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Toward Inclusive Advancement: An Analysis of Gender Equity in Kenya

By Gloria Nyambura Kenyatta¹

Abstract

This article assesses the notion of gender parity and its function towards inclusive advancement in the Kenyan context. Gender parity has been extensively acknowledged in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, although its intended outcomes still need to be attained. Men and women have different needs, which should be harmonized for efforts geared towards achieving inclusive advancement. Both are entitled to equity in the advancement agenda. Through secondary research, this paper reviews the international, regional, and national frameworks on gender equity to which Kenya is a signatory. These frameworks are significant in supporting the country's efforts towards gender equity. The paper further maps out the four major structural impediments to gender equity: poverty, lack of education, uneven access to resources, and retrogressive cultures. These structural impediments have maintained the status quo as they are socioeconomic and linked to gender inequity indicators. Additionally, this paper argues that for inclusive advancement to be realized in Kenya, the notion of gender parity must be acknowledged; both men and women should be empowered for equitable gender participation. This development is only possible with the meaningful involvement of both genders.

Keywords: Empowerment, Equality, Gender Participation, Gender Equity, Structural Impediments, Women's Involvement

Introduction

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya extensively acknowledges the involvement of both genders in the country's development agenda. For example, articles 10, 27, 59, 69, 175, and 197 provide an elaborate framework of gender parity. Article 10 establishes the autonomy and involvement of people as part of the national principles and ideologies of governance. The discrimination of individuals on various grounds, such as sex, race, ethnicity, color, marital status, and others, is prescribed under article 27. The establishment of the Kenya National Human Rights and Equality Commission, as well as the commission's role in supporting gender parity efforts, is prescribed by article 59. The provision for every individual's engagement in the sustainability of the environment and utilization of its resources is stipulated by article 69. The provision of the gender threshold—mandating no more than two-thirds of the same gender in any government position—is provided by articles 175 (c) and 197. Despite these provisions, gender equity has not been realized due to the structural impediments of poverty, lack of education, uneven access to resources, and retrogressive cultures, as discussed in this paper. Further, this paper assesses some of the global, regional, and countrywide frameworks that support gender equity as they are significant for promoting Kenya's inclusive advancement. Additionally, this paper argues that for sustainable development to be achieved, empowerment of both men and women is needed for equitable participation, thus emphasizing the role of gender in national development.

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Gender Equity

The United Nations (2008) defines gender as fixed societal norms, cultures, and institutions that control the associations between men and women. Therefore, the term gender does not only mean women and girls, as it has frequently been misused to exclusively refer to women and initiatives towards their emancipation. However, it is a broad concept that also includes boys and men. Hazel Reeves and Sally Baden (2000) state that gender parity is about equal participation in public life for both genders, while acknowledging their differences, and a reallocation of authority and resources. Gender equity is a concept wherein both men and women's participation in development is ensured and their unique needs are addressed to resolve inequality.

Policy actions have failed to enhance gender equity due to their ambiguity in defining gender relations and power dynamics. In addition, the strategies implemented to improve equal participation of both genders towards national development have yet to be successful. Richard Strickland and Nata Duvvury (2003) decry the unevenness of the regulations and guidelines that outline gender associations. This unevenness hinders women's access to resources and their involvement in political and socioeconomic spheres, hence contributing to gender inequity.

As gender parity denotes the equivalent engagement of both men and women in various life aspects (political and socioeconomic), it acknowledges that both genders can advance their capabilities and make decisions without restrictions associated with gendered roles or prejudices. However, gender equity goes beyond gender parity and advocates for fairness in addressing the different requirements and interests of all genders (International Labour Organization, 2000). This paper adapts the gender perspective that offers both genders' similar prospects in decision-making for determining their rights or allocating resources to address their different needs (Latham, 2007). Article 27 of the Kenyan constitution emphasizes this perspective by asserting that both genders have the right to equal treatment, including the liberties to equivalent prospects in life such as political and socioeconomic aspects. Therefore, the Kenyan Constitution envisioned a situation where both sexes equally participate in inclusive advancement.

