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## University Gender Policy and Women's Representation in Committees and Leadership Positions in a Nigerian University

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### **Abstract:**

*This research work assessed the university gender policy and determined the extent to which it has enhanced women's representation in committees and leadership positions in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. It identified the challenges of the full implementation of the policy and proffered strategies that can be adopted to make it more functional. The study adopted the survey research design and utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data was generated from the conduct of in-depth interviews of 13 purposively selected chairpersons of 13 randomly selected university committees; and 3 purposively selected senior members of staff of the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies from where the gender policy was initiated. Secondary data were derived from the Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit of the university as well as from relevant literature. The retrieved data from the in-depth interviews were analyzed using the ZY index table, while the sex disaggregated data derived from the Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit were presented in percentages. The study found that the policy has not achieved its mandate of ensuring a 70:30 ratio representation of men and women in committees and leadership positions in the university and that women were grossly under represented. The existence of patriarchal culture was found to be a leading cause of female under representation and a challenge to the full implementation of the policy. Biases in the nomination of members into committees and a low pool of senior women to draw membership from were also found to be causes. A critical strategy found for ensuring the full implementation of the policy was provision of funds by the university. Also found useful was the need to raise the awareness of the community and management about the mandate of the policy through creating appropriate organizational arrangements that monitor the application of gender equity principles. The study concluded that there is need to deconstruct the conditions that incapacitate the policy, so that the university can thrive better by having more women in committees and leadership positions.*

**Keywords:** University gender policy, women, committees, leadership positions

### **1. Introduction**

Universities all over the world are established for the propagation, dissemination and application of knowledge required for manpower and national development. They promote capacity development by equipping individuals with the skills required for professional life and for national development (Ede, 2000). The university system is complex and requires adequate institutional arrangements to facilitate the achievements of the set goals and for its effective administration. The number of universities in Nigeria has increased over the years since its inception over 70 years ago, but their effective administration and management has been a major challenge (Okebukola, 2005). In view of this, the committee system has been identified as a veritable tool for the effective management of the system and for the decision-making process. This is because committees are advisory bodies and the think tanks that offer special and useful advice for effective university administration. The committee system promotes the democratization of the administrative process, (Obayan, 2002). It is a means of sharing governance with the university governing bodies as well as an avenue for ensuring the full participation of staff in the decision-making process (Ogbogu, 2011). Ogunraku (2012) affirmed that the committee system remains the only viable and acceptable system for the administration of universities.

All over the Nigerian university system, the share of women and men in committees and leadership positions are uneven and women are mostly under represented. In Obafemi Awolowo University, for instance, female participation in committees and decision-making bodies is limited. The situation analysis carried out in the university in 2009, revealed that of the 19 statutory committees, males were approximately 10 times that of females on 6 committees and 5 times on 5 committees, (OAU, 2009). Gender gap was found to be widest in Senate where the ratio was 19 males to 1 female (OAU, 2009). Women in Nigerian universities hold less than 35 percent of academic posts and they are mainly represented in the lower and middle level academic and administrative positions. Ogbogu (2011) found that women's participation, relative to that of men decreases at higher levels. This situation encouraged Obafemi Awolowo University to pay attention to the issue of gender balance by initiating the university gender policy, which is an instrument for promoting gender equality in the university. Since women dominate the lower positions in academia and are poorly represented in committees where decisions are made, there is the need to strengthen and facilitate gender equality through the university gender policy.

Gender equality became part of Obafemi Awolowo University's strategic plan towards the close of the 1990s. To this end, the gender policy which was initiated in 2009 was a response to the need to bridge gender gaps by increasing women's participation in all aspects of the university life. The broad aim of the policy is to promote gender equity within the university and to enhance organizational effectiveness and fundamental human rights. One of the specific objectives of the policy is to encourage women to participate fully in decision making in the university and to achieve 70:30 ratio (male: female) in committees and leadership positions (Muoghalu & Eboiyehi, 2018). In view of these, this study assessed the structure and composition of committees by gender in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria and determined the extent to which the university gender policy has enhanced women's representation in the committees and leadership positions. It also proffered strategies that would further enable the gender policy to achieve its goal of gender equality in committees and leadership positions.

