HIRING PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ZIMBABWE: INTO THE GENDER EQUALITY LENS

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ABSTRACT

The presence of male dominance within organisations has been observed to contribute to the establishment of a culture and ethos that symbolically align with masculine traits. Consequently, this gendered organisational environment poses challenges for women seeking acceptance upon applying for employment positions. Hence, the workplace has occasionally been characterised as an unwelcoming environment for women as a result of the various manifestations of gender disparities that exist. The study examines the hiring practices within Zimbabwe's higher education institutions, analysing them through the lens of gender equality. The research adopted a pragmatic research philosophy. The initial two objectives were accomplished through the utilisation of quantitative data, whereas the latter two objectives were achieved through the utilisation of qualitative data. The data collection process involved the utilisation of a simple random sampling technique, which facilitated the selection of a sample consisting of 60 participants from a remote learning institution. A survey was administered to individuals employed in the management, administration, and lecturing departments in order to provide a comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon. In the context of qualitative data collection, it is worth noting that data saturation was achieved at the 10th interview, leading to the cessation of further interviews. In terms of recruitment practices, the study found that there is online recruitment, external recruitment and formal recruitment processes in higher and tertiary education institutions in Zimbabwe. The study also concludes that traditional recruitment and internal recruitment have been neglected in these institutions. In terms of selection practices interviews were found to be the most frequently used in higher education institutions. However, negative selection practices were found such as more men being promoted and occupying leadership positions. Lack of affirmative action, limited qualifications and experience, digital divide and subjectivity of interviews, were found to be challenges that women face with regards to hiring practices in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe.

Key words: higher education; gender equality; hiring practices; recruitment, selection, women academics

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The topic of gender equality in the workplace is of significant importance and has garnered considerable attention in academic and professional circles. The influence of gender on an individual's ability to get employment, remain in employment, and achieve success inside an organisation is disproportionately significant. According to Carter et al. (2015), the concept of

gender equality entails addressing the existing disparities that systematically place women in a position of disadvantage and powerlessness on a worldwide scale. Gender roles have a detrimental impact on women's social and economic prospects, as well as their participation in decision-making processes and access to employment opportunities. In contemporary society, there persists an enduring expectation that women bear the primary duty of managing family affairs and caring for children. Consequently, this situation presents a quandary for women seeking to engage in gainful employment. Scholarly research has demonstrated that the integration of women into the labour force has a positive effect on both social and economic welfare (Maceira, 2017; Minasyan, Zenker, Klasen & Vollmer, 2019). Conversely, the exclusion of women from the labour market and managerial roles has been found to have a detrimental impact on overall labour productivity (Cuberes & Teignier, 2014).

Despite the fact that women constitute at least 50% of the world's population, their ongoing struggle for equality remains a matter of significant concern on local, regional, and international levels, thus necessitating an urgent solution. Despite the European Union (EU) countries being seen as prominent global frontrunners in terms of gender equality, the European Commission (EC) notes that advancements in this area have been sluggish, and gender disparities continue to persist across all sectors. According to the European Commission (2019), women hold a mere 22% of leadership positions at higher education institutions at the European Union (EU) level. Additionally, women make up only 20% of the leadership roles within research boards. Despite the equitable distribution of the world's population between men and women, with women constituting around half, and their significant representation in the global labour force, accounting for over 40 percent, gender disparity persists in the current day (Edwardsson, 2012; World Development Report, 2012). According to Dimovski (2021), prior to the onset of the pandemic, the global rate of women's workplace involvement stood at approximately 47%. Furthermore, Dimovski (2021) observed that the rate at which women enter the workforce has been characterised by a gradual pace.

This paper is organised as follows: the next section presents the background to the study, next it is on literature review on hiring practices and gender equality, followed by a section on the methodology used, the next section are the findings and discussions and lastly the conclusion.

1.1 The portrayal and inclusion of women in workplace environments

Within the realm of academia, there has been a notable rise in the representation of women occupying high-level managerial roles across diverse nations. Although the aforementioned progress holds benefits for the organisation, it is important to note that scholarly research indicates that it should not be regarded as conclusive proof of the elimination of the "glass ceiling" phenomenon (Peterson, 2016). The phenomenon can be attributed to the concurrent reduction in status and prestige associated with senior jobs, which has resulted in a decreased appeal for men (Deem et al., 2000).