The Linkage between Gender and Advancement

The concept of advancement is defined distinctively by individual countries. Various classifications exist, including economic, societal, and human advancements. Therefore, advancement is not a restricted economic phenomenon but involves restructuring fiscal and social systems (Todaro, 2000). Gunnar Myrdal (1974) refers to advancement as improving the whole societal structure which covers financial and non-financial factors such as cultural, social, and political aspects. In Kenyan society, the advancement concept has placed women at a disadvantage relative to men, which is attributed to the societal norms that define gender roles. Consequently, gender-based rights and women's societal positions in decision-making and access to resources are affected. Substantial development should emphasize gender parity and address the attitudes towards the gendered roles of both sexes.

Gender parity is perceived to accelerate sustainable development. Because gender parity focuses on human rights, it is viewed as a development goal. Therefore, women need support to attain their liberties, the lack of which will hinder the achievement of inclusive advancement. Gender equity in development aims to achieve a level playing ground, where the inputs of both genders towards state development are appreciated, and their individual needs are satisfied. It goes beyond equality by recognizing that both sexes are different in their needs, interests, and preferences; therefore, they should be treated differently to attain equal outcomes (Reeves & Baden, 2000).

Methodology

This study is desk research that reviews international, regional, and national statutory frameworks on gender equity and assesses the prevailing structural impediments to gender equity in Kenya. The majority of the data analyzed was collected from state documents, including policy and legal frameworks. Thus, the study aligned its research issue with information from various secondary sources.

Statutory Frameworks on Gender Equity

This section includes a review of some of the statutory frameworks at the international, regional, and national levels to which Kenya is a signatory, as they play a facilitative role towards gender parity in the country.

International Frameworks

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) acknowledges that all persons' fundamental self-worth and absolute rights are the basis of liberty, fairness, and harmony (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Although it recognizes that both genders are not similar, it emphasizes their equal liberties under the legislation and fair treatment. As the declaration enhances the equivalent rights of all persons, it also corrects any violation of these rights. Article 22 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya provides for this violation by stipulating that every individual has the right to petition the courts if their privileges or fundamental freedom in the Bill of Rights are defied, infringed, or rejected.

Equity fosters impartiality, which is demonstrated when individuals are given equal opportunities, and facilitated to access these opportunities justly. The UDHR is the foundation of many laws worldwide that focus on human rights. Their universality binds every state to work towards achieving gender equity by ensuring that both men and women pursue their aspirations without discrimination. In Kenya, article 19 of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution acknowledges that safeguarding civil privileges and fundamental liberties helps to preserve the self-worth of everyone, enhance social fairness, and recognize the capabilities of every individual. Preserving human dignity empowers men and women to achieve their goals and promotes inclusive advancement.

2. The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

The 1966 treaty, realized ten years later, mandates the extensive rights of nations in the economy, society, and culture. The treaty further recognizes individual rights to work in a conducive environment, as well as social protection, education, mental health, and cultural freedom. States are required to ensure all persons enjoy the mentioned rights without discrimination. Therefore, this convention provides a framework for gender-sensitive indicators to measure the states' accountability on the adopted ICESCR commitments. Further, article 3 of the covenant facilitates equivalent liberties to both sexes, including their complete gratification of civil privileges. Article 43 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya reiterates the treaty's essence as it offers individuals financial and societal liberties, and article 20 (5) (b) emphasizes the gratification of the liberties or fundamental freedoms while recognizing the weakness of individuals and groups.

3. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

The 1979 Agreement acknowledged that prejudice against women violates human self-worth and the ideologies of civil rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1979). It noted that discrimination against women hindered their involvement in political, societal, and financial

spheres in comparison to men, thus limiting their capabilities and contributions to society's development. The convention called upon states to address the discrimination against women by establishing policies and legislations that tackle the discrimination against women, for example, in their constitutions or other statutory instruments. These efforts aimed to enhance the equal involvement of both genders towards inclusive advancement in their countries. Kenya has done considerably well in enacting statutory frameworks; for example, the 2010 Constitution of Kenya provides for social equity, non-discrimination, and equality principles. Further, article 21 (2) mandates the state to establish other procedures that promote every individual's fiscal and social rights, as specified in article 43. Implementing these frameworks is needed to promote the engagement of both genders for inclusive advancement.

