

Original Research Article

## An assessment of the challenges of gender disparity in the City of Windhoek's management structures

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### ARTICLE INFO

Received: Sept 2022  
Accepted: Sept 2023  
Published: May 2024

#### Keywords:

Gender  
disparity,  
Equality and  
Discrimination

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to assess the challenges relating to gender disparity in the City of Windhoek's management structures. The results of the study should help the City of Windhoek's management in developing leadership and management positions and in addressing gender parity. The study suggests possible ways of how to eliminate gender barriers and create opportunities in higher leadership and management positions. This study adopted a qualitative approach and case study research design. The researcher purposively selected 15 participants from all departments. Primary data for this study was collected using interview guides. Thematic analysis was used to analyse interview responses. The first key conclusion was that, gender disparity is prevalent at the City of Windhoek. The study revealed eight factors that lead to gender disparity in the city of Windhoek. These include lack of implementation of strategic policy, stereotyping leading to discrimination of women in recruitment and selection policies, lack of gender-sensitive budgeting practices, inconsistent gender mainstreaming practices, inadequate gender analysis of information and poor implementation of gender responsive key result areas in performance management plans.

### 1. Introduction

According to Hall (2021) gender imbalance is a disparity between males and females in a population. As stated above, males usually exceed females at birth, but subsequently experience different mortality rates due to many possible causes such as differential natural death rates, war casualties and deliberate gender control. The overall participation of women over the world in public administration is 46 percent. Despite this, just 32% of countries have achieved gender equality. In 39 percent of countries, women are underrepresented in public administration, whereas in 28 percent, women outweigh males significantly. Gender parity among public officials is most prevalent in Latin America and the Caribbean, and least prevalent in Central and Southern Asia (Hall, 2021). Women in the

civil service are more prevalent in nations with higher levels of economic development, whereas fragile and conflict-affected countries have less women in the same sector.

Though progress is uneven, the world is moving closer to gender balance among civil officials. According to the most recent data available, the global average of women's engagement in public administration is 46 percent in 139 nations. When compared to the global GEPA report from 2014, where women made up 37 percent of public administrators in 33 nations; from 2006 to 2012, there

has been significant progress towards gender parity around the world (Hall, 2021). Using all available statistics from each year, the upward

trend continues as evidenced by women's average proportion of all public administrators rising from 44% in 2010 to 49% in 2020 (UN, 2021).

Even if only the countries featured in both the 2014 global GEPA study and this report are considered, over time, women's engagement in public administration has increased from 38% to 42%. Despite recent progress in some nations, there is still significant global diversity in women's engagement in government. At 6% and 7%, respectively, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo have the lowest percentage of women in public administration in the world. Lithuania, with 77 percent women in public administration, and the Russian Federation, with 73 percent of women in public administration, are the two countries with most women in public administration (United Nations, 2020).

In the public sector, there is still a gender gap in the workforce. In general, only around a third of countries (32%) have gender parity in public administration. Underrepresentation of women is more widespread in 39 percent of countries around the world. Women are generally underrepresented, if not completely excluded in public administration in 17 percent of countries (Hall, 2021). Women's underrepresentation in government means that it is not utilising the full potential, capacity, and inventiveness of its citizens. Given that government is the single largest employer in many countries, women's underrepresentation in the civil service jeopardises their economic stability and empowerment, both of which are important drivers of long-term development and economic success.

As depicted in the next statistics, women's engagement in public administration varies by location and country. Europe and North America (53 percent women), Eastern and South-eastern Asia and Oceania (51 percent women), and Latin America and the Caribbean (51 percent women) are the three regions with the highest gender parity (49 percent women). Women in public administration are underrepresented in the remaining three regions, with 38 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa, 37 percent in Northern Africa and Western Asia, and 32 percent in Central and Southern Asia (Hall, 2021).

