

**INFLUENCE OF GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR ON CAREER PROGRESSION
AMONG MATURE FEMALE ENTRY STUDENTS IN EGERTON UNIVERSITY
KENYA**

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Abstract: *This study explores the socio-cultural factors influencing career progression among mature female entry students at Egerton University, Kenya, with a particular focus on the impact of gender division of labor. Despite increasing participation in the labor market, women continue to face barriers in career advancement due to entrenched gender roles, which prioritize domestic responsibilities over professional ambitions. A case study research design was employed, targeting 127 mature female students, with data collected via questionnaires and interviews with departmental heads. Findings reveal that gender roles within households significantly hinder women's career progression, as women are often responsible for caregiving and domestic tasks, limiting their ability to pursue further education and professional development. The results also highlight the role of organizational support, mentorship, and societal expectations in shaping career trajectories. Regression analysis showed that factors such as gender division of labor, household size, mentorship, and cultural stereotypes strongly predict career progression. Other challenges identified include financial constraints, self-doubt, mental health issues, and language barriers. The study concludes that addressing these socio-cultural barriers is crucial for enhancing career opportunities for mature female students.*

Keywords: *career progression, gender division of labor, mature female entry students, socio – cultural factors*

Introduction

Career progression is the manner in which one climbs up the ladder during the entire working life. It is about finding new employers, new opportunities and getting new promotions. There are various factors that may contribute to an efficient and successful career progression while having the ability to negotiate for a better pay. For the longest time women have remained in the private sector and this factor has continued despite having liberal minds on issues of gender equality. The number of mature student questing to progress on their careers has been on the increase since the year 1966 around the world (Walsh, 2020). The existence of student mothers raises concerns about being a mother, being employed, having a family or married and being a student (Asli, 2019). Combing the gender roles and being a student can be of great challenge and when a woman must focus all her attention on her education achievement, then her behaviour might contrast with her traditional role of just being a mother. Some women go an extra mile of emulating their male counterparts with the hope

of climbing up the ladder faster and even with the zeal; women continue to be disadvantaged in different career aspirations (Sanagavarapu et al., 2021).

For the longest time women have been traditionally viewed as home keepers and child-bearers and it has continued to exist despite people being liberal-minded on issues of gender equality. Based on the old mentalities about the rightful status of a woman, it presents barriers to women career progression. According to Sanagavarapu et al., (2021), traditionally, men had all the fulfilling careers while women are restricted in the private spheres and today women face socio-cultural challenges moving up the ladder such as family size because the number of children in a family has direct relation to the rate of career progression for a woman. Gender challenges in career progression continue to be a major hindrance. Motherhood imposes responsibility burden on students' shoulders and the society at large only focuses on success without the mature female students getting any kind of help.

In 2020, the World Bank reported that the participation of women in the labour force has been on the rise since 2010 in Kenya. On the other hand, only 49% of the females are active in the labour force but the number of women wanting to progress their careers have been hindered because of a number of major indicators. The situation is even worse for women who opted venture in education as a manner of seeking promotions at their places of work. They face unique set of challenges because they have to cope with the attributes of being a mother, wife, employee or a student. Kenyan universities have also been able to admit mature female students in the post graduate level. Although women would prefer institutions that deeply tackle their reproductive factors, only institutions such as Egerton University have been able to meet the factors. According to Lustig *et al.* (2018), there are different challenges that come with the aspect of being a mother and being a student. Career development continues to be an essential step for all students in institutions of higher learning. Career guidance to students contributes to the positive development of students and accepted as an excellent and efficient method of bridging the gap between the world of work and education. Careers offer directions on the distinct, creative way into the social systems that give a platform for self-survival, reliance, and income in the future

Liani *et al.*, (2021) explains that career progression is a significant decision, and it influences an individual's complete future. Career exploration can be demarcated as the extreme to which possible careers are studied and considered. Exploring career options before committing to a job increases future career inspiration, success, and satisfaction. Today, one requires not only to make prior career planning but also to carry out exhaustive career research before making a career choice to adjust to the evolving socio-economic conditions.

Statement of the Problem

Women were restricted within the household where they strictly performed household chores. But with the liberation that was accompanied by the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, which aimed at addressing gender inequalities, women began to gradually enter the labour market and started to compete for employment opportunities that had been traditionally reserved for men. Nearly a century since more women entered the labour market, disparities continue to exist along gender, which significantly disadvantaged women. Some of these disparities are easily notable in income and career progression strides. One of the reasons why these disparities continue to exist is that an overwhelming majority of women are still stuck at the entry level due to a lack of the needed experience, education, and skills for them to climb the career ladder, which would attract a better pay. Additionally, women still lag behind because of the ascribed gender roles; care giving which includes taking care of the elderly, children, being the homemakers.

