THE ENGAGEMENT OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP IN TANZANIA'S WILDLIFE SECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

Women play a critical role in natural resource management around the world, yet they are largely excluded from leadership and strategic decision-making processes about landscape and wildlife governance.

In Tanzania, despite the growing interest of women in pursuing conservation careers and joining the wildlife sector, their inclusion at managerial levels has historically been limited. For instance, there are three wildlife institutions responsible for the management of protected areas in Tanzania: Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA), Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA), and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA). All Chief Executive Officers (Conservation Commissioners) and their immediate subordinates have been men.

Furthermore, critical analysis of the factors influencing the participation of women in wildlife governance and leadership in Tanzania is lacking, thus reducing the effectiveness of policies and practices intended to mitigate gender imbalance.

Objectives

In 2022, African People & Wildlife brought together researchers from The Open University of Tanzania, the College of African Wildlife Management, and the Tanzanian Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism to examine the engagement of women in wildlife governance in Tanzania. This research sought to fill the existing knowledge gaps in the status, trends, and factors influencing women's inclusion in wildlife management and leadership, and to inspire conservation institutions to give adequate attention to gender balance as a way of improving effective management of wildlife and wildlands. The specific research objectives were:

- To document the status and trends of participation of women in the top leadership positions in the wildlife conservation sector in Tanzania since independence;
- To analyze the factors influencing participation of women in wildlife governance;
- To identify options for promoting the participation of women in wildlife governance;
- To analyze the impacts of Tanzania's paramilitary model of wildlife management operations on the participation of women in wildlife governance.

Regarding the fourth objective, the researchers recognize that at a global level, militarization of the conservation sector is documented and studied extensively. However, there are few studies evaluating the efficacy of Tanzania's paramilitary model of wildlife protection, which was introduced in July 2013 through the principal legislation of the Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority Act of 2013.

Therefore, while this study sought to understand the model's effect on women, the researchers recommend further research on militarized wildlife conservation within the context of Tanzania.

Methods

This study used a mixed methods approach, employing both quantitative and qualitative techniques to understand women's engagement in the governance of wildlife resources. Primary data were collected through quantitative questionnaires while qualitative data, used to supplement quantitative results, were collected through semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs). The data collection tools were developed in English and then translated into Kiswahili before data collection.

Across all data collection tools, 195 individuals participated in this study (126 respondents to the student questionnaire, 52 respondents to the staff questionnaire, and 17 key informants in qualitative interviews). See Figure 1 for respondent sex distribution for each data collection tool. Respondents included students and staff from four academic institutions – the College of African Wildlife Management (CAWM), Pasiansi Wildlife Training Institute (PWTI), Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), and the Community Based Conservation Training Centre (CBCTC) – as well as staff from several protected areas and wildlife management authorities including TANAPA, TAWA, and the NCAA.

FIGURE 1

Respondent Sex Distribution
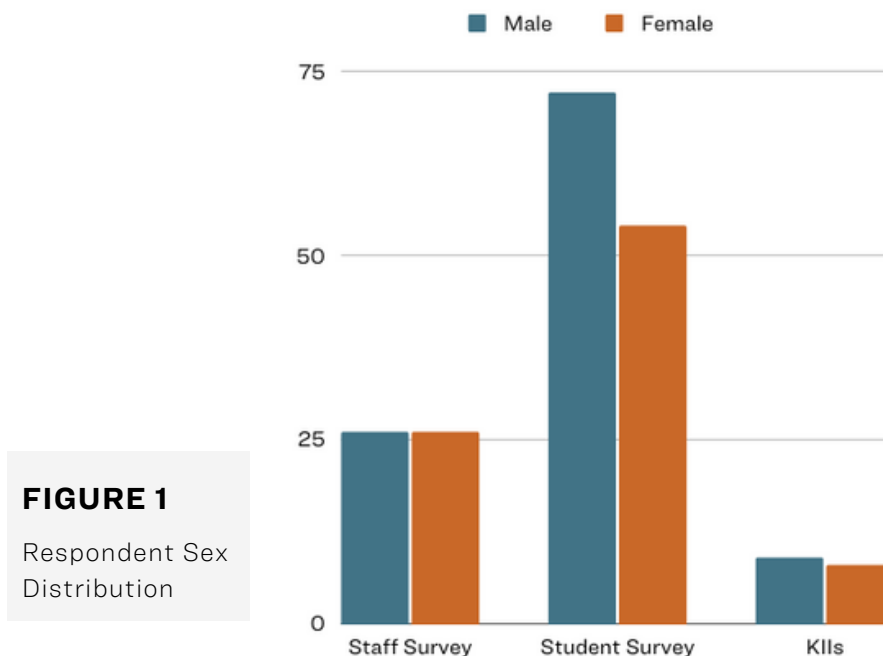
Quantitative responses were analyzed through descriptive statistics and a series of Pearson Chi-Square Tests of Independence, Two-sample T-tests, or One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) depending on the data type. Qualitative interviews were analyzed through manual summarizing, coding, and interpreting responses to provide relevant themes that supplemented the quantitative results.