To get insight into the dynamics of gender in recruiting procedures and gender disparities within universities, it is crucial to acknowledge the concept of "sticky floors." This metaphor symbolises the phenomenon of women being disproportionately concentrated in vulnerable and low-ranking positions within the academic hierarchy. The presence of a "glass ceiling" or a "sticky floor" has a significant impact on women who are striving to enter the workforce or advance to higher-level positions inside organisations. These individuals in academia are

engaged in temporary and short-term employment agreements to fulfill essential academic responsibilities, like teaching and doing research work. Similar to the concepts of "glass ceilings" and "glass cliffs," the notion of "sticky floors" also highlights the concealed obstacles that impede women's access to formal employment. The workforce situated at the lower end of the academic hierarchy, characterised by a significant presence of women, is prone to get trapped in a cycle of precarious employment, hence facing limited prospects for attaining stable positions, (O'Keefe & Courtois, 2019).

The invisibility of these hurdles stems from the fact that organisational regulations may purport to provide women with an equitable chance to participate in recruitment and promotion processes alongside males. Nevertheless, the existence of informal norms and practices can impede women's advancement to top positions, as they encounter a barrier that restricts their progress (Teelken et al., 2019). The lack of female representation among academics and university rectors is a prominent and conspicuous display of gender disparities within the academic field.

The emergence of hierarchical structures occurred in a manner that was influenced by gender, as women were often recruited as a source of inexpensive labour and were expected to occupy subordinate job posts. According to the findings of Witz and Savage (1992), the inclusion of women in these occupations facilitated the expedited advancement of male clerks. Historically, career structures were pre-established with a bias towards men, while the advancement of men's careers was often aided by the presence of female supporters. According to Clavero and Galligan's (2020) research, there is a lack of emphasis on the influence of academic power in the establishment of gender inequities across various institutional levels. Consequently, organisational culture has a significant role in the continuation of gender disparities within these contexts.

According to Paterson's (2019) research, the available South African national data pertaining to the distribution of male and female university academic staff posts reveals that in 2016, the proportion of female professors was a mere 27.5%. The statistical data additionally indicates that a significant proportion of female academics are concentrated in the lower ranks of the lecturer position, comprising 53.3% of the total. In the context of Zimbabwe, it is observed that women account for around 52% of the total population, although they continue to face challenges in accessing opportunities within the official labour market. One study conducted by Maunganidze (2020) revealed that female lawyers encounter workplace prejudice rooted in cultural limitations. In Zimbabwe, the 20 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) continue to exhibit a notable gender disparity, as men predominantly occupy leadership roles within these institutions. This is evident by the overwhelming majority of men holding positions of authority, with only one private university and one state university having females as Vice-Chancellor and five PVC representatives in five universities.

1.2 Zimbabwean laws that foster gender equality in workplace practices

According to Cornwall and Rivas (2015), the United Nations (UN) has prioritised historical debates on gender equality, which has hindered the progress of a transformative agenda aimed at implementing policies that address global justice problems. The fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) established by the United Nations (UN) is focused on attaining gender equality and promoting the empowerment of women and girls (UN Women, 2017).

Zimbabwe is an active participant in various regional and international agreements aimed at promoting gender equality. Notably, the country is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1991), the Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the Equal Remuneration Convention, the Convention on Prohibition of Discrimination in Occupations, the Beijing Declaration on the Platform for Action (1995), and the 1986 Optional Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa. The objective of these policies is to eliminate the legal and many other obstacles that hinder the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in professional work settings. Additionally, these policies seek to rectify gender disparities in decision-making procedures and enhance the consideration of gender-related aspects in employment, economic, and other societal domains.

