

# **WOMEN ACADEMICS' CAREERS IN KENYA**

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### **Declaration**

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

Signature: -----

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## **Abbreviations**

AAU: Association of African Universities

ACU: Association of Commonwealth Universities

CHE: Commission for Higher Education

DVC: Deputy Vice Chancellor

FAWE: Forum for African Women Educationists

FIDA (Kenya): Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya

GPI: Gender Parity Index

HE: Higher Education

HELB: Higher Education Loan Board

HRM: Human Resource Management

JAB: Joint Admission Board

KCSE: Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

MA: Master of Arts

NGO: Non- Governmental, Organisation

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy

UK: United Kingdom

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural, Organisation

USA: United States of America

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

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## **Abstract.**

This thesis examined the experiences of women academics in relation to their family contribution, educational experiences and, factors that motivated them towards academia, while highlighting strategies that they have employed to reach their present professional and academic ranks. In addition, any challenges experienced by the women academics were explored.

The study is a contribution to knowledge and the extant literature on women academics' career experiences which has been under-researched, especially in Kenya. It claims to have made a contribution to a wider understanding of women academics' experiences, exposing a significant impact of culture, family, work tensions, gender role expectations, male-dominated university cultures, and a lack of role models and mentors, which contribute to the slow progress of women academics' careers in Kenyan universities.

Using a qualitative research approach, the researcher used a face-to-face in-depth interviewing technique with sixteen women academics from three universities in Kenya while drawing from a feminist perspective. My aim was to create a dialogue on the lived experiences while at the same time using theory to inform and reflect on those experiences. With the use of thematic analysis, the data generated five themes; family socialisation, educational attributes, motivational factors, challenges and strategies.

The findings of this research demonstrated that very few women have progressed into senior academic and professional ranks and that, the pace is slow. They continue to be hampered by socio-cultural attitudes towards women and their roles in Kenyan society.

This is not the full story as some of the women interviewed reported that they had to put off marriage for career and likewise, others put on hold or postponed career for family responsibilities.

To maintain their positions or climb the professional ladder, they therefore, had to employ a range of strategies such as; working hard, focusing on research and publication for promotion purposes.

The wider implications of these findings are discussed.

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

### Prologue

*Women pay too heavy a price for success in career, a pitch for African feminism, a journey that may never end but is worth taking nonetheless.... what has happened to us?.... the girl as a species in serious crisis.... In the quest for education and career progress, the female graduates who seemed to have postponed important things like marriage and child bearing.... today I listen to the women of my generation mourning omissions for motherhood, the biological clock is ticking. Between education, career and motherhood, which is superior? Which of these can be sacrificed or postponed over the other? Which of these is of uttermost importance in life? This is the question that every woman should ask herself (Ngesa, 2007, p.1).*

### 1.2 Rationale, Aim and Purpose of the Study

Cultural norms and expectations tend to make many people in Kenya believe that there is no gender discrimination, and that, women in Kenya, especially academics, are regarded as the elites and great mothers of society (Kanake, 1997). In her Kenyan study, Manya (2000) highlights that despite the fact that the university employs many of the country's leading advocates of gender equity in the political and public sector, they are not vocal about the position of women within the university.

A substantial body of research on women academics and career advancement has been produced in western countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States of America in past years (Acker and Armenti, 2004; White, 2004; Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Morley, 2000; Morley, 2006; Armenti, 2004; Bagilhole, 1993; Coleman, 1996; Morley and Walsh, 1996; Blackmore, 1999).

The few studies which have been conducted in Kenya on women in higher education include; gender disparities (Kanake, 1997), university governance (Sifuna,1989), research and publication, (Onsongo, 2000), women's participation in university management, (Onsongo, 2005) and equal opportunity policy (Manya, 2000). The only existing study on women academics' career experiences was that by Kamau (2004).

Rather than exploring the reasons for the existence of 'leaking pipeline' and 'glass ceiling' as in other studies (White, 2001; Wolfinger et al., 2008), the present study offers a different perspective coming from the experiences of female academics in Kenya. Specifically, the study focuses on successful female academics through in- depth- narrative interviews, recording and analyzing experiences of their career journeys, motivational factors, challenges, and the strategies they have employed to reach their current career positions in academia.

The overall aim of this study is to use a critical feminist theory and to examine the experiences of successful female academics in three universities in Kenya, while identifying common themes from their interviews. The purposes of this study are:

- Identify the family circumstances and factors that contributed to their careers
- Identify the relationships, the educational experiences and significant events in their lives that affected the development of their careers
- Identify those motivational factors to pursue a career in academia
- Highlight skills and attributes for success in their careers
- Examine any challenges faced through their careers
- Focus on strategies they employed to reach the present ranks with a view to providing role models to those aspiring to succeed in academia.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The main research question for this study is:

**What in the experiences of the women academics in Kenyan universities, has contributed to their career success?**

In addressing the above question, subsidiary questions are also addressed:

- **How did their family background affect/contribute to their careers?**
- **How did their education contribute to their career?**
- **What motivational factors, personal attributes and skills have been critical in their career?**
- **What significant contributing factors are perceived to have been barriers or challenges, if any, to career advancement?**
- **What strategies, if any, did they use to attain and maintain their current career positions?**

In the next section, the present study demonstrates that there is relative under-representation of female academics in Kenya (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Western literature has used theories such as 'glass ceiling', 'stone wall' and 'leaking pipes' in trying to explain the under-representation of women in academia (White, 2001; Wolfinger et al., 2008). According to Forster (2001), there are other factors such as the structural and socio-cultural that block female academics from a smooth career advancement.

## ***1.4 Women's Presence in Higher Education in Kenya***

Higher education in Kenya has expanded rapidly since the 1980s with an increase of public universities to seven (see Table 2.1). There are also several private universities (see Table 2.3) by 2010. The introduction of parallel degree programmes at the public universities and the upgrading of polytechnic colleges to university campuses has created more opportunities in higher education. The enrolments at public universities reveal the wide disparities in favour of male students. In 2004, female students made up only 36.2% of the total enrolment (Nyamu, 2004). This low enrolment of girls remains a challenge to university education in Kenya. The government is trying to increase gender equity through Affirmative Action that allows girls to be admitted to universities with one point lower than that of boys at KSCE examinations (Kenya Secondary Certificate of Education) (Onsongo, 2009). Furthermore, according to Muindi (2010), girls were admitted to universities with two points (61) lower than that of boys' (63).

According to the September 2009 intake (2007 KSCE candidates), of the total 16,629 qualifiers, there were 11,401 boys (68.5%) and 5,228 girls (31.4%). The girls were admitted to universities with two points lower than that of boys. 'The gender divide is wider than it appears to be at KSCE level where parity has nearly been achieved' (Siringi, 2009 p.1). In the 2008 KCSE candidates, girls comprised nearly 46% of the total 305,000 candidates. 'It means that the number of girls reaching Form Four is high but a majority end up not achieving grades that can enable them to join the university' Siringi (2009, pp.1-2). In 2010, the number of students admitted to public universities (to join by May 2011) increased to 24,221.

The under-representation of women academics is not unique to Kenya, as shown by research on women in Higher Education over the past decades in Western countries (Morley, 2010; Morley and Lugg, 2009). Despite the widespread introduction of equal opportunity policies in HE, women have not been notably more successful in reaching senior positions in academia (Forster, 2001).

To highlight the contemporary situation in Kenyan universities, the study examined faculty profiles from the university websites and from the registry in Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 below which show the underrepresentation of women academics.

**Table 1.1 Professional ranks at universities X, Y and Z**

Professional Rank	University X		University Y		University Z	
	Sex	Total	Sex	Total	Sex	Total
Full Professor	M	15	M	16	M	03
	F	02	F	03	F	00
Associate Professors	M	17	M	09	M	04
	F	01	F	05	F	00
Senior Lecturers	M	39	M	63	M	09
	F	9	F	22	F	05
Lecturers	M	75	M	95	M	10
	F	27	F	23	F	06
Assistant Lecturers	M	92	M	111	M	12
	F	38	F	63	F	09
TOTAL		315		410		58

*Sources: University registry and websites, January 2010*

**Table 1.2 Academic ranks at universities X, Y and Z**

Academic Rank	University X		University Y		University Z	
PhD	M	100	M	163	M	16
	F	24	F	39	F	05
Masters	M	138	M	133	M	22
	F	53	F	75	F	15
TOTAL		315		410		58

*Sources: University registry and websites, January 2010*

Table 1.1 and Table 1.2 above show that women are still under-represented in academia in Kenya in 2010. It appears that even those few get fewer as they ascend to senior ranks, with majority in Assistant lecturers and Lecturers ranks.

At university Z, there are no women professors, not even an Associate professor. Universities X and Y have 2 and 3 female professors respectively. These figures raise significant questions about the role of women academics in Higher Education in Kenya, and in particular, why are there so few women academics, and more so, senior ones?

The present study approaches the above questions by exploring the experiences of women academics through face- to- face in- depth interviews. Rather than only focusing on challenges that may hinder the success for upcoming women academics, it focuses also on those factors that motivated them and how they made sense of their life experiences and achieved success in their careers. Strategies employed for survival in academe are further explored.

Studies done in Kenya (Onsongo, 2009; Kamau, 2004; Kanake, 1997; Nzomo, 1995; Nyamu, 2004; Bunyi, 2006; Onsongo, 2005) show that women are under-represented in universities. The poor representation of women academics has led to questions being raised about the climate within the institutions, for example, why women are so few and what other factors impede women joining or rising through the professional ranks for those who are already in academia (Kearney, 2000)? The questions asked by Kearney (2000) call for a critical analysis of the socio-cultural traditions and organizational cultures of universities in various contexts that continue to impede women's career advancement (Silver, 2003).

Apart from the study by Kamau (2004), little has been researched about women academics' career experiences in Kenyan universities. The extant literature on gender issues mostly concerns employment, policy issues and management. The present study therefore, adds to the literature and research in the under-researched area of career experiences of women academics in Kenya.

The present research contributes to knowledge about one specific group of women in Kenya- female academics in higher education. As indicated above, Kamau (2004) conducted a study with women academics in Kenyan universities. From the study, she observed and asked:

Why have women's high educational achievement levels not produced greater female representations in the university sector? These questions continue to be pertinent, and they point to a gap in current scholarly knowledge, that requires further research. The present study aims to bridge that gap.

In a practical sense, the female academics in the present study can serve as role models to the upcoming female academics in Kenya. Research has indicated that women are more likely to look to their own gender as their role models (Morley, 2006). However, young women have few occupational role models from whom they can learn how to balance the demands of a mother, wife, sister in-law and with the demands of career (Gachukia, 2002). It is therefore important that the stories and the experiences of the limited number of successful women academics in Kenya be heard. The role played by these women academics in their families and society as a whole could be an agent for change. It is worth acknowledging that the present study becomes distinctive in that, it is a gendered study with a focus on Kenyan women academics in Kenya.

Unlike most studies on women which largely examine barriers to career advancement for women, the aim of the present study is to identify those factors that have facilitated the success of sixteen women academics in Kenyan universities. In addition, the present study will supplement the extant literature on gender studies, which has, for the most part, has been under-researched, especially in Kenya. This study may prove significant in contributing to the underdeveloped area of research related to the academic persistence of female academics in higher education.

In the next section, I share my personal experience as a woman academic.

## ***1.5 My Experience as a Woman Academic***

In this section, I describe some of my experiences as a woman academic that have contributed to carrying out research in this particular area. It is important for me as a researcher to locate my-self within the research context. This reflection becomes useful in the interpretation of the narratives of other women academics and the ways in which the interviewees position themselves within the research process (Harding, 1987; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Patton, 2002).

I am a Kenyan, married, with two grown-up children (twenty four and nineteen years). My age is in the early forties. My professional background cuts across psychology and sociology, with a teaching background of Bachelor of Education and an MA in psychology of education. I have had nineteen years of teaching experience (ten at the university and nine in high schools). From my experience as a student, a teacher and a lecturer, I have realized the different academic and career challenges women face. Several questions have continued to linger in my mind, with no clear answers. Crucial to the present study is the realization of the number of women being few in all the institutions that I have worked and also, the narratives from colleagues indicate that the majority experience a slow progress in their careers.

Why are there so few women in academia? Why is the career progress of women in academia so slow? Where are these women colleagues with whom we studied at undergraduate school? How do women academics manage to combine family roles and career expectations?

Married at the age of 21, it was a struggle to combine family and career roles. Therefore, I postponed my career until I was 26 years after giving birth to two children. That was one sacrifice, but not the full story. Teaching and managing two young children, together with the family roles was an obstacle to my career advancement.

It was not until my children were 14 and 9 years that I pursued my Masters degree. This was not an easy option either. On one hand, I wished I had postponed marriage, but when I meet my girlfriends at undergraduate and high school who took a different career path, crying foul, in search of husbands, children or both, I concluded that none of the options is better than the other. Some of my friends claim that their biological clock is working against them or rather clashing with their career clocks. The third option taken by my other colleagues is to remain unmarried, but not a better option either, as they face a cultural stigma, as this goes against the cultural norms of Kenyan society. The question then is, what should women academics do to be able to combine family and career?

Through their stories, women colleagues and friends have expressed different feelings of isolation, discrimination, patriarchal and male domination in most of the institutions where they work. Because of the cultural attitudes, women go for lunch in the company of other women and men in the company of other men. Once I went for lunch with a male colleague who is a family friend, but when other men came in, they made very negative comments and told me to join the other women and not the men for my next lunch. How many cultures exist in academia? What wrong did I do in joining my male colleagues for lunch?

I have been interested in issues on women and Higher Education. With a background in social sciences (psychology and sociology), I'm interested in exploring those factors that have motivated women academics to pursue their careers. Why are women academics so disadvantaged in their roles? How best can HE be inclusive of women? With these several unanswered questions, I decided to look for those women elites in Kenyan society, to share their success stories and challenges, in the hope of being role models and mentors to the young upcoming women to see that despite all the challenges, it is possible to climb the career ladder.

The extensive reading, research and teaching experiences together with the courses I took at Lancaster and the University of London provided me with the skills, created awareness and the motivation to investigate this particular under-researched area on women in academia in the Kenyan context.