FINDINGS

Key results from the study included both descriptive findings and correlations between respondent demographics and perceptions of women's roles and capacity to work in wildlife management.

1. Gender Balance

The study first explored the overall gender balance in protected area management and wildlife conservation leadership and found that there are very few women in leadership positions in the wildlife conservation sector.

Since the establishment of these institutions, women have never held any of the top positions in leadership of the NCAA, TANAPA, TAWA, or CAWM. Similarly, the Boards of Directors of these institutions have been dominated and chaired by men. Since its establishment, only one woman has been appointed as a chairperson of the Board of Directors for NCAA. Historically, TANAPA has engaged more women in leadership positions compared to other institutions, with four out of the 22 national parks (18%) currently headed by female wardens.

Despite this limited involvement of women in leadership in the wildlife sector, respondents to the staff questionnaire reported neutral to slightly positive feelings about the number of women in leadership positions. In contrast, respondents to the student questionnaire were aware of the gender imbalance, generally agreeing that the number of women in leadership is too low, with female students agreeing more strongly.

Today, with existing policies and targeted political commitment, more women are being included in natural resource management and leadership in Tanzania. At the time of this study, the Minister and Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism are women, and the number of women on the Boards of Directors for the NCAA, TANAPA, and TAWA has increased with recent appointments.

2. Barriers to Women's Participation in Leadership

This study also explored the barriers to women's participation in wildlife governance in Tanzania, categorizing types of barriers into socio-cultural factors, personal factors, and organizational factors.

Type of Barrier	Definition and Examples
Socio-cultural factors	In this study, socio-cultural factors are defined as human constructs originating from historical or social norms and cultural values that are broadly present at the national and regional level. Examples of socio-cultural factors assessed in the staff survey included societal perceptions of women's leadership skills, trust in women leaders, and cooperation with women leaders.
Personal factors	In this study, personal factors are defined as intrinsic personality traits that vary from individual to individual. The researchers recognize that these personal characteristics are often influenced by socio-cultural factors. Personal factors assessed in the staff survey included leadership characteristics such as self-esteem, confidence, assertiveness, commitment, motivations, and aspirations.
Organizational factors	In this study, organizational factors are defined as culture and behaviors founded in institutional history and memory, which may or may not align with the beliefs of individuals in the institution but affect the functioning of the organizational as a whole. Organizational factors assessed in the staff survey included treatment by authority figures in an organization, organizational support systems for women leaders, existence and enforcement of gender policies at an organizational level, and recruitment and selection processes for leadership positions.

Socio-Cultural Factors

Results from the staff survey suggest that respondents do not believe socio-cultural factors to be significant barriers to women's inclusion in leadership. On average, respondents were neutral to or disagreed with socio-cultural factors being considered barriers to women in leadership, although female respondents were generally more concerned with socio-cultural barriers than male respondents. Qualitative responses to KIIs counter this finding, with most key informants citing social and cultural factors as the most significant barriers to women in leadership.

Interestingly, one socio-cultural factor assessed in the staff survey – lack of cooperation of the society to women leaders – yielded significantly different results depending on the length of time the respondent had worked at their organization. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that staff who have worked at their organization for more than five years are more likely to believe that lack of cooperation with female leaders is a barrier to women in leadership.

