

# Factors Influencing Women's Career Progression To Leadership Positions In Harare City Council, Zimbabwe

Anella Tendai Machiridza, Dr Ephantus Kihonge, Dr Pamela Awuor Ochieng

**Abstract:** This study examines the factors influencing women's career progression to leadership positions in Harare City Council. The specific objective was to determine the influence of gender roles on women's career progression to leadership positions in Harare City Council. The target population included management team and permanent staff in the Harare City Council. Data was collected using questionnaires as well as semi structured interviews. A sample size of 116 was determined by using 33% of the population. Data from interviews was analyzed by means of establishing recurring themes and providing narratives of key findings. The collected data from the questionnaires was analyzed using SPSS. The findings revealed that traditional gender roles made the balance between work and family difficult in such a way that some women would prioritize family responsibilities at the expense of focusing on their careers. Furthermore, it was revealed that gender roles affected the careers choices they make thus influencing the gender compositions in departments and divisions and consequently those in leadership positions. As a result of study findings the researcher recommends that civil society organizations implement gender deconstruction programs in societies such that women will not be confined to the traditionally expected roles. The researcher's expectation is that it will lead to society accepting the concept of 'stay-at home- dads' thus encouraging the acceptance of women as serious career women. It is also recommended that family friendly policies should be put in place in order to minimize the pressure that women experience in trying to balance between work and family. These policies should enable employees especially women to work from home without being physically present at their workplace but monitoring mechanisms should be in place to ensure that work deadlines are met. Furthermore, women are encouraged to implement personal strategies that will help them minimize the pressure of trying to balance between work and family life.

**Index Terms:** gender roles, domestic roles, Harare City Council, leadership positions, local government, women

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Due to global pressure for the realization of women's rights their participation in the workforce has grown steadily over the years, from 43 percent in 1970 to 59 percent in 2004 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005). There has been an increase in women occupation of strategic positions in professional and managerial fields, despite the deficiencies emanating from societal and patriarchal beliefs. Women are yet to occupy strategic positions within society that shapes policy and development agendas of their nations specifically within the developing countries. Women's careers are decidedly different from those of men. In particular, men tend to follow more linear career paths, whereas women's careers are more likely to be nonlinear, disjointed, and interrupted (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2006). Globally, there is still a gap between the ideal gender inclusion of both women and men and the actual situation in leadership practice (Do, Levchenko, and Raddatz, 2011). Even though women constitute over 50% of the worlds' working population, their representation in leadership roles in both public and private sectors continues to remain low in most regions across the world (Elborgh-Woytek et al, 2013). Warner (2014) indicates that women in the US make up 14.6% of executive officers. He further explains this to imply that, it's only 4.6% of Fortune 500 CEOs and only 16.9% of the Fortune 500 organizations board seats that are held by women. This study grounds the fact that - even in the most seemingly gender sensitive societies as the US, women inclusion in senior management positions remains a challenge. Ernst and Young (2014) revealed that the global percentage of women on corporate boards stood at 11% in 2013. However, they further identified that some countries had better women representation statistics in management positions. For example Norway has 40.5%, Sweden (27.0%), Finland (26.8%), the UK (20.7%) and France (18.3%). It is worrisome to note that these countries made the top five out of the forty-four countries ranked GMI ratings in 2013 globally. The first-mentioned disparities are also evident in the public