I feel proud to be where I am, as part of the women elite, a role model and a mentor to my children, my students, colleagues and my society. Nothing goes without a price, and it is for the hard work, sacrifice and family support that I have journeyed through the rugged road within academia. I urge my women folk to join me in the race and try to make a change, a better future for the generations to come. This thesis is written with the hope that others will come to join the procession, be inspired by different narratives of these women in academia and move forward.

## ***1.6 Overview of the thesis***

The thesis comprises six chapters, summarised as follows:

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter giving the background of research highlighting the current position of women in higher education in Kenya and the roles they play. The chapter further outlines the aims and the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of research.

Chapter 2 examines the literature review in relation to women academics and their career. The literature reviews various areas that have impacted on the women academics career path and in particular explores; representation of women academics on a global context, motivational factors, the effects of family, mentoring, role models, networking, career-family balance and university cultures. The literature review highlights the under-representation of women in academia.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of feminism and its relevance to the present research. Feminism as viewed in the African Kenyan context is examined. The chapter concludes by exploring five principles of feminist research as put forward by (Cook and Fonow, 1990).

Chapter 4 describes the research methodology and methods, which uses a qualitative research approach with in- depth interviewing techniques drawn from a feminist perspective. It explains its relevance to the study and justification for the choice of the use of a feminist perspective. The use of thematic analysis was examined. The chapter also covers the ethical issues in research and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5 covers both the data analysis of four of the research questions followed by a discussion of the common themes from the data.

- 1 *How did their family background affect/contribute to their careers?*
- 2 *How did their education contribute to their career?*
- 3 *What motivational factors, personal attributes and skills have been critical in career?*
- 4 *What significant factors are perceived to have been barriers or challenges, if any, to career advancement?*

The discussion section of the chapter provides a detailed interpretation of results, examining the common themes in light of the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 6 is a continuation of data analysis and discussion of the research question 5: *What strategies, if any, did they use to attain their current career positions?* It further analyses data on emergent themes; the culture of Kenyan HE institutions and the gender dynamics within them, the diversity of the home backgrounds and parental expectations of the women participants and the importance of study abroad. The discussions are in light of the literature reviewed and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 7 is a conclusion, giving an overview of the thesis, examining the aims, the purpose of the study, and the theoretical framework. The chapter gives a summary of each of the research questions. It concludes by exploring, the implication for the research findings for higher education in Kenya, for theory, practice, and possible future research.

## **Chapter: 2 Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Introduction***

The overall aim of this study is to investigate and examine the career experiences of a group of female academics in Kenyan universities and, in particular, the contribution of the socialization process from their families and the impact of their early education. The study further aims to identify the elements of motivational factors which may have impacted and shaped their careers. In addition, the strategies they have employed to reach their professional levels. Any challenges they may have encountered during their career journey are explored.

Substantial research on career advancement of female academics has been carried out in Western countries such as Canada, Australia, United States of America and United Kingdom (Bagilhole, 1993a; Bagilhole, 2000; Morley, 1999; Acker and Armenti, 2004a; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2003). Western literature advocates on ethos of individualism and goal-directed self-promotion for women's career mobility. However, in an African and the Kenyan context, such strategies do not readily apply (Mikell, 1997). Unlike in the arts and humanities, social sciences, faculties of medicine and law tend to be male-dominated and in these enclaves, women find few role models or female colleagues of which many claimed leads to a sense of profound isolation (Luke, 2001).

The initial review of literature from books, journals, data bases, conference papers, dissertations and theses indicate that relatively little has been written about the career experiences of female academics in African countries, and specifically in Kenya.

The few existing studies involving women in higher education about female academics have been on women managers in universities (Onsongo, 2005). Those women in university committees in Onsongo's study reported cases of isolation, segregation in meetings where men and women sit separately and the 'old-boys' network seems to be in existence. In a closer vein, Gachukia (2002) investigated the role of higher education in empowering women while Manya, (2000) investigated the existence of equal opportunity policy. In another study, Bunyi (2006) explored the gender equity in higher education in Kenya.

As mentioned earlier (chapter 1), the only significant study involving female academics' career experiences in Kenyan universities was carried out by Kamau (2004) who through in-depth interviews and observations examined the experiences of twenty four Kenyan women academics as they struggle to develop their careers. Kamau (2004, p.3) cited the negative traditional culture which defines women academics as 'deviants or outsiders within' and the hierarchical male-dominated university structures. Rather than focusing only on the presumed barriers to career advancement for women, the present study seeks to identify the motivational factors that have facilitated the success of sixteen female academics in Kenya. It aims to bridge a significant gap in the extant literature and to share how experiences shape the careers of academically successful women in Kenya.

The literature review examines relevant research in this area in broad categories. In view of examining those factors that motivated women academics towards academia, the study includes literature on motivation, looking through intrinsic and extrinsic factors, gender and motivation, and the relationship between self-efficacy, gender and career choices (Meece, 2006; Bandura, 1997). Conflicts between family and work, role models, mentors, and university culture are explored. Finally, the literature reviews strategies for career advancement.

Since the literature on women academics in Kenya is extremely scarce, the literature review includes substantial references to studies of female academics in other countries like the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Australia, Canada and South Africa.

## ***2.2 Women in Academia: The Wider Context***

Women at the senior levels in academia have not achieved a critical mass (White, 2001; Valian, 1999) despite the existence of equity programmes in universities for the last few decades. Morley (1999) has questioned the effectiveness of public and organisational policies in bringing about change in academia. In her study, Morley (1999) found that for a majority of women in academia, equity was simply not affecting them in either material or discursive forms. It appeared that 'equity and feminism were operating on quite different trajectories' (Morley, 1999, p.72). According to White (2001), being a senior female in academia in Australia is a hard road to travel, and it can be harder still to even reach that point. She further indicates that while the number of women professors in Australia has increased over the last decades, universities still have a disproportionately small number of senior women. Probably the best analogy to describe women's representation is the 'leaking pipeline' according to (Wolfinger et al., 2008).

While female participation rates are high at undergraduate levels, their participation rates in research and higher degrees decrease significantly. Women continue to be under-represented in tenured academic positions according to (Lund, 1999). Although the numbers of women in higher education are rising in many countries, most occupy part-time, low-status or temporary positions and the proportion of women in most senior academic positions remains small (Mason and Goulden, 2002; Williams, 2004).

According to (Forster, 2001; Bagilhole, 1993a) there are structural and socio-cultural barriers for women in academia as they advance their careers. They further point out that there are still far too few women in the academic profession at all levels though this is no longer the case in systems like the UK's.

Barriers that impede career motivation include; family conflicts and work structural barriers - recruitment and selection policies, lack of mentors and role models, promotion policies and institutional male power (Luke, 2000; Forster, 2001). Bagilhole (1993b) also found that women tend to have higher lecturing, administration and counseling workloads compared to men. However, these duties are overlooked in the promotion process that emphasize almost exclusively research and publication outputs ( Onsongo, 2000).

Different researchers have identified some of the factors that hamper women academics from climbing the career ladder to include; the chilly climate within the institutions (Sandler, 1986b); old –boys networks (Luke, 2000; Quina et al., 1998); promotion and publications (Onsongo, 2000); outsiders within in (Onsongo, 2005), and the pipeline theories (Morley and Walsh, 1996; White, 2001).

Morley (2006) from her interviews with women faculty members, students and observing staff training sessions, found that women experience a range of discriminatory practices, gendered processes and exclusions within higher education. According to Morley (2006), such factors include; the exclusion of women from career development opportunities, gender-insensitive pedagogical processes, prejudice about women's academic abilities and intellectual authority, poor equality policy implementation and backlash and stigmatization in relation to affirmative action programmes. In addition, she highlights that gender violence and prejudice about women's academic abilities as some of the main barriers to accessing higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. She further suggests that the women academics in the study lacked role models and faced hostile attitudes.

Another theme that runs along as a barrier to women's career advancement is sexual harassment (Morley and Lussier, 2009; Morley, 2000; Durrani, 2001) where women are offered professional advantage if they grant sexual favours. This can take the form of overt and covert bullying that is notoriously difficult to confront. The widespread existence of sexual harassment marks out the territory of the male according to (Durrani, 2001). In a similar vein various studies find that women academics suffer from sex bias and sex discrimination (Morley and Walsh, 1996; Donaldson and Emes, 2000; Bain and Cummings, 2000; Petersen and Gravetts, 2000) in their quest for career advancement.

In a study that emphasises the under-representation of women in academia, Gardiner et al., (2007, p.426) cite the 'chilly climate' as a barrier to their progress. A further explanation that appears pertinent to women in the academic context, they argue includes; lack of networking opportunities and lower levels of advancement in women's research careers compared to their male counterparts. Results from Lund's (1999) survey of 30 Commonwealth nations asserts that women are still severely under-represented among both academic and administration and that, women academics are mostly found at the levels of lecturers.

Luke (2000) in her study of women academics found that balancing family and childcare needs with professional careers is the biggest obstacle for women academics. She cites that even single women were not exempt from family care, especially care for their elderly parents. Although the single women interviewed reported that they had much more time for their career, they emphasised that being single carried its own price. Cultural attitudes acted very negatively on women's career advancement especially, when they had to attend institutional meetings with no partner and also, if they socialised with married male colleagues, they would be gossiped about. Similar studies on balancing family and career have been highlighted (Armenti, 2004c; Acker and Armenti, 2004; Wolfinger et al., 2008; Mason and Goulden, 2002).

Luke (2000, p.292) further highlights that the cultural stigma associated with women's single status could lead to:

Women missing out networking opportunities and also access to information about promotion as these could sometimes be discussed over drinks or dinner. Such cultural gender politics inscribed on married or single women's social and professional relations with men are part of an informal cultural milieu that makes women invisible.

Bagilhole (2000, p.13) also argues that women are regarded as different in higher education 'due to men's advantage through thriving patriarchal systems and the myth of individualism promoted through their cultural hegemony'. In a similar vein, Rarieya (2007, p.199) emphasizes that stereotypes held against women have been found to be barriers to their career progress. Such stereotypes include women leaders being seen as 'cold and hard'. These views result in overt and covert forms of discrimination (Forster, 2001).

### ***2.3 Women Academics: The Kenyan Context 2010***

Higher education in Kenya had a period of rapid expansion in the early 1990s. According to the Ministry of Education (2007), the number of public universities increased from two to seven. The imbalance of women academics in Kenya in the late 1990s contradicts markedly to female participation rates at undergraduate and postgraduate level and in the lower levels of academia (Kanake, 1997). Women's under-representation in academia remains startling, for example, women account for 7.1% of professors (Manya, 2000). In 2010, however, Table 2.1 illustrates a slight increase in the number of women professors in Kenya's public universities to 10%. Gachukia (2002, p.3) further emphasizes the continuing under-representation of women academics in Kenya's public universities:

Kenyatta University had one woman Deputy Vice Chancellor, and among full professors, there were 2 women out of 24 professors. Moi University had only one woman professor of 37 professors. Out of 65 lecturers, there were only 6 women. There were 50 women Lecturers out of the total 417 in all public universities.

The Gender Policy in Education published by the Ministry of Education – Kenya (2007), reveals that in Kenya, enrolment in public university education is characterized by wide disparities in favour of males. In 2004, female students made up only 36.2% of the total enrolment. Furthermore, female enrolment in science, mathematics and technology-related degree courses is very low.

For example, at the University of Nairobi, for the academic years 2002/2003 to 2004/2005, females constituted only 16.1% and 26.3% of those enrolled in the bachelor of architecture and computer science degree programmes respectively.

A low enrolment rate of girls and women is still a challenge in university education in Kenya. This is despite Affirmative Action Policy (see chapter 1) that allows girls to be admitted to state universities with one point lower than that of boys (Onsongo, 2009). Onsongo (2009, p.71) in her study reported that the 'Affirmative Action Policy as currently applied does not enhance access and gender equity in university education'. The total number of students admitted to the seven public universities for September 2009 intake was 16, 629 of which 11, 401 (68.5%) were male and 5, 228 (31.4%) were female. It was reported that 1,070 girls were admitted to the university with two points lower than their male counterparts, on what the JAB (Joint Admission Board) termed as part of the affirmative action policy aimed at attaining gender parity and to ensure females entered the university (Siringi, 2009).

The government of Kenya is strategising to attain increased participation and gender equity in teaching, learning and governance of the university and research (Bunyi, 2006). The Ministry of Education plans among other strategies; to encourage gender-responsive teaching and learning environments, to encourage and disseminate gender-responsive research, mainstream gender in universities and implement women empowerment programmes such as Affirmative Action Policy to ensure female representation (Ministry of Education-Kenya, 2007).

The nature of higher education in Kenya has remained highly conservative and male dominated as one of the last remaining bastions of patriarchal privilege and power, according to (Manya, 2000). A review of literature and research on Kenyan universities further reveals that there are no policies or mechanisms in Kenyan universities on women's access to higher education related to the implementation of the proposals made at the UNESCO world conferences on Higher Education (Nyamu, 2004). However, there have been attempts by individual universities to incorporate women's issues in their programmes. Most of these attempts have been financed by donor funding or Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs) such as the African Forum for Women Educationists (FAWE) and the Association of African Universities (AAU) which launched a gender equity programme in 2001, calling for the establishment of gender units in its member universities (Ministry of Education, Kenya, 2007). As Mama (2003) notes, such efforts lead to reforming but not transforming the institutions in the interest of women, gender equity and society.

In Kenya, the gender issues are more outside the university, and the teaching that takes place is still limited to technical approaches. This is in terms of making women and gender issues part of the disciplines and transformations in higher education, Kenyan universities still lag behind. This scenario reflects the challenges to Women and Gender Studies in Kenyan universities, and effects on the career advancement of women academics (Gachukia, 2002).

Research on female academics in Kenyan universities and their careers is scarce (as mentioned earlier in chapter 1), and the only documented study was conducted by Kamau (2004) in an interview with twenty four women academics examining barriers in their career. The study concluded that women academics' career experiences are greatly shaped by the interlocking nature of the indigenous gender role expectations and western hierarchies of gender subordination. The study further illustrates how women lag behind their male counterparts due to lack of support and inhospitable work environments.