4. United Nations World Conference in Beijing

The fourth global convention on women was held in 1995, and it acknowledged the emancipation of women and their full involvement in all dimensions of life for the attainment of gender parity, harmony, and advancement (United Nations, 1995a, 1995b). Further emphasis was placed on women's engagement in policy-making and guaranteeing both sexes equivalent privileges, prospects, assets, and responsibilities for their well-being and those of their families. The conference recognized the disadvantaged position of women in society. Over the years, such recognition has contributed immensely towards women's empowerment through efforts to achieve gender equity. Of note, the conference did not focus on one gender but on efforts towards gender equity for inclusive advancement.

5. Sustainable Development

The Brundtland Commission of 1987 referred to sustainable development as the advancement that accomplishes the necessities of the current generation without jeopardizing the capability of upcoming generations to fulfill their needs (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Bill Hopwood et al. (2005) state that sustainable development strongly links environmental and socioeconomic concerns and is comprised of three elements: the environment, economy, and society. This paper focuses on social sustainability, as it promotes gender equity. Jonathan Harris (2003) claims that a socially sustainable society considers fairness in the distribution of opportunities, provides adequate social services, and promotes political accountability and equivalent engagement of both men and women. Therefore, the emancipation of both genders is significant for effective involvement in sustainable development. It also helps acknowledge that the treatment of one gender as superior to the other hinders the achievement of social sustainability and inclusive advancement.

6. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

The 1992 Convention on Ecology and Advancement reasserted the 1972 proclamation of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment and resolved to advance some of its ideologies (United Nations General Assembly, 1972). For example, principle 1 acknowledges the significance of everyone in sustainable development and one's right to a life that is industrious and harmonious with the environment. This principle recognizes the significant role of human beings in participating in sustainable development agendas irrespective of gender. It envisions a society where men and women participate equally in a sustainable environment for all.

Subsequently, principle 5 advocates for poverty eradication by state agencies to accomplish sustainable development. It aims to alleviate the disparities in living standards and assist countries in providing the basic needs of their majority populace. Nations, therefore, need to cooperate and improve the living conditions of both men and women without discrimination. Further, principle 20 reinforces this idea by stating the significant role of women in their

country's advancement and ecological control, noting the need for their engagement towards the attainment of sustainable development. These ideologies facilitate equality and participation of all genders to realize inclusive advancement.

7. World Summit on Sustainable Development

The 2002 Global Convention in Johannesburg approved the Johannesburg Proposal. The proposal aimed to advance three prime objectives: destitution eradication, sustainable utilization, and ecological safety to advance the economy and society. It further emphasizes the implementation of the 1992 Rio principles above. Sustainability goes beyond the provision of stable ecological environments and extends to society's social and cultural needs. Therefore, there is a need to preserve the ecological, social, cultural, and economic resources for future generations.

Likewise, to address poverty, the emancipation of both genders is essential to prevent their sole reliance on the government. Governments must develop mechanisms that address the necessities of both genders because poverty affects both differently; with such efforts, the policy frameworks gain social acceptability. Therefore, as the needs of both men and women are tackled, human development is promoted, demonstrating the link between society and sustainable development for inclusive advancement.

Regional Frameworks

1. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights

The 1981 charter promises to all individuals fiscal, communal, and cultural advancement while upholding their freedom, identity, and cultural heritage (African Union, 1981). It acknowledges that liberty, parity, justice, and dignity should be the fundamental objects for the African population to attain its ambitions. Further, the charter emphasizes the gratification of the liberties guaranteed by the agreement without prejudices in regard to ethnicity, sex, birth, race, and religion. These rights entail the exchange of information to support the engagement of everyone towards sustainable development. Therefore, the charter seeks to attain gender parity through a holistic method that focuses on achieving national development goals.