There has been a notable surge in efforts to establish equitable possibilities through legislative measures, resulting in a corresponding focus on policy development pertaining to gender equality within organisational contexts. The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) has prioritised the development of gender equality, as seen by the inclusion of provisions in its Constitution. Specifically, Sections 56, 65, and 80 of the Constitution acknowledge the equality of all individuals and clearly prohibit any kind of discrimination based on sex or gender. In an endeavor to tackle the challenges related to gender equality, the Zimbabwean government has developed and implemented numerous statutes and policies aimed at promoting gender equality. The Gender Affirmative Action Policy implemented in 1992, and the National Gender Policy in effect from 2013 to 2017 exemplify efforts aimed at eliminating gender discrimination and disparities across several domains of life and development. Section 5 of the Labour Relations Act 28:01 encompasses provisions that safeguard employees from discriminatory practices pertaining to various aspects of employment, including but not limited to job advertisements, recruitment processes, job creation and classification, wage and salary determination, career advancement or promotion, and other relevant employment practices. In light of the aforementioned statement, a majority of organisations implemented policies and strategies aimed at mitigating gender disparities within their respective entities. Nonetheless, it is evident that the practical outcomes have been limited, as Zimbabwe continues to exhibit a low ranking in terms of gender equality, as indicated by its Gender Inequality Index (GII) of 0.583, which remains significantly far from the desired value of zero.

A comprehensive examination of the historical literature pertaining to Zimbabwe, conducted by various researchers such as Chingarande, Muchabaiwa, and Muyambo (2023), Chinyani (2010), Chirimuuta (2006), Mawere (2013), Mbetu-Nvenga and Kudenga (2016), and Nzvenga, Rutoro, et al. (2013), among others, reveals a significant amount of scholarly discourse and deliberation concerning gender inequality within the education sector. This discourse primarily centers around the curriculum, student enrollment, and the representation of women in leadership positions (Chabaya et al., 2009). Nevertheless, there is a lack of comprehensive literature that examines the hiring practices in HEIs from the perspective of gender equality. Considering the pervasive and entrenched existence of gender disparity within the academic realm, this study aims to further the discourse surrounding gender parity in academic hiring procedures and advance concrete ways to address inequality within HEIs workplaces.

1.3 Research Objectives

i. To determine recruitment practices used in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe.
ii. To determine selection practices used in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe.
iii. To explore challenges faced by women with regards to hiring practices used by higher education institutions in Zimbabwe.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptualizing gender equality

The concept of gender equality refers to the principle that all individuals, regardless of their gender, should have equal rights, opportunities, and treatment in all aspects of life, including social, economic, and political spheres. Gender equality is primarily concerned with establishing equitable conditions for both women and men, wherein their rights, treatment, responsibilities, and opportunities are not contingent upon their biological sex (Arat, 2015). Gender equality encompasses the notion that all individuals possess the freedom to cultivate their unique capabilities and exercise autonomy in decision-making, unencumbered by the constraints imposed by gender stereotypes, inflexible gender roles, and prejudiced attitudes. The assertion posits that gender equality does not imply complete sameness between men and women, but rather emphasises the need to ensure equal employment rights, responsibilities, and professional advancement possibilities regardless of one's gender at birth. Gender equality in short becomes the state in which an organisation's employment practices are free from any form of discrimination based on gender.

According to Matsa and Miller (2013), the makeup of top management teams and its impact on hiring practices suggest that companies with a higher representation of women in top management positions exhibit a reduced propensity to engage in staff layoffs. The perpetuation of the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions can be facilitated due to the influence of the gender of organisational leaders on the presence of gender discrimination, gender-supportive policies, and a climate that promotes gender diversity within the organization (Ostroff et al., 2012).

2.2 Hiring practices

The process of hiring serves as the initial point of entry for both males and females into the labour market. Hiring processes involve the process of recruiting and selecting individuals who express interest in employment with the organisation. The domains of recruitment and selection have gained notoriety due to their susceptibility to prejudice and subjective biases, leading to potential violations of anti-discrimination legislation. The Zimbabwean, legislative provisions prohibit all forms of discrimination within the context of employment, encompassing both direct and indirect manifestations. Nevertheless, the identification and eradication of indirect discrimination pose greater challenges in organisations. According to Pounder and Young (1996), the alignment between job expectations and recruitment and selection criteria has a positive impact on the legal defensibility of the search process, as well as the reliability and validity of selection judgments.