In addition, women academics are in a dilemma over family and career, the great effect of traditional African cultural expectations that expect them to excel as 'good wives' and 'good mothers', lack of role models and the old boys'-networks that locks women out of the circle (Kamau, 2004). The women studied were perceived as 'outsiders within the sacred grove, intruders, incompetent and sometimes ridiculed as unfeminine' (Kamau, 2004, p.3). In another study (Kamau, 2001) cites how domestic roles restrict married women's choices of promotion and career advancement. In Kenya, a female academic would turn down an offer to study abroad because of family commitments or just because her husband has refused her permission to travel (Onsongo, 2005).

A similar view regarding challenges faced by women academics in pursuit of career advancement is echoed by Manya (2000) in her study on gender equal opportunity policy in a Kenyan university, where women are excluded from accessing information about scholarships, and are ignored in meetings. She gives a personal story of how she found an MA scholarship advertisement by the Institute of Education, University of London, in her boss's tray, after the deadline for application. She however applied, got the admission, and pursued the course. Elsewhere, 'A woman is expected to prove her competence while that of a man is assumed... has to work twice as hard as her male counterparts, and faces opposition and criticism'. Women need to attend formal seminars, conferences and workshops and to network with other women for social support (Gachukia, 2002, p.3).

Another of the challenges faced by women academics in Kenya, as elsewhere, is the highly masculinist culture and several gate-keepers in the deeply hierarchical management exhibited by the universities (Manya, 2000, p.9). She contends:

I signed my name as M.Manya, Snr. Administrative Assistant with no indication of my gender. In response, the chairman (male) addressed the envelope and my letter as 'Mr. M. Manya'. It left me quite amused, but made me wonder why the assumption that I was male was made.

A further illustration that the cultural expectation of women to play their societal roles as wives and mothers is a major stumbling block to women's access to career advancement to senior positions is expressed by (Manya, 2000; Hughes and Mwiria, 1989). The cultural attitude and societal expectation has been used as a weapon to deny women appointments, promotion and training opportunities in the guise that with their multiple roles, they are not able to fully commit themselves to paid employment. In addition, this has been used to deny them equal benefits and in turn, equal pay. This is often justified by claims that they do not need money, as much as men, since they have husbands to provide for them and their families (Hughes and Mwiria, 1989). In agreement, is Kanake (1997) arguing that the Kenyan universities are driven by cultural beliefs and general societal attitudes, viewing women as non - issues.

Faced with multitude of responsibilities, women are often not keen to apply for promotions to senior academic positions that would require them to devote more time to work and research. This would require delegating domestic responsibilities to home-helps, a situation that in Kenya is likely to have one branded as a neglectful and irresponsible mother (Kamau, 2001). Such moves are not easy for women, since the logistics can often be quite involving to the family (Kanake, 1997; Hughes and Mwiria, 1989).

In other cases, promotion in academic environment may mean having published and attended professional conferences and completed PhD studies. A female in Kanake's (1997, p.20) study aptly captures this predicament:

My husband will not take food prepared by a house girl. I have to come home early to prepare supper and ensure that young ones eat their meal...promotion committees are male dominated and more men become eligible for promotions as they have a chance to pursue their PhD's, have publications and researches. Some of us women are accused of not applying for promotion. How does one apply when she has no chance to fulfill the required qualifications? We need a break: otherwise sometimes we really feel worked up.

The socialisation process in Kenya and the societal allocation of the role wife/mother and care giver to women has also further exacerbated women's limitations to career advancement (Onsongo, 2005). Girls are socialized to expect marriage and to bear children. Only a small proportion of girls enroll for postgraduate courses. According to 1999/2000 figures, women constituted 29.5% at the university of Nairobi with a mere 24% in postgraduate courses (Nyamu, 2004). It is from this scattered pool of women that senior appointments can be made. There were only three female Professors then, constituting 5.1% showing an increase yet still too few. In 2010, there is a slight increase in the number of women professors to 10% in public universities (see Table 2.1).

Most women academics are to be found in lower grades as Tutorial Fellows, Assistant Lecturers and Lecturers (Nyamu, 2004). To be eligible for promotion to Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor, a great emphasis is laid on publications and research (Onsongo, 2000). To get to such levels of career advancement, a woman has to face promotion and appointment criteria that on paper are quite clear, fair and espouse the principle of merit, while in practice have been found to be prone to abuse (Sifuna, 1989). Sifuna (1989) further reports that appointments and promotions in Kenya's public universities seem to be dependent on a system close to patronage and sponsorship, cronyism or the old boys' network. This clearly excludes women who are 'less willing to play the careerist games that men do' (Kettle, 1996, p.55).

In addition, many women's domestic and personal circumstances do not allow them to socialize in clubs, pubs, and sports grounds where networks for career advancement and promotions are sometimes developed and sustained (Kamau, 2004). The fear of being labeled as a deviant character or 'loose' woman, keeps many women away from such social places (Kamau, 2004, p.10). In Kenya, the old-boys' networks could be both social and political (Kanake, 1997; Sifuna, 1989), and women are likely not to have access to these networks.

Thus, many appointments to senior positions in Kenya's universities go to men, and as a respondent in Kanake (1997) noted, it seems women are attempting to enter and operate in a world and a system created and controlled by men without much success. This seems to confirm an earlier assertion that Kenyan higher education is a mirror of Kenyan's society's exclusion of women from career advancement, management and decision-making (Bunyi, 2006). Societal expectations and the traditional role of women have made them less likely to hold senior positions or pursue long-term careers (Gachukia, 2002; Bunyi, 2006). Progression to seniority in academia can be a slow and lengthy process and with fewer women academics-, there is a corresponding time lag in increasing the numbers of senior academic women (Bunyi, 2006; Ngesa, 2007; Kamau, 2001). Kamau (2004) further confirms that the devaluation of women's accomplishment has its origin from Kenyan gender ideology.

According to Ayodo (2010, pp.1-2) Dr. X, a woman don reported that she was the only woman lecturer for almost a decade in the department of English at university X in the 1990s and most of the lecturers at the university were men. The scholar adds that teaching is her passion and she has risen to the rank of a senior lecturer after getting her PhD in 2003. She says she 'has also published widely to fit the university benchmarks of promotion... it is not easy balancing between scholarship, domestic and roles of community'.

## ***2.4 Kenya Higher Education within a Global Setting***

Internationally, women have been identified as a group in need of inclusion into the private and public good that higher education can offer. The World Declaration on Higher Education identified equitable participation for women as an urgent priority for the sector (UNESCO, 1998, Article 4). Despite equal opportunity policies, global inequalities (in terms of gender, race, class, poverty) still exist in HE (Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010; Morley, 2010).

It is important, however, to celebrate the marked gender gains. Globally, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for higher education is 1.05, suggesting that overall rates of participation are slightly higher for women than for men (UNESCO, 2007, 132). There has been little international research attention paid to how women academics fare in specific contexts like Kenya where there is a contradiction to the prevailing GPI. Women academics in Kenyan HE still continue to be under-represented in academia (see Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3). In 2010, only 10% of Professors in Kenyan public universities were women, and some of the private universities have no professor (see Table 2.3). Hence, the gender gains according to Morley and Lugg (2009) 'might be masking more persistent inequalities in higher education access, particularly in relation to poverty. There is much talk about feminization of higher education. Some western feminist scholars are taking issue with popularist beliefs that women are taking over the academy and that their newly found professional and economic independence is responsible for societal destabilization and a crisis in masculinity (Leathwood and Read, 2008).

When discussing gender gains, it is important to indicate how women's participation in higher education is unevenly distributed. In 2005, participation in higher education was greater for women than men in four regions of the world: Northern America and Western Europe; Central and Eastern Europe; Latin America and Caribbean and Central Asia.

In East Asia and the Pacific, South and West Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, participation rates for men continue to outstrip those for women and the GPI in each region remains below 1 (UNESCO, 2007).

'Could it be that women in these regions are so lacking in merit that they are excluded from higher education, or are the stories behind the statistics more socially complex?' (Morley and Lugg, 2009, p.38). While patterns of representation among women have remained largely unchanged in leadership, women are fairing slightly better in academic positions (Singh, 2008). Women's participation as Professors and Associate Professors has increased marginally across the Commonwealth during the past decade. 'In 1997, 9.9% of Professors and 23.3% of Associate Professors were women. By 2006, this had risen to 15% of Professors and 19% of associate professors, Readers and Senior lecturers' (Sing, 2008, p.46).

It is worth noting that the increasing trends tend to be in higher-income countries such as Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Very few women are appointed as head of administration in South Asian or African Countries (Singh, 2008). In the UK, in 2006/2007, women comprised 42.3% of academics, but only 17.5% of Professors in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom (Lipsett, 2008). Women disappear when power, resources and influence increase. Again, questions can be posed about the gendering of meritocracy. While some women in certain countries and disciplines are entering the academy as students, women are not significantly occupying positions of power within higher education organizations on an international basis (Morley and Lugg, 2009).

In 2010, Kenya prides itself on having one woman Vice Chancellor at Kenyatta University appointed in 2006. There are also two women Vice Chancellors in private universities, (Ministry of Education-Kenya, 2007). Another appointment of the first woman Chancellor was made to Maseno University in December 2008, who was previously the first woman Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) of a public university-University of Nairobi in 1994.

'The Professor says she did not have to behave like a man to excel in the male - dominated arena. 'I have never elbowed my way to get an appointment in the male- dominated academic field but worked at my best' (Ayodo, 2009, p.1).

At the university level in Kenya, women remain under-represented, forming about 40% of the total student population in 2007 (Republic of Kenya, 2008). Women's low rates of attendance at the university level reflect the cumulative effect factors hindering their progression in education from the time they enter school at the primary level. Women's representation remains low despite the fact that the government has lowered girls' required admission points by one to improve women's access to university education (Onsongo, 2009). Furthermore, for the 2010 university intake, the girls' admission points were lowered by two points.

Muindi (2010, p.1) reports:

'... Professor Olive Mugenda said the board had taken affirmative action in the case of the girls and candidates from hardship areas...the cut-off point for male students is a B of 63 points, while that of girls is two points lower (61)... as a result, 1,694 more girls will be enrolled, putting the gender ratio at 63 to 37'.

Kenya has made progress in ensuring that education is available to all, but enrollment of females is generally lower than that of males. With very low transition rates, women become scarcer as one moves up the education ladder. The Kenya government needs to address the limitations on access and retention, and despite the increased total enrollment, significant gender disparities exist, and the girls' access and retention remain elusive (Maina, 2010).

Tables, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 in the next section illustrate the gender distribution in Kenya's public and private universities in terms of employment and professional ranks.

**Table 2.1 The number of Professors in Kenya's Public Universities**

University	Male	Female
Nairobi	100	10
Egerton	9	0
Masinde Muliro	10	1
Kenyatta University	28	2
Maseno	15	2
JKUAT	17	5
Moi	31	4
Constituents	3	0
Total	213	24

*Source:* The Daily Nation 7<sup>th</sup> November 2010 (Commission for Higher Education-Kenya)

Table 2.1 above indicates that in 2010, women make up 10% of professors in public universities in Kenya, emphasizing the under-representation of women academics at senior levels.

**Table 2.2 University Staff by terms of employment: Public Universities**

UNIVERSITY Name	DOCTORATE				MASTERS & BELOW				TOTAL
	Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female	Total	%	
NAIROBI	540	133	673	46	560	238	798	54	1471
MOI	28	8	36	39	46	11	57	61	93
KENYATTA	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
EGERTON	108	34	142	39	172	49	221	61	363
JKUAT	165	45	210	38	272	71	343	62	553
MASENO	159	63	222	32	313	164	477	68	699
MMUST	68	6	74	25	168	55	223	75	297

Source: *The Daily Nation* 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2010 (Commission for Higher Education- Kenya).

Table 2.2 above illustrates the academic qualifications of both male and female academics in Kenya's public universities. The male academics with PhD qualifications are 1,068 (78.7%), while the female academics with PhD's are 289 (21.3%). Data from one of the universities is missing. The male academics with masters constitute a total of 1,532 (72.2%) and the female academics, a total of 588 (27.7%). The statistics indicate that there are more male academics with PhD thus, more male professors than females (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.3 University Staff by terms of employment: Private Universities**

UNIVERSITY Name	DOCTORATE				MASTERS & BELOW			TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Total	%	Male	Female	Total	%	
BARATON	21	3	24	17	86	35	121	83	145
CUEA	54	7	61	24	134	58	192	76	253
DAYSTAR	17	8	25	10	143	85	228	90	253
USIU	60	15	75	43	65	33	98	57	173
NAZARENE	7	4	11	28	21	7	28	72	39
KEMU	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
STRATHMORE	47	13	60	29	68	79	147	71	207
KABARAK	23	5	28	20	95	19	114	80	142
KIRIRI	0	0	0	0	12	2	14	100	14
GRETSA	5	0	5	10	24	23	47	90	52
GREATLAKES	9	5	14	18	36	28	64	83	78
KCA	15	0	15	13	68	31	99	87	114
PRESBYTERIAN	2	0	2	4	28	17	45	96	47
ADVENTIST	11	2	13	87	2	0	2	13	15
MT. KENYA	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
INOORERO	10	3	13	9	98	26	124	91	137
KHBC	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
NEGST	40	8	48	94	1	2	3	6	51
MIST	20	5	25	89	2	1	3	11	28
SCOTT	3	1	4	29	7	3	10	71	14
AGA KHAN	82	28	110	91	8	3	11	9	121

Source: *The Daily Nation*, 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2010 (Commission of Higher Education- Kenya)

Table 2.3 above shows the academic qualifications of faculty members in private universities in Kenya. All the universities above have fewer than 10 professors except two. United States International University has 14 and Kenya College of Accountancy has 15. Women are fewer, and with lower levels of qualification compared to their male counterparts.