This finding was corroborated by responses to KIIs where over 85% of key informants cited the societal perception that women are not capable leaders as a barrier. 64% also mentioned cultural norms which discourage women from becoming leaders such as women's role as primary caretakers of children, women as subservient to their husbands, and women being more suited to administrative or assistant positions in the workplace. This is unsurprising, since it is likely that key informants selected for qualitative interviews were longer term staff members of these institutions.

Overall, these findings suggest that newer staff members are less likely to be aware of and understand the social and cultural factors that limit women's access to leadership positions. However, over the course of several years working in these institutions, witnessing the hierarchies, and observing paths to career advancement, staff are more able to identify barriers to women in leadership.

Personal Factors

Results from the staff survey show that most respondents do not consider personal factors to be significant barriers to women achieving leadership positions. In nine out of ten statements assessing various personal factors such as leadership knowledge and intrinsic motivation, over 70% of the staff disagreed that women lack leadership characteristics.

However, demographic analysis shows that male respondents to the survey were significantly more likely to believe that women have low self-esteem for leadership. Men were also significantly more likely to believe that women lack commitment to accept leadership positions.

These findings were supplemented by qualitative data where 64% of key informants cited lack of confidence among women as a barrier to their capacity for leadership. These findings provide evidence that suggests that men are more likely to consider personal factors to be significant barriers to women's professional advancement.

Family responsibilities were also mentioned frequently in KIIs as a barrier to women taking high-level positions. 71% of key informants referenced family responsibilities, often in the context of a personal factor. Yet given the cultural expectations of women to undertake the majority of family responsibilities, it could also be considered a significant socio-cultural factor.

Organizational Factors

Results from the staff survey suggest that respondents do not believe organizational factors to be significant barriers to women's professional advancement in the wildlife sector. In the majority of organizational factors assessed, such as unequal and unfair treatment, lack of organizational support systems for women leaders, imbalanced budget allocations, and lack of training for women, respondents were, on average, neutral or disagreed that these factors pose barriers to women.

However, female respondents were more likely to agree that organizational factors limit women's leadership opportunities. For instance, female staff were moderately more likely to agree that women face unequal treatment in the workplace, that women do not receive recognition for their performance, and that there is no monitoring system to improve women's participation.

Further, over 45% of all staff respondents were not sure if there is a policy in place which encourages women to pursue and hold leadership positions. Women were significantly more likely to state that there is no proper implementation of gender policies when establishing leadership positions. Men were significantly more likely to believe that gender policies are properly implemented.

These findings demonstrate a general lack of awareness among all staff on organizational policies and priorities regarding gender balance. They also highlight a discrepancy between male and female perceptions of the extent to which organizational factors contribute to gender imbalance in the workplace.

3. Enabling Forces and Policies for Women's Leadership

This study also sought to understand enabling forces for women's success in leadership. Importantly, every key informant mentioned educational qualifications as an enabling factor during qualitative interviews.

Almost all key informants (93%) cited a supportive work environment as an important enabling factor, though as discussed in section 2, female and male respondents to the staff questionnaire differed in their perception of how supportive the workplace is for women. Similarly, 86% of key informants referenced encouragement and support from society as an enabling factor for women, but the same percentage of KIs cited the societal perception that women are not capable leaders as a barrier.

Organizational policies around equal opportunities, diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as gender-balanced representation in leadership, are generally considered good practice in all sectors and regularly referenced as enabling factors for marginalized groups and minorities. However, for the Tanzanian government institutions sampled, results from the questionnaire show that 73% of staff either think there is no policy encouraging women's participation in leadership or they are unaware of such a policy.

Interestingly, an ANOVA revealed significant differences between organizations in how their staff felt about the implementation of gender policies. Notably, staff from TANAPA were significantly more likely to say that gender policies are properly implemented, whereas staff from TAWA were more likely to say these policies are not implemented well.

The sampled academic institutions showed similar results, with 59% of students either thinking there is no policy for gender balance or being unaware of one. For those students who did report knowing of such a policy, female students were significantly more likely to say the policy is gender neutral and does not speak of inclusive governance. Female students were also more likely to say that a lack of equity in the way leaders are selected excludes qualified women candidates. Men generally responded neutrally to the same question.