sector as well as in the political arena. A survey carried out by Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2014) revealed that women constitute about 21.8% of the parliamentarians worldwide in both the lower and upper houses and Sub Saharan Africa has representation at 22.5%. Tolmay and Morna (2010) revealed that in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), women involvement in parliament was at 26%, women in cabinet at 21% and in local government 24%. In Zimbabwe, women constitute 35% in parliament, 12% in cabinet and for local government women constitute 16% (Gender Links, 2014). This therefore implies that the biggest percentages of political and senior cabinet positions are male dominated. Abubakari and Ayuune, (2014) further asserts that women are mostly identified with domestic life while politics is viewed as a male-dominated public activity that is typically masculine in nature. Mainiero and Sullivan, (2006) Elborgh-Woytek et al (2013) proved how this trend has persisted in all spheres of African leadership strata to the extent that leadership was considered an exclusively male activity. The low representation of women in leadership and decision making roles has been changing over the past three decades through the international community's commitments to promote gender equality and the elimination of discrimination against women. As a result of treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) and the Millennium Declaration 2000, there has been an increase in women political representation in Southern Africa as compared to the low rates that existed in the 1960s (Ndlovu and Mutale 2013). Despite this positive trend of progress, overly, the average impact of these treaties is still very low in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe Country Analysis Working Report, 2014). Most countries in Southern Africa still lag behind in terms of women inclusion in decision making and leadership roles from the local, regional municipal/district and national levels both in the public and private sectors; political/public offices and parastatal bodies, commissions and other institutions in SADC

Member States (Southern Africa Development Community Report, 2013). Participation of women in decision making is regarded as a vital ingredient in national development especially in Zimbabwe. Women's involvement in leadership amplifies their decision making power, an aspect most regarded as contributing factors towards a democratic and just society. The Report on the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) was conclusive on "Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account," (United Nations, 1996, p 79). The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which was adopted by the SADC Heads of State and Government in August- 2008, is very elaborate in its provisions to ensuring equal representation and participation of women. It endeavors, by 2015, to enshrine gender equality and equity in their constitutions and ensure that these rights are not compromised by any provisions, laws or practices. The idea is to ensure that all legislative and other measures are accompanied by public awareness campaigns which demonstrate the vital link between the equal representation and participation of women and men in decision making positions, democracy, good governance and citizen participation. In addition, the protocol further details its endeavor to consider at least fifty percent of decision making positions in the public and private sectors are held by women including the use of affirmative action measures as provided for in Article 5 by the year 2015 and lastly, it mandated equal participation of women and men in decision making by putting in place policies, strategies and programs. Despite these provisions, many countries in Southern Africa are still far from achieving the equal representation in decision making and Zimbabwe is no exception (SARDC Report, 2013). ILO (2012) and Katrin Elborgh-Woytek et al, (2013) have agreed that women's participation is vital as they offer different perspectives that also promote development and overall well-being of the society. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (2009), the involvement and participation of women in local government can have significant influence on development both at national and local levels. Furthermore, the impact is also witnessed on issues that directly affect their lives and families such as access to health, education and development of necessary infrastructure. These social issues are crucial in meeting their basic needs as well as determining their quality of life for both men and women. Demographic and gender distribution studies across sub-Saharan Africa on women have shown underrepresentation in electoral politics among voters and candidates. Female candidates have often been victims to unequal 'access to and control over the basic services provided by local government' (ibid). Disparities of gender differences in leadership are still very evident across every sector in Zimbabwe. There is an intention by the government of Zimbabwe to increase women's participation in leadership and decision making to fifty percent as indicated in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013). To the contrary, this has not happened - Zimbabwe like many other African countries has taken various positive steps towards addressing the issues of gender political representation at various levels. For example, it has ratified various regional and international protocols on gender equality such as the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development which is very elaborate and specific and also the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, Zimbabwe

formulated a very comprehensive Gender Policy aimed at achieving gender parity in both private and public institutions. Even though the government is making socio-political commitments to gender equity in places of work, a number of challenges still affect women's career advancement to top leadership positions in local authorities. It is from this background that the study will focus on examining factors influencing women's career progression to leadership positions in local government authorities with a focus on Harare City Council.