In view of the above, income and gender disparities are very common all over the world. However, the gap is more prominent among women in developing countries. Some of the factors that influence these gender imbalances in work places are deeply rooted in the socio-cultural structures that are deeply embedded in society. They are as a result of factors such as difference in education between man and women, preferred job and industry, work experience and labour market. According to Younas & Sandler (2017) research proved that there has been steady progress in

improving women's representation in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade. However, their research revealed that most of the women are still the most underrepresented group of all in the workplace, especially in politics. Their study revealed that the gender imbalance that women experience on political and top management leadership positions in many organisations is due to lack of education or attrition rates. Women are not generally attracted to careers in politics as compared to men (United Nations, 2020).

Gender imbalance in the work-place is a global phenomenon. Wide disparities exist in the employment of men and women in different fields of work, particularly, in health, education, economics and politics as well as in promotions and wages. In the business world, women leaders are still a minority. Globally, efforts are continuing to redress these challenges. Whereas gender imbalance and the resultant disparity in politics are prevalent in most African countries, this is less so in Rwanda, Namibia, South Africa, Seychelles, Senegal, Burundi, and Botswana. The stereotypes that contribute to gender imbalances are anchored in religion, education, culture, social orientation, politics and public policy considerations. These continue to contribute to the chasm that exists in the presence of women in Namibian elective offices (Tavis, 2018).

Despite the legal and social frameworks institutionalised by the Namibian government, that say all people are and should be treated as equal in all areas of life, there is clearly evidence of gender-related inequalities at workplaces. Stereotypes persist that portray women as less capable leaders than men. According to Afro barometer of Namibia, there are greater levels of support for men in political leadership and management. The Afro barometer also shows that women are less interested in public affairs than their male counterparts are (Shejavali, 2020). Women also discuss politics less frequently than men do. It is therefore against this background that this study sought to evaluate gender imbalances in the City of Windhoek and how women progress in their careers. It also sought to identify the causes and effects of the gender gap at the City of Windhoek in particular. This study analysed the impact of gender-imbalances and how it affects service delivery and the performance of the City of Windhoek.

### 1.1. The Objectives the study

The main objective of research paper was to assess the challenges brought about by gender disparity in

the City of Windhoek's Management structure.

- To examine whether the City of Windhoek is rendering efficient and effective municipal services to the people.
- To evaluate gender imbalances in the City of Windhoek
- To evaluate women's progression in their careers.
- To identify the causes and effects of the gender gap at the City of Windhoek.
- To analyse the impact of gender-imbalances and how this affects service delivery and the performance of the City of Windhoek.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Human Capital Theories

Gender imbalance in organisations is a complex phenomenon to explain and its manifestations vary in the organisational structures, processes and practices especially for women in developing countries like Namibia. To explain the issue of gender imbalance in Namibia, the researchers used human capital theories. Human capital theories argue that men and women receive different pay-offs from employment because they invest differently in their careers. Men seek higher education, skills training, and overtime at work because they are family breadwinners whose major responsibility is to support their wives and dependent children (Mahendra Dev, 2018). Meanwhile, women invest less in the human capital by workplace because their primary commitment is to their families. This theory assumes the heterosexual nuclear family, which is no longer the typical family form (Perrotta & Perrotta, 2018). This rational choice perspective also fails to explain recent trends in women's educational attainment and labour force participation rates, now estimated to be equal to, if not greater than men's (Ginting, 2020).

### 2.2 The Social Context of Gender-Disparity in Namibia

Along with many other countries, Namibia was represented in the Beijing Platform for Action in the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995. Namibia established its National Gender Policy in 1997 in response to the proposed steps, laying the groundwork for gender equality and women empowerment programs in the country (MGECW, 2010). The Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare is in charge of the National Gender Policy, and it has the mission of establishing gender equality and equitable socio-economic development for women and men.

In August 2018, Namibia signed and ratified the amended SADC Gender Protocol (Kampilipili, 2018). All

Namibian line ministries and state bodies are required to execute the country's National Gender Policy without delay. All stakeholders are responsible for putting the National Gender Policy (NGP) into action. All policy partners are responsible for the NGP's implementation and will be held accountable for gender equality outcomes (Republic of Namibia, 2008).