The influence of gender division of labor on career progression among mature female entry students in Kenya is a multifaceted issue that reflects broader societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles. In Kenya, as in many other contexts, women often face significant barriers to career advancement due to entrenched gender stereotypes and the division of labor that prioritizes domestic responsibilities over professional aspirations. This gendered division of labor can lead to a lack of access to career development opportunities, which are critical for career progression. For instance, highlight how part-time work, often undertaken by women due to family commitments, is associated with limited career mobility and marginalization within the workplace (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010). This marginalization is exacerbated by societal expectations that prioritize women's roles in the home, which can hinder their professional development and aspirations (Essandoh, 2023).

Moreover, the concept of career identity plays a crucial role in shaping the career trajectories of mature female students. Research indicates that a clear career identity, developed through proactive career planning and exploration, is linked to enhanced perceived employability and reduced career distress (Praskova et al., 2015). However, many women may struggle to cultivate this identity due to competing family responsibilities and societal pressures, which can lead to a diminished sense of agency in their career development (Biju et al., 2021). The intersection of gender and career expectations often results in women prioritizing familial roles over professional ambitions, thereby limiting their career progression (Ulrich et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the barriers to career advancement are not solely individual but are also influenced by organizational structures and cultural norms. For instance, perceived organizational support has been shown to significantly impact career success, particularly for women who may feel unsupported in their career aspirations (Wickramaratne, 2021). In the Kenyan context, where traditional gender roles are prevalent, the lack of supportive structures can further inhibit women's career progression, leading to a cycle of underrepresentation in leadership roles (Muchanje et al., 2016). This situation is compounded by the fact that women often receive fewer challenging assignments compared to their male counterparts, which are critical for career development (Pater et al., 2010).

In summary, the interplay between gender division of labor, societal expectations, and organizational support creates a complex landscape for mature female entry students in Kenya. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted interventions that can facilitate career progression for women, ensuring that they have equal opportunities to succeed in their professional endeavors. Therefore, the aim of this study was to bridge this gap in the literature as well as generate findings that would be used to inform strategies focused on the career progression of mature female entry students in Egerton University, Kenya.

Study Objective

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the socio-cultural factors affecting career progression with a more specific aim to determine the influence of gender division of labour on career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya.

Therefore, the research question to be answered is, in which ways does gender division of labour influence career progression among mature female entry students in Kenya?

Justification of the study

It is expected that the research findings and recommendations of this study will enable stakeholders in the education sector to improve the uptake and implementation of mature entry students' programs and projects

based on the strength of the evidence of information collected from this research. Hence, develop strategies for implementing education programs targeting women who are in class and are employed, mothers or even wives. The research findings obtained are also expected to enable stakeholders in the education sector to overcome socio-cultural challenges in integration of education programs that suit these women properly in their different backgrounds.

Related studies

Over the past few decades, there has been great improvement on gender division of labour which has led to the increment of women entering the labour force and desiring to progress positively in their careers. The gender division of labour within families refers to the allocation of chores between men and women with the household (McMunn et al., 2020). It may change over time and varies from place to place. Different cultural beliefs shape the gender responsibilities between women and men, changes in the gender division of labour are promoting the increase in tensions between the caring responsibilities and employment demands for women. Traditional patterns of task allocation confined women largely in the household spaces. The men in the family tend to engage in productive roles while women focus on community and reproductive roles (McMunn et al., 2020).

Although women have made tremendous improvement in career progression, they still lag behind compared to men because they do twice the work compared to men. Women have to accomplish their gender roles attributed by the society of being mothers, wives or caretakers (Seiz, 2021). Gender division of labour is a context practiced globally whereby women tend to specialize in the private spheres i.e., domestic works while men have the tendency of specializing in the public spheres i.e., the labour markets more so in most developed countries.

Traditionally, it is always the responsibility of the man to provide for the family but in the recent years' women have turned out to equally be the breadwinners of the families which increases the burden load for women especially when they have to take care of young ones and are career oriented. When families have young children at most times the burden is heavily felt by the mother. Different researches have shown that even when men have opted to engaged in household chores, they seem to be engendered as well in that they opt for chores that can be done within their busy schedules (Edgell, 2023). On the other hand, women become engaged on chores that require most of their time and attention such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, laundry or taking care of children. According to Kurowska (2020), care giving is heavily reliant on women since it involves a day-to-day experience which tends to occupy most of their time which would in-turn militate against the career progression of women.