The Chief for Commission for Higher Education, Prof Everett Standa, reports in (Muindi, 2010, p. 2):

Some Kenyan university students are completing their courses without having interacted with a professor... there is acute shortage of professors at a time when the higher education sub-sector is experiencing exponential growth. This contravenes international standards that require academic staff to hold qualifications one level above those they teach.

... there are only 352 professors (male and female in public and private universities) in the country's 30 universities serving a student population of 200,000.

The worst affected are private universities, some of which have no professors, or when they have them, their number does not exceed 10. The increase in university colleges in Kenya has heightened the crisis. Table 2.3 shows that at least four universities do not have a single professor (male or female).

The next section discusses motivation and its relevance to careers of women academics.

## **2.5 Motivation**

This study relates motivation to the women's career advancement in terms of those factors that facilitated their career success and how sources of motivation could be embedded in their gender roles and socialization which later impact on their career decisions.

According to Stipek (2002), motivation is a psychologically complex issue and generally accepted as one of the most important factors that determine the rate and success of any human activity and this is why researchers have focused on those factors that motivate learners. Motivation according to Meece (2006) refers to choices people make as to what experience or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect. Motivation energises and guides behaviour towards reaching a particular goal in life. Modern theories of motivation (Stipek, 2002; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002; Meece, 2006) focus more on relation to the individual's beliefs, values and goals with action. These beliefs are about competence, expectancy for success, achievement values, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, interest and goals.

### **2.5.1 Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation**

Eccles and Wigfield (2002, p.112) highlight the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. When individuals are 'intrinsically motivated, they engage in an activity because they are interested in and enjoy the activity and when extrinsically motivated, individuals engage in activities for instrumental or other reasons, such as receiving a reward'. The role of gender in shaping achievement motivation has a long history in psychological and educational research (Meece, 2006). Studies on achievement motivation theories have been used to explain why adult women and men differed in their educational and occupational pursuits including attribution, expectancy-value, self-efficacy and achievement goal perspectives.

Across all theories, findings indicate that girls' and boys' motivation-related beliefs and behaviours continue to follow gender role stereotypes (Schunk, 1991; Stipek, 2002).

Closely related to motivation is self-efficacy which refers to a person's judgement of their confidence to learn, perform academic tasks or succeed in endeavours (Bandura, 1997; Bandura et al., 2001) which influences self-motivation. Self-efficacy beliefs can be identified as individuals' beliefs about their performance capabilities in a particular domain (Bandura, 1997; Zimmerman, 2000; Pintrich and McKeachie, 2000). The construct of self-efficacy is not considered as a global personality trait, but includes instead a person's 'judgement about their ability to accomplish certain goals or tasks by their actions in a specific situation' (Pintrich and McKeachie, 2000, p.36). Since the introduction of social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, it has received increasing attention in educational research studies and the studies of academic motivation (Zimmerman, 2000). There is plenty of research on self-efficacy beliefs about school teachers. The work of Bandura (1997) in particular, is exhaustively detailed indicating that pupils of teachers with higher self-efficacy beliefs tend to have better learning outcomes.

However, research on university teachers' self-efficacy beliefs is scarce. Bailey (1999) examined the effects of faculty's gender, qualification and research productivity on staff's self-efficacy beliefs, motivation to teach and do research. The results showed a relationship between self-efficacy and research. Women showed more motivation to teach than men. The study by Bailey (1999) showed that low success in research correlated with higher motivation for teaching. The results suggest the need to understand how each individual's motivation and self efficacy is constructed and determined to increase motivation and self-efficacy for teaching and research.

Family environment can influence self-efficacy through parental support and encouragement. Parents can nurture and support their children, while stimulating their curiosity and encouraging self-discovery to positively affect self-efficacy. This promotes intellectual development of the children (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). The self-efficacy theory has been applied to the career development of women (Meece, 2006). Self-efficacy has similarly been widely used to understand gender differences in motivation and achievement patterns. For example, numerous studies (Raburu, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000; Meece, 2006) document that boys tend to report higher self-efficacy and expectancy beliefs than girls about their performance. The relationship between gender, self - concepts and perceptions as well as women stereotypes roles are influencing women's motivations and career aspirations. From (Acker and Armenti, 2004), it is apparent the women's comments were concerned about self-esteem and self presentation.

Morley (1999) has highlighted that social psychology has produced various explanations for women's lack of seniority in different professions. She further argues that the concept of internalized oppression suggests that women learn to believe negativity about themselves and other women, which sometimes translates into low self-esteem/self-worth/self-confidence.

### **2.5.2 Gender differences in motivation**

Social psychologist researchers like Eccles and Wigfield (2002) have studied patterns of attribution about success or failure, and have found that the success of women is often attributed to unstable factors such as luck or hard work. The success of men on the other hand, are generally attributed to stable factors such as ability, while women are more likely to exhibit what has been labeled as low-expectancy attribution pattern (Meece, 2006). This cognitive pattern is probably most likely to be found when the activity at which people are successful is one that is considered stereotypically masculine (for example, scholarships or grants for research).

Thus, when women are successful at obtaining a grant or publishing an article, because their success is attributed to unstable factors, they will not expect continued success in the future. De La Rey (2001) in her study found that success was perceived by women as luck, rather than a result of skills and competence. When women fail, their failures are likely to be attributed to stable factors such as lack of ability, whereas men's failures are generally attributed to unstable factors such as lack of effort (Meece, 2006).

Participants in McGuire and Reger (2003) indicated that their initial motivation to publish was shaped by their institutional rewards structure. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) agree that behaviour is influenced by personal factors (motivation or internal factors) and by environmental factors. Raburu (2000) in her study of high school students in Kenya found gender differences in terms of task-orientations; males were more task-oriented than girls and the study revealed a relationship between motivation and achievement. In support, Eccles (1983) also suggests the link between motivation and school achievement.

Socialisation and achievement experiences play an important role in the development of gender differences in motivation. The child's home environment plays an important role in the shaping of their competency beliefs and interests. At school too children have the opportunity to validate, refine and enact their gender behavior (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). According to Eccles (1983), both parents and teachers contribute to gender differences in motivation. Through parental socialisation, children's motivation is influenced through role-modeling from parents, communication about their own abilities and skills and what is valued as important. This reflects greatly of the children's own beliefs and academic abilities (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). According to Eccles (2007), socio-cultural influences also impact on the development of motivation.

Children begin to form gender role conceptions that influence their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior well before they enter school. Eccles (1983) has also argued that the socialisation processes that lead children to internalize and accept these gender stereotypes are largely responsible for gender differences in motivation and achievement.

Researchers (Raburu, 2000; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002) have further demonstrated that male and female adolescents differ not only in their interests, attitudes and plans for the future but also, in their self-confidence and self-evaluation. Thus, in the course of their socialization, a different orientation to work develops between boys and girls which may have an effect on their future career choices. Women for example attach less importance than men to opportunities for promotion or higher income and more to the content of work itself and the atmosphere (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Moreover, motivation to pursue career is decisively influenced by family duties. Men on the other hand are, socialised in a male-dominated world, are admitted to old boys' networks, and their names enter the lists of quotable authors, the women have neither the backing of other women nor role models to motivate them and show them the way forward (Eccles, 2007).

Research with women academics describe different motivational factors that impacted on the women's lives during their careers. By focusing on individual beliefs, values and goals, motivation researchers such as Eccles and Wigfield (2002) have learned much about the reasons why individuals choose to engage or disengage in different activities related to their achievement behaviours.

## **2.6 Towards Career Advancement**

This section discusses those factors that play a role in women's career advancement.

### **2.6.1 Socialisation**

Among the factors that prevent women from planning a career in academia are the traditional gender roles. Women are more often judged on the basis of stereotypes, rather than according to their abilities. In addition, there is the difficulty to recon-ciliate family roles with a job that requires time, attention and concentration (Armenti, 2004). Furthermore, these traditional gender roles do not constitute merely an external factor, but they also become internalized by women themselves, and have an effect on their motivations and career aspirations (Bagilhole, 1994).

According to Armenti (2004a), some women have difficulties in recognising their abilities and in valuing themselves as they believe to be presented as being very capable could decrease their femininity. Women in academia manifest higher levels on stress than their male colleagues and have a tendency to be overloaded with teaching activities, that although important, are less valued in research which counts a great deal on promotion (Armenti, 2004a). Even as women move into new roles in society, they are influenced by the old ones they seek to escape and women have been warned from childhood not to speak up or to question, challenge, or criticise others (Kamau, 2001). Bagilhole (1993c, p.71) points out that social sanctions still exist for women who violate gender role expectations and those who raise their voices in intellectual argument may find themselves 'stigmatised, shrewish, whining, or complaining'.

According to Quina et al., (1998), women who fit the traditional gender roles display a number of characteristics that are likely to work against those needed to succeed as a scholar, and femininity has been equated with low assertiveness, low self competitiveness, dependency, patience, receptivity, modesty and non-aggressiveness. It is therefore, difficult for women to assert themselves. Furthermore, those women who showed modesty effect in describing their failures (that is, blamed themselves rather than the reviewers or editors), thus were less likely to make attempts to publish articles (Quina et al., 1998; Collins et al., 1998).

### **2.6.2 The Family effects/Socialisation process**

Relationships with parents and siblings affect career development but little research has been done with a focus on female career advancement. Respondents in Nyangaga (2007) reported a strong father-daughter and mother-daughter relationships as being very significant to their career development. Her study found women's experiences of their fathers' support and encouragement in a predominantly patriarchal society which facilitates their entry into academia and leadership. Mothers also provided feminine qualities which the participants draw upon as a basis of their leadership values and practices. Teaching they argued, is a gendered choice in Pakistan, so families push the women to teach, with no career plan (Nyangaga, 2007).

In a similar context, Rarieya (2007) in her interview with four women in Pakistan found that families played an important role in shaping the careers perceptions of the respondents; early independence, confidence and a desire to succeed. It is the mothers who are likely to go to school as parents to meet teachers and mothers support their children's learning at home. Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men largely determine lives of women (Nyangaga, 2007; Rarieya, 2007).

Although the women studied by Rarieya recognized support from both parents, there appeared to be 'unequivocal dominant influence of fathers in their lives, especially with regard to career ascent' (Rarieya, 2007, p.201).

One of Rarieya's respondents had this to say:

My father loved me very much, he would encourage me. I got my confidence from him. From the very beginning, he inculcated in me this love for education. My father was obviously a great influence in my life. He was focused and the best thing was that he thought that women were equal to men.

### **2.6.3 Family - Career Balance**

Women's balancing of career and parenthood has received much attention in Canada, Australia, United Kingdom, and United States of America showing women experiencing considerable conflicts when combining work and family responsibilities (Forster, 2001; Bagilhole, 1994; Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Luke, 2000; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2003). Working mothers strive to integrate their dual needs to nurture and to engage in challenging academic career (Armenti, 2004b; Acker and Armenti, 2004; Correl and Paik, 2007). Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) posits that childcare responsibilities, dueling tenure and biological clocks and reduced mobility for faculty women with children affect and slow their career advancement.

Research across cultures has indicated that women carry the major domestic responsibilities such as caring for children and cooking (Acker, 1994; Blackmore, 1999; Coleman, 1996; Luke, 2000). Similarly, Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2003) indicate that most women showed concerns related to having or caring for children and that the university structures did not take account of their family dilemmas. Balancing the demands of children and career posed daily dilemmas for the women by these researchers (Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2003; Raddon, 2002; Wajcman and Martin, 2002).

Accessing day care was a problem for women faculty in the study suggesting again, the barriers to women's career advancement (Armenti, 2004b).

Although the twin demands of career and family affect both men and women, Coleman (1996) contended that women usually carry the major responsibility for household management. The majority of the women in (Blackmore, 1999; Acker, 1994) reported to have worked triple shifts. In Blackmore's study, the women worked which was paid, the unpaid domestic work and unpaid community work while in Acker's study women teachers with young children juggled with paid work, home and child-care responsibilities. According to Blackmore (1999), women in education are constantly torn between home and work.

Recent research confirms that family conflict extends to academics (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2003), with female professors spending more time on domestic chores than their male counterparts. This may interfere with the woman's ability for performance in research and teaching necessary for advancement in academia (White, 2001). Women have less time to devote to their careers when their domestic responsibilities include spouses and children (Wolfinger et al., 2008). Another strong evidence on family and work conflict comes from the studies by (Mason and Goulden, 2004; Armenti, 2004) who found that women who are within five years of PhD receipt are less likely to have tenure than either men or women who delay or forsake childbirth.

Similarly, results from Wolfinger et al., (2008) show that family and children account for the lower rate at which women obtain tenure-track jobs and that single women without young children fare better on career advancement than those women academics with children. Academic careers may also conflict with family by forcing relocation in pursuit of tenure-track positions. Women with children and, especially with husbands, often lack flexibility (Bunyi, 2006; Kamau, 2001).

Women may forsake their own academic careers for those of their husbands, suggesting that dual-career constraints limit women's ability to accept and retain professorship. A woman academic in Forster (2001) narrated how she took leave of seven years from her career and put it on hold in order to take care of her family. Furthermore, in Forster (2001), many women were proud of their career achievements but regretted the costs; deferring having children until PhDs were completed and this led to some staying single, some women ended in divorce, with lack of time for the children and the guilt of letting child care to maids .

McCall et al., (2000) suggest that poorer research output by women academics may be because of many working women taking time off for childcare, creating a gap in their research career, which is detrimental to their promotion as research is believed to be criteria for promotion. These gaps they further argue, not only slow career advancement but could also cause regression to lower positions within the university. In addition, the ongoing responsibilities of childcare and household tasks, typically performed by women, consume time, energy and concentration, and restrict the number of hours spent on campus (Acker and Armenti, 2004). This might suggest that women produce fewer publications than men, which appears to be part of a research productivity cycle, as described by (Soliman and Soliman, 1997).

An excellent review on women faculty, Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2003, p.121) relate family status and publication rates and looks at how motherhood affects women and their faculty career, indicating that a 'significant tension exists for women who combine work and family'. Similarly, women academics in Acker and Armenti (2004, p.10) study showed a significant tension resulting from, house work, childcare and that the institutions did not care about the family dilemmas which was faced by the women faculty. A respondent reported; 'If I walked around pregnant that would be my doom'.