## 2 LITERATURE

### 2.1 Review

Gender roles have been defined as those roles which are assigned to men and women based on their sex and usually define what is feminine and masculine. Traditional gender roles have been observed to have a very strong influence on the behaviors and decisions especially of those who seek not to be classified against certain stereotypes. As a result, people often find themselves acting in a manner that society has deemed fit for them, whether it is at home or in the workplace. This has led to the creation of stereotypes for example stereotypes that express that women work less than men or in less demanding positions or earn less, (Sandberg cited by Lahti, 2013). Women's participation in leadership has been linked to the dual roles that women have to perform as mothers and career women. Hora (2014) argues that women experience a lot of pressure of trying to balance between their socially expected domestic roles as mothers and wives and their responsibilities at the workplace. This balance is deemed necessary if women are to perform at the same level as men or even better and usually it is always the case that women have to put in much more effort. Hora (2014) further confirms that lack of time is a practical barrier affecting women's interest to participate in leadership whether in political, public and economic spheres as well as civil society sectors. These findings were similar to those of Abubakari and Ayuune (2014) who concluded that the work at home did not avail the required time for women to participate in leadership as compared to their male counterparts. Lahti (2013) also notes that there is an indication of traditional gender roles determining the type of education one will acquire. She highlights that there is "growing gender division in educational fields and in the clear distinction between industries in which women and men want to work in." As such women are likely to be found in working in certain professions and more so leading in those fields.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction

Kothari (2004) refers to research methodology as a systematic way explored by researchers to solve a research problem. The research methodology looks at the various steps taken by a researcher to gather data for a specific problem along with the logic behind them as well as the techniques employed to analyze the data. This section discusses the research design, the population, sampling techniques and data collection methods. Lastly, the data analysis methods will be explained in this chapter.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). The research design clearly explains the different steps that are taken during research in order to fulfill the objectives of the research in the best possible way (Sahu, 2013). The study adopted the case study approach. According to Robson (1993) a case study involves the development of a detailed, intensive knowledge about a single 'case' or of a small number of related cases. Therefore, the case study approach enables one to obtain in depth information on a particular group or individuals. The common features therefore include selection of single case of a situation, individual, or group of interest or concern and the information can be collected using observation, interview and documentary analysis. The research design was descriptive study design using the case study. The study made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in obtaining information. This approach enabled the researcher to amass a lot of information pertaining to the research objectives. The major weakness of the case study approach is that the findings may not be generalizable to other situations (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005).

### 3.3 RESEARCH POPULATION

Research population means a collection of well defined objects which can be people, animals, books and so on (Sahu, 2013). In this study, the population was the permanent staff of the Harare city council. The target population was estimated at 7 000 employees. For this study those with grade 9 and above were targeted and were 351 people.

### 3.4 SAMPLING

According to Robson (2013) sampling is a process by which a sample is drawn from the target population. The sample represents the population in terms of its characteristics and allows for inferences to be made to the population based on observations from the sample (Sahu, 2013). Purposive sampling and convenience sampling methods were used for this study. Patton (1990) explains that purposive sampling is a sampling technique whereby the researcher identifies respondents from which they can obtain the most information from thus enabling one to understand in depth the issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. It results in the researcher obtaining 'information rich case.' Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents for the interview such as the gender focal person (GFP) and females in leadership positions. On the other hand stratified sampling was used to identify the respondents from the various departments. This was an appropriate method as the population was divided into a number of groups or strata. It is in this case that the strata presented by the target population were the departments which include the Corporate Services and Housing, Finance, Works and Finance department. The respondents were conveniently chosen from the strata. The sample size of 116 respondents was determined from a population of 351 people. This population was derived from the Human Resources Department where information revealed stated that the target population was made up 351 people. The researcher took 33% of the target population. These departments were chosen because they offer high value jobs and have the highest concentration of knowledge workers and they offer a clear professional path through which employees

can rise to leadership positions. This group comprised of divisional heads, middle management and other departmental staff members.

**Table 1** Sample Size

Department	Total Number of Employees (N)	Sample Size (n)	Population Proportion (P)
Works	197	65	33%
Corporate Services and Housing	112	37	33%
Finance	27	9	33%
Town Clerk's office	15	5	33%
<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>351</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>33%</b>

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION

Both primary and secondary data sources were used. The primary data was gathered from the sample respondents which were chosen using the above mentioned sampling techniques. The secondary data sources were documents and books. Data from secondary sources was read and summarized in the researcher's notebook.