According to many researchers, since independence, gender mainstreaming in Namibia has taken several different paths. The Namibian Constitution was the starting point for gender equality (Namibian National Strategic Plan, 2022–2027). As soon as the country gained independence, women activists fought for significant declarations on women's rights in the new Namibian Constitution. This was both individually and through religious and political party organisations. In contrast to many other African countries' constitutions, which include different citizenship rules for men and women, Namibia's citizenship regulations are totally gender-neutral. According to Gertze (2018), Namibia is entirely devoted to the advancement of women as well as achieving gender equality and equity. Despite the fact that the Namibian Constitution incorporates these ideals in national laws, policies, and institutions; more still has to be done. There is still work to be done on developing the requisite political will for the incorporation of such ideals in the legal structure. To complete the mainstreaming of these gender sensitive policies, there must be buy-in. For this purpose, Namibia's ruling party has proved its political determination by implementing the 50/50 rule (Gertze, 2018).

The Affirmative Action (Employment) Act 29 of 1998, on the other hand, aims to boost the participation of blacks, women and people with disabilities in the formal sector. According to the Employment Equity Commission's most recent reports, women account for approximately 15% of executive directors and slightly over a quarter of senior managers (Hubbard, 2018). In middle management and specialist supervisory jobs, however, they are approaching parity with men. Affirmative action measures apply to a variety of statutory bodies and boards, with seats reserved for women in bodies ranging from line ministries to municipalities.

### 2.3 Namibian Gender Policy

One of Namibia's strategies for achieving gender equality is Gender mainstreaming. This is represented in the National Gender Policy as a strategy to achieve gender equality and to fulfil this goal (MGECW, 2010). Namibia reviewed its 1997 Gender Policy in 2010. This review was in order to realign it with the rest of the world and resulted in



The National Gender Policy (2010-2020). This new Gender Policy (2010-2020) and its gender plans of action are targeted at closing the gender gaps that exist in Namibian society as a result of socio-economic, political, and cultural disparities (MGECW, 2010). The Policy Document establishes a framework for implementing programs aimed at achieving the expectations of Namibians, particularly women. All this, in order to achieve fundamental freedoms and to be treated equally with their male counterparts in all developmental projects (MGECW, 2010).

#### **2.4 Gender Imbalances in Windhoek City Police Service**

According to Rajalingam (2021) the literature review forms the nucleus of all research. For a scientific investigation to succeed in coming up with new conclusions and establish facts, each research builds on existing data. Unless one needs to reinvent the wheel, precise awareness of the extent of knowledge on a topic is important. This paper presents the literature review focusing on the leadership-management positions in City of Windhoek, its effects on salary structure, recruitment and promotion, decision-making and it also looks at The Namibia National Gender Policy.

It is a well-known fact that women are under-represented in governance and leadership positions in public and private sectors, all over the world (Kazembe, 2020). At times, the equal representation does not necessarily mean equal power in decision-making but women are put in such a position to further the men or the patriarchal agenda. Society is driven by a struggle for dominance among social groups and culture, men as the dominant group and women as the subordinate group and social problems are created when dominant groups exploit or oppress subordinate groups.

Gender-disparity in the public sector affects salary scales. The gender pay gap expresses the average difference between male and female earnings as a percentage of average male earnings and is usually based on gross hourly earnings among employed individuals (Publications Office of the European Union, 2014). If the gender pay gap is positive, it indicates that women's salaries are on average lower than men's salaries, with the opposite holding true if the gender pay gap is negative. The effect of the gender pay gap means that women earn less over their lifetimes. This results in lower pensions and a risk of poverty in old age.