Research Methodology

The study employed a case study research design, which allowed for an in-depth investigation into the socio-cultural factors affecting career progression among mature female students. This design enabled the researcher to gain comprehensive, multi-faceted insights by focusing on Egerton University, Nakuru County, as the study area. Egerton University was chosen for its diverse course offerings and inclusive student programs, such as the student mothers' program, making it an ideal setting for the research.

The accessible population was 127 mature female students in the postgraduate programme from various departments. From this population, the sample size obtained was 96 mature female students. Interviews were also conducted on 8 departmental heads. Two primary instruments were used for data collection:

1. Key Informant Interview Schedule for departmental heads, designed to explore socio-cultural factors influencing career progression.
2. Questionnaire for mature female students, using a Likert scale to capture their views on factors such as household size, gender division of labor, cultural stereotypes, and mentorship.

Data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics helped in understanding the socio-cultural factors, while inferential statistics—including mean, Chi-square, correlation, and multiple regression analysis—were used to examine the relationship between independent variables (household size, gender division of labor, cultural stereotypes, mentorship) and the dependent variable (career progression). The analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the analysis results, interpretation, and discussion of the study's findings through analysis of the questionnaires and interview responses. The information is summarized in tables, which aid in the visualization of the findings.

During the survey, 127 respondents were targeted. Therefore, 127 questionnaires were distributed to the various prospective respondents. However, 96 informants filled and returned the questionnaires. Therefore, the response rate was 94.12%. The number of questionnaires filled and returned was appropriate for analysis because it exceeds the 80% threshold. On the other hand, the researcher targeted nine members of the faculty for the oral interviews. However, eight (88.89%) were available for the interviews.

Influence of Gender Division of Labour on Career Progression

The respondents indicated that men and women perform different roles within the households. As per the results, 90 (93.75%) respondents indicated that men and women are in charge of different roles. The rest 6 (6.25%) indicated that they were not sure if there is a difference between the roles played by men and women in the households. Most of those who said there are clear demarcations about the roles played by men and women explained that women were usually in charge of domestic tasks such as homecare chores, while men were supposed to provide for the family. Generally, women were in charge of laundry and dishes, grocery and shopping, taking care of children and the elderly, and cleaning. In some few cases, house helps and children could assist in activities like cleaning and shopping. Men, on the other hand, were in charge of paying bills and providing for the family. However, women also provided for the family by buying their children food and clothes. As for the unsure informants, they said each family had its unique approach to the activities allocated to men and women. Therefore, there is no distinct role that has to be done by either gender. The informants stated that their homemaker role influenced their career progression by hindering them. For instance, the women indicated that they could not pursue further studies when their children were young because they were supposed to keep an eye on such children's babysitting. Therefore, they could not travel far to study. Table 1 gives an analysis of Likert-Scale Average and Standard Deviation of the responses regarding the gender division of labour and how it impacts career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya.

Table 1: Influence of Gender Division of Labour on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDEV
Traditional gender norms, deeply entrenched in household roles, affect women's career advancement	3	2	6	40	45	4.27	0.044
Pervasive societal expectations that limit women's primary responsibilities to homemakers potentially impede their capacity to pursue academic and professional aspirations	2	3	9	32	50	4.30	0.045
The asymmetric allocation of domestic and caregiving duties potentially serves as a hindrance to women's strides in their chosen careers	6	4	10	33	43	4.07	0.041
In the context of shared household responsibilities, a collaborative approach with partners potentially contributes to heightened prospects of success in women's professional journeys	1	2	4	44	45	4.35	0.046
Societal constructs designating women's central role as homemakers impacts their decision-making process regarding career progression	5	4	6	43	38	4.09	0.042
A robust support structure from family members that facilitates an equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities can bolster women's advancement in their professional pursuits	2	2	8	39	45	4.28	0.044
Women who conscientiously challenge traditional gender roles are highly likely to make higher career achievements	2	1	3	36	54	4.45	0.047
The university environment plays a significant role in empowering women to balance household duties and career aspirations	1	1	4	39	51	4.44	0.047

The findings indicated that gender roles in household chores and responsibilities have an impact on how women pursue their careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.27, STDEV 0.044). Additionally, traditional expectations of women's roles at home were found to affect their ability to focus on academic and career goals (Likert-Scale Average of 4.30, STDEV 0.045).