#### 3.5.1 Semi Structured Interviews

The experiences and opinions of the respondents were collected using semi-structured interviews. The interviews were in the form of face to face interviews which derived questions from the questionnaire used under the study. Robson (1993) highlighted that an interview is "a conversation with a purpose". In this regard the conversation had an aim of deriving useful information for the purpose of completing the study. Face to face interviews are advantageous in that they enable the researcher to modify the manner in which the questions are asked, allow further probing and follow up on interesting responses which other methods such as questionnaires cannot (Robson, 1993). The researcher made use of semi-structured and open ended interview guide in order to obtain a wealth of information of descriptions and experiences. Robson (1993) highlighted semi structured interview to be a process where the interviewer prepares a set of questions prior to the interview but can be changed at the discretion of the interviewer based on interviewer judgement on what seems most appropriate in the context of the conversation where a particular question can be left out to incorporate a new one.

#### 3.5.2 Questionnaires

The researcher prepared a questionnaire with both closed as well as open ended questions. Questionnaires are very efficient in terms of researcher time and effort and also will save time when analyzing if the questionnaire has been well constructed and also if computer coding and analysis is available (Robson, 1993). The researcher chose to use this instrument as it was convenient and enabled the researcher to obtain a lot of information from different people in various departments. It also enabled the researcher to amass information on the study area to achieve the research objectives.



**3.6 Data Analysis**

Data from the semi structured interview was categorized into themes which provided narratives of the research findings. This method entails the reduction of large volumes of data in order to emerge with information relevant to the study. The findings were integrated with quantitative data during the data analysis and presentation of the findings. Quantitative data collected using questionnaire was sorted, categorized, coded and analyzed using the statistical package for social scientists (SPSS 19). The data was presented in the form of tables and graphs.

**4 RESULTS**

**4.1 Response Rate**

The response rate of the study was 90%. This was due to the difficulties of obtaining the questionnaires from the respondents. Some of the staff was very busy and mobile during the time of data collection. A total of 104 questionnaires were returned.

**4.2 Respondent's Profile**

The study revealed that the respondents consisted of 63.5% males and 36.5% females. This shows that the departments under study had more males than females who were above grade 9 which was considered for promotions to leadership positions. The predominant age category was found to be 40-49 years constituting 39.4%. The study revealed that 77.9% of the respondents were married and 53.8% of the respondents had between 3-5 children. This implies that there majority of the respondents have both work and family commitments and therefore able to relate with the questions under study. The study also shows that the sample was comprised of highly educated respondents with 53.8 % have attained a bachelor's degree and 33.7% being holders of master's degrees. This implies that education plays a role in the recruitment and promotion of staff within the organization. The study also shows that 10.6% of the respondents had worked in the organization for a period of 5 years or less whilst 32.7% had been in the organization for a period of between 21-30 years (Table 2). This implies that the study has respondents that are knowledgeable about the organization and thus provide information that gives a snapshot of factors affecting women's progression to leadership positions.

**Table 2 Respondent's Profile**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender of respondent	Male	66	63.5	63.5	63.5
	Female	38	36.5	36.5	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
Age of respondent	Below 40 years	32	30.8	30.8	30.8
	Between 40-49 years	41	39.4	39.4	70.2
	Above 50 years	31	29.8	29.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Marital status	Single	15	14.4	14.4	14.4
	Married	81	77.9	77.9	92.3
	Divorced	4	3.8	3.8	96.2
	Widowed	4	3.8	3.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Number of children	2 children or less	44	42.3	42.3	42.3
	3-5 children	56	53.8	53.8	96.2
	6 or more children	4	3.8	3.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Academic Qualifications	PhD	3	2.9	2.9	2.9
	Masters	35	33.7	33.7	36.5
	Bachelors	56	53.8	53.8	90.4
	HND	7	6.7	6.7	97.1
	Diploma	3	2.9	2.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

Duration worked in organization	0-5 years	11	10.6	10.6	10.6
	21-30 years	23	22.1	22.1	32.7
	11-15 years	17	16.3	16.3	49.0
	16-20 years	19	18.3	18.3	67.3
	21-30 years	34	32.7	32.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>		

Department	Works	53	51.0	51.0	51.0
	Corporate Services and Housing	37	35.6	35.6	86.5
	Finance	9	8.7	8.7	95.2
	Town Clerk Office	5	4.8	4.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**4.3 INFLUENCE OF GENDER ROLES ON WOMEN'S PROGRESSION TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS**