The empowering and mentoring of women in leadership is a great opportunity, especially within the City of Windhoek as it helps women interact with other women from all spheres of life. According to the Affirmative action report (2013/14), the achievement of equality in terms of promotions and occupation of higher leadership and management positions in terms of gender, is showing a slow progress. Achieving equality in promotion between women and men at workplaces is a prerequisite for global

prosperity and an advancement in society. According to Transparency International (2010) the integration of women into service-based workforces, can help reduce gender-specific forms of corruption and provide positive role models for young women in society. The mainstreaming of gender in anti-corruption work ensures that women are well represented at all stages of service delivery. Also, the likelihood of opportunities to promote women's participation and strengthen their voice in the planning, managing and oversight of decision making becomes apparent.

Inequality in institutions remains a key area of gender-based discrimination and to date, one of the most neglected topics in Namibia. Equality in the organisations is fundamental to gender balances overall, and this affects every Namibian woman in multiple ways. According to Samuel (2015) gender inequalities at the workplace and in the family context can undermine women's financial independence and personal autonomy, thus affecting their ability to exercise rights in other spheres.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design**

This study adopted a qualitative approach and case study research design. This refers to an interpretive research approach, relying on multiple types of subjective data and investigation of people in particular situations in their natural environment (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). The researchers understood the gathered data from participants' subjective perspectives. The key was to understand the insider's views and objective outsider's view to interpret this subjective information, based on the research purpose. The aim of this qualitative research was to analyse the impact of gender imbalance in the City of Windhoek.

A questionnaire was adopted as the research instrument and the data was collected by means of a survey. In order to attain the research objectives, this research used quantitative methods to address the relationships between all the variables in the study. Initially, descriptive statistics were used to illustrate the profile of the respondents. This was in order to have a balanced assessment of the results. Detailed analysis then followed, which involved inferential statistics based on correlation and regression analyses. The inferential process included making deductive claims that could be generalised to the population. A quantitative research approach is based on examining theories by testing the link between variables (Khalid, 2017). The study used regression

analysis to study the relationship between the measured variables. In order to attain the research objectives, this research used qualitative data collection for all the variables in the study.

**3.2 Research Population**

Bertram and Christiansen (2014) views population as an aggregate or totality of all the objects, subjects or members that conform to a set of specifications. The targeted population in this study were 100 employees from the City of Windhoek employees. The population for this study included all strategic executives within the City of Windhoek in all departments and the political leadership comprising of 2020-2022 councillors. The target population of this study was top management and the political leadership. It comprised of 9 departmental managers, their deputies and 15 Political Councillors who led different committees of the municipality of every department in the City of Windhoek.

**3.3 Sample size**

According to Strydom (2014), sampling involves the examination of a carefully selected proportion of the units of a phenomenon in order to help extend knowledge gained from the study of that part to the whole, from which the part was selected. This study used a purposive non-probability sampling. The study targeted 30 respondents who were purposefully selected from various departments such as: Marketing, Corporate Communications, Office of the CEO, Human Resources, City Police Department, Human Resources and Political leadership Councillors. Similarly, six political councillors were drawn to be part of the study sample, giving a total of 15 participants. The chosen individuals/departments were believed to be knowledgeable, and informative on the phenomenon of interest in this study.

**3.4 Data collection procedure**

Both primary and secondary data were used in the study. The researchers collected primary data by means of a structured questionnaire and interview guide. Interviews were used to obtain views and opinions from the staff members of the City of Windhoek. Responses from face-to-face interviews were recorded on a tape recorder and then transcribed. Secondary data, such as documentary analysis and books were explored. Questionnaires were distributed to the respondents to fill in, in the presence of the researcher so that assistance could be availed if required.

**3.5. Credibility**

The design of the interview schedule was guided by the principles of the Human Capital Theory. The instrument was piloted, and corrections were made. Consistency

was measured by asking the participants the same question in different ways. Reliability was achieved by asking questions based on the principles of Human Capital Theory.

**3.6 Data Analysis**

ATLAS.ti was used for data analysis. The research data was coded and thematically analysed. A further analysis was done through reviewing transcripts and field notes and that were then matched with the coded data.

**4. Results of the study**

Table 4.1 below presents a summary of key findings which were extracted from the results gathered through face-to-face interviews with 15 participants.