It was also found that the unequal distribution of household and caregiving tasks hinders women's advancement in their chosen careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.07, STDEV 0.041). Women who share household responsibilities equally with their partners are more likely to have successful careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.35, STDEV 0.046). It was also established that society's expectations of women's primary role as

homemakers impact their career progression choices negatively (Likert-Scale Average of 4.09, STDEV 0.042). On the other hand, adequate support from family members in sharing household tasks positively correlates with women's career development (Likert-Scale Average of 4.28, STDEV 0.044). Women who challenge traditional gender roles are more likely to achieve higher levels of career success (Likert-Scale Average of 4.45, STDEV 0.047). Finally, it was indicated that the university environment plays a significant role in empowering women to balance household duties and career aspirations (Likert-Scale Average of 4.44, STDEV 0.047).

The results align with what the interviewees said. For instance, interviewee 6 stated, “*Gender division of labour can play a role in career progression. Female students often face challenges in balancing academic commitments with family responsibilities, impacting their ability to invest fully in their careers.*” Therefore, women usually have to complete numerous home tasks before they can consider doing their studies.

Career Progression

An assessment of the potential for career growth was done. The review entails aspects like promotions, salary increments, and opportunities for personal development. According to the results, 91 (94.79%) respondents said that they get promotions at their workplaces. However, such opportunities came occasionally. Only a few of the 91 informants said that there are annual or semi-annual promotions at their workplaces. However, most of the informants indicated that their workplaces offered promotions once after every two years, five years, or sometimes, after more than five years. Regarding salary increments, informants indicated that their companies offered salary increments, but such steps were actualized occasionally. As per the respondents, the organisations based the increments on various factors such as productivity, performance, educational qualifications, economic conditions, and company performance. Only few companies were quoted to have helped the respondents in acquiring new skills for example Google empowers women to gain IT skills through Women Techmakers and also Microsoft through “DigiGirlz”. For instance, some respondents said that their companies paid for their tuition to pursue advanced studies, especially administrative courses. The organisations also paid for the frequent training sessions that took place. Particularly, some respondents had gained problem-solving, leadership, and customer relations skills recently. The individuals said that they used the skills to perform their roles appropriately, contributing to organizational success. Additionally, the respondents were requested to answer questions regarding how further education enabled or hindered women to or from making good progress in their careers. Table 2 summarises the findings from the quantified questions.

Table 2: Influence of Education on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDEV
Women who have undertaken further studies are more likely to receive promotions within their organizations	1	2	10	32	51	4.35	0.045
Further studies contribute to women's eligibility for higher-	1	2	9	39	45	4.30	0.046

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Average	STDEV
level job positions and leadership roles							
There is a connection between pursuing further studies and salary increments for women in the context of career progression	2	7	9	39	39	4.10	0.044
Organisations that create tailored career growth opportunities for women with advanced degrees end up supporting their journey of professional advancement	2	3	11	35	45	4.23	0.046
Advanced degrees facilitate women's participation in specialized training and development programs, nurturing their multidimensional career growth	1	2	8	31	54	4.41	0.043
Advanced degrees amplify women's qualifications and enhance their diverse skill sets, opening up various career opportunities	5	8	7	34	42	4.04	0.044
Women with advanced degrees gain access to strategic and high-impact projects, enhancing their career advancement and influence	4	5	4	40	43	4.18	0.047
Generally, organizations prioritize creating an environment that empowers women with further studies to excel in their career progression	9	7	14	29	37	3.81	0.046

The results indicate that women who have undertaken further studies are more likely to receive promotions within their organizations (Likert-Scale Average of 4.35, STDEV 0.045). Additionally, it was found that further studies contribute to women's eligibility for higher-level job positions and leadership roles (Likert-Scale Average of 4.30, STDEV 0.046). It was also found that there is a notable correlation between women's pursuit of further studies and receiving salary increments (Likert-Scale Average of 4.10, STDEV 0.045). On

the other hand, organisations are increasingly creating opportunities for career growth specifically tailored for women with advanced degrees (Likert-Scale Average of 4.23, STDEV 0.046).

It was also indicated that women who pursue further studies often gain access to specialized training and development programs (Likert-Scale Average of 4.41, STDEV 0.043). Further studies enhance women's qualifications and skills, leading to more diverse job opportunities (Likert-Scale Average of 4.04, STDEV 0.044). Most respondents agreed that women with advanced degrees are more likely to be considered for strategic and high-impact projects, fostering their career growth (Likert-Scale Average of 4.18, STDEV 0.047). Finally, the informants believed that organisations are highly committed to providing a conducive environment for women with further studies to thrive in their career progression (Likert-Scale Average of 3.81, STDEV 0.046).