The study sought to establish the influence of gender roles on women's progression to leadership positions and the following are some of the results that were obtained from the staff under study. The results revealed that 74% of the respondents agreed that women face more disruptions at work to attend to home emergencies or problems. The majority of women 86.3% concurred with this statement. This implies that women take off days or hours away from work more than their male counterparts in order to attend to family emergencies and issues (Table 3)

**Table 3** Opinions on who faces more disruptions at work due to home emergencies

Variable	Sex of respondent				
	Male	Female	Total		
Women face more disruptions at work to attend to family emergencies or problems	Yes	n	44	33	77
		%	66.7%	66.8%	74.0%
	No	n	22	5	27
		%	33.3%	13.2%	26.0%
<b>Total</b>		n	<b>66</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>104</b>
		%	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.3.2 Responsibility to attend to family issues

The study showed that 39.4% of the respondents agreed that it was the woman's responsibility to attend to emergencies at home, 52.6% of these were women. On the other hand 33.3% and 16.7% of the men disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, with the statement (Table 4). This implies that women view home issues as their responsibility, this is supported by the fact that it was noted that women face more disruptions at work to attend to family issues. Also it was noted through the interviews responses that 5 out of the 7 respondents reported that it was only natural for society to expect a woman to be the first one to attend to a home emergency. "If a child gets sick, it is usually the woman who is expected to first attend to the situation at home; some people just do not understand it when you do not. They start questioning your motherhood and you are seen as an uncaring mother" expressed one respondent.

**Table 4** Responsibility to attend to family issues

Variable	Sex of respondent				
	Male	Female	Total		
The responsibility to attend to family emergencies and issues at home lies with the woman	Strongly Agree	n	7	6	13
		%	10.6%	15.8%	12.5%
	Agree	n	21	20	41
		%	31.8%	52.6%	39.4%
	Neutral	n	5	1	6
		%	7.6%	2.6%	5.8%
	Disagree	n	22	11	33
		%	33.3%	28.9%	31.7%
Strongly Disagree	n	11	0	11	
	%	16.7%	0%	10.6%	
<b>Total</b>		n	<b>66</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>104</b>
		%	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.3.3 Pregnancy and women's ability to lead

It was noted that the majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that pregnancy limits women's ability to lead. The results showed that 49% disagreed whilst another 24% strongly disagreed. Of those that disagreed 50% were men and 47.4% were women. Only a small percentage of women (7.9%) strongly agreed (Table 5). This implies that pregnancy and raising children is not seen as an impediment to women's duties and responsibilities at the workplace if in leadership positions.

**Table 5** Pregnancy and women's ability to lead

Variable	Sex of respondent				
	Male	Female	Total		
Pregnancy and raising children limits women's ability to lead	Strongly Agree	n	4	3	7
		%	6.1%	7.9%	6.7%
	Agree	n	8	7	15
		%	12.1%	18.4%	14.4%
Neutral	n	5	1	6	
	%	7.6%	2.6%	5.8%	
Disagree	n	33	18	51	
	%	50.0%	47.4%	49.0%	
Strongly Disagree	n	16	9	25	
	%	24.2%	23.7%	24.0%	
<b>Total</b>		n	<b>66</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>104</b>
		%	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

#### 4.3.4 Departments/sections with more women

Findings from the study revealed that there were more women than men in some departments and sections. The results showed that the health department (94.2%) and the amenities section (74%) had more women than men. Other departments mentioned included the social services department with 26.9% of the respondent (Table 6). Responses from the interviews also indicated that the health department and amenities division was observed to have the most number of women.