Additionally, the charter recognizes the right for all to work in conducive environments that are impartial, suitable, and with uniform remuneration. As poverty derails development, the economic empowerment of both genders can address destitution by advocating for the working rights of all and thus providing a source of livelihood. The states are responsible for enabling their people to participate in national development by recognizing their rights to equal treatment and equivalent prospects in life dimensions, including society, economy, culture, and politics. Therefore, this will enhance gender equity, as it supports fairness towards both men and women.

2. The Maputo Protocol

The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa requires nations to address all prejudices towards women through forming policy frameworks (African Union, 2003). Therefore, states must ensure gender mainstreaming in their statutory instruments and government processes. The protocol further reaffirms the promise of African countries to safeguard women's engagement in the advancement of Africa as counterparts. The protocol urges the nations to tackle the socio-cultural norms that are founded on stereotypes and are disadvantageous to women. It further recommends various mechanisms to tackle them, such as education, information, and communication strategies. The protocol endorses the parity of both men and women as the legislation guarantees uniform

liberties. Additionally, it obligates the states to promote participative governance through positive actions, for example, affirmative actions that enable women to participate in the political landscape. The protocol acknowledges that women are counterparts to men, and their equal involvement is significant for inclusive advancement.

Article 21 of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution mandates the country to deal with the necessities of the disenfranchised groups, including women, and further provides for enacting laws that focus on civil rights and fundamental liberties to fulfill international agreements. Through this legal framework, the country can embrace best practices globally for its progress towards gender equity and inclusive advancement.

Subsequently, the protocol allows women to enjoy sustainable development through various measures, including gender mainstreaming in national development, women's involvement in all dimensions, including politics, and their access and regulation of assets such as the right to property ownership. As women are required to live in sustainable environments, their involvement in the control of the ecosystem is significant, which necessitates nations to take proper actions to facilitate this. Hence, the execution of the Maputo protocol by African countries is a gateway for promoting gender equity for all-encompassing advancement.

3. Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa

The 2004 affirmation acknowledges the adverse effects of gender disparity on Africa's financial development and the unequal destitution of women in Africa. It recognizes that the main hindrances to gender parity can only be addressed through combined governance and by everyone's efforts, including the organizations that focus on gender advancement. Further, it acknowledges that collaborative efforts are essential to address poverty and enhance women's access to resources. The state parties must commit to gender mainstreaming through various initiatives, such as promoting schooling for girls, especially in the countryside, to promote "Education for All." Additionally, states must promote civil rights for women through legislation and financial resources to strengthen the capacity of women in Africa from both the rural and urban areas. Education for girls and women is crucial to their emancipation and promotes inclusive advancement. Through education, women are empowered to enter the workforce and improve their welfare and those of their families. Article 20 of the 2010 Kenyan Constitution provides for the socioeconomic liberties of all persons and hence supports the 2004 declaration. The states are expected to work towards achieving these rights for their citizenry.

National Frameworks

1. Kenya Vision 2030

Vision 2030 for Kenya is the state's long-term advancement plan (Republic of Kenya, 2007). It seeks to create a universally ambitious and flourishing state with extraordinary well-being by 2030. The blueprint is anchored on three pillars: the economy, society, and politics. The economic pillar aims at attaining a fiscal growth of 10% annually and generating more resources through flagship projects in ministries of agriculture, health, water, environment, and education. The society pillar aims to create a just and equitable environment for inclusive development, while the political pillar supports people-centered democratic systems.

On gender, Vision 2030 embraces gender equity, promoting fairness in authority and asset allocation, and improving the living standards of all people, including marginalized groups. It advocates for the equality of all citizens by arguing against the discrimination of women based on gender, race, tribe, religion, or ancestral origin. Further, it asserts that the progress of a nation is driven by the collaboration of both men and women, with none feeling superior over the other. To achieve gender equity, the Vision proposes specific strategies that

include improving women's engagement in policy-making in all spheres of life. Similarly, the Vision guarantees access to public services by all persons, including disadvantaged groups like women, and minimization of harmful practices, such as child labor and the circumcision of young women. The Vision recognizes that women have a significant role in realizing the social pillar, and their active participation is significant for its achievement. Therefore, empowering men and women is a prerequisite to equitable gender participation towards achieving the country's Vision 2030.