## 2. Literature Review

Committees are sub-groups of people in organizations brought together to perform certain duties in the university system. They are conceived as small groups of persons, selected to perform the functions of larger bodies at meetings and at intervals (Amadi, 2011). It is a strong and reliable instrument for taking administrative decisions because it allows the university to benefit from the expertise of faculty and other members of staff. Universities being complex organizations require strong and virile systems such as committees for effective administration (Obayan, 2002). Committees assist the university management in arriving at new decisions that facilitate change and enhance the performance of the system (Erero, 1991). Ogunraku (2012) affirmed that committee system remains the major viable and acceptable system for the administration of universities. The core value of committee system is accountability, transparency and involvement (Bowen & Shapiro, 1998).

Normally, the Vice-Chancellor of Nigerian universities chair and work through the various established committees which are responsible for policy making. To be able to contribute meaningfully to the work of university committees, membership is drawn based on their understanding and commitment to the university policies. Membership is usually by appointment, election or nomination (Oyebode, Ajayi & Oyeyipo, 2001). They are usually set up at the discretion of the Vice-Chancellor to ease the burden of administration and to examine specific issues. University committees therefore allow for sufficient intellectual discourse to be granted in solving problems. The performance of these committees on the basis of bottom-up decision-making process makes the committee system an important and strong link in the administrative process of the university (Ogbogu, 2011).

In Nigeria, the use of committees was entrenched in the laws and statutes that established the university system and they are vital instruments in the decision-making process (Ogbogu, 2013). Each public university in Nigeria has not less than 40 standing committees with which they make decisions that facilitate the proper management and growth of the university system (Amadi, 2011). There are about 45 major statutory committees in Obafemi Awolowo University. Some of which are chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, or a nominee selected by him whenever necessary (OAU, 2009).

Despite a slight increase in the number of women in the university system in recent times a strikingly low presence of their representation in committees and leadership positions is noticeable. The few mostly serve as secretaries in the committees were, they are represented. Consequently, women's low representation in committees and leadership positions is abysmal. They are few in the professional cadre from where staff are drawn to participate in decision making positions. For instance, at the University of Ibadan, Lagos, Nigeria (Nsukka) and Maiduguri, female professors constitute 13.1%, 12.0%, 9.3% and 2.1% respectively. (Muoghalu and Eboiyehi, 2018). This trend of low female representation is also a global phenomenon. In respect of this, Aiston and Yang (2017) found that men dominate the top leadership positions in universities in the United Kingdom. They chair about 81% of the governing bodies and constitute 78% of the position of Vice-Chancellor. Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, in 2018 had just 12 female Heads of Departments out of 93, 2 female Deans out of 11 and just 1 female Director out of 24. Also, male representation in about 19 statutory committees was 10 times that of females. Furthermore, in 2018, women were just 42 in 9 statutory committees which had 150 participants; this constituted 26.9% of the entire population. (OAU, Bulletin, 2018). This indicates the existence of the glass ceiling, that is, invisible barriers based on prejudices which stand in the way of women accessing positions of responsibility (Zaleniene, krinickiene, Tvaronaviciene & Lobacerskyte, 2016). Monroe and Chiu (2010) in line with this argued that low representation of women in committees is connected with insufficient number of females in high level positions from which membership into committees can be drawn.

In an effort to address gender inequality, some universities have put up affirmative action programmes designed to increase the number of women in leadership positions. Also, international communities have made numerous commitments to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination against women (Farisayi, 2014). In addressing this issue, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria initiated a university gender policy in 2009 to redress the question of gender imbalance in the various arms of the university. The gender policy takes a cue from the university strategic plan which highlighted the issue of gender disparity and it is premised on the principles of universal human rights article 26 paragraph 1 which states that "everyone has the right to education and that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of individual capacity". The main purpose of the policy is to establish a clear vision and make commitments to guide the process of gender mainstreaming and women empowerment to influence policies, procedures and practices which will accelerate the achievement of gender equality, justice and non-discrimination. It was initiated to also reduce gender gaps in employment at all levels in the university and ensure a 70:30 ratio (male: female) in the employment of academic staff and encourage women to participate in decision making and achieve 70:30 ratio (male: female) in committees and leadership positions in the university. The overall goal of the policy is to promote fundamental human

rights, equity and to promote organizational effectiveness. Despite the fact that the gender policy highlights that an increase in the participation of women in committees and decision-making bodies would be achieved through employing a number of strategies some of which are highlighted in the policy document, women are still not well represented. Since the approval of the policy in 2009, not much has been done to facilitate its full implementation. Also, since its enactment in 2009, not many studies have been carried out to assess its progress in realizing its objective of increasing women's representation in committees and leadership positions.