The results concur with the interviewees' indications that institutions are trying to help females advance their careers. For instance, interviewee 1 said, *"I have been keen to ensure my students get a chance to advance in terms of career. For instance, I have made my teaching as flexible as possible. Online tutoring and evening classes are part of the initiatives I have taken."* Other interviewees said they mentor learners. For instance, interviewee 2 stated, *"My support for career progression entails mentoring the students under me. I have managed to connect most of my students with other successful former students of the institution to help them professionally by offering support and guidance."* Interviewee 5 provided a closely-related statement by saying that, *"Our department engages in numerous activities to help female students. For instance, we facilitate networking. We also try to customize our programs to suit students' schedules and family commitments. We prioritise females whenever there are opportunities."* Also, interviewee 8 said, *"In my department, we take career progression seriously. Therefore, we offer career-related counselling. We also liaise with advocacy organisations to support females."*

On her part, interviewee 3 said, *"In our department, the focus has always been to ensure learners are well-versed with the cultural and social issues that affect them in terms of career. We have created a learning environment where everyone feels included, and this minimizes the bias and systematic stereotypes."* On the other hand, interviewee 4 felt that there is a need to overcome cultural stereotypes. He said, *"I would say the best way we have adopted in the department is encouraging students to try and overcome stereotypes. Our capacity building approach is appropriate in helping students gain confidence and negotiation skills."*

It was affirmed that mature female learners require help from departmental leaders. Such assistance would help the students advance in their careers. For instance, interviewee 6 said, *"In our department, we focus on giving females an appropriate supportive environment. For instance, we mentor our learners and cooperate with gender equality and empowerment organisations to sensitize people on the challenges that females face as they pursue careers."* Interviewer 7 asserted that, *"Our department is committed to increase the opportunities available to females. Consequently, we offer scholarship programs to learners, especially females from large families."*

Correlation between Independent Variables and the Depended Variable

A Pearson Correlation analysis was performed to determine the correlation between the independent (gender division of labor) and dependent variables Career Progression. The analysis was executed using SPSS. The correlation findings are summarised on Table 3.

Table 3: Correlation Results

Relationship Assessed	r (Correlation Coefficient)	p (Significance)	Interpretation
Gender Division of Labour and Career Progression	-.960	.000	Strong, negative, and significant

Strong negative and significant correlations were found between gender division of labour and career progression $r = -.960$, $p = .000$.

The correlation results from quantitative data are in line with what the interviewees shared. For instance, regarding cultural stereotypes, interviewee 1 indicated, *“I agree that sociocultural issues, as well as, economic factors sometimes, bar females from progressing with their careers.”* On her part, interviewee 3 said, *“Yes, I believe socio-cultural factors significantly impact career progression. Cultural norms and stereotypes can influence career choices, opportunities, and advancement. These factors can create barriers for female postgraduate students, affecting their confidence and decisions”*

According to interviewee 2, *“Values and beliefs within societies influence career progression among females. Stereotypes and cultural expectations can shape the choices female students make and affect their ability to pursue higher-level positions. Addressing these factors is crucial for a more equitable academic environment.”* The statement reflected interviewee 4’s indication that, *“Indeed, socio-cultural factors have a considerable impact on career progression. Stereotypes and expectations can shape the paths that female students are expected to follow, affecting their choices and opportunities within their fields of study.”* Similarly, interviewee 5 said, *“I am convinced that socio-cultural factors significantly affect career progression. Stereotypes and cultural biases can shape students’ perceptions of what is attainable for them, potentially limiting their ambitions and opportunities.”*

Predictor Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables

To determine whether household size, gender division of labour, mentorship, and cultural stereotypes can predict career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya, a regression analysis was performed. The regression result was significant ($R^2 = .99946$) as shown in Table 4. It was established that gender division of labour significantly predict career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya. The results of the regression indicated the predictors explained 99.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .99946$, $F(7, 1,391.97) = 0.2539$, $p = .000031$). Based on the results, the following regression equation was adopted.

$$\text{Career Progression} = 3.0480 - 0.1996 \text{ Gender Division of Labour} - 0.3003$$

Table 4: Regression Results

SUMMARY OUTPUT								
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.999731							
R ²	0.999461							
Adjusted R ²	0.998743							
Standard Error	0.006752							
ANOVA								
	Df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	4	0.253851	0.063463	1391.97	0.000031			
Residual	3	0.000137	0.000046					
Total	7	0.253988						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	3.048011	0.532711	5.721697	0.010595	1.352687	4.743336	1.352687	4.743336
Gender Division of Labour	0.206414	0.103276	1.998665	0.139506	-0.122263	0.535083	-0.122263	0.535083

It was also established that greater gender division of labour results in reduced career progression (Figure 1).

