facilities are unavailable, a woman may even be forced to abandon work and return home. The unavailability of such facilities was attributed to the fact that university management structures are dominated by men who are insensitive to the needs of their female

counterparts. Moreover, where institutional sanitary facilities are not hygienic, female academic staff, given their biological nature, more than their male counterparts, are at risk of contracting diseases. This has dire consequences on the performance and promotion prospects of women, again contributing to the glass ceiling. Therefore, the unavailability or inadequacy of female-specific sanitation and health facilities poses a great health risk to women, and contributes to the glass ceiling. These findings are in agreement with Bushiri [22] who asserts that working environment has a great effect on the way staff in as far as their productivity is concerned, and their willingness to exert more energy to achieve organization objectives.

While Mbazor [58] opines that office environment and available facilities are important and should be adequately provided to improve a good and healthy working environment for higher productivity, he also established in his study on the influence of office facilities and work place environment on staffs' productivity in the university system that, fire prevention facilities were not functional and so were the toilet facilities. staffs were also very dissatisfied with the condition of furniture. As expected, this is demotivating, a lot more so on female staff who naturally are always hygiene conscious. Work conditions and the physical or material resources available for the execution of work tasks, were found to create and perpetuate the glass ceiling in Ugandan universities. It was found that access to adequate office space or facilities, conducive to productive working, plays a major role in an employee's performance, especially in universities where lecturers have to prepare lecture notes, conduct research, and write papers for publication if they are to qualify for promotion to leadership positions. This is because, without adequate and well equipped office space, a lecturer finds it difficult or impossible to perform his or her duties. That is why even the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the body that regulates tertiary education institutions in Uganda, stipulates a minimum of office space that a university should have per lecturer [59]. The kind of office equipment and facilities that a lecturer needs to work efficiently and effectively include, a computer or laptop, Internet connectivity, and direct access to online library facilities. However, as the study established, access to office space varies according to rank, and the higher the rank of an employee, the more likely he or she is to access adequate office space. This situation is unfavourable to women precisely because a higher proportion of women than of men are in lower-level ranks that have less office space, equipment and facilities. This means that, generally women are more likely than men to have inadequate office space, equipment and facilities, and, as a result, to be constrained in the performance of their duties, and in their ability to ascend to leadership positions.

It was also established that although female university employees need childcare facilities, especially when they are breast-feeding, none of the five universities in the sample had a childcare facility to support female staff with babies. This puts women employees in a dilemma where they have to choose between their maternal responsibilities and their careers, forcing some of them to have only one or two children in order to be able to fit

within the work environment of the university, and to progress professionally. However, where such childcare facilities are accessible nearby, female academic staff reap professional benefits. The absence of a nearby day-care facility, where mothers could take their children and access them any time for breast-feeding, was viewed as a serious omission that sustains the glass ceiling. Given that male lecturers do not have to endure the burden associated with the lack of childcare facilities, women face a unique challenge that contributes to the glass ceiling in Ugandan universities. The total absence of childcare facilities in the study sample confirms the male-dominated nature of management structures that are apparently insensitive to uniquely female needs. The above views are in agreement with Shava et al. [8] who observed that majority of women face a number of challenges on their journey to academic success especially with family challenges which end up knocking down majority of them hindering them to access upper echelons.

This study also established that there are unfavorable conditions as relates to teaching load, study leave and scholarships, which further limit female career development opportunities. These findings support the findings of Gibney [21] who in her study on teaching load putting female scientists at career disadvantage established that in the UK, male scientists report teaching less than their female counterparts, while women and minorities tend to feel disadvantaged in their careers.

It was also established that recruitment and selection practices, or the sum total of all the activities, ranging from job identification to job evaluation and advertisement, negatively or positively influence people's access to employment and subsequent advancement up the professional ladder. Significantly, the study established that recruitment practices are often fraudulent and biased against women, partly because the identification and announcement of vacancies are not transparent to women who are in most cases in junior positions and can't access all information easily compared to men who are in senior positions. Therefore, one can conclude that the recruitment and selection practices are male-dominated, following largely male-formulated policies, which were fraught with bias in the form of favoritism to the benefit of mainly male cronies of top male administrators. These submissions were further observed but Tibatemwa [34] who noted that institutional opportunities for staff recruitment needed fairness if gender equity is to be realized. Moreover, it was also established that most top administrators were indeed male, regardless of the gender policies in place. Therefore, one can logically conclude that, overall, while the recruitment and selection policies are regarded as fair on paper, looking at the existing university recruitment and selection policies, their corresponding practices are considered to be unfair. These discriminatory practices can themselves be attributed to the fact that most universities were reported not to use independent recruitment consultants, which gives free rein to those (mainly men) in the internal recruiting and selection organs who may be bent on subverting the system to deny positions to deserving applicants, including females, thereby reinforcing the glass ceiling.

These findings that most private universities had recruitment practices that were contrary to relevant

National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) guidelines and that were gender insensitive, also meant that female scholars had less chances of being recruited to higher positions in the universities further strengthening the glass-ceiling. These results were in line with those of Nielsen [60]. In his study in Aarhus University where he established that while women and men had approximately the same likelihood of being appointed in single applicant competitions, women may still be at a disadvantage. His results further established that female postdocs and assistant professors were far less likely than men to apply for vacancies at the associate professorship level.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, the existing glass ceiling cannot be broken down since most work environment policies are either never implemented, or selectively implemented. While universities have gender-sensitive policies, the implementation of those policies is marred by favoritism, and male cronyism. Moreover, the absence of favorable conditions, such as a reasonable teaching load, study leave and scholarships, limit female career development opportunities. In addition, junior, female staff members have fewer chances of advancing due to limited office space and facilities at their disposal. Further, universities do not pay sufficient attention to the provision of sanitary facilities whose absence or total inadequacy erodes the morale of female staff.

The study recommends that, to shatter the glass ceiling, specific organizations should establish or effectively implement work policies and conditions that are fair and favourable to all the staff, and improve recruitment practices. Given that the glass ceiling was more pronounced in the old universities than in the more recently established ones, old universities should emulate the practices of young universities. Given further that most private universities had recruitment practices that were contrary to relevant National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) guidelines, all private universities should adopt the staff recruitment practices recommended by NCHE, and NCHE should ensure that all universities, including private ones, adhere to all its guidelines. In the interest of quality and fairness, and in cognizance of the fact that universities are essentially universal, faith-based universities should open their top academic leadership positions to people of any faith, or of no faith at all, in order to rectify the current situation in which most top academic leadership positions are occupied by members of the founding faith. Universities should also ensure that staff development policies are cognizant of, and cater for, the unique challenges, associated with pregnancy, childbirth and care as well as home roles, that women face as they pursue their training and development opportunities. In addition, each university should establish a monitoring system to streamline the recruitment practices, and eliminate any form of favoritism in the recruitment process, which disadvantages certain categories of employees, especially women. For their part, women should be encouraged to join other women in local and international leadership associations which can empower them with leadership skills, research and publication

opportunities as well as scholarships for further career development.

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