2. National Gender and Equality Commission

The National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) was created by the National Gender and Equality Commission Act of 2011 and is anchored on the Kenyan Constitution, 2010, under article 59 (4). The key intent of the commission is to support gender parity and ideologies of impartiality to all persons with attention to the various interest groups, including women, children, elderly, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities, and marginalized groups. The commission draws its mandate from section 8 of the Act, which primarily focuses on the facilitation of the ideologies of gender parity and liberty from discrimination. Additionally, it safeguards the country's compliance with treaties ratified on issues of gender parity and liberty from prejudice and ensures gender mainstreaming in government processes. Gender mainstreaming addresses the interests of men and women in structuring policies, governance frameworks, and all life dimensions to ensure equal benefits for both genders. Therefore, the commission must ensure an equitable society that handles genders justly and uniformly.

Findings and Discussion

The policy frameworks on gender parity at the international, regional, and state levels are significant in promoting global inclusive advancement, particularly in guiding individual countries to implement the gender equity concept for both genders to participate in national development equally. However, implementing these frameworks in Kenya has yet to be successful due to structural barriers, such as poverty, lack of education, uneven access to resources, and retrogressive cultures. Thus, the government must address these barriers for gender equity to be achieved. The following section describes the four significant critical structural barriers to gender equity.

The four structural impediments of poverty, lack of education, uneven access to resources, and retrogressive cultures are selected from the gender inequity indicators adapted in the Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme, 1995). Currently, 47 indicators are used to assess countries' progress in achieving gender parity. Therefore, these indicators are significant in determining the gender inequality index for individual countries, with Kenya ranked 134 out of 162 countries globally according to the 2018 gender inequality index. The four selected structural impediments in this study are socioeconomic and are heavily dependent on gender, which causes disproportionate treatment of men and women. For example, access to essential communal economic services for men and women is unequal. Also, this is evidenced by the higher destitution rates among women, especially in women-headed households, unequal education opportunities, unequal access to resources and jobs, and harmful societal norms (Kiriti & Tisdell, 2003).

Further, in developing countries with patriarchal societies like Kenya, gender disparities are more prevalent and persist through the socioeconomic indicators associated with the societal structures (Tisdell, 2019). Therefore, with the structural impediments that disadvantage women, the status quo of gender inequity remains, which hinders inclusive advancement because not all human capacity is used. It becomes difficult for women to engage productively in the country's development.

Poverty

The foremost sustainable development goal focuses on terminating poverty in all its manifestations. It states that countries should aim at eradicating extreme poverty for their people by 2030, with poverty considered a livelihood of less than \$1.25 a day. Sylvia Chant (2006) states that women are poorer compared to men globally. Margaret Lombe et al. (2014) claim women are the most impacted by destitution for several reasons, such as harmful societal norms that grant men greater access to financial resources and other gender-related biases. Further, David Neumark (2004) states that women have minimal access to the labor market, hence their low average earnings. In addition, they lack control or possession of resources such as land. Philomena Muiruri (2010) notes that the poverty level of Kenyan women is amplified by the limited financial diversity, given the overreliance on agriculture.

In Kenya, poverty is widespread, as approximately 50% of the populace cannot meet its necessities, and 46% of the population survives under the poverty threshold (UNICEF, 2015). Further, poverty in Kenya is linked to food insecurity (MoFP Kenya, 2001), which is caused by low agricultural production, lack of jobs, poor salaries, poor leadership, insecurity, and poor infrastructure (Oluoko-Odinga, 2009). In addition, according to the International Monetary Fund (2010), the segregation of people and groups in the community creates a poverty cycle that exposes the population to restricted prospects for jobs and education. Kenyan women are highly affected by poverty and are classified by article 260 of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya as marginalized and require affirmative action for their progress.