Feminist theories that analyse the subordination of women, social structures and gender relations is used as framework for this study. Feminist theorists affirm that the subordination of women account for their under representation in decision-making positions and that it also accounts for their being discriminated against in the work environment. They believe that social change is required in achieving gender equality. Feminist theorists therefore advocate for the transformation of institutions to enable women benefit and participate effectively like their male counterparts. It is thus, a theoretical orientation that seeks to change the situation of women (Bunwaree, 2010). It should be noted that the participation of women in the university's decision-making body is fundamental for achieving equal opportunity in the university. It also ensures that decision-making is informed and enriched by diversity of staff.

### 3. Methodology

This is a case study which adopted the survey research design. The study was carried out in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria, a first-generation university, whose gender policy was enacted in 2009. Both primary and secondary data were utilized for this study. Primary data was generated through the conduct of in-depth interviews with 13 purposively selected members of senior academic staff who are the chairpersons of the 13 randomly selected committees in the university, as well as 3 purposively selected senior members of staff of the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies from where the university's gender policy was initiated. This brought the total number of staffs interviewed to 16. The chairpersons were selected because of their knowledge and experience about committee issues and where therefore in the position to provide information about the situation of women's representation as well as proffer initiatives for improving their participation. Staff of the Centre for Gender and Social Policy Studies provided information about the extent to which the gender policy has achieved its objective of increasing women's participation in committees and leadership positions as well as shed light on the challenges encountered in making the policy functional. In addition to these, secondary data in the form of sex disaggregated data showing the status of men and women in committees and leadership positions were derived from the university's Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit. The secondary data were analysed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages while the data from the in-depth interviews conducted were analysed using the ZY index table.

### 4. Results and Discussion

Positions	2009		2018	
	Male	Female	male	female
Deans	12(85.7%)	2(14.3%)	12(85.7%)	2(14.3%)
Directors	23(95.8%)	1(4.1%)	23(95.8%)	1(4.1%)
Heads of Departments	83(89.2%)	10(10.7%)	81(87.1%)	12(12.9%)
Provosts	2(100%)	-	2(100%)	-
Senior administrative staff	998(64.3%)	554(35.7%)	1007(60.1%)	669(39.9%)
Bursar	-	1(100%)	1(100%)	-
Registrar	1(100%)	-	-	1(100%)
Librarian	1(100%)	-	1(100%)	-
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration)	1(100%)	-	1(100%)	-
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	-	1(100%)	1(100%)	-
Vice-Chancellor	1(100%)	-	1(100%)	-

Table 1: Staff Representation in Leadership Positions by Gender.  
Source: Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit (PMBU), OAU, 2018

Table 1 shows data on staff representation in leadership positions by gender in 2009 when the university gender policy was enacted and eight years after in 2018. This was done to determine whether the gender policy has enhanced the rate of female representation in leadership positions, which is one of the major objectives that the policy was initiated to achieve. The table shows that women continued to be under-represented in most of the leadership positions both in 2009 and 2018, with only very slight and insignificant increase in the positions of Heads of Departments from 10.7% in 2009 to just 12.9% in 2018; in the position of senior administrative staff from 35.7% in 2009 to 39.9% in 2018; and in the position

of registrar with none in 2009 to 1 in 2018. Top level positions such as that of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration) and Provosts have all been occupied by men since 2009. However, two of the respondents interviewed noted that there was a female Librarian, Bursar and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics) between 2011- 2016. These results show that men more than women dominate leadership positions in the administration of the university. The vast under-representation of women in leadership positions and the obvious gender inequality is attributed to the 'glass ceiling phenomenon' and the 'pipeline argument'. This result corroborates that of Ogbogu (2018), Muoghalu and Eboiyehi (2018) and that of Oyebade et al (2007). However, Monroe and Chiu (2010) argue that gender inequality will decline once there are sufficient members of qualified women in the university system from which to nominate from into leadership positions. This argument predicts that the low representation of women is more connected with insufficient members of females in top positions. These results further imply that the gender policy has been effective to a minimal extent. It has not fully achieved its objective of increasing women's representation in leadership and decision-making positions in the university. The university is still male dominated in leadership positions despite having the gender policy in place. These findings corroborate that of Eboiyehi, Fayomi and Eboiyehi (2016) and Kjeldal, Rindfleish and Sheridon (2005). Eboiyehi, Fayomi and Eboiyehi (2016) found that the proportion of females in top administrative positions in Obafemi Awolowo University was abysmally low compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, Kjeldal, Rindfleish and Sheeridan (2005) observed that after more than two decades of EEO legislation in Australia, women are still under-represented in senior academic positions.