In Acker and Armenti (2004), younger women academics were either childless or unmarried as balancing demands of children and career posed daily dilemmas of sleepless nights, stress and exhaustion as it did for women studied by other researchers (Raddon, 2002; Wajcman and Martin, 2002).

Another key issue which has been noted in literature is the scheduling of motherhood. Armenti (2004b, p.217) highlights how some of her respondents were planning their pregnancies, and considered having a child before tenure as detrimental to career but instead have the baby before tenure on what they termed, 'May baby phenomenon'. This meant that the junior faculty tried having the babies by the end of May or anytime during Spring and Summer months to permit them to have children without being forced to take time off from their work as this would 'jeopardize their goals for achieving tenure'. The month of May was considered ideal for the birth of a child since it allowed the women a few months of motherhood prior to the new teaching session. Young women academics postponed their child birth until after obtaining tenure in what they termed, 'post-tenure baby phenomenon' Armenti (2004b, p.220). Other women faculty did not disclose pregnancy at interviews in what they called, 'the hidden pregnancy phenomenon' (Armenti, 2004b, p.220).

Armenti (2004b) further highlights how women seek to manage the biological clock and academic clock conflicts in four different ways; 'delay of childbearing, delay of degree or career, combining both career and family, and decision of career over children'. Other studies (Williams, 2004; Ngesa, 2007) also highlight the problem of clashing biological and academic clocks for women academics.

Some of the women in Acker (2003, p.123) had to compromise sleep and/or times for themselves. One of the respondents explained how family relationships suffered when the job was time consuming:

At the time my marriage was on the rocks and in fact I'd have to attribute, to some extent, the time and energy I was putting in my work over the years as contributing to the breakdown of my marriage... when I was trying to apply for leave to redress that .. it turned out to be too late.

The family contributes to early career influence in that, some women explained that earlier career decisions had been influenced, and their choices limited, by placing need of relationships and family first (Forster, 2001). They exhibited interrupted career patterns as opposed to linear career development as in (Blaxter et al., 2006). There are those women who reported not to have had interruptions in their career because they remained single or, had supportive husbands.

Despite the availability of domestic helpers in Kenyan to assist with household responsibilities, conflicts between career and family still have adverse effects for the career advancement of women academics (Kanake, 1997; Kamau, 2004). Most women in these studies reported that having children hampered their professional aspirations.

The Kenyan scenario could be summarised as in Onsongo (2005, p.183) as:

Women face contradictions of mother, wife and career which are exacerbated by the socio-cultural expectations of women in Kenya... if they spent time in office doing research, the husbands at home and the family felt neglected... the cultural construction of motherhood and the gendered domestics roles- multiple roles as academics, mother, daughter in law, wife makes it difficult to balance.

The role of mentoring on women academics' career is discussed in the next section.

## 2.6.4 Mentoring

Mentoring implies a relationship between a younger adult, and an older more experienced adult that helps the younger individual learn to navigate in the adult world, and the world of work (Kamler and Rasheed, 2006). A mentor supports, guides, and counsels the young adult as she or he accomplishes an important task (Gardiner et al., 2007). Historically, mentoring has been an informal process, in which the mentor and mentee spontaneously form a relationship with the purpose of assisting the mentee in developing career-relevant skills (Gardiner et al., 2007). Recently there has been a trend towards formal or assigned mentoring relationships in organizations which is relevant for women, who may often be excluded from the informal mentoring partnerships (Gardiner et al., 2007).

Several studies (McCormack and West, 2006; Eliasson et al., 2000) have found mentoring to have some effect on learning experience for both mentors and mentees. In a review of over 300 mentoring evaluations Ehrich (2004) discovered that 35% resulted in positive outcomes such as networking, sharing ideas with colleagues, personal satisfaction and growth. On the other hand, 2.5% reported exclusively negative outcomes including lack of time, or personal mismatches. Overall, mentoring has produced many benefits for the mentees such as encouragement, networking, increased self-confidence as well as benefits to mentors (Ehrich, 2004).

In Gardiner et al., (2007, p.433), one female academic reported this about her promotion:

Achieving promotion to Senior Lecturer, which was a direct result of working with my mentor. It helped me look into the future with a greater sense of self-worth and self-confidence. I tried for promotion a few years after the scheme and was successful.

Several mentees in the same study Gardiner et al., (2007, p.433) commented on the effect of mentoring scheme to their publication record as follows:

In the past twelve months I submitted one article, one co-authored article, a book chapter and co-edited a book. It gave me the confidence to do this, and a plan to achieve it. I could develop clear career planning objectives which helped me to submit twelve manuscripts last year- the most ever. I feel empowered by the choices I am making.

Women academics report fewer support systems with few mentors and role models and little access to communication networks which affect their perception of themselves as academics, putting pressure on them to perform better than their male colleagues (Bagilhole, 1993c). In a similar context, Kamler and Rasheed (2006) points out that, through the centuries, traditional mentorship, a relationship between a respected accomplished elder and a novice, has been credited for providing the support and the know-how for career advancement. They caution that formal university mentoring programmes are rare and some that exist fail to determine evaluative outcomes in terms of protégés, mentors and institutional goals and objectives. Kamler and Rasheed (2006) further suggests that mentoring should be included in policy documents to raise awareness.

In academia, mentoring has simultaneously invigorated senior faculty and assisted junior ones in learning the ropes of understanding the institutional organisational culture (Tierney, 1988; Silver, 2003). However, women in academia have continued to face barriers in acquiring nurturing mentorship which subsequently appears to have limited the number of women mentors.

Aisenberg and Harrington (1988, p.45) in support cite:

.... another important form of subsidy that women notoriously lack is professional counseling- guidance and instruction in the actual rules of the game... women suffer chronically from lack of professional mentors.

McGuire and Reger (2003) emphasize that informal and formal mentoring relationships even with their shortcomings have proven for many to be the pathway to professional promotion. Unfortunately, most women in academia have not experienced either traditional formal or informal mentoring and few have enjoyed collaborative mentoring structures as their lives and priorities coupled organisational bias that have denied women the opportunity to benefit from this mentorship boost (Kamler and Rasheed, 2006).

In emphasis on the importance of mentoring, McCormack and West (2006, p.421) in their case study suggested that mentoring programme helped women to develop three ways of knowing-‘knowing why’ (relates to values, beliefs, motivations and passions), ‘knowing how’ (competencies) and ‘knowing whom’(the relationships or links that contribute to an individual’s networking activities), which contributed to enhanced career outcomes. Mentors are also helpful in the professional socialization of aspiring professionals.

One of the participants of the mentoring program McCormack and West (2006, p.421-422) reported:

The program gave me more insight into myself, my university role...has motivated me to know where I am and where to go in the future, to de-construct who you are and where you want to be.

On completion of the programme, participants in McCormack and West (2006) reported increased understanding of university culture, planning skills, negotiation skills, strengthening of weak self-esteem, policies, procedures to promotions, and some gained confidence, motivation to their jobs, some discovered career paths to pursue and a sense of belonging.

The Kenyan women academics in Kamau (2004, p.17) repeatedly linked their slow production rates to lack of an academic mentor. A good relationship between a junior academic and a senior was referred to as a ‘catalyst or passport’ to success in academia.

Bagilhole (1993a) also argues that continuing lack of positive role models and mentors means that women are handicapped on a daily basis in both appraisal and promotion because women in a male dominated environment lack the benefits of colleague relationships. Women academics in Morley and Walsh (1996) similarly reported that encouragement they received from others in the early stages of academic careers were of the greatest significance for their later success. For many respondents in this study, the basis of their career success was getting a good degree or PhD and being encouraged by their tutors or supervisors to pursue an academic career. A number of authors (Johnson, 2002; McGuire and Reger, 2003; Gardiner et al., 2007) have also acknowledged the importance of mentors to professional socialization. The relative lack of female mentors has no doubt affected women's career development.

Eliasson et al., (2000) in investigating the experiences of fourteen women academics paired with senior academics found out that mentoring occurs informally in academic as well as in other types of organizations, yet little in terms of hard evidence is known about its effects. The study concluded that, mentoring makes enough of a difference to the junior faculty concerned that it should be undertaken openly and made available to all junior faculty members wishing to be mentored. Johnson (2002, p.89) confirms that in informal mentoring relationships, protégés 'receive more career and psychological functions (support) from mentors and report greater effect from, and satisfaction with, the mentorship than in informal mentoring relationship'.

The next section discusses the effect of role models on women academics' careers.

### **2.6.5 Role Models**

Role models are individuals like whom one wants to be. It is not necessary to interact with the role model to be influenced by him or her. In contrast, the relationship between mentor and mentee requires interaction (Gardiner et al., 2007a). According to Gachukia (2002), the absence of female role models in Kenyan universities have been cited as one of the barriers to women's advancement in academia by other researchers (Kamau, 2001; Nzomo, 1995). Similarly, in Morley's (2006) study of gender equity, respondents reported lack of role models and faced hostile attitudes in their attempts to access higher education. In addition, women in McCall et al. (2000) felt isolated from their male colleagues who were in old-boys networks, while women had difficulty in obtaining career-relevant information for progress due to the lack of role models.

### **2.6.6 Networking**

Career networks usually involve contacts with a variety of colleagues for the purpose of mutual career benefits. In academia, networking has been seen as a relation between individuals of equal or higher status. Other benefits of networking include; information exchange, collaboration, career planning, professional support and encouragement, access to visibility and upward mobility (O'Leary and Mitchell, 1990). According to Mavin and Bryans (2002), networking has been considered a crucial ingredient of success in any professional career including academia, within the academic community, and different stages of academic careers.

It is through the informal networks of subject communities that the values by which members of the academic profession are recruited and promoted are sustained, while the old-boys network can sometimes act as gate keepers in academia (Quina et al., 1998; Mavin and Bryans, 2002).

In O'Leary and Mitchell (1990), women academics have been found to be less integrated into their academic departments and disciplines than men. The most frequently offered explanation for this fact is that women do not have access to the same networks nor enjoy the same relationships with mentors as men. A similar view is echoed in Gardiner et al., (2007) where a mentoring scheme for junior academics report a lack of access to informal networks which provide information relevant to career advancement. This in effect is regarded as one of the causes for women's under-representation in academia. As such, women miss advice on applying for research grants, information about procedures involved in applying for promotion.

A professor in Morley and Walsh (1996, p.20) cited how the colleague he had known at Oxbridge assisted in his promotion:

One of the professors who was in the group had seen my book and heard me talk and said to somebody else, 'This chap should have been promoted some time ago'. That person then fed it through to the Dean of Law School who did something about it.

### **2.6.7 Women's networks**

Women's access to networks has improved considerably in the last 30 years although feelings of exclusion and isolation from academic communication networks are commonly still reported among some women academics (McGuire and Reger, 2003; McCall et al., 2000). Kamau (2004) also found that women had difficulty locating colleagues with whom they could discuss ideas over lunch or share research interests. Such women felt they were left out of the 'club' and 'outsiders within' (Kamau, 2004, p.10). Not only do men fail to include women in their networks, but women hesitate to push their way in fear of being stigmatised and ridiculed (Forster, 2001).

Luke (2000, p.291) reported how women academics avoided joining their male colleagues over drinks or lunches because of the cultural stigma- 'people will gossip....will lead to whispers, people will talk, and so did not want to intrude'. Conversely, in McCormack and West (2006), the women who were highly connected to networking reported having published more than those who were less connected to networks. An investigation by Bagilhole (1993c) suggests that women academics find themselves excluded from male networks. If promotion opportunities are not available in the respondent's institution, then a move to another is usually the way to progress. However, networking tends to provide cumulative advantages to men and disadvantages to women (Bagilhole, 1994).

### **2.6.8 Queen Bees.**

A great deal has been written and assumed about the failure of women to support and even nurture other women in the work place as some of the senior women may not be useful mentors for fear that success of other women would challenge their positions (Luke, 2001). In Armenti (2004, p.71), women have been labeled as 'Queen Bees' by other women. Similarly, according to Morley and Walsh (1996), such women academics who have achieved professional success are described as anti-feminist. Such women are strongly individualistic and tend to deny the existence of discrimination based on sex (O'Leary and Mitchell, 1990, Luke, 2001).

## **2.7 University Culture**

The culture of individual institutions is crucial to the success or failure of initiatives to enhance women's progress. Academic institutions have more of a traditional stance that tends to exclude women's participation through chilly climates, boys' clubs, promotion criteria, and lack of family- friendly policies such as childcare (Armenti, 2004a; Currie et al., 2002).

With a focus on women and careers in higher education, Bagilhole (1993c) interviewed women in one university, interpreted her findings within the framework of institutional discrimination and argued that women were excluded from the male networks which dominate academic institutions. This view is supported by Currie and Thiele (2001) who argue that male cultures serve to marginalize women academics.

According to Manya (2000), the exclusion of women from the upper echelons of the university is not however, a formal disbarment since the university is acknowledged to be a meritocracy where advancement is supposedly based on ability and academic achievement. Nevertheless, one cannot disregard gender in considering interactions, communication, and evaluations (Manya, 2000).

Similarly, Currie et al., (2000) in their interviews with the staff in two Australian universities about the sacrifices they make to do their jobs, describe the institutions as greedy, making the women work long hours and away from their families. A similar view is echoed by Acker (1994), while (Sandler, 1986; Forster, 2001; Morley, 1999; Acker and Armenti, 2004) draw attention to the chilly climate experienced by women academics. In these different contexts, women academics face barriers to career advancement as a result of the cultures from the universities.

In Morley and Walsh (1996, p.62) one of the women professors reported that it was her firm belief that the barriers to women are largely attitudinal:

Men go drinking in the common room 5.30 p.m. This excludes women with caring responsibilities, but a lot of women say they feel excluded from that type of life and it's not decisions being taken but people get to know each other and think, oh this is a good chap. Women don't get to look in.

Morley and Walsh (1996) further point out that it is assumed in these institutions that concepts such as merit, underlying staff selection and promotion procedures are universal and objective.