According to Watson (1994), recruitment is a series of activities undertaken by organisations to actively seek, engage, and attract potential candidates, followed by the evaluation of their suitability for appointment. The recruitment process encompasses the establishment of job

specifications, the attraction of potential candidates, and the subsequent selection of individuals for the position (Armstrong, 2014). According to Mokoditoa (2011), a crucial aspect of the recruitment process is the presence of a meticulously designed policy that clearly delineates the guidelines and objectives to be attained inside an organisation. The recruitment process is influenced by both internal and external factors. Internal factors encompass elements within the business, such as its culture, while external ones pertain to the demand and supply of human resources in the broader context. Organisations can use sources of recruiting, both internal and external sources, based on their specific requirements and objectives. However, as Muscalu (2015) suggests, it is advisable to utilise multiple sources in order to enhance the likelihood of the organisation obtaining the most highly qualified candidate for the position.

The primary objective of the selection process is to carefully evaluate and identify suitable job candidates from a pool of applicants that has been previously established. This process is designed to align with the goals and objectives set by management, while also adhering to the prevailing legal provisions in place (Catano et al., 2010). On the contrary, selection is primarily focused on forecasting the individuals who will provide the most suitable contribution to the organisation, both presently and in the long term (Hackett, 1991). The process of selection involves the careful evaluation and consideration of candidates for a specific work position. This is achieved via the utilisation of various methods such as interviews, assessment centers, and exams. The primary objective of this process is to exclude individuals who are not appropriate for the position and ultimately identify the most qualified and suitable candidates. The significance of meticulous selection processes is underscored by the legal ramifications associated with inept employment practices that may lead to unjust discrimination against protected groups.

2.3 The hiring processes

Grobler et al. (2019) define the hiring process as the locating, attracting and selecting of applicants to fill job openings. Torres-Coronas et al. (2016) contend that the hiring process involves numerous steps to ensure that the best candidate fills the job opening. According to Taylor (2015), the hiring process involves attracting qualified job seekers to form an applicant pool, in which the best suitable candidate is to be selected. The employee appointment processes involve job analysis, job description, job specification, posting the job advertisement, interviewing and making a job offer (Price, 2021).

Job analysis is a process of investigating the tasks, responsibilities and duties that make up a job (Grobler et al., 2019). It involves analysing the level of decision-making, working conditions, and machines operated on (Taylor, 2015). A number of tools can be used to come up with a job analysis (Armstrong, 2019). Some of the tools include observation, interviews and questionnaires (Price, 2021). Gomolski (2020) notes that job analysis is important in the employee appointment processes as its information helps in the creation of job advertisement that include job descriptions and job specifications. Armstrong (2014) contends that job analysis can improve recruitment decisions.

A job description is a written summary of activities performed on a job (Grobler et al., 2019). Price (2021) argues that a job description may also include information on working conditions, reporting structure and equipment the job incumbent will use. Tyson and York (2020) claim

that a job description is important in the employee appointment processes as it will be included in the job advertisement.

Storey (2017) notes that job specifications outline the specific knowledge, skills and abilities that are required to perform a job. According to Armstrong (2014), a job specification may also include personal and physical characteristics that a job seeker should possess in order to fill the vacant post. Grobler et al. (2019) contend that a job specification is essential in the employee appointment process as it will be included in the job advertisement.

Armstrong (2014) notes that posting a job advertisement includes drafting a combination of job specifications and job descriptions. Price (2021) also argues that the job advertisement should be attractive and explanatory to the job seeker. Armstrong (2014) shares that the recruiter should choose the best medium to communicate the job opening. Some of the sources include newspapers, radios, televisions and e-recruitment tools. Grobler et al. (2019) posit that for the effectiveness of the employee appointment processes, the organisation should use a recruitment tool which is readily accessed by job seekers. Boxall et al. (2018) suggest that after receiving applications the organisation should shortlist candidates for interviews. Koo & Skinner (2015) contend that interviews are a popular method of selecting the best candidate. They involve a physical dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee, (Armstrong 2014).