As a result of these results, further investigation was carried out to determine whether women fared better in their representation in university committees.

Names of Committees	Membership	Chairperson	2009		2018	
			M	F	M	F
Finance and General-Purpose Committee	15	Male	14	1	14	3
Tender Board	14	Male	13	1	13	4
Tender Sub-Committee	10	Male	6	4	6	4
Procurement Planning Committee	21	Male	18	3	17	4
Committee on Petty Contracts	19	Female	17	2	16	3
Building, Works, Estate Committee	18	Male	18	-	15	3
Projects Sitting Sub-Co	16	Male	16	-	14	2
Administrative Staff Committee	12	Male	8	4	8	4
Governing Board of the OAU Staff School	13	Male	8	5	8	5
Board of Advancement Office	11	Male	8	3	8	3
Development Committee	11	Male	8	3	8	3
Committee of Deans	14	Male	10	4	12	2
Financial Support Sub-Committee	8	Male	4	4	8	-
Total	182	-	157	36	156	42

Table 2: Staff Participation in University Committees by Gender, 2009 and 2018  
Source: Planning, Monitoring and Budgeting Unit (PMBU), OAU, 2018

Table 2 shows the representation of male and female staff in university committees between 2009 when the gender policy was enacted and eight years after in 2018. Data on the table indicates that female representation in 6 out of the 13 committees slightly increased in 2018 as follows: females increased in finance and general purpose committee from 1 in 2009 to 3 in 2018; in tender board committee from 1 in 2009 to 4 in 2018; in procurement and planning committee from 3 in 2008 to 4 in 2018; in building, works and estate committee from zero in 2009 to 3 in 2018; in projects sitting sub-committee from zero in 2009 to 2 in 2018; and in committee on petty contract from 2 in 2009 to 3 in 2018. All the committees were chaired by men with the exception of Committee on Petty Contracts.

Furthermore, the table shows that there was a slight decrease in the representation of females in committee of deans from 4 in 2009 to 2 in 2018, as well as in financial support sub-committee from 4 in 2009 to zero in 2018. Some of the respondents interviewed noted that the few females in committees always act as secretaries. These are evidences of gender biases and assumptions. Overall, results on the table show that in 2009 there were 157(81.3%) males in all the 13 committees with only 36(18.6%) females, while in 2018, these were 156(78.7%) males and 42(21.2%) females. Generally, there was a slight increase, but these gains are insignificant and minimal, which are indications that females remain under represented in almost all the committees.

These evidences further support the claim that women are not visible in most university committees. The results indicate that the gender policy has not made significant impact in promoting women's representation in committees and

leadership positions and neither has it achieved its objective of ensuring a 70:30 ratio in the representation of males and females in decision-making positions. This result is discouraging because, the participation of women in all committees is fundamental to the achievement of equal opportunities, excellence and integrity of the university, as it contributes to the richness of diversity in decision-making. Despite the enactment of the university gender policy in 2009, the strikingly low presence of women noticed in committees and leadership positions 8 years after in 2018 led to further investigations to ascertain the causes.

Causes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Lack of Functional gender policy	+	+	++	++	-	++	+	-	+	+	++	++	+	-	++	++
Biases in nominating members into committees	+	+	++	-	++	++	++	+	-	++	+	++	+	++	++	++
Low pool of women in senior positions to draw from	+	-	++	+	++	++	++	+	-	++	++	+	++	+	++	-
Sex discrimination	-	+	+	-	++	++	+	++	+	-	+	+	++	-	+	++
Patriarchal culture	+	++	++	-	++	++	++	+	+	++	++	+	++	-	++	++
Lack of women's access to university networks and mentoring	-	+	-	++	+	+	-	+	+	++	+	+	++	-	+	++

*Table 3: Causes of Women's Underrepresentation in Committees and Leadership Positions*