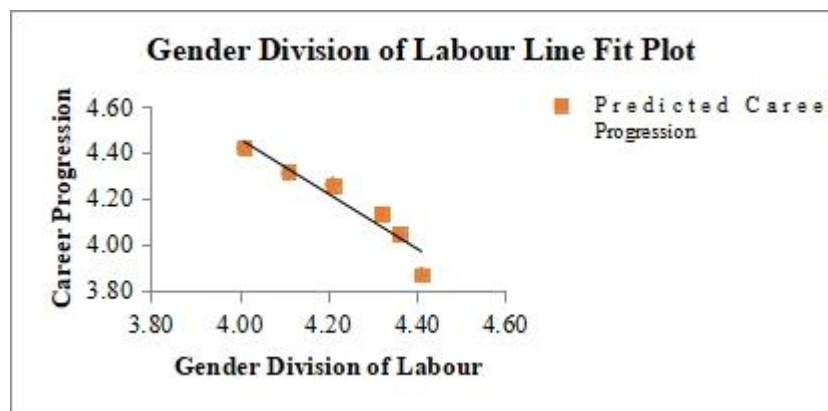


Figure 1: Gender Division of Labour Line Fit Plot

Other Factors Affecting Mature Females' Career Progression

Besides mentorship, cultural stereotypes, household size, and gender division of labour, the participants mentioned other key factors that may affect mature females' career progression. For instance, financial challenges may hinder one's pursuit for higher education. For instance, interviewee 1 indicated, *"In addition to the factors we discussed, I have observed that financial constraints can be a significant hindrance. Many mature female students juggle work and studies to support their families, leaving limited time for networking and career development."* The assertion was supported by interviewee 3, who said, *"Financial challenges are another factor that hampers career progression. Many female students struggle to afford education while supporting their families, impacting their ability to fully invest in their careers."* A similar opinion was shared by Interviewee 4, who stated, *"Alongside the factors mentioned, financial difficulties can also impede career progression. Many mature female students have to balance work and studies, limiting their capacity to focus on professional growth."* Similarly, Interviewee 5 said, *"Beyond the factors we discussed, financial limitations can hinder career progression. Some female students may not have access to resources needed for networking, attending conferences, or pursuing advanced degrees."*

Interviewee 2 identified self-doubt as a challenge females face by saying, *"Apart from the mentioned factors, I have noticed that self-doubt can hinder career progression. Some mature female students question their capabilities due to societal stereotypes, which can affect their willingness to pursue advanced positions."* The assertion was supported by interviewee 6, who said, *"I have observed that some mature female students face imposter syndrome, which affects their confidence and career decisions. This psychological barrier can hold them back from pursuing higher positions."*

Other factors were mental challenges and language barriers. Interviewee 7 said that, *"In addition to the factors we talked about, mental health challenges can hinder career progression. The stress of balancing family, work, and studies can take a toll on female students' well-being, affecting their ability to focus on their careers."* On the other hand, interviewee 8 stated, *"In my experience, I have seen that language barriers can be an additional challenge for some mature female students, especially those from diverse linguistic backgrounds. These barriers can affect their communication skills and, consequently, their career growth."*

Generally, societal expectations and cultural beliefs influence mature female students' career progression. For instance, interviewee 1 noted, *"Mature entry female students often face challenges related to time management. Balancing family responsibilities with studies can be demanding, affecting their ability to fully engage in academic and extracurricular activities."* On the other hand, interviewee 2 said, *"Mature female students frequently encounter challenges related to societal expectations. Balancing academic pursuits with cultural roles and responsibilities can lead to feelings of inadequacy and hinder career growth."* Still on social constraints, interviewee 3 said, *"Many mature female students struggle to find role models who have successfully balanced family, work, and academic commitments. This lack of representation can make it difficult for them to envision their own career paths."*

Society norms and systematic discrimination were also found to affect mature female learners' career progression. Interviewee 4 indicated that, *"Female students often face challenges in asserting themselves and negotiating for career opportunities due to societal norms. Balancing family responsibilities can sometimes limit their capacity to advocate for themselves effectively."* The notion was supported by interviewee 5, who said, *"Mature female students commonly experience difficulties in finding support systems that cater to their unique needs. This lack of tailored resources can impact their career progression and overall academic*

experience.” Therefore, networking poses a challenge to females as they try to grow their careers. Interviewee 6 indicated, *“I have noticed that mature female students often face challenges in networking and building professional relationships. Balancing family responsibilities can limit their availability for extracurricular activities that promote career growth.”*