In Kenya, the poverty rate is higher in rural areas than in cities (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019). Extreme poverty is mainly among women-headed households (FHHs) (Republic of Kenya, 1991, 1998). Kulundu (2007) states that women-headed households have high poverty levels due to low access to critical basic needs, such as healthcare, clean water, primary education, affordable housing, and employment. According to the Society for International Development (2013), 26.8% of households led by women have no schooling, in contrast to 23.5% of households led by males. The proportion of households with no formal schooling is higher among those led by women in both cities and rural areas. Therefore, FHHs are considered the neediest households because of their restricted access to finances, possessions, land, and resources, adversely affecting their living and communal wealth (World Bank, 2005). In addition, many heads of FHHs secure jobs at the lower social structures with low wages and extended job hours (Chant, 2007).

Subsequently, women are more familiar with poverty than men, creating the notion of feminization of poverty (Chant, 2006). This concept denotes that destitution is more severe for women than men. Further, Naila Kabeer (2015) and Munyae Mulinge (2001) state that the heads of FHHs engage in small trades, such as running kiosks and vending vegetables, and their wages are inadequate to cater to their families' necessities; thus, these families continue to suffer in poverty. With power imbalances, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of education and skills, women continue to experience material insufficiency and the social impacts of poverty. They, therefore, cannot make meaningful contributions to the nation's development agenda. The Food and Agriculture Organization (2013) states that women's contribution to agriculture and rural enterprises is critical in fighting hunger and poverty, especially considering that most of the global poor live in rural areas. Therefore, women's contribution to food security is significant. Kenya should strive to ensure that both genders obtain equal social, political, and economic opportunities to contribute to poverty eradication and achieve inclusive advancement.

Lack of Education

Despite acknowledging the significance of education for all as a fundamental civil right and for development purposes, its achievement remains a considerable challenge. As the fourth

goal of sustainable development, it is centered on providing excellent education. Nations are required to guarantee comprehensive and impartial education and the advancement of lifetime education prospects for everyone. Furthermore, the United Nations (1995) states that education is a civil right that impacts the individual's progress, as well as societal and financial progress, and enables individuals to tap into opportunities that accrue from development (Ghaida & Klasen, 2003, p. 2).

Every society has some form of purposeful education. Njoki Wane (2002) describes education as an attempt to help people live in society and participate fully in its organization and for their continued existence. Fatuma Chege and Daniel Sifuna (2006) state that African women were systematically and deliberately discriminated against regarding education. The colonial administration deemed that no formal education was required to undertake women's domestic work. This idea was supported by the cultural norms that ensured the systemic marginalization of girls (Kivoi, 2014). Men were favored, and as a result, many parents preferred to educate the boys and excluded their daughters from schooling.

In many African homes, education is considered an asset in human resources. In Kenya, the education of women is regarded as a waste of funds because, in the long run, girl children eventually leave their parents' homes as opposed to their male children (Gopal & Salim, 2001). Pamela Abuya (1993) supports this norm, stating that in her home, she was deemed "a visitor who would one day go away." Women members of the family were considered as the only family members who would shift their membership when married to other families. Further, as Kenyan women have been socialized to housework, such as taking care of the children, cooking, fetching water, and keeping their homes tidy, they view education as a preserve for the men. Thus, anyone who resists communal beliefs loses social respect (Kivoi, 2014). Therefore, from this cultural background, denying women their education is not based on their rational disposition but on some societal agreements that place them in a disadvantaged position.

Although all children are expected to participate in family labor in Kenya, household chores are mostly given to girls rather than boys. Women and girls are viewed as providers of cheap casual labor, as they offer services in the private domain. Therefore, when a young girl is sent to school, it costs the family twice, as they lose her labor, and they must pay for her school fees. There is a higher dropout rate for girls than boys because of household responsibilities and a higher opportunity cost to the family (Wane & Opini, 2006; Lloyd et al., 2000).

Regarding poor rural families, girls are sent to the cities for domestic chores for regular cash income. This cash is often used to send the boys to school. In addition, when the available funds are limited, parents prefer to educate boys because they expect financial returns in contrast to the girls, who are depicted as visitors (Odaga & Heneveld, 1995). Therefore, poverty is a common reason children, especially girls, fail to attend school, as their families need them to work.