Boxall et al. (2018) share that an interview panel which includes the immediate supervisor and the human resources management team carries out interviews. Interviews are criticised for being expensive and time consuming (Price, 2021). Sparrow et al. (2014) share that after the interviews have been conducted the organisation makes a decision about the best candidate to fill in the job opening. The offer usually includes the job position and the benefits the job incumbent will receive (Gomolski, 2020). The candidate will either accept or decline the job offer (Armstrong, 2014). In case the candidate declines, the organisation should offer the job to the next best candidate (Price, 2021). According to Boxal et al. (2018) once the job offer has been accepted the hiring process is complete.

2.4 Gender equality in hiring practices

Varying studies employing different approaches have demonstrated that women encounter individualised discrimination during the selection process (Goldberg, 1968; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974). The findings of multiple meta-analyses indicate that in the context of formal e-typed jobs, which are predominantly male-dominated and perceived as being suitable for men, female candidates are subjected to more negative evaluations and are less frequently recommended for employment when compared to male candidates who are matched in relevant characteristics (Davison & Burke, 2000; Olian et al., 1988; Tosi & Einbender, 1985). Bain and Cummings (2000) argue that informal hiring procedures at higher organisational levels represent a significant area where discrimination and prejudice against women can infiltrate an organisation.

The recruitment of highly skilled individuals, regardless of gender, enables organisations to access a diverse and highly capable talent pool. Organisations that espouse a value proposition centered on gender equality are more inclined to attract highly skilled individuals who are attuned to this issue and prioritise gender equality policies when evaluating potential workers.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the overrepresentation of men in interview panels often leads to distorted gender composition, as highlighted by Sheltzer and Smith (2014).

Despite significant advancements in addressing gender inequality, gender bias and discrimination continue to impede progress toward achieving gender equality in academia (Eagly, 2018). Prior to the initiation of job applications, bias is present and sustained by individuals of both genders through networking and gatekeeping behaviors (Van den Brink, Benschop & Jansen, 2010, Milkman, Akinola & Chugh 2015).

The phenomenon of gender inequality in the recruiting process might manifest itself even prior to the evaluation of applications (Nielsen, 2016). Institutional discrimination can be defined as the presence of human resource policies that exhibit intrinsic bias against a specific set of individuals, irrespective of their job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and performance. Furthermore, it has been observed that gender discrimination may occur when a test is incorporated into the selection battery and exhibits significant gender disparities (Hough et al., 2001).

One instance of gendered oppression within organisational practices is evident in job descriptions for positions of authority that prioritise masculine traits such as aggression, independence, and competitiveness while neglecting other traits that may be equally or more pertinent to the job requirements. The hiring process is susceptible to biases, as evidenced by research conducted by Hardy, Tey, Cyrus-Lai, Martell, Olstad and Uhlmann (2020). One such bias is the gender congruity bias, which results in a preference for male candidates in sectors dominated by men, as highlighted by Koch, D'Mello, and Sackett (2015). Additionally, Haslam and Ryan (2008) found that women are more likely to be hired for positions with a higher risk of failure, further exacerbating ascriptive inequality.

In Shepherd's (2017) study on the appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors (PVCs) in pre-1992 universities, it was observed that institutions exhibit a tendency to be risk-averse. As a result, they seek to mitigate this risk by choosing individuals for PVC positions who have prior experience at this level in other academic institutions. According to Shepherd, experience emerges as the primary criterion for assessing quality, but this perspective hinders the thorough evaluation of a broader range of candidates. The survey also reveals that women are more likely to be appointed to PVC jobs via internal than external competition. This phenomenon can be attributed to the propensity of recruitment panels to exhibit risk aversion, leading them to select women candidates whose abilities and qualifications are already familiar to the organisation. The study conducted by Van den Brink et al. (2010) about the hiring of professors provides evidence that despite the presence of comprehensive institutional norms and protocols aimed at promoting transparency and accountability in the hiring process, these measures are shown to have notable constraints in their implementation.