*Key: ++= Cases Where Opinions Were Strongly Expressed*

*+ = Cases Where Opinions Were Expressed*

*- = Cases Where Opinions Were Not Expressed*

Table 3 shows the results of the in-depth interviews held with the chairpersons of the 13 university committees as well as the 3-senior staff in the Centre of Gender and Social Policy Studies. Data on the table show that a larger number (10) of the interviewees strongly expressed the fact that the existence of patriarchal culture in the university is a leading cause of female under representation in committees and leadership positions. This result indicates that many stakeholders in the university hold tenaciously to the traditional belief that women being subordinate beings must occupy subordinate positions, while males remain dominant. This finding reveals that the gender policy is not supported by males because they want to maintain the status quo, resist change and not gladly support the idea of women ascending to leadership positions. In support of this, one of the respondents noted that women are sometimes not allowed to retain their leadership positions not because of poor performance but because of gender biases and patriarchy. This is not surprising because results on the table further show that biases in the nomination of members into committees was rated as the second major cause of women under representation with 9 of the respondents strongly attesting to it. It should be noted that gendered management practices reinforce unconscious bias against women and that is why a respondent specifically noted that the criteria for nominating staff into certain committees and positions are not clearly stated. Rather, management sometimes uses its discretion in the selection process which usually favours men. Such practices justify the existence of the glass ceiling which refers to invisible and unwritten barriers based on prejudices which stand in the way of women accessing positions of responsibility. This finding supports that of Lindsey (1997) who found that women's access to leadership positions is not supported by males, because they are not sensitized. Data on the table further reveals that about half (8) of the respondents strongly emphasised the fact that having a low pool of women in senior positions from which to draw membership from was a major cause of women's under-representation in committees and leadership positions. This implies that even if the institution wanted more women, there was a lack of pool to select from. This finding is similar to that of Farisaye (2014) in Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. These results show that there is the need for universities to develop the potentials of women through various forms of training and exposures so that they can build their credentials that will qualify them to advance to leadership positions.

Data in table 3 further shows that lack of a functional university gender policy was a cause of under-representation of women in committees which was strongly expressed by 7 out of the 16 respondents. This finding is supported by the results in tables 1 and 2 of this study, which revealed a gross under-representation of women in committees and leadership positions in the university. These are indications that there are not many gains from the enactment of the policy. It can be inferred that the policy is not functional and has not succeeded in transforming the disadvantaged situation of women that prevailed before the policy was enacted.

Also, on table 3, sex discrimination and lack of women's access to university networks and mentoring were strongly emphasized as causes of women under representation by less than half (5) of the respondents. These results confirm the assertion of the various strands of feminist theorists, who affirm that women are discriminated against and subjugated in the work environment. Hence, they all work to free women from being marginalized and support the view that women in the workplace should be treated with dignity and respect. Further still, this finding supports that of Morley (2006) who found that networks, coalitions and formal arrangements in boardrooms work in synergy to exclude women from decision making positions in the university. She emphasized that most of these network formations occur in places that more men frequent such as the staff club, old boys' club, Senate and some other academic and social meetings. Generally, results in table 3 show that the prevalence of patriarchal culture in the university system was the most emphasized factor that accounts for women under representation in committees and leadership positions. In view of this, there is the need to address the inherent inequities built into the system and which stack the desk against women. Hence, further investigation was made on how to make the policy more functional in enhancing women's representation.

Strategies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Provision of funds for the implementation of the policy	++	++	+	++	-	++	+	+	++	++	++	++	+	++	++	++
Create committees to mainstream gender & sensitize the community about the gender policy	+	+	-	++	++	+	++	++	++	+	-	++	+	++	++	++
Appoint gender officers in major units to monitor gender equity principles	-	++	+	-	++	+	++	+	-	++	+	++	++	+	++	++
Sensitize management about gender equality in committees	++	++	+	-	++	+	+	++	+	++	++	+	++	++	++	++
Leadership skills workshops for female staff	+	-	++	++	++	-	+	++	+	-	++	+	++	+	+	++

*Table 4: Strategies for Making the Gender Policy Functional in Increasing Women's Representation in Committees and Leadership Positions*

*Key: ++= Cases Where Opinions Were Strongly Expressed*

*+= Cases Where Opinions Were Expressed*

*- = Cases Where Opinions Were Not Expressed*

Results in table 4 provide insights into the variety of strategies for ensuring that the university gender policy fulfils its mandate of enhancing women's representation in committees and leadership positions. Data on the table shows that the provision of funds was the major strategy strongly proffered by a higher number (11) of the respondents for ensuring the full implementation of the gender policy. They noted that the university seem not to allocate any strategic resource for the implementation of the policy. In addition, funds for sustaining the policy at the faculty, department and all levels as practised in most universities in developed countries are almost absent. Teigen and Wangherud (2009) viewed this strategy as critical in ensuring progress and consistency in promoting the implementation of gender policies and mainstreaming them.