Table 4.1: Main findings from the interviews

Findings from Interviews	Responses
1. Gender Imbalances in Windhoek City Police Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Namibia Constitution Article 10: Equality and Freedom from Discrimination (1) All persons shall be equal before the law. (2) No persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status. Gender stereotyping leads to discrimination of women, affect recruitment and selection policies.</li> </ul>
2. Namibian policy on gender.	Literature revealed that the national policy on gender and employment is to promote equal economic rights between men and women as well as the economic independence of women.
3. The factors that lead to gender disparity in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Gender-Focal Representatives</li> <li>• Lack of gender-sensitive budgeting</li> </ul>

<p>the city of Windhoek</p>	<p>practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent gender mainstreaming practices</li> <li>• Inadequate gender analysis of information.</li> <li>• No implementation of gender responsive key result areas in performance management plans</li> <li>• No preparation of gender responsive performance indicators in plans of action</li> <li>• HR Policy is not explicit on incorporating gender balance in strategic human resource management plans and gender equality quotas.</li> </ul>		<p>and women at all levels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mainstreaming attempts are depicted as voluntary which results in little explicit effort to initiate change.</li> <li>• Limitation in resources and low organisational commitments to put gender policies into practice.</li> <li>• unfair identification and mentoring of high potential employees, both men and women</li> <li>• Leadership does not regularly review and develop talent management initiatives and succession <i>management</i> towards obtaining gender balance in all leadership positions.</li> <li>• lack of promotion of gender balanced participation in management development programs</li> <li>• no mentoring and coaching programs for women in the leadership pipeline.</li> </ul>
<p>The challenges women face in decision-making concerning gender roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women receive equal salaries with men</li> <li>• Women receive equal internal training opportunities only</li> <li>• Women receive less study leave opportunities</li> <li>• Women are accorded adequate maternity leave</li> <li>• Women have unequal representation in all leadership positions</li> </ul>		
<p>The effect of gender-disparity on municipality's performance</p>	<p>Gender imbalance negatively affects the municipality's performance due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• limited monitoring and evaluative processes of the outcomes and impacts of gender mainstreaming,</li> <li>• lack of disaggregated data,</li> <li>• failure to provide effective capacity building for both men</li> </ul>	<p><b>The factors that lead to gender disparity in the city of Windhoek</b></p>	<p>The participants identified eight key factors that lead to gender disparity in the City of Windhoek. These are: lack of implementation of strategic policy, lack of gender focal representatives, stereotyping leads to discrimination of women and affects recruitment and selection policies, lack of gender-sensitive budgeting practices and inconsistent gender mainstreaming practices. The other three are: inadequate gender analysis of information, poor implementation of gender responsive key result areas in performance management plans and lack of clarity on the roles of departments in gender-responsive budgeting in the workplace.</p>



### **The challenges women face in decision-making concerning gender roles**

The participants reported seven significant challenges women face concerning gender roles in decision-making in the City of Windhoek. First, unlike their male counter-parts, women do not receive equal opportunities for training outside the country. However, the same women indicated that they receive equal internal training opportunities. The second challenge is that, women also receive less study leave opportunities at local universities and beyond. Furthermore, men tend to have study leave opportunities and scholarships to continue with their studies, both locally and through foreign institutions. Thirdly, women have unequal representation in all leadership positions in the City of Windhoek. The participants indicated that women only make one quarter of top and middle leadership positions while they outnumber men at line level of management. The other four challenges are inefficient oversight mechanisms to ensure effective management of gender-related complaints/grievances, senior leadership lacks sound understanding on how to best integrate gender mainstreaming. Senior leadership does not also wholly support the gender issues with most senior leadership resisting the implementation of gender mainstreaming, giving high priority to other key result areas. Lastly, performance agreements of the majority of officers have not yet integrated gender mainstreaming as a key indicator of excellent performance.