This discrimination against women's education persists due to the patriarchal culture of Kenyan society, which places more value on male children. For example, in the Maasai community in Kenya, early marriages are legalized via customary laws; hence, girls terminate their education to be wedded. The community prioritizes the wealth earned from marrying the girls over educating them. Further, as formal education is a gateway to employment, those who benefit from it, especially men, have a financial base to support their families. Consequently, the education discrimination gap is widened for women. George Eshiwani (1993) states that the assumed linkage between schooling and employment in the financial structure guarantees men better remuneration in the formal sector, which explains the preference for educating boys over girls. In this regard, Gita Gopal and Maryam Salim (2001) observe that in communities

like Kenya with deeply ingrained societal norms, families choose to educate the boys first when resources are scanty.

Of note, educating young women contributes to the economic growth of any country, as young women contribute to their families and country. Despite primary education being free and the fact that the Kenyan Children's Act facilitates educational opportunities for all children, those from rural areas and low-income families have limited access to schooling. Unfortunately, girls are the most affected by the mentioned categories, as they are forced to drop out of school and venture into socially acceptable roles, such as house chores or early marriages (Amin et al., 2017).

Despite Kenya advocating for education for all through the Basic Education Act of 2013, it is evident that young women are denied similar schooling opportunities as young men, and those already in school withdraw due to the customary laws and cultural norms (Gopal & Salim, 2001). Kenya should therefore strive to ensure similar education opportunities across genders because education is a successful tool for development. Educated women can support their families financially and make meaningful contributions to the development of their countries.

Uneven Access to Resources

In Kenya, women have little control over resources, financial prospects, and leadership opportunities (Tripp et al., 2014). This situation represents a challenge for women regarding their economic status, placing women in a disadvantaged position in development. Patricia Mbote (2006) states that men own more economic resources than women; women lack control or ownership and depend heavily on the assets of male family members. Further, Bernadette Wanjala and Maureen Odongo (2010) decry that only 23% of Kenyan women have access to communal enterprises that offer credit to women. Yolande Bouka et al. (2019) state that women can only access approximately 65% of the finances accessible to men. With these restrictions, women need help engaging in the development space. In addition, although ownership of land in Kenya is a human right, many women need channels for property ownership despite it being a legal right, and only 1% of the land is possessed legally by women in Kenya (World Bank, 2004, p. 34). Further, some cultures prohibit women from land inheritance, as they are viewed as visitors who will be married off to other families (Kivoi, 2014). Thus, in Kenyan society, men primarily control and share family property and resources.

According to KNBS (2020), only 29% of women in Kenya are empowered economically to participate successfully in the country's development, with 40% in the cities and 22% in the rural areas. Further, according to the United Nations Report of 2004, the number of jobless women was 275,000, and that of men was lower at 75,000 (although 50.5% of the Kenyan population is women). Among the employed, men mostly occupy prominent jobs, such as leadership roles, as opposed to women who are confined to low-level jobs (Kivoi, 2014). Due to the male-dominated culture of Kenya, men remain the decision-makers even on matters that exclusively touch on women (Kivoi, 2014).

Therefore, the Kenyan workforce appears to have a glass ceiling that limits women from having similar job opportunities as men (Suda, 2002). These ceilings are unseen hindrances to women's progression in jobs and create barriers to women's career growth (Suda, 2002; Robbins, 2001). Women are deliberately excluded, making them miss job prospects, upgrades, or salary raises (Suda, 2002). Similarly, the disparity in the job market where women are employed in low-level jobs creates a gender inequity effect that limits both men and women from participating in national development as partners (Linehan & Scullion, 2005). Therefore, without ownership of property and resources, women will remain spectators in the development space and will not contribute meaningfully on an even level with men in the nation's development.

Retrogressive Cultures

Culture is described by Joan Mulholland (1991) as a set of shared values and beliefs that characterize a nation or a group and orient their behavior. Therefore, culture denotes what is wrong and right in society while allowing and prohibiting specific actions and behaviors. It also creates the separation of the workforce. It sets the roles considered suitable for men and women, with men assigned roles in the public sphere and women in the private domain to undertake domestic chores (Phillips, 1991). In Kenya, these cultures give men empowering roles while women are accorded disempowering and subjugating roles (Kivoi, 2014). Therefore, the gendered roles given to both genders in society have created inconsistencies that continue to promote gender inequities.