**Table 6** Departments/sections with more women

Variable	Responses		Percent of Cases	
	N	Percent		
Departments/sections with more women than men	Health	98	44.7%	94.2%
	Amenities	77	35.2%	74.0%
	Social Services	28	12.8%	26.9%
	Town planning	1	.5%	1.0%
	Human capital	8	3.7%	7.7%
	Town clerk	1	.5%	1.0%
	Legal	3	1.4%	2.9%
	Public safety	1	.5%	1.0%
	Finance	2	.9%	1.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>210.6%</b>

#### 4.3.5 Reasons why there are more women than men in other sections/departments

The reasons cited for this observation were that there were socially constructed stereotypes thus women were applying for jobs in those specific departments because that is what society has defined as jobs appropriate for women (49%), nature of duties in the sections were more suited for women than for men (26.9%), behavioral traits of women suit the job (26.9%) hence women have been considered more for the jobs. For example, women are considered as caring and nurturing and this has been associated with their role as nurses. Some of the respondents noted that they were more women in some of the departments due to deliberate work policy to recruit women in those departments (13.5%) (Table 7). This implies that women have been to some extent conditioned to apply for those specific jobs because they are socially acceptable and it would be easy for them to fit in, furthermore these stereotypes have also influenced their

choice of qualifications which then affect the jobs that they select. On the other hand, it was also noted that men shun from these jobs because they are too feminine (5.8%). Further interrogation through interviews on the reasons why there were more women than men in these sections revealed that stereotypes have been perpetuated as to what women can and cannot do. This is to the extent that even their abilities are defined for them. One male respondent explained by stating that often women are not expected to operate heavy machinery and as such people are shocked when they see them operating heavy machinery. This is because they think that they are unable to do it. Some highlighted that these gender role expectation had influenced women's academic choices and hence their careers paths. "I guess this is why we have more female nurses and less female engineers. But I see this is slowly changing," mentioned one participant. Others also mentioned that their earlier generations had been greatly influenced by these gender role expectations but were looking forward to change as the current generation was having more women undertaking academic courses that were previously male dominated such as engineering. From the interview responses, the health department, social services section as well as the amenities section stood out to be the sections where there were more women than men. Reasons for this status were almost a consensus. It was explained that the amenities section required minimum entry points and furthermore since it involved a lot of cleaning, women by virtue of their domestic duties at home, those with low educational qualifications would naturally apply for those jobs. Men on the other hand were few in this section because some of them would shun from it and say that it is mostly a woman's role. One participant elaborated by saying that men would opt for more masculine sections like the quarry and roads. Thus, in the end one would progress in their career based on the section they would have started in. One male participant, indicated that few women were now breaking the barrier and entering into these male dominated sections. Another participant acknowledged that there was deliberate exercise under the Centers of Excellence program to incorporate women in previously male dominated divisions within the local authorities. Most women were identified to have joined the health department as a result of their caring, nurturing and motherly qualities which were associated with nursing profession. These fields were rated as feminine and therefore more suitable for women, and also explaining why the male nurses had been few. Another participant also commented that the gender disparities witnessed in the local authorities divisions could be attributed to deliberate action of the colonial fathers that placed women in the health departments. It was interesting to note that some felt that it was deliberate work policy to recruit more women in the health section and social services as opposed to some sections in other departments. As result of this, the pattern would still follow that women's career progression was often limited to the departments they had more access to join in.

**Table 7** Reasons why there are more women than men

Variable		Responses		Percent of Cases
		n	Percent	
Why there are more women in those departments or sections	socially constructed stereotypes	51	42.5%	49.0%
	behavioral traits of women suit job	17	14.2%	16.3%
	nature of duties	28	23.3%	26.9%
	offensive to men/men shun them	6	5.0%	5.8%
	lighty duty	2	1.7%	1.9%
	minimum education qualification required	2	1.7%	1.9%
	deliberate policy to recruit women	14	11.7%	13.5%
<b>Total</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>115.4%</b>

#### 4.3.6 Opinions on whether there are some departments that are not suitable for women

The study revealed that 56.7% were of the opinion that there are no sections or departments that were not suitable for women to work in, whilst 43.3% were of the opinion that some sections are not suitable for women to work in (Table 8). These results suggest that the majority view women as capable of working in every department and section. As to the question of whether there are some departments or sections that were not suitable for women to work in, the interview responses were varied. Points were made as to what entry level the women were going to join the department. In the department of works, in some divisions, where employees were subject to heavy manual work were deemed unfit for women due to their lack of physique.