The table also shows that more than half (10) of the respondents strongly emphasized the need for management to be sensitized on the policy's mandate of ensuring at least 30% of women's representation in leadership positions and in committees. The process of creating such awareness to management will act as an impetus for increasing women's representation in committees as specified in the policy. This is imperative because management need feminist knowledge in the managerial expertise of the university. Creating committees whose function to mainstream gender by sensitizing the university community was a strategy mentioned by a sizeable number (9) of the respondents. To further, actualize this, 8 representing half of the respondents stressed the need to appoint gender officers in major administrative units to monitor gender equity issues and principles in the university as spelt out in the policy document. This is necessary such that women for instance benefit from application for grants for their work and also enjoy other benefits that promote their advancement into leadership positions. The gender officers are expected to report the status of women and other gender

equality activities on a regular basis to university management. It is worthy to note that the university gender policy stipulates the use of networks of gender focal persons across faculties, department, units, centres and institutes within the university system; but the document has failed to actualise this strategy. This observation implies that the gender policy is less institutionalised in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria. In this regard, Trimmers, Willernsen and Tijdens (2010) noted that most universities in Sweden create committees to support the institutionalization and promotion of gender policy initiatives and activities, thereby creating awareness of the document.

Table 3 further shows that less than half (7) of the respondents strongly emphasized the need for organizing leadership training workshops for female staff as a strategy for advancing them into leadership positions. Leadership programmes will have enormous impact on the career opportunities in terms of growth, capacity and skill acquisition required to fit into leadership positions. Leadership training helps women 'play the game' and it is an important ticket to advancement. Pitts (2007) and Borchorst and Siim (2008) found similar results by emphasizing the need for women to overcome deficiencies through universities' emphasis on development, mentoring and networking programmes which are forms of training that equip women with the requisite skills to succeed in leadership positions.

Generally, these results resonant the fact that the gender policy is a lower priority in Obafemi Awolowo University and the document's analysis of the laudable implementation strategies are not known to the community nor have they been activated. There is the need to revisit the existing gendered norms responsible for the lack of recognition of the document by deconstructing structures and cultural conditions founded on male norms which emphasise patriarchy in subtle ways.

## 5. Conclusion

This study investigated the extent to which the university gender policy document in Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria has been able to fulfil its mandate of increasing the representation of women in committees and leadership positions. It also provided insights into the causes of women under representation in committees and leadership positions, as well as identified and assessed the strategies for making the policy functional in enhancing women's full representation. There are evidences that the gender policy has not achieved its mandate of ensuring 70:30 ratio of men and women's representation in committees and decision-making positions. These are revealed in the poor representation of women in committees and leadership positions as found in this study. The few women in committees hardly act as chairpersons; rather they mostly serve as secretaries. Patriarchal culture and the primacy of the male norm as well as biases in nominating members into committees amongst other factors were found to inhibit women from featuring in committees and decision-making positions. The study noted the difficulty encountered in raising the awareness of the university community about the gender policy and making it more functional. In view of this, there is the need to deconstruct structural and cultural conditions inhibiting the implementation of the policy in achieving its goals.

In order for the gender policy to lead to positive outcomes and to fulfil its mandate of increasing women's representation in committees and leadership positions, provisions of funds for its full implementation is a critical strategy. In addition, it is imperative to sensitize the university community and management about the concept of women's full representation as spelt out in the policy document; and appoint gender officers in major administrative units to monitor gender equity principles. In furtherance of this, the gender policy document contains varieties of strategies built into it to enhance women's representation and to make sure that the policy is institutionalised. These include creating appropriate organizational arrangements, raising awareness, training and equipping more women with leadership skills, broadening and eligibility of committees to include more women amongst others. It should be noted that the university system will thrive better and ensure sufficient diversity when there is equal participation of both genders and when both hold management and leadership roles and work together.

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