Women's problems with promotion are thought to be associated with their domestic responsibilities, which are ameliorated with career breaks and crèches. Despite equal opportunity policies, women in universities remain crowded into low -status poorly paid jobs. Too often these are statements of policy ideals, which fail to address gendered power relations and rarely provoke actions or change. The evidence suggests that the problem of women and their careers in higher education may be more accurately conceptualized as trying to keep them at the bottom and preventing them from getting to the top (Morley and Walsh, 1996).

Women in Forster et al., (2002) study also reported a lack of culture-fit within the university and feel more socially and intellectually isolated than their male colleagues. Such feelings of isolation may be because the universities still maintain the tradition of a boys club which is hard for women to penetrate. Respondents in Quinlan (1999) experienced similar old-boys network/boys clubs as they tried to advance their careers.

Another argument put forward for the lack of senior women academics may be that women tend to lag behind men in their research careers. Research is widely believed to be one of the key criteria for promotion and, therefore, poor research performance is detrimental to women achieving promotion to senior positions (McCall et al., 2000). There is pressure to publish in a number of country's universities, notably; Canada (Acker and Armenti, 2004), the UK (Forster, 2001), Australia (White, 2001) and in Kenya (Onsongo, 2000).

Feminist organizational theorists have noted how organizational cultures (Gherardi, 1995) are gendered. The cultures in some institutions reflect patriarchal hegemonies in their images, beliefs and norms, dress codes, language, stories and myths. Organisational cultures can be overt such as expression of prejudice in promotions and recruitment (Morley, 2006).

Masculine cultures such as those in higher education can make working environments unattractive to women, as supported by Quina et al., (1998, p.219) which identified several barriers to advancement in academia; 'Chilly climate, the old-boys network, and negative attitudes and stereotypes'. They further emphasize that universities have not been well known for family- friendly policies, but given the increasing number of women academics and dual career couples in academia, family issues are important concerns for many women. Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) emphasize the consistent struggle to integrate work and family life and not to give one up for the other.

Kamau (2004) echoes sentiments of the existence of chilly and hostile climates which according to the women academics interviewed, destroys the congenial relationships expected in a university. She further highlights how women are trapped in a double-bind affecting women academics' productivity. Her interviews revealed the strong male culture in Kenyan academia.

One respondent in Kamau (2004, p.15) had this to say:

I gave up trying to be part of the network of my research team after experiencing a psychological exclusion. If you speak, the men are all quiet, they just signal each other...they whisper, beckon each other, I felt the climate was not right for me... you are a stranger...an 'outsider within'.

Another respondent also reported in Kamau (2004, p.16) that, 'to fit in the boys club I had to deal with sexist jokes, derogatory remarks that contained reminders that after all, you remain a woman'. In a similar view, White (2001b, p.64) points out that once women reach senior levels in any organization, they encounter 'the power of the male hegemony that is prepared to accommodate some women, but not have the male dominance challenged'. A drawback for women academics' progress according to Gachukia (2002) is the lack of women friendly institutions, male-dominated interviewing panels and non-transparent job selection criteria and that most of the Kenyan universities lack gender policies.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The review from the literature suggests that in order to understand the female academics profession, it is necessary to consider various factors stemming from their socialization, early education experience and general life experiences. The literature indicates how women academics' careers are constrained by many factors including a lack of role models, family conflicts, conflicts of career, and limited opportunities for mentoring and networks. In addition, university culture which is still perceived as masculine and patriarchal, women are seen as 'outsiders within', and the culture of the 'old boys' networks, show the complexities of women's career advancement.

The review of literature reveals that Kenya's culture is different from western countries in the nature of the extended family life styles, family expectations, and the entire society of roles to be accomplished by women academics despite their high level of education and career expectations.

These findings from the literature review provide valuable background knowledge for the present study. They reveal critical issues, but also lack of research in the specific Kenyan context shows the need for a local study, with the focus on the unique experience of women academics in the Kenyan setting.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework**

### ***3.1 Introduction***

This chapter examines the theoretical framework that I have used in this study to explore the experiences of women academics interviewed. The theoretical framework of feminism is briefly explained and three strands addressed: Liberal, Marxist and Radical. The African view of feminism is also discussed. I opted for a feminist perspective which places the social construction of gender at the centre of research. The link between the theoretical framework and its influence on the choice of my research methodology is then addressed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on five epistemological principles that inform a feminist research as suggested by (Cook and Fonow, 1990).

### ***3.2 Feminism***

Researchers, Bensimon and Marshall (1997) point out that there is no monolithic feminism or feminist theory as it is a movement which has developed and shifted over the years in various locations and contexts. Debates among researchers continue as to whether they should talk about post feminism, feminism, or feminisms (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Spivak, 2000).

Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.5) define feminism as:

...unstable intellectual, political and practical activity grounded in some sense of women having common political interests across their social divisions, and so having some potential interest in acting together to transform unjust gender relations.

This definition implies that feminism covers a diversity of beliefs, practices and politics that overlap and interact with others. With a different lens, Macionis (2007, p.353) defines feminism as, 'the advocacy of social equality for women and men, in opposition to patriarchy and sexism'.

In a broader sense, feminism has been defined as a movement that seeks for women the same opportunities and privileges that society gives men (Spivak, 2000). In addition, hooks (1997, p.22) defines feminism as 'a struggle to end sexist oppression' and observes that, when defined in this sense, feminism is not limited to a particular culture, country or time. This is because women all over the world experience some form of social injustice brought about by the gender relations between men and women. In this study, I adopt hook's (1997) as it corrects the misconception about the purpose of feminism as viewed in Kenya which implies it is seeking to make 'women as the social equals of men'(Adhiambo-Oduol, 1993, p.83).

Hughes (2002) argues that feminism is based on the premise that gender is a central construct in a society that privileges men and marginalizes women. According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), feminism is an international and global movement, which considers a woman's experience as a source of knowledge.

Different strands of feminism (Liberal, Radical, Marxist) emerged, all acknowledging patriarchy as an oppressive force against women's freedom but vary in relationship to creating possibilities of change (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002) Different strands of feminism agree on the importance of gender equality, but they disagree on how to achieve it (Freedman, 2002).

I will now discuss each of the feminist strands. The first wave of feminism was called Liberal feminism which emerged in the early 1900s and advocated primarily for the equal rights of women (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

*Liberal* feminists were concerned with women's rights in the public spheres, such as receiving fairer access to education and careers (Delamont, 2003). For this group, the key issue was how to resist traditional socialist tendencies to subordinate feminist issues in the course of the struggle for socialism. Liberal feminism was established on the belief that all women should have equal opportunities in all areas of their lives (Delamont, 2003). According to Haralambos and Holborn (2000), liberal feminism aims for gradual change in the political, economic and social systems of western societies, with a focus on its cultures and the attitudes of individuals rather than in the structures and institutions.

Liberal feminism however, ignores racial and class oppression and fails to address the entrenched nature of patriarchy. It failed to analyse the innate levels of oppression and discrimination that are perpetuated by major patriarchal institutions within society. By not addressing this power issue, they failed to acknowledge the varying degrees of women's oppression (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

The emergence of Marxist and radical feminism sought to improve women's rights through empowerment, emancipation and transformation (Delamont, 2003; Hughes, 2002). Radical feminism brought to light the idea of 'personal is political' as in Morley (1999, p.3), a strong commitment to understanding a woman's personal experience in relationship to existing power structures and the oppressive forces within society at large.

*Marxist* feminism does not attribute women's exploitation entirely to men, but they see capitalism rather than patriarchy as being the principle source of women's oppression. Like radical feminism, they see women's unpaid work as housewives and mothers as one of the main ways in which women are exploited. Marxist feminists desire a revolutionary change, a society where gender inequalities would disappear (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000).

Marxist feminists further believe that women's oppression is a consequence of capitalism and that their role within the family keeps them in a dependent position (Delamont, 2003).

*Radical* feminists on the other hand, blames the exploitation of women on men because of the unpaid labour, childcare and, house work women do, and being denied access to positions of power in a patriarchal society (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). Radical feminists view the family as a key institution in the oppression of women in modern societies, thus they seek alternatives to patriarchal society in all areas of life, striving for the development of a woman's culture and desiring a revolutionary change (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). They further question patriarchal structures and values (Coffey, 2000). Radical feminists declare that 'personal is political' and believe that such social systems as marriage, and motherhood perpetrate oppression and keep women subordinate to men (Coffey, 2000).

The realization that women's experiences are to a large extent influenced by their location and context has led to feminists like Spivak (2000) to advocate the use of different feminist perspectives in the analysis of women's oppression. The diversity of women's location has meant that feminists developed different strategies to overcome their oppression. This has led to the emergence of other feminist perspectives such as postcolonial feminism, postmodern feminism, and African feminism (Beasley, 1999). Because of the Kenyan context, the present study draws on some aspects of African feminism. The next section explains why I chose to work from a feminist perspective.

### 3.2.1 Why a Feminist Perspective?

I chose to write from a feminist perspective as it focuses on the participatory patterns of men and women in order to generate a more realistic picture of the situation. Onsongo (2005) in her study of women managers in Kenyan universities highlights that women are not given similar opportunities to men in social, economic, political and academic issues. Thus, her study concludes that higher institutions of education in Kenya are not gender neutral. A feminist perspective poses gender as a crucial category of analysis, with the intention of improving the understanding of how gender influences relations between men and women (Cook and Fonow, 1990; Bensimon and Marshall, 1997).

My main reason for exploring women academics' career experiences in Kenya from a feminist perspective is that, researchers (Morley, 1999; Bagilhole, 1993a; Bagilhole, 1994; Deem and Ozga, 1997; Hearn, 2001) have demonstrated that work in higher education institutions is highly gendered. For example, Hearn (2001, p.71) observes that there is a male numerical and cultural dominance in western universities that results in the universities and academic life being 'highly gendered organizationally, structurally and practically'. Hearn (2001, p.71) further identifies three features characterizing gendered structures of universities in most western countries as:

- The exclusion of women from university education for a long time.
- Men continuing to dominate the top positions of universities in most disciplines and management positions.
- Higher status universities being more male dominated.

Universities according to Hearn (2001), discriminate against women and allow men to retain their superior status.

Some of the strategies developed by men to maintain dominance from the literature include; marginalising women's scholarship and research interests, the use of patriarchal values to structure and determine career progression in universities (Morley, 1999). In addition, Brooks (1997) in her research found that patriarchal values define the operation and practices of the academy and expressed in issues related to appointments and promotion, limiting women's career development. Feminist perspective views on universities has also shown that the dominance of men and male culture in universities is made possible by coalitions of men in positions of power determining who is to teach, do research and what subjects are valued for research and instruction (Bagilhole and White, 2003).

I consider a feminist perspective suitable for my study because it problematises these gendered relations in universities so as to understand the taken for granted relations between men and women which have led to inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities (Delamont, 2003). By using a feminist perspective, I am able to identify the gendered consequences of seemingly gender neutral policies and practices in the three universities in the present study. A feminist perspective therefore, enhances the argument that in the process of career advancement in the three universities the supposedly neutral gender blind policies and practices produce different results in the promotion of men and women academics (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997).

I chose a feminist approach to reflect upon my personal experiences as a woman academic (see details in chapters 1 and 4). In addition, a feminist research methodology emphasises that, the researcher takes into account their personal experiences as part of the research process (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

The gendered nature and the male cultural dominance of universities has led feminists like Deem and Ozga (1997) to conclude that a variety of interacting factors affect women's promotion, their career progress and because of the gendered nature of universities, women must show outstanding abilities if they want to be appointed to higher ranks.

### **3.3 African Feminism**

There have been many debates as to whether feminism exists in Africa as Mama (1996, p. 10) explains:

We have had to fight for our own meanings to be kept alive... sometimes the term has been appropriated by anti-democratic interest. African regimes have tried to do funny things with gender politics and misrepresent feminism, and our societies have not always been clear about the meaning of 'feminism' and its perennial presence in all our societies. Feminism remains a positive, movement-based term....It signals refusal of oppression and commitment to struggling for women's liberation from all forms of oppression; psychological, emotional, socio-economic and political.

African feminism owes its origin to different dynamics from those that generated western feminism. It has been greatly shaped by African women's resistance to western hegemony and its legacy within the African culture (Mikell, 1997). For example, in Kenya the women's movement emerged in reaction to the low status that Kenyan women occupy in all sectors of the economy (Sifuna, 1989). In education and labour force for example, gender discrimination has marginalized women from mainstream development (Bunyi, 2006).

In this study, I draw on African feminism because there are certain aspects of African culture that continue to play an important role in determining women's participation in the social, economic and political development. Onsongo (2005) highlights that Kenyan culture and the role expectations of women impact on women academics' careers.

Another reason for drawing on African feminism is the fact that, often there are assumptions made especially in early western feminist writing that imply that women in low income countries lack organized forms of addressing issues affecting women (Mama, 2006). In Kenya, men and women hold the view that feminism is a foreign, western ideology and therefore, has no relevance to Kenyan culture and life style, and 'a number of Kenyan, male and female are repelled by western notions of feminism' (Adhiambo-Oduol, 1993, p.83).

It is important to highlight the diversity in African feminism just as there are different strands in western feminism as Nnaemeka (2005) observes that, the plurality of African feminism reflects the fluidity and dynamism of the cultural imperatives, historical forces and localized realities conditioning women's activities and movement in Africa. However, Nnaemeka (2005) further notes that there are commonalities too and shared beliefs among the different African feminisms.

Because African feminism is based on African culture and is resistant to western feminism, it has different characteristics and objectives. For example, African feminism is distinctly pro-natal, meaning that African feminism values the reproductive roles of women and the ability to give birth is not considered subordinate to other roles women play in society (Mikell, 1997). The pro-natal aspect of African feminism is reflected in the fact that in many parts of Africa, women strive to bear and rear children in addition to having economic and political roles (Mikell, 1997).

While western feminism tends to emphasize autonomy for women, African feminism has tended to emphasize culturally linked communal forms of public participation (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

The nature- culture fusion of African feminism incorporates an overlap between household or domestic roles and the public/political roles African women play because in traditional African society, the distinction between domestic and public remains difficult (Mikell, 1997). The language of African feminism is one of collaboration and negotiation with men and sometimes involves a compromise. It therefore, 'does not seek to disrupt, deconstruct and eliminate patriarchy as is advocated by radical western feminism' (Nnaemeka, 2005, p.6).