**Table 8** Opinions on whether there are departments/ sections not suitable for women

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Are there any departments/ sections that are not suitable for women to work in?	Yes	45	43.3	43.3
	No	59	56.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

#### 4.3.7 Selection of women to be in leadership positions in those departments

Findings from the study revealed that 46.2% were of the view that it is to a moderate extent that women will be selected for a leadership position. Of those that noted that it is to a moderate extent that women will be selected, 52.5% had noted that there were no departments that women cannot work in. On the other hand, 60% of those who were of the opinion that there were other departments that were not suitable for women in revealed that it was to a low extent that women would be selected for leadership positions in those departments (Table 9). This implies that it is unlikely that a woman will be



considered for a leadership position in sections that are viewed as not suitable for them to work in. This may be as a result of bias in favor of men or it would seem unusual for a woman to be in a leadership position in male dominated section or department. Interview responses also indicated that it was possible to a moderate extent in the case of external recruitment to a supervisory position. Ascending from the lowest rank to leadership position was viewed as a big challenge, as promotions were merit based and chances were that the men would do better in those sections that were male dominated. However, one female respondent was of a different view, stating that women can do all the jobs that men can do in that local authority. Another female respondent was of the view that a woman should not take up leadership positions in some divisions not because they are incapable but because of the nature of the work environment. She was of the view that women might not be able to handle the kind of "workshop language" that was used in those sections. Furthermore, she was of the impression that a woman would face more resistance or lack support from her subordinates because her presence would take away their freedom of expression.

**Table 9** Opinion on whether women will be selected for leadership position

Variable	Are there any department that are not suitable for women to work in?			
		Yes	No	Total
Extent to which they will be selected for a leadership position	Great Extent	n 1	19	20
		% 2.2%	32.2%	19.2%
	Moderate Extent	n 17	31	48
		% 37.8%	52.5%	46.2%
Total	Low Extent	n 27	9	36
		% 60.0%	15.3%	34.6%
		n 45	59	104
		% 100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

## 5 Conclusion

The study revealed women often face more disruptions at work to attend to family issues and responsibilities at home and that it was viewed as women's responsibility to attend to issues at home. As such women's greatest challenge was the need to balance the domestic responsibilities as well as the work responsibilities. As a result women would end up prioritizing family over work. Research findings also revealed that because men faced fewer disruptions it did not mean that they were reliable leaders. Interview responses clearly showed that balance between work and family demanded a lot of courage and support if one was to excel in their careers. Traditionally expected roles for women at home therefore posed as a limitation if one could not balance the two. Also it was revealed that women at the end of the day would end up prioritizing their families at the expense of focusing on career advancement. Findings from both interviews and questionnaires also revealed that there were more departments and divisions that had more women and these departments include the health department (94%), the amenities division (74%) and social services division (26.9%). This observation was attributed to socially constructed stereotypes of what was deemed fit for men, nature of duties,

behavioral characteristic of women suiting the job description as well as deliberate policy by the organization to recruit women in those departments. It was further revealed in the interviews gender role expectations had also influenced women academic choices and resultantly their career paths. For example, because of the caring nature of women and gentleness it was more acceptable for women to be in the health sector and because there were more women in those sections it was highly expected to find them in leadership positions. It was therefore expected that the same pattern would follow that women's career's progression to leadership positions was often limited to the departments they had more access to join in. The study findings also showed that 60% of those that were of the opinion that there are some departments that were not suitable for women to work in expressed that it was to a very low extent that a woman will be selected for a leadership position. Based on the study it was concluded that societal expectations of the role of the woman at home placed women in position whereby they found it difficult to balance between work and family life. Some domestic responsibilities were overwhelming to the extent that women would forego aspiring for leadership positions which are more demanding in their responsibilities. The current outlook of Harare City council in terms of gender distribution in various departments was also ascribed to traditionally expected gender roles as indicated by women's career choice and a deliberate exercise to have women in those particular departments. As a result they were few women in some divisions the ripple effect was that a man was selected to be in the leadership position.

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