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Promoting Gender Equity in Scholarly Journal Management

By Job Mwaura and Dinesh Balliah

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RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Universities, research institutions, and scholarly journals should create** gender-sensitive and inclusive support systems, including leadership training programs, workshops, awareness campaigns, professional development opportunities, expanded funding opportunities, networking platforms, and flexible working conditions, to enable women to advance their academic careers without compromising their personal and familial obligations.

- **Consolidate policies that outline clear strategies and targets** for promoting the representation of women in key leadership roles, such as editors-in-chief and editorial board members.

- **Establish support networks and alliances for women in academia** to facilitate knowledge sharing, increased representation, and advocacy for gender equity in academic leadership and journal management. Such networks can serve as platforms for collaboration and collective action.

- **Develop funding mechanisms** specifically targeted at women-led research and publications. These programs should provide resources for women scholars to lead research projects, produce high-quality publications, and engage in global academic dialogues.

This policy brief explores the persistent underrepresentation of women in African academic leadership and in the management of scholarly journals, highlighting the adverse implications for gender equity and diversity in higher education. Despite the increased presence of women in academia across the continent, their roles in leadership positions remain limited, particularly in the management of academic journals, which serve as critical sites for knowledge production and dissemination.[1] This exclusion has far-reaching consequences, including perpetuating gender biases, hindering women's career progression, and reinforcing patriarchal norms within academic institutions.[2]

The limited participation of women in academic journal management and leadership roles is reflected in empirical evidence from the African Journals Online (AJOL) database and institutional data gathered from eleven countries in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, and Ethiopia) and West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Gambia). The findings indicate that women constitute only a small percentage of editors-in-chief and editorial board members, with men occupying over 90% of these positions.[3] This lack of gender diversity in key academic roles stifles diverse perspectives and hampers the inclusion of women's voices in research and policy discussions.

Addressing these disparities requires a commitment to implementing transformative policies and gender-sensitive practices within academic institutions. Strategies such as adopting gender-inclusive recruitment policies, promoting mentorship for emerging female academics, and creating supportive environments for women's leadership are critical to achieving a balanced and inclusive academic landscape.[4] By ensuring that women have equal opportunities to participate in academic

Job Mwaura is a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Centre for Journalism at Wits University in South Africa. He is recipient of the 2023 SSRC APN Individual Research fellowship, and researches emerging technologies in Africa and their impact on society. Email: job.mwaura@wits.ac.za

Dinesh Balliah is the Director of the Centre for Journalism at Wits University in South Africa. She has over decades of teaching and research experience in higher education. Email: dinesh.balliah@wits.ac.za

African Peacebuilding Network | Social Science Research Council | www.ssrc.org
One Pierrepont Plaza, 15th Floor, 300 Cadman Plaza West, Brooklyn, NY 11201 USA
For more information please contact the APN: apn@ssrc.org

leadership and scholarly journal management, institutions can contribute to the advancement of knowledge production that reflects diverse experiences and fosters innovation across the continent.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

1. **Gender Disparities in Leadership Roles:** There is a significant underrepresentation of women in the management of scholarly journals across East Swahili and Anglo-West Africa. Only 9.41% of editors-in-chief are women, while men constitute 91.47%. Similarly, women make up just 14.60% of editorial board members compared to 85.40% of men.

2. **Impact of Female Leadership:** Journals led by women editors-in-chief were noted to have a higher proportion of women in other editorial roles. This suggests that female leadership positively influences the gender diversity of editorial boards.

3. **Systemic Marginalization of Women in Academia:** Systemic barriers still hinder women's participation in academic leadership, including entrenched patriarchal norms, limited access to professional networks, and biases in the academic publishing process.

4. **Geographical and Disciplinary Disparities:** Gender disparities vary across different countries and academic disciplines. For instance, disciplines like STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) are more male-dominated, reflecting broader gender inequalities within academic institutions.

5. **Intersectional Challenges:** The exclusion of women from leadership roles is exacerbated for Black women, whose experiences are often overshadowed by those of Black men or subsumed within narratives of white women. This intersectional marginalization requires targeted strategies to ensure inclusivity at all levels of academia.

6. **Role of Institutional Policies:** Institutional and journal management policies lack clear gender inclusion frameworks, contributing to the persistent exclusion of women in leadership positions.

[1] Hagan, Allison K., Başak D. Topçuoğlu, Michele E. Gregory, Hazel A. Barton, and Patrick D. Schloss. 2020. "Women Are Underrepresented and Receive Differential Outcomes at ASM Journals: A Six-Year Retrospective Analysis." mBio 11 (6). https://doi.org/10.1128/mBio.01680-20.

[2] Rathgeber, Eva M. 2013. Gender Barriers Faced by African Women in Graduate Programmes and Research in the Social Sciences: A PASGR Scoping Study. Nairobi: Partnership for African Social & Governance Research.

[3] Mwaura, John, and Daisy Balliah. 2024. "Championing Inclusivity: Underrepresentation of Women in African Academic Leadership and Scholarly Journal Management." Evidence Based Library and Information Practice 19 (3): 42–59. https://doi.org/10.18438/eblip30447.

CONCLUSION

This brief calls for collective action from universities, journal editors, policymakers, and civil society organizations to institutionalize gender equity strategies. Gender-balanced editorial boards and leadership teams are crucial for fostering innovation and enhancing the overall quality of African research. The research findings highlight the need for a co-ordinated, multi-stakeholder approach to address gender disparities in African academic leadership and journal management. Implementing the recommended policies will promote gender equity and inclusivity in scholarly publishing and decision-making spaces. Establishing gender inclusion frameworks will ensure equal leadership opportunities for women, enriching the academic environment with diverse perspectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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- **Develop funding mechanisms** specifically targeted at women-led research and publications. These programs should provide resources for women scholars to lead research projects, produce high-quality publications, and engage in global academic dialogues.

[4] Liani, Mary L., Isaac K. Nyamongo, John Pulford, and Rosemary Tolhurst. 2021. "An Intersectional Gender Analysis of Familial and Socio-Cultural Drivers of Inequitable Scientific Career Progression of Researchers in Sub-Saharan Africa." Global Health Research and Policy 6 (1): 30.