The underlying framework for this points out that, the forces of patriarchy which pervade the majority of African societies skew the balance of rights to mainstream development in favour of the male gender (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000). Although there have been attempts to redefine the concept of gender in African development to include not only the direct and overt violations of the rights of women, these have been shattered by the dominant patriarchal ideologies by governments and communities (Mama, 2006).

The influence of forums and organizations such as FIDA (Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya), FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationists), the Beijing Platform of Action and the many international networks of research and activist created new political spaces for feminist work towards engendering development (Pereira, 2002).

The contributions of these forms of organizations created awareness among women, provided struggles for a critical voice, representation and resources by women and for women as they demanded engagement with the content and processes of policy development (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Pereira, 2002).

African scholars in gender studies recognize that the women's movement in Africa was initiated and continues to be sustained through women's agency (Pereira, 2002).

African feminists seek ways of solving some of the problems affecting the continent such as; drought, crop failure, refugee situations human rights abuses and traditional cultural practices and beliefs that are harmful to women (Pereira, 2002). They advocate for abolition of oppressive traditions such as child marriage, widowhood *taboos* (wife inheritance) and retention of traditional structures that are supportive of women's multiple roles (Mikell, 1997). Because of the diversity in African feminism, I discuss examples from the Kenyan context to expand on the objectives and limitations of this perspective.

### ***3.4 Feminism in the Kenyan Context***

Writing on the women's movement in Kenya, (Kanake, 1997) believes that the support and cooperation of men is crucial if the negative cultural perception and societal biases against women are to be changed. Women's movements advocate for the elimination of all the obstacles that hinder women from participating in the development process. They advocate for women to have equal share in responsibilities and opportunities in all spheres of economic, social, political and educational development (Adhiambo-Oduol, 1993). Feminist researchers highlight the need to empower women, create awareness and encourage girls' education and the abolition of child marriage that still exists in some communities in Kenya (Benyawa, 2010).

In the Kenyan context, the women's movement has failed to uplift the status of women for various reasons. First, the movement is characterized by self-help women's groups such as GROOTS Kenya (a member of network and not a branch of GROOTS International- Grassroots to women). It is a network of self-help groups that seek to improve the status of women by involving them in income generating activities, a movement giving voice and power to grassroots women on health, and care for orphans. The failure to politicize women's issues in Kenya has led to a focus on activities that are an extension of the traditional domestic and biological roles of women.

As a result, the women's movements fail to lobby for changes in policies, plans and laws which discriminate against women (Nzomo, 1995).

The cultural perception that feminism is a foreign ideology that originated from western countries becomes a set-back. As a result, both men and women are discouraged from supporting such ideas, as they view them as against family values (Adhiambo-Oduol, 1993). Another misconception is the view that feminism advocates for equality in family responsibility including child care, which in Kenya is not within the norms of the culture (Nyamu, 2004).

Child care remains highly regarded as purely women's role despite their involvement in career pursuits. Those few women who are expected to act as role models have used the forums to further their own ambitions at the expense of women's interests, resulting in disunity and personal differences (Adhiambo-Oduol, 1993).

The limitations of African feminism in general and the women's movements in Kenya in particular, call for an additional perspective to allow for understanding of multilayered experiences of gendered oppression (Onsongo, 2005). I therefore, adopt a feminist perspective to explore women's career experiences in three universities in Kenya.

In this study, I have problematised the taken for granted practices such as promotions and selection criteria of women academics in Kenyan universities as well as the socio-cultural expectations for men and women. Manya (2000) suggests that a gender-balanced policy implementation in higher education in Kenya could enhance women's participation and career progress in academia.

The next section discusses how the theoretical framework links to research method.

### ***3.5 Linking Theoretical Framework and the Research Method***

Feminist perspective advocates and favours a qualitative research design to understanding women's lives as opposed to quantitative methods of research (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). Feminist preference for qualitative research methods is based on the premise that dominant modes of doing research in the past (quantitative) were regarded by some feminists as inhibiting an understanding of women's experiences. Quantitative research especially questionnaires are viewed from a feminist perspective as representing a masculinist form of knowing, where the emphasis is on the detachment of the researcher and the collection and measurement of objective social facts through a value free form of data (see a detailed discussion in chapter 4).

### ***3.6 Principles of Feminist Methodology***

In carrying out a feminist research, Cook and Fonow (1990) outline five epistemological principles that inform a feminist research. I will discuss each of them in detail. Feminist methodology complements research on women in academia and support the integration of theory and practice. I chose to adopt a feminist critical methodology that requires an egalitarian, reciprocal and reflexive relationship between the researcher and the participant (Seely, 2007).

#### **3.6.1 Gender as central to enquiry**

In feminist research, Harding (1986) suggests that women should be considered as a source of analysis. Since academia operates a microcosm of a wider society, traditional academic institutions have been built on hierarchy and order, power control and privilege. Further, acknowledging that gender is socially, culturally and historically constructed, Harding (1986) points out that this enables change and subsequent emancipation.

In a similar vein, Cook and Fonow (1990, p.6) acknowledge the importance of gender in social life and social research as, '...defining women as the focus of analysis, recognizing the central place that men have held in most sociological analysis and viewing gender as a crucial influence on the network of relations encompassing the research act'.

Given the marginalisation of women academics, critical feminist research provides a safe environment for women academics to share their experience (Roberts, 2002). In-depth interviews allowed the participants and the researcher to share their career experiences freely (see chapter 5 for data analysis).

### **3.6.2 Conscious-raising**

The knowledge of conscious-raising for the participants is incorporated in feminist research in various ways as it advocates for 'consciousness of the researcher (and the researched) using consciousness-raising techniques as a research method (such as role playing) (Cook and Fonow, 1990, p.6).

Feminist research focuses on creating change through consciousness-raising and self growth. Through in-depth interviews, women academics in this study were able to share their career experiences, identifying motivational factors, challenges faced and strategies they have each used to survive in academia in order to stimulate change in academia. In addition, the in-depth interviews enabled conscious-raising, enabling the participants to create meaning and engage in a process of self analysis and sharing their experiences. Knowledge of women's lives have been absent or constructed from the perspective of men, investigating men's social world, making women's experiences in public places invisible or are spoken about from men's points of view. The overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience (Lather, 1998).

### **3.6.3 Rejection of Subject/Object separation**

The rejection of the subject/object separation is emphasised and the need to allow women respondents to 'talk back to the investigator'. Answering the questions of interviewees personalises and humanises the researcher and places the interactions on a more equal footing' (Cook and Fonow, 1990, p.9).

Feminist methodology rejects the assumption that the separation between the researcher and the research subject as providing a valid, objective account. To involve the subjects, respondents are allowed to talk back. An interaction between the researcher and the researched is realized through interviews, as was done in the present study.

### **3.6.4 Ethical concerns**

Feminist research attempts to establish an equal and reflexive relationship between the researcher and the participant, addresses oppressive structures such as language, and demands a non-sexist commitment in the production of knowledge (Coffey, 2000).

Cook and Fonow (1990) urge that the language used in research should not perpetuate women's subordination, avoiding the generic use of masculine pronouns, and the application of offensive adjectives to women's experiences. A feminist ethics requires investigation into those practices that may act as professional gate-keeping on selection and research funding without holding information from women subjects. The issues surrounding the role of the researcher, reflexivity, confidentiality, anonymity, and consent from the participants are discussed in chapter 4.

### **3.6.5 Transformation**

Creating change is a focus of feminist research with greater inquiry into social realities, why things happen the way they do in trying to examine the truth. With a concentration on individual experiences of women academics, it was important to place the study within a framework that validates women's voices.

Cook and Fonow (1990, p.13) highlights that, 'an assumption of feminist methodology is that knowledge must be elicited and analysed in a way that can be used by women to alter oppressive and exploitative conditions in their society'.

Feminist research reports that empowerment and transformation are possible through consciousness-raising (Cook and Fonow, 1990). Similarly, feminist research aims to identify the historical exclusion of women within a patriarchal society (Code, 2000).

While conducting this research, I was consistently drawn to the stories of the participants and believe that this study will validate their experiences. I wanted to capture the thoughts and feelings of the participants.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the framework of my study. Feminism has been defined, while highlighting its different strands such as Liberal, Marxism and Radical. In paying attention to the experiences of women academics in the Kenyan context, I have examined African feminism and the feminism as viewed in the Kenyan context. The links between the theoretical framework and the present research is also discussed. The chapter concludes by outlining some of the feminist epistemological principles as highlighted by (Cook and Fonow, 1990).

## **Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

This chapter describes feminist methodology and examines the assumptions and its relevance to qualitative research. Using a critical feminist framework, the study focused on women academics' career experiences in Kenya. The method of research employed was interviews, and the data was analysed using the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

### ***4.2 Feminist Methodology***

In using qualitative method in the present research, I was greatly influenced by a feminist perspective and notably, researchers (Armenti, 2004b; Currie et al., 2002; Morley, 1999; Morley, 2006; Bagilhole, 2000; Acker and Armenti, 2004). A feminist study emphasizes women's lives and experiences as a primary source of knowledge and that 'to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the centre of one's inquiry' (Lather, 1991, p.91). Feminist research reports that empowerment and transformation are made possible through consciousness- raising (Cook and Fonow, 1990, Hughes, 2002). A key feature of feminist methodology is 'the implication that the relevant rules can provide criteria for judging between competing knowledge claims' (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002, p.11). Underpinning this research is a methodology of 'women talking to women, listening to women's voices and a feminist standpoint' (Mavin and Bryans, 2002, p.240).

My focus is on women's career experiences as a basis for research, including the development of theoretical frameworks where 'each researcher is accountable for other research participants and to a wider feminist constituency' (Mavin and Bryans, 2002, p.240).

For the understanding of a feminist research, it was necessary to explore the fundamental epistemological principles that inform feminist methodology and the process of research. I argue like Harding (1996) that, women's ways of knowing developed on the margins of the dominant knowledge system.

Feminist theory framed my research as it links theory and practice and locates the generation of knowledge in the women participants' stories (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). In addition, it values life experience and focuses on creating change and 'emancipation and personal power' (Mavin and Bryans, 2002, p.241). By placing the life experiences of women at the centre of a feminist enquiry, the institutions that oppress and marginalize women become more distinguishable and therefore challenged (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

My choice of research topic and the intention of placing gender at the center of inquiry were influenced by my life and career experiences. I have been working as a woman academic for nineteen years in higher institutions of learning. In addition to being isolated in academia, women academics are faced with family and career tensions (Armenti, 2004c; Currie et al., 2000). Like other women researchers, I'm troubled by the cultural expectations on women's roles, the perpetuation of patriarchy and intrigued by the gender-blind policy in practice in Kenyan universities (Manya, 2000).

My decision to design the research as a feminist exploration was not only due to my belief that women are few and isolated in academia but also, wanted to make some positive change with a realization that every woman's story of emancipation is her truth (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997).

Similarly, when conducting a feminist research, it is important that I have insights of the experiences of women from a feminist perspective. Studying women's lives from a feminist perspective also means that the issues of male dominance and masculinity are essentially part of the research (Currie et al., 2000).

Feminist methodology complements research on women in academia and supports the integration of theory and practice. I chose to work from a feminist methodology that requires an egalitarian, reciprocal and reflexive relationship between the researcher and the participant (Seely, 2007).

### ***4.3 Philosophical Approach***

This exploratory research adopts a constructivist paradigm and takes an interpretivist theoretical perspectives as Crotty (1998, p.42) describes constructivism as an epistemological approach that perceives:

..all knowledge, and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context.

According to Crotty (1998) constructionism perceives knowledge and all meaningful reality as socially constructed and stems from the engagement of humans and the world around them. This is in contrast to the objectivist epistemological view of things existing as meaningful entities outside human consciousness, but having truth and meanings residing in them, with the truth being out there waiting to be discovered (Crotty, 1998). I ascribe to the notion of constructionism as I believe that social reality exists in corporation with other social actors (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). Humans are not just slot into pre-ordained social structures according to Denscombe (2007), but are the architects of that social order. 'What constructionism claims is that, 'meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting' (Crotty, 1998, p.43). Feminist epistemology raises questions about the nature of knowledge and supports research that adopts a reflexive (see details on reflexivity section 4.6), dialectical relationships, valuing women's ideas, experiences and needs (Code, 2000).

Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3) helps situate the research in a qualitative framework:

....qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer's world. It consists of a set of interpretive material and practices that makes the world visible... these practices transform the world... they turn the world in conversations, photos, recordings and memos to the self...qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings...the meanings people bring to them.

With the above discussions, the present study maps itself onto an interpretive and qualitative research with the purposes of exploring women's experiences, while exploring their family backgrounds, early education, strategies and skills that could have contributed or affected their careers. An interpretive and a qualitative approach is appropriate because of its exploratory nature, catering for factors such as; relationships, attitudes and skills which cannot be quantified (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Moreover, a qualitative approach of interviewing fits the present study as it yields rich and descriptive data, allowing women to speak out in their own voices while bringing out often complex and subjective experiences (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

The methodology adopted in addressing the research questions (see chapter 1) begins with a development of interview questions as a guide (Table 4.2) to aid in the collection of data during the in-depth interviewing. The data was then organised and thematic analysis was used in coding and identifying similarities and differences in themes (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). The next section discusses the research design.

## **4.4 Research Design**

The present research adopted a qualitative research design as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994, p.145), identifying the strengths of a qualitative design suitable for this study to include:

- It allows thick descriptions because the researcher is near to the context of research
- Allows the researcher to collect data in close proximity to a specific situation considering the local context
- Allows the flexibility in the data production procedures as one can adapt the methods to the circumstances
- The emphasis of qualitative research is on people's 'lived experience'. It allows the researcher to identify the meanings that people place on the events, processes and structures of their lives.

My study incorporated the views of Miles and Huberman (1994) in different forms; fourteen of the interviews were conducted in the respondents' offices while two others took place at a quiet location in a restaurant.