The main challenge facing women as they pursue their careers was established as familial responsibilities that limit their opportunities to explore other activities. For instance, interviewee 7 said, *“Balancing work and family responsibilities is a significant challenge for many mature female students. This struggle can lead to burnout, impacting their overall career progression and well-being. Usually, females are supposed to perform numerous roles at home. This leaves them with less energy to focus on career development.”* Interviewee 8 provided a similar response by saying, *“Females rarely get time to engage in other activities that help them grow in terms of career. Balancing work, studies, and family responsibilities can be especially challenging for mature female students who are also caregivers for elderly family members. This additional responsibility can affect their availability for career-related activities.”*

It was established that the family situation disadvantages females. For instance, interviewee 1 said, *“Conditions within the family and workplace commitments affect the career progression of females negatively. As one focuses on attending such roles, they are left with limited time to pursue studies and network for career opportunities.”* The assertion was supported by interviewee 2, who said, *“Challenges of striking a balance between work and family time is set to have a negative effect on the career progression of mature female students. The reason is that some of the many tasks that such learners have to perform may not be completed satisfactorily.”* Generally, family tasks hinder mature female students’ career progression. Interviewees 3, 4, 5, and 6 said, *“Most of the mature females’ career progression derails because they are overwhelmed by family tasks, Females are often responsible for numerous familial chores due to gender division of labour. Consequently, their career progression is affected negatively, Workload at home and office overwhelms mature female students to a point of tampering with their career focus, and with familial and work-related roles, mature females may have challenges in investing in career advancement”*, respectively.

Discussion of the Research Findings

Numerous manifestations of inequality, such as differences in educational and employment possibilities, have been linked to the gender division of labour (Seiz, 2021). As the data demonstrate, women are frequently burdened with home duties as a result of conventional gender roles, which might limit their capacity to fully engage in educational pursuits and therefore impair their job advancement. The purpose of this article is to investigate and provide data supporting the major detrimental effect of gender division of labour on career advancement among mature female entrance students at Kenya's Egerton University.

Like many other societies, Kenyan culture has been shaped by deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and customs that assign women predominantly domestic tasks. In line with the findings, Seiz (2021) makes the case that his division of labour frequently prevents women from pursuing further education and advancing in their careers. Women's capacity to seek higher education and prioritize career-building activities may be constrained by the conventional expectation that they will put family and caregiving duties first. Gender-related obstacles that prevent mature female entering students from completing their degree are common. According to a research by Kiburi (2022), home duties including cleaning, caring for children, and cooking take up a large amount of their time, giving them little opportunity to concentrate on their academics. As a result, these women

could find it difficult to succeed academically, which would have an impact on their whole school experience and potential job paths.

Extracurricular activities are essential for networking, developing skills, and creating a well-rounded resume for job advancement. However, the gender wage gap frequently prevents older female entry-level students from fully engaging in these activities (Edgell, 2023). Home obligations may make it difficult for them to participate in clubs, groups, internships, and other activities that advance their personal and professional development. In a different study, Seiz (2021) finds that older female entering students find it much harder to balance household duties with scholastic obligations. According to Seiz (2021), balancing family responsibilities with coursework, assignments, and examinations might result in increased stress and burnout. As a result, there may be a decline in desire, a decline in performance, and a general loss of confidence in pursuing challenging professional goals.

The gender division of labour may make it more difficult for older female entry-level students to participate in the networking and mentoring activities that are crucial for professional progression. Edgell (2023) claims that because of time restrictions and cultural expectations, women frequently have less opportunity to network with professors, business leaders, and classmates outside of the classroom. Their inability to network may make it more difficult for them to acquire helpful counsel, direction, and employment prospects. Edgell (2023) further indicates that the gender wage gap might affect the career decisions made by older female entrance students. Due to cultural expectations, they can decide to pursue careers that are more "suitable" for women rather than following their genuine interests and inclinations. As a result, they could choose careers with fewer room for advancement and lower income potential, which would feed the inequality cycle even more. After joining the employment, the effects of the gender wage gap still have an impact on career advancement. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance may be difficult for women who have been raised to emphasize family and domestic duties (Kiburi, 2022). This may force you to make challenging career-related decisions, such as choosing less demanding responsibilities or devoting time off to care for your family.