> **EQUALITY VS. EQUITY**
>
> Although hiring policies often reference equality – the need for male and female candidates to be considered equally – the female student survey respondents recognized a lack of equity – the quality of being fair, rather than equal, in supporting historically underrepresented populations. Equity, in these hiring practices, could mean intentionally considering additional female candidates for leadership positions to account for the historical imbalance in women's representation.

Overall, despite efforts in government to formalize gender policies at a ministerial and departmental level, the majority of staff and students are unaware of these policies, believe they are not implemented well, or suggest that they are not monitored effectively.

4. Paramilitary Model Effects

Lastly, the study inquired about the effect of Tanzania's paramilitary model of wildlife management on the participation of women in this sector. Several questions also sought to understand staff support, or lack thereof, of the change to a paramilitary model without a gender lens.

Qualitative interviews provided mixed results with many key informants believing that a paramilitary model of wildlife conservation does not exclude women because they can be given "light duties" or administrative positions. However, this type of response is contradictory to women holding leadership positions and itself may pose a barrier for women since these key informants indirectly suggested that women were more suited to lower-level posts or work that does not require physical training.

Others mentioned that the military-style training is perceived as being physically difficult, leading to a social expectation that these positions should be held by men. This subsequently contributes to the cultural norms that prevent women from rising in leadership in the wildlife sector. Nonetheless, female respondents to the staff survey disagreed that they lack the physical capabilities to complete training exercises. Men were generally neutral in response to this question.

Respondents to the student survey were also asked about the potential effect of the paramilitary model on women seeking to work in the wildlife sector. Students at PWTI, Tanzania's renowned center for paramilitary training for game scouts and rangers, disagreed significantly with students from other institutions on women's opportunity to be employed in the wildlife sector. PWTI students on average disagreed that women and men have equal opportunities for employment in the wildlife sector, while students at the other surveyed institutions generally agreed that opportunities were equal for women and men. Further, when asked if they think the paramilitary model is gender inclusive, men were significantly more likely to say yes while women were significantly more likely to say no.

The significant difference in responses from PWTI students versus students from other academic institutions is likely due to PWTI's focus on military-style training and less on academic or community-based work. As a result, PWTI students perceive wildlife and conservation work as militaristic while their peers at CAWM, SUA, and CBCTC may have a broader understanding of the positions available in wildlife management. This conclusion further exemplifies the problematic perception that women cannot cope with field-based or physically demanding positions.

These results also demonstrate a discrepancy between male and female perceptions of the factors that contribute to gender imbalance, their understanding of the paramilitary model's effect on women, and the best strategies to enhance gender equity under this model of wildlife management.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this study provide institutions in the Tanzanian wildlife sector with a strong foundation for future policy and programmatic design aimed at improving gender equity. Much more social research could be done in the country to understand societal values and cultural norms in other sectors as well. However, the conclusions drawn from this study can inform short and medium-term recommendations for the protected area management and academic institutions studied.

After analyzing the results of the staff questionnaire, student questionnaire, and key informant interviews, the researchers recommend the following actions.

1

IMPROVE ONBOARDING

Include a gender module in staff orientation

2

EXPAND TRAINING

Conduct annual gender equity workshops for all staff

3

BUILD AWARENESS

Formalize gender policies through an awareness building campaign

4

CREATE RELATIONSHIPS

Implement a mentorship program for young women professionals

1

IMPROVE ONBOARDING

Include a gender module in staff orientation

Informed by the finding that longer term staff are more aware of the socio-cultural barriers to women's professional advancement than newer staff, we recommend a gender module be included in new staff and/or student orientation for all the institutions included in this study. Introducing gender mainstreaming in the workspace during orientation will benefit new staff and/or students by providing them with critical context and understanding of gender issues before they begin interacting with colleagues and communities as a representative of their new institution.