In most African societies, the distribution of work is gendered depending on cultural norms (Kabira, 2016). In Kenya, young women have been socialized through traditional and cultural teachings to view themselves as homemakers confined to the private sphere (Kivoi, 2014). They are reluctant to go to school and consequently find themselves in early marriages or unwanted pregnancies. George Eshiwani (1993) states that girls carry the burden of household chores, such as looking after young children, fetching firewood and water, and cooking, while boys go to school. Girls, therefore, lose their chance for education.

Article 11 of the Kenyan Constitution, 2010, recognizes culture as the bedrock of a country. Further, Article 2 (4) provides for the invalidation of any legislation that contradicts the constitution, such as the customary laws. This provision recognizes that some societal norms are repressive to one gender, particularly women, whilst empowering the other. Most communities in Kenya still have stereotyped cultures that have confined women to subordinate tasks, such as household chores, while men are perceived to be leaders (Kivoi, 2014; Phillips, 1991). These cultures portray patriarchal attitudes towards women and hinder their engagement in the public sphere and societal decision-making positions (Bouka et al., 2019). Women are downgraded while men are emancipated and propelled into positions of influence. With these cultural norms reigning in society, women will continue to face significant difficulties when venturing into leadership positions.

To achieve development, Kenya must deliberately address the retrogressive societal norms that disempower and exclude one gender. Kenya must also ensure some resocialization to address the negative cultural structures that promote the superiority of men and the victimization of women. There is a need to embrace cultures that emancipate and propel both genders to enhance gender equity for inclusive advancement.

Conclusion

Gender inequality is a global challenge for most states as it is entrenched in structures at various levels, including family, communities, and government institutions. The Kenyan demography indicates that women are not actively engaged in the development space due to the aforementioned structural impediments linked to socioeconomic factors, despite women being the majority of the Kenyan population (50.5% as per the 2019 Kenya National Housing and Population census). Therefore, these impediments hinder gender equity implementation in the country, as they disadvantage women and place them in a subordinate position in the societal structure. Unless these barriers are addressed, the marginalization of women will continue, and hence the status quo on gender inequity in the development space will remain. Subsequently, Vision 2030 for Kenya, launched in 2008, has made significant progress on its three pillars of the economy, society, and politics through implementing the First, Second, and Third (currently in use) Medium Term Plans. This progress can be linked to the nature of the three Plans, which have deliberately underlined the specific interventions towards gender mainstreaming to strengthen accountability on gender equity in the country. Further, the Plans

acknowledge that gender mainstreaming is crucial in the promotion of the social pillar of the Vision, which aims at creating a just and inclusive environment for everyone to participate in the national development space.

Currently, the Vision has only seven years left until its closure. Of note is that addressing gender equity is not only about ensuring fairness for everyone to be permitted to realize their developmental potential, but also about demonstrating its relevance to the country's pursuit of broad and sustainable growth and development. Given this, there is a need for the Government, the private sector, and the development partners who have been instrumental in the implementation of the Vision to ensure that strategies laid out in the Medium-Term Plans can comprehensively address the challenges of the existing gender inequalities in Kenya's development. Further, these strategies should be able to generate opportunities for all as we approach 2030.

Therefore, for developing countries such as Kenya, the concept of gender and the importance of gender-balanced participation for achieving the country's development goals need to be emphasized. The individual differences of both genders regarding their needs and interests, as well as their emancipation for equitable participation, are significant for inclusive advancement. In addition, concerted efforts by public and private agencies are required to successfully address the socioeconomic structural impediments of retrogressive cultures, poverty, uneven access to resources, and lack of education, which are significant contributors to the status quo of gender inequity. Although achieving gender equity is a difficult endeavor, with concerted efforts from relevant stakeholders, it is an attainable goal for Kenya.

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