It is evident that the gender wage gap has a major detrimental influence on mature female entering students at Kenya's Egerton University's ability to advance in their careers. Domestic responsibility inequality puts obstacles in the way of networking, extracurricular activities, education, and professional options. In order to give women, the freedom to pursue their educational and professional aspirations without being constrained by conventional gender roles, efforts to solve these obstacles should include changes in society norms, regulations, and support structures. In order to empower women and promote an inclusive and fair society, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of gender equality in the workplace and in education.

It takes a thorough and proactive strategy to address the detrimental effects of gender division of labour on career advancement among mature female entering students at Egerton University. Some of the suggestions of dealing with this challenge include workshops for awareness-raising campaigns and education. Organising workshops and seminars to inform teachers and students on the effects of the gender wage gap on career advancement could be beneficial, as indicated by Kurowska (2020). The school should convey the value of providing equal opportunity for people of all genders in the academic and professional realms. There is a need for gender-neutral career guidance. Therefore, staff members should encourage mature female entry-level students to choose a variety of professional choices by offering career counselling that questions established gender norms (Busher & James, 2020). The school should also provide information on unconventional jobs and sectors, highlighting the fact that everyone may pursue them regardless of gender.

On the other hand, flexible work and study arrangements would be beneficial. The university should work with employers and business partners to develop flexible work-study plans that will let older female entry-level students combine their obligations to family and school (Kurowska, 2020). This way, the institution will provide students with flexible part-time or remote employment options. There is a need to create support for child care responsibilities. This will entail the creation of child care facilities on campus or collaborate with neighbourhood day-care services to assist students who have kids (Aloka, 2023). The university will have to create leadership development programs that emphasise discouraging gender stereotypes, boosting self-assurance, and enhancing leadership abilities in mature female entering students. It is important to ensure that course materials and instructional strategies dispel gender stereotypes and offer illustrations of successful people who have broken free from conventional gender norms.

It will be essential to ensure that persons of all genders have equal access to leadership roles within the institution, including faculty and administration. Therefore, there is a need to encourage and aid female entry-level students who are mature to pursue leadership positions in on-campus activities and student groups (Seiz, 2021). Through research and advocacy, the institution can gather information on the difficulties mature female entering students have as a result of the gender wage gap and utilise it to promote initiatives and lobby for legislative reforms. However, it is important to collaborate with neighbourhood companies and groups to develop internship, job-shadowing, and mentorship opportunities that advance diversity in the workplace and gender equality (Aloka, 2023). Additionally, the university should evaluate, monitor, and improve the solutions continuously. The role requires the use of input from students and teachers, and then make the required modifications to assure progress (Chacha, 2021). This way, it will be possible to provide a setting that promotes mature female entrance students' career advancement, independent of conventional gender roles and labour divides.

Summary and Conclusion

The distinct roles for men and women at home influence career progression. Women are predominantly responsible for domestic tasks, while men provided for the family. The division influences women's career paths and hinders their academic pursuits. Traditional gender expectations negatively affect women's ability to focus on careers and academic goals. The unequal distribution of household and caregiving tasks hinders career advancement among women from households characterized with patriarchy. The main challenge is balancing home tasks with studies because usually, one is supposed to complete household chores before focusing on education. However, women who share responsibilities equally with partners become successful in their careers. Usually, societal expectations of women as homemakers impede their career progression. However, family support in sharing tasks is positively correlated with career development. There is a need to challenge traditional gender roles and seek support from family members to enhance career success. It is also noted that most institutions play a significant role in empowering women to balance household duties and career aspirations.

The study successfully answered the research questions. It was established that the size of a woman's household is a crucial factor that affects mature female students' career progression. It was found that larger households are characterised by challenges in balancing domestic responsibilities and career pursuits. On the other hand, smaller households may offer potential advantages for career focus due to reduced domestic demands. The division of labour along gender lines within households causes obstacles for women's career advancement. However, those who share responsibilities equally with partners are set to achieve more success. It was also found that cultural stereotypes influence career progression among female students. For instance, implicit

biases and subtle cues tend to hinder progression in career and studies. Therefore, traditional gender norms and expectations should be dispelled. Finally, mentorship was found to play a pivotal role in enabling positive experiences for mature female students. The reason is that mentors guide learners, thus improving their confidence. This way, students are encouraged to focus on personal and professional growth. Such learners can also overcome hurdles in their career development. Therefore, it is noted that household dynamics, gender divisions, cultural biases, and mentorship influence the learning environment of women and affect their potential in achieving their career aspirations. The study's findings can be used to formulate and implement gender equality and meaningful career development strategies and programs.

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