The imperative for enhanced transparency and accountability in hiring procedures is frequently regarded as a means of mitigating the potential for gender prejudice and discriminatory behaviours. The majority of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have established and well-defined human resources (HR) policies and processes to govern the process of staff recruitment and selection. However, the presence of bias remains evident, as exemplified by the sluggish advancement in addressing the disparity in senior positions between genders. This implies that

while well-defined human resources policies and procedures are essential tools for attaining more gender equality, they are insufficient on their own.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs the liberal feminist theory, which posits that gender disparities are not biologically determined, hence suggesting that women and men exhibit little differences. If there are no inherent differences between women and men, it follows that they should not be subject to differential treatment under legal or organisational policies. It is imperative to ensure gender equality by granting women equal rights, educational opportunities, and access to employment. Consequently, organisations should adopt inclusive hiring practices that accommodate women. The primary contribution of liberal feminism is in its elucidation of the extent to which this particular perspective attributes women's societal position to unequal rights or artificial obstacles that impede their involvement in the public sphere, extending beyond the realms of family and household. According to Beasley (1999), liberal feminists prioritise the public domain and emphasise legal, political, and institutional struggles aimed at securing individuals' rights to participate in the marketplace.

Employers are obligated by law to ensure an acceptable level of workforce diversity by hiring a sufficient number of individuals from various backgrounds. Additionally, companies are required to provide equitable compensation and opportunities for career advancement to all employees. There exists a prevailing assumption of gender equality, wherein women are expected to possess the same capabilities and opportunities as men, enabling them to engage in activities traditionally associated with men. Wolf (2007) argues that women should actively embrace and pursue many forms of success, including financial success, which are present in society. This can be achieved by ensuring equal access to opportunities traditionally associated with men. Liberal feminism posits that women, despite lacking inherent disparities from men, encounter systemic barriers that restrict their access to various possibilities solely due to their gender. Sex, as a result, presents an unjustified form of disadvantage. One obstacle that hinders competition and the acknowledgment of merit. Therefore, the role of women in society may be seen as a justifiable topic for governmental intervention. Wodak (2005) posits that a consensus exists among the majority of feminists about the fundamental tenets of gender equality. This consensus maintains that both men and women should be granted equitable rights and opportunities in all aspects of life, without any form of differential valuation.

4.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a mixed methodology to investigate the research questions at hand. The data collection process involved the utilisation of a simple random sampling technique, whereby a sample size of 60 respondents was selected from a remote learning institution. Data was collected by distributing a questionnaire to the respondents. The data was subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics. Interview data was analysed using thematic analysis. The researchers requested permission from the authorities at the University to conduct the study. Participation in the study was voluntary. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were instructed to refrain from including their names on the questionnaires. Moreover, the participants were provided with the guarantee that their responses would be treated as confidential and utilised solely for the purpose of this research endeavour.

5.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents and gives an interpretation of the results according to the objectives they align with.

5.1 Demographic Data

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Gender	
Male	44% (n=24)
Female	56% (n=31)
Age	
18-30 years	22% (n=12)
31-40 years	56% (n=31)
41-50 years	16% (n=9)
51years & above	6% (n=3)
Educational Level	
A' Level & Below	5% (n=3)
Undergraduate	13% (n=7)
Masters	60% (n=33)
PhD	22% (n=12)
Experience	
0-5 years	51% (n=28)
6-10 years	33% (n=18)
11 years & above	16% (n=9)

Source: Primary Data (2023)

Response rate of the study was 92%, as 55 questionnaires were completed. Table 1 shows that women were dominant in this research. However, many represented 44% of the respondents which is a statistically significant figure. Participants aged between 31-40 years were the majority. Masters' qualification was the frequent highest educational level in this study, and most participants have 0-5 years' experience. However, it should be noted that the demographics were diverse, each demographic had a representation. This means that the study results are generalizable to the wider population.

5.2 Recruitment Practices

The first objective of the study was to determine recruitment practices used in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics on recruitment and selection practices used in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe.