### **The effect of gender-disparity on municipality's performance**

The direct effects of gender-disparity on the municipality are that: there is limited monitoring and evaluative processes of the outcomes and impacts of gender mainstreaming, inadequate and lack of disaggregated data, failure to provide effective capacity building for both men and women at all levels and most mainstreaming attempts are depicted as voluntary, which results in little explicit effort to initiate change. There is also limitation in resources and low organisational commitment to putting gender policies into practice.

The indirect effects are that, the organisation engages in unfair identification and mentoring of high potential employees, both men and women. This discourages consistent internal promotions from occurring. In addition, leadership does not regularly review and develop talent management initiatives and succession management towards obtaining gender balance in all leadership positions. There is also lack of promotion of gender balanced participation in management development programs and no mentoring and coaching

programs for women in the leadership pipeline.

## **5. Discussions and Conclusions**

### *Instigation of gender sensitive program-based budgeting*

The City of Windhoek should incorporate GRB into departmental missions and objectives; develop gender sensitive indicators for each budget phase and apply the principles of gender sensitive program-based budgeting. This would create gender equality and equity awareness among all employees.

### *Leadership and coordination mechanisms for gender budgeting*

The City of Windhoek should have clear coordination and leadership mechanisms for gender budgeting processes, provide guidance to departments through budget circulars and training to ensure sufficient capacity for delivery of gender budgeting goals.

All City of Windhoek Departments should engage in gathering gender-disaggregated data for supporting gender assessments and developing effective evidence based and gender sensitive policies, engaging with key stakeholders on gender budgeting issues to allow participative, inclusive and responsive gender budgeting practices.

The departments should assign distinct functional classifications to performance indicators to help highlight and monitor how the budget contributes towards attainment of gender equality and mainstreaming in the whole Municipality.

The Senior Managers should create mechanism for appeals on gender equality complaints with no repercussions of being victimised and they should acknowledge receipt of complaints timeously and communicate on follow-up processes and timelines.

The Senior Managers should facilitate proactive training of officers on gender equality policies and legislation for effective gender equality implementation; capture and report all gender related appeals and recourses, render protection to employees who report violations of gender equality legislation and policies in the workplace. They must do much to establish impartial and effective appeal and recourse mechanisms on gender issues and develop advocacy and awareness campaigns on gender laws and policies.

The HR Policy should be explicit on incorporating gender balance among key objectives in strategic human resources management plans and gender equality quotas in senior leaders and middle managers' performance agreements for recruitment and selection. This would ensure all managers consider gender equality practices as one of their key result areas for performance review and assessment.

The Top Managers should ensure that all departments in the organisation make their internal gender policies explicit and ensure that all subordinates understand them so that they can value them and eventually feel committed to implementing them effectively;

The Top Managers should build the capacity for high potential women, such as through fast-track schemes, also, ensure women are well represented in both foreign and domestic workshops through making such training as accessible as possible for them;

The Top Managers should build the capacity of gender focal points and gender champions in order to nurture a culture of gender equality and institutionalize gender equality commitments;

The employees at the City of Windhoek should develop the political will and openness to innovation, commitment and willingness to allocate resources towards gender sensitive budgeting which is aimed at benefitting both men and women in a fair and sound manner.

The study concluded that there is gender disparity in the City of Windhoek. Women do not receive equal opportunities for training outside the country like their male counterparts, women also have unequal representation in all leadership positions. Furthermore, there are inefficient oversight mechanisms to ensure effective management of gender related complaints/grievances, senior leadership lacks sound understanding on integrating gender mainstreaming. Also, most senior leadership resists the implementation of gender mainstreaming and performance agreements of the majority of officers do not integrate gender mainstreaming as a key indicator of excellent performance. Thus, disgruntled women and incompetent men appointed based on gender stereotypes become sources of incompetency in the City of Windhoek.

## **6. Areas for future studies**

1. Future studies can explore the established linkages of interpersonal and socio-cultural gender disparity.
2. This study provides an opportunity for future

research on exploring how changing norms have been altering the position of women.

3. The current study also provides an opportunity for designing intervention projects aimed at providing justice and quality to women.



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