Including a gender module in orientation will also benefit the institutions by demonstrating organizational commitment to gender equity. Such a module should be designed in collaboration with experienced gender specialists and may include topics such as:

- Definitions of terms related to gender and diversity
- Demography of Tanzania, highlighting diversity and minority groups
- History of gender balance in Tanzanian government, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Global, national, and organizational policies and commitments to gender equality
- Ongoing actions by the institution to promote gender equity and the results

2

EXPAND TRAINING

Conduct annual gender
equity workshops for all staff

The findings from this study showed several areas where male and female perceptions of gender issues differed significantly. This disconnect can cause ineffective policy and programming since those making the policies may have very different problem definitions than those affected by the policies. We recommend each represented institution conduct an all-staff gender equity workshop each year. These workshops will provide a formal platform for women to discuss the issues that impact them the most and the challenges they face both in and outside the workplace. Further, the workshops will be particularly important for men since they will have the opportunity to listen, participate, and learn from their female colleagues and better understand and exchange their points of view.

By normalizing discussions on gender-related issues through annual workshops, wildlife institutions will create a culture of openness and mutual understanding that will, in the long-term, strengthen their operational effectiveness. These workshops should be designed and facilitated by experienced gender specialists and may include sessions on:

- Team building and organizational goal setting
- Understanding the social, cultural, and organizational barriers to women in leadership
- Identifying and deconstructing personal biases related to gender and diversity
- Recognizing gender equality versus gender equity
- Testimonials from women staff and leaders
- Small group gender action planning
- Brainstorming ideas to create a more supportive work environment
- Harassment and appropriate workplace behavior

3

BUILD AWARENESS

Formalize gender policies
through an awareness
building campaign

Based on the finding that awareness of gender policies is very low across all institutions studied, we recommend each organization conduct an internal review of their existing policies related to gender and ensure the following points are referenced:

- Gender balance in all levels of the organization, including management and leadership
- Gender sensitive recruitment methods
- Family leave, childcare, paternity and maternity leave
- Place of work and position transfers – family benefits and accommodation, particularly for those in protected area management who are frequently moved
- Training requirements for all staff related to gender issues, including the orientation module and annual gender equity workshops
- Harassment and appropriate workplace behavior
- Sexist language, posts, videos, or other media sharing

Depending on the current state of the gender policies as they are reviewed, revisions may or may not be necessary.

Once gender policies have been reviewed and approved, each institution should begin raising awareness of these policies through one or more of the following actions:

- Organization-wide email announcing the formalization of the policies
- Printing and posting the policies in all offices
- Posting the policies in organizational media sharing platforms like WhatsApp
- Requiring all staff to read and sign the policies, on paper or electronically
- Establishing a working group to monitor the implementation of the policies

4

CREATE RELATIONSHIPS

Implement a mentorship program for young women professionals

The research findings also suggest that women in the wildlife sector would benefit from increased camaraderie, safe spaces, and general mentorship from other female professionals. Therefore, we recommend that the participating institutions, including both the protected area management authorities and the academic and capacity building institutions, engage in a cross-departmental mentorship program. Women in leadership positions could apply to be mentors to students, new employees, or other women professionals who feel they would benefit from the program.

The mentors and mentees could then be matched for a 1-year, formal mentorship which could continue informally after the year is over. Mentors would be advised by an experienced gender specialist and activities could include:

- Shadowing
- CV review
- Mock interviews and interview preparation
- Networking support
- Joint field excursions

A WAY FORWARD

This study examined the factors influencing participation of women in Tanzania's wildlife sector – but the findings can be applied across other sectors and geographies.

On an individual level, traditional gender roles and social perceptions of female leaders affect women around the world, restricting their opportunities for advancement and preventing women from achieving their goals. On a societal level, the historical underrepresentation and exclusion of women from leadership positions has limited the efficacy of institutions that seek to improve human wellbeing.

A diversity of perspectives, experiences, and ideas is vital to the long-term sustainability of development projects, conservation outcomes, and business strategies alike. Thus, it is to the benefit of all individuals, institutions, and societies to foster an environment of equity. We encourage other sectors and geographies to undertake similar research to understand their specific barriers and identify enabling conditions for women in leadership.

Only through deep reflection on our values, evidence-based problem analysis, and a genuine commitment to equity can we create solutions for change.

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We elevate women and girls as conservation champions at a time when nature needs them the most.

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