Table 2: Recruitment practices in higher education institutions

Constraint	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
There are formal recruitment practices	4.8	.011	High
There is external recruitment	4.7	.023	High
There is internal recruitment	3.2	.099	Medium
Use of online recruitment (website, online job sites)	4.9	.072	High
Use of traditional recruitment (newspapers, radios)	2.2	.047	Low

Source: SPSS v28.0

Table 2 shows that the use of online recruitment is the most frequent recruitment practice in higher and tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe. This has a mean of 4.9 signifying that respondents strongly agreed that universities use online recruitment in inviting job applicants. This has a low standard deviation meaning that respondents agreed on this variable. This corresponds to the finding that there is limited use of traditional recruitment tools such as newspapers and radios, as this had the lowest mean of 2.2, indicating that respondents disagreed with this practice. This deviates from Mawere (2013) who identifies traditional recruitment as still relevant. This divergence may be an increase in embracing technology especially given the COVID-19 pandemic which stimulated organisations to avoid traditional techniques but rely on digital and technology tools. Therefore, the use of online recruitment was found as a major recruitment practice in higher education institutions. This means that institutions are making use of their websites, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp, and online job sites such as Vacancy Mail to advertise their job openings.

The second recruitment practice identified in this study was that there are formal recruitment processes in place in higher education institutions. This had a mean of 4.8 meaning that respondents strongly agreed, and a low standard deviation signifying unanimity amongst study respondents. This finding diverges from Mokoditoa (2011) who found loopholes in recruitment policies in the recruitment of academic policies. This finding shows that Zimbabwean universities are using formalised recruitment policies for consistency purposes. The other recruitment practice earthed by this study is the use of external recruitment. This had a mean of 4.7 showing that respondents strongly agreed. This finding is consistent with the neutrality exhibited by respondents on the use of internal recruitment. Again, this is divergent from the views by Curtis et al (2012) in Poland that academic institutions emphasise staff development and use internal recruitment. In Zimbabwe, universities are relying on the external labour market to fill their vacancies.

5.3 Selection Practices

The second objective was aimed at establishing selection practices in the higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. Table 3 displays descriptive statistics for selection practices in universities in Zimbabwe.

Table 3: Selection practices in higher education institutions

Constraint	Mean	Std. Deviation	Level
There is use of interviews	4.9	.027	High
There is the use of psychometrics	2.4	.033	High
Selection mostly favours men over women	3.3	.078	Medium
Promotion mostly favours men and is not based on merit	3.1	.013	Medium
Most leadership positions are occupied by men	4.2	.022	High

Source: SPSS v28.0

Table 3 shows that interviews are the most used selection tools as opposed to psychometrics. Interviews had a mean of 4.9, signifying those respondents strongly agreed whereas psychometrics scored a mean of 2.4 illustrating that respondents disagreed with this selection tool. All these factors had a low standard deviation showing agreement among respondents. This is diverging from findings by Shepherd (2017) whose study identified the use of a mixture of psychometrics and interviews.

However, this study establishes that psychometrics has been shunned in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. Respondents were neutral in relation to the question of whether selection in higher education institutions favours men over women. This means that 50% of respondents believe that there is favoritism in selection practices, while the other 50% believe that there is no favouritism. This is contrary to findings by Mokoditoa (2011) who established that academic recruitment is based on merit in South Africa. In Zimbabwe, it seems that a large number of people believe that selection works at the disadvantage of female candidates. This also relates to promotion which 50% of respondents believe that promotion is biased towards men, as this had a mean of 3.1 meaning that respondents were neutral. Again, this deviates from Mokoditoa (2011) who did not identify gender discrimination in terms of promotion in higher education institutions in South Africa. However, in Zimbabwe, a large section of people in higher education institutions believe that promotion is subjective and it favours men at the expense of female candidates, and this is a problem.

The worst part of selection practices identified in this study is that most leadership positions are occupied by men in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. This finding corroborates with findings by Shepherd (2017) in Europe. This means that men are dominating higher education institutions worldwide, and this is a problem. This also means that women are failing to break the glass ceiling and it's problematic as organisations fail to tap into women's talent for their own good.

5.4 Challenges faced by women with regard to hiring practices

After the identification of recruitment and selection practices using the questionnaire, there was a need for interviews to understand the challenges faced by women associated with recruitment

and selection in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe. From the interviews, four themes were identified with regard to challenges as presented in Table 3.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Women

Theme	Explanations
Lack of affirmative action	Interviewees explained that there is a lack of affirmative action to allow women to be engaged in positions. Women have been historically disadvantaged in terms of employment and in terms of unfair wages and they feel that they need to be given preferential treatment so that they can be equal to men. These were some of the explanations from respondents: Participant 4 *"Adverts just come with a note that women are encouraged to apply, but there is no policy in place that encourages recruitment and selection of women."* Participant 7 *"There is a difference between fair recruitment and affirmative action. What we want is affirmative action because women have been traditionally sidelined."* In other words, women are being sidelined even if there is fairness. This contrasts with findings by Mokoditoa (2011) who submits that in South Africa there is affirmative action. In Zimbabwe, the lack of affirmative action means that the gender divide will always exist in hiring practices in higher education institutions.
Limited qualifications and experience	The other finding is in terms of lack of qualifications and experience. Women started being allowed to go to school and to go to work recently. This was because of the backward and primitive beliefs in society. The interviewees believe that most jobs particularly leadership positions are dominated by men because women lack the skills and expertise to occupy these positions. Participants 2 and 8 highlighted this in terms of limited qualifications and experience: *"Some lecturing jobs would require two years of teaching in tertiary education institutions. Most women do not have this experience and this discourages them from applying."* *"Executive posts such as Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice Chancellor, Bursar, Registrar and Librarian require more than 10 years' experience…. most women do not have this experience."* This finding is in contrast to Shepherd (2017) who found that job specifications for higher positions are lowered for women so that they can break the glass ceiling. However, in Zimbabwe, job specifications are not lowered leading to failure by women to break the glass ceiling.
Digital divide	The other challenge established from interviews is the digital divide. It was explained by interviews that women lack access to the internet as compared to men. This results in some online job adverts from higher education not reaching them. Some women have been censored by their husbands not to use social media because it encourages promiscuity,

	and these are platforms being used by higher institutions to advertise jobs, and adverts end up not reaching them. This finding diverges from Curtis et al (2012) women prefer online recruitment in the United States as compared to online recruitment. However, in Zimbabwe, this is not the case because of problems with connectivity and high data tariffs.
Subjectivity of interviews	The other challenge unearthed in this study is on subjectivity of interviews. Participants of this study indicated that women are not comfortable with interviews. They feel that interviews give men an upper hand in the selection process. One participant indicated this with regard to this challenge: *"Most interview panels in higher education institutions are dominated by men, and it will be hard for a female candidate to express yourself. Some of the men who will be part of the panel would give you a suggestive look that makes it hard for you as a woman to effectively respond to the interview questions."* This is not unearthed in studies by Van den Brink et al (2010) as interview panels in universities in South Africa have a mixture of men and women and thus do not put women in a precarious position as compared with the situation in Zimbabwe.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is unique because it unearthed the hiring practices in tertiary education and the challenges that poses to women. In terms of recruitment practices, the study found that there is online recruitment, external recruitment and formal recruitment processes in higher and tertiary education institutions in Zimbabwe. The study also concludes that traditional recruitment and internal recruitment have been neglected in these institutions. In terms of selection practices interviews were found to be the most frequently used in higher education institutions. However, negative selection practices were found such as more men being promoted and occupying leadership positions. Lack of affirmative action, limited qualifications and experience, digital divide and subjectivity of interviews, were found to be challenges that women face with regards to hiring practices in higher education institutions in Zimbabwe.

- Interviews were found to be subjective, hence higher education institutions are encouraged to use a mixture of interviews and psychometrics in the selection process;
- Fair recruitment was found to perpetuate gender divide, hence the need to use affirmative action;
- Women lack qualifications and skills, there is a need to lower the qualification threshold to encourage women to apply for posts;
- The study found that there is external recruitment, higher education institutions are encouraged to use internal recruitment to promote women into executive positions; and
- To solve the digital divide, higher education institutions should use traditional recruitment tools to reach out to women who may be interested in vacancies.

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