### **4.4.1 Sampling**

The present research adopted purposive sampling method as in Mason (2002) of selecting participants as it fits in with a qualitative research, establishing a link between the research questions and the sample (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Bryman, 2004). It is a criterion based sampling, meaning that, the participants are selected because they have particular knowledge pertinent to the questions to be explored (Patton, 2002). The main criterion used to select respondents for this research was the fact that they were senior women academics. I got access to some participants through contact persons from the three universities. I contacted others personally after getting their email addresses and telephone numbers.

The sample criteria is determined by the needs of the study and not through some external criteria as compared to other probability based methods such as random sampling (Huberman and Miles, 1994). According to Mason (2002), a sample should allow the researcher access to data that can be developed empirically and theoretically with a grounded argument about a particular issue. The choice of the participants and their ability to provide an overall sense of meaning to the research is of importance (Cohen et al., 2000). In support, Denscombe (2007) highlights the benefits of selecting a sample that is critical to the research.

I interviewed a sample of sixteen women academics with a prior pilot study of two, who formed part of the respondents in the final research. The sample consisted of two Professors, two Assistant professors, five Senior Lecturers, six Lecturers and one Assistant Lecturer. Letters were sent to all female academics with the ranks of lecturers to professors. However, an Assistant lecturer showed great interest, was interviewed and became part of the sample.

Since Kenya has few female academics (see Table 1.1), I selected respondents from three universities (two public and one private) as I was afraid that one university alone would not have had the adequate number. The study's intention was not to make a comparison between the universities. University X is a public university and one of the oldest universities started in the 1970's. It is located within the city of Nairobi, and has the largest number of faculty and students. The other public university Y was started in the 1990's and is located in one of the provincial towns. The private university Z is quite young, started in 2000, and is located in a different provincial town from the other two. Among the reasons for the choice of the universities for the study was that of convenience to the researcher and also, the older universities have larger numbers of women faculty. In addition, the three universities selected for the study offer different courses, among them humanities and social sciences which most women faculty teach (see respondents' profile Table 4.1).

I decided on sixteen participants to allow a variety women academics' experiences as only one study by Kamau (2004), has been documented on women academics' career advancement in Kenya. As mentioned earlier (chapters 1 and 2), other studies about women academics in Kenya have focused on different areas such as; women and management in universities (Onsongo, 2005) policy issues (Manya, 2000) and research publications (Onsongo, 2000).The choice of the respondents for this study was based on certain broad criteria such as seniority /rank (Lecturer, Senior lecturer, Assistant Professor and Professors). The study could not ensure a spread of respondents in all departments across all disciplines but respondents came from different departments (see Table 4.1 in the next section).

**Table 4.1 Profile of Respondents**

<b>Women Academics</b>	<b>Professional Rank</b>	<b>Academic Qualification</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>
W1	Senior Lecturer and Director	PhD	Linguistics	37	Single
W2	Lecturer and Head of Department	PhD	Creative Arts	40	Married 3 children
W3	Assistant Professor & Head of Teaching Programmes	PhD	Gender and Leadership	46	Single
W4	Lecturer	Masters (PhD Student)	Human Resource	45	Married 3 children
W5	Lecturer	Masters (PhD student)	Nursing	42	Married 2 children
W6	Senior Lecturer and Head of Department	PhD	Media and Communication	53	Married 4 children
W7	Lecturer	Masters (PhD Student)	Nursing	34	Single
W8	Assistant Lecturer	Masters (PhD student)	Nutrition Community and Health	29	Single
W9	Senior Lecturer	PhD	Management	58	Married 3 children
W10	Senior Lecturer	PhD	Kiswahili	42	Married 3 children
W11	Lecturer	Masters (PhD student)	Psychology	43	Married 2 children
W12	Assistant Professor	PhD	Biology	48	Married 3 children
W13	Professor	PhD	History and Governance	57	Widowed 3 children
W14	Professor and Deputy Vice Chancellor	PhD	Finance and Administration	54	Married 3 children
W15	Lecturer	PhD	Economics	52	Married 3 children
W16	Senior Lecturer	PhD	Research	43	Married 4 children

The women academics included in this study were from different backgrounds in terms of age, academic interests, teaching experience, roles with their institutions and family backgrounds (married with children or single). Their ages ranged from twenty nine to fifty eight years. Eight women academics were in their forties, five in their fifties, two in their thirties and one in her late twenties. The respondents were from different socio-economic backgrounds, with majority coming from the lower economic levels (this was reflected in their career choices as stated in chapter 5 and 6 of data analysis).

Marital status was important in this study as part of the research questions involved finding out how women academics were able to combine their family responsibilities and career expectations. Twelve of the respondents were married and one of them widowed. Most of them had two or three children. It was important too, to compare the views of single women academics and to find out similarities or differences from those who are married. Four respondents were single, unmarried and without any children.

#### **4.4.2 Scholarship Awards**

The respondents received their scholarships for Masters, PhD, or both from different bodies. The British Council sponsored W6, W13 and W16 to the UK. The other respondents, W9, W13, and W14 received their scholarships to the UK and USA respectively. The Commonwealth also awarded scholarships to W6 and W16. The respondents W4, W7, W8, and W5 from the private university were sponsored by their employer university. The only respondent whose PhD was sponsored by the Kenyan government on her academic merit was W12. Of the sixteen respondents, only three respondents W11, W1 and W2 were self-sponsored. The respondents cited studying abroad after receiving different scholarship Awards as significant to their career progress (see chapter 6, section 6.3.2).

#### **4.4.3 Data Collection and Pilot study**

The process of data gathering started on 15<sup>th</sup> July until 10<sup>th</sup>, September 2008. The researcher accomplished ten interviews while the remaining six interviews were carried out three months later between 10<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> December, 2008 as the researcher had to travel back to her place of work abroad.

For clarity, validity and the effectiveness of the research questions, I conducted a pilot study with two female academics who formed part of the interviewees in the final research process (Mason, 2002). The interviews which were tape-recorded took place in the respondent's respective offices. The interview questions were then revised, leading to deletion of some closed-ended questions and rephrasing some unstructured questions that appeared as either leading or negative in meaning. The pilot interviews enabled me as a researcher to become familiar with the interview procedure and to refine my interview skills such as: building a rapport, taking notes, paying attention and tape-recording.

#### **4.4.4 Interviewing**

Interviewing is a form of qualitative research method which involves the construction and reconstruction of knowledge (Mason, 2002). In addition, an interview is a flexible interactive and generative tool that explores meanings and language in depth (Silverman, 2001). In depth-interviewing was employed in the present study because it enables the researcher to understand and interpret social reality through meanings that the respondents attach to their career experiences (Punch, 2005). According to Cohen et al., (2007), interviewing is a qualitative tool which allows the researcher and the participant some freedom to negotiate their own meanings and further allowing the researcher to explore in depth interesting issues through conversations. This approach is viewed as suitable for reaching an understanding of meanings an individual attributes to some aspect of personal experiences and the sense of self (Punch, 2005).

However, Wengraf (2001) highlights some problems associated with interviews, in particular, the danger of assuming that the information gathered during an interview can simply be extracted and quoted. Its time consuming nature and the possibility of loss of objectivity by the researcher is highlighted in (Punch, 2005). In addition, interviewing is susceptible to bias, casting doubts on the reliability of the data (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). The recall of events in interviews is seen by (Fontana and Frey, 2003) as a major setback. However, the existing literature in support of unstructured interviews, makes it a suitable method for exploring the experiences of the women faculty in academia in relation to their career (Punch, 2005).

Although Middleton (1992, p.91) suggests the use of a life history approach as 'giving the subjects opportunity to interpret their own experiences, analysing the relationships between the individual, biographies, historical events', I opted for in-depth interviews due to its limitations as expressed by Woods (1987, p.124) :

...that life history approach may not yield the same results especially when used with the powerful, because part of the power resides in their control of information and the public identity they choose to present.

#### **4.4.5 Interview process**

Fourteen interviews were held at the participants' place of work while two others were held in a quiet place at a restaurant. A semi-structured interview guide (Table 4.2) was used to ensure that most/all topics were covered. Each participant signed a consent form (Appendix 2) before being interviewed. At the start of each interview, each participant was informed of the procedure about the length of time and the purpose of the study (Burns, 2000). In order to build a rapport and trust, I began by asking general questions to create a relaxed environment for the participants so as to speak more freely (Punch, 2005).

I used non-verbal and verbal probes to encourage the interviewees to elaborate on their experiences. The verbal probes 'where', 'when', 'what', and 'how' assisted in gathering details from the respondents (Patton, 2002).

Further examples of probes used included different statements such as: 'can you give more details', 'tell me more about' and 'how do you?'. Such clarification statements were used to enhance the interpretation of the data. The non-verbal probes included gestures like, eye contacts, and nodding the head, to show attention and to give a flow to the conversations.

Patton (2002, p.41) describes the importance of a researcher's voice as a tool to convey trustworthiness and genuineness:

... complete objectivity being impossible and pure subjectivity undermining credibility, the researcher's focus becomes balance-understanding and depicting the work authentically in all its complexity while self-analytical, politically aware, and reflexive in consciousness.

Each interview lasted between forty five minutes to one hour. All the interviews were audio- taped and transcribed verbatim for analysis by the researcher to allow for immersion in the data and to maintain connections in the content (Cohen et al., 2007). The tapes have the advantage of being replayed and preserves the sequence of talk (Silverman, 2001). If I felt that the interviews did not reveal anything new, I either re-focused on the critical incidents or used probing questions and followed up the discussions either through an email or telephone conversations. Where necessary, I went back to the participants, either for verifications or for further exploration of specific issues.

The tapes were then revisited for accuracy to ensure trustworthiness. Each respondent was allocated a code for personal identification and anonymity (W1 to W16 as shown in Table 4.1). Themes were identified from the research questions and the literature and the initial sets of codes were established from the themes (see samples of data extracts in Tables 4.4 and 4.5).

The interview questions that acted as a guide during the interviews are shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2 Interview Guide: From research aims and research questions**

1. How did your childhood/family and education affect/contribute to your career?
2. What motivated/inspired you towards academia? Any personal attributes and skills?
3. How long did it take you to get to your present rank?  How many years have you worked at the university?  Do you have any publications (journals, books, book chapters, conference papers)?  Do you belong to any committees at your institution?
4. How do you manage to keep a balance between career expectations and family responsibilities?
5. What challenges/barriers if any, and how do you overcome them?
6. What strategies have you used to reach/maintain your current academic and professional rank?
7. How would you describe the working environment at your institution?
8. What kind of support do you get for career advancement? Mentors/role models/research/from your institution.
9. To what extent is the university structure and culture supportive/fits in with the needs of women academics?
10. How has the traditional culture/societal expectations of women's roles in your society impacted on/affected your career?

#### **4.5 Role of the Researcher**

As in a qualitative research, the researcher assumed a more participatory role due to the 'sustained and extensive experience with participants' and the personal involvement with the research topic (Creswell, 2003, p.184). According to Patton (2002, p.14), the researcher is considered an instrument, and credibility depends on the 'skills, competence, and, rigour of the person doing the fieldwork'.

Roberts (2002, pp.85-86) further emphasizes that:

.. the researcher is also a narrator and an active producer of knowledge in research ... the researcher is also involved in writing his or her life, reflecting on experiences both within and outside the research context- both are also related. There is the intellectual biography of the researcher who not only translates the experience of others but also, writes and interprets their own life.

The researcher in this study made every attempt to look at the data systematically, recognizing the potential bias, and considering the respondents' views (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). The researcher has nineteen years of teaching experience (as mentioned in chapter 1). This knowledge provided a basis of focus on women's career experiences in academia and the teaching experience also provided a background on research skills for interpreting and analyzing themes in the data.

The current Doctoral studies in Educational Research, research, conferences, the academic and professional background in social sciences have provided a solid base for the skills and motivation to complete this study. Although I am a lecturer at a university outside Kenya, as a Kenyan, I know some of the participants with whom I either attended school, college or worked together. My knowledge of the Kenyan culture, the higher education bureaucracy, and my teaching experience made it easier to build a rapport during the interview process.

In addition, fourteen of the respondents studied for either their MA's or PhD's abroad and shared similar academic and social experiences as the researcher. The majority of the respondents had experienced a similar student life in the UK as the researcher.

Married with two grown-up children, the researcher shared common issues surrounding cultural expectations on women's roles and family responsibilities as twelve other married respondents with children. Other similar characteristics were shared with five other respondents who were also PhD candidates at the time of the interview and seven other respondents who were in their forties, a similar age bracket as the researcher. Such experiences could introduce the possibility of an insider advantage during the research process such as; access to confidential data, a sense of belonging and knowledge of culture and language in its context (Naples, 1996). Locke et al., (2000) however highlight challenges of being an insider for subjective interpretations of the phenomenon being studied and the possibility for bias such as; credibility, dangers of putting own interpretation, and difficulties with objectivity.

Being aware of such constraints as a researcher, I focused on the respondent's own voices (see extracts of verbatim quotes in Table 4.5) and fostered an atmosphere of trust, encouraging the respondents to talk freely about their personal and professional experiences. With no cultural and language barrier, I conducted the interviews in the English language as all the interviewees felt comfortable. The researcher's confidence and the theoretical sensitivity grew with time and through interactions with the data.

Being significant to feminist research, reflexivity is discussed in the next section.

## **4.6 Reflexivity**

One way in which feminists seek to achieve reciprocity in practice is by emphasizing reflexivity in the research process. This means that the researcher's personal experiences are part of the research process. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.118) point out reflexivity in feminist research as:

...attempting to make explicit the power relations and the exercise of power in the research process....reflexivity opens up possibilities of negotiations over what knowledge claims are made, for whom, why and within what frame of reference.

They note that reflexivity covers varying attempts by feminist researchers to evaluate critically how knowledge is produced, how the researcher is socially situated, and how the research agenda is constituted. According to Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), reflexivity is accomplished by a thorough review of the research setting and its participants, including an exploration of the researcher's reactions in the research process.

Reflexivity makes the researcher a subject in her own research process, immersed in the study so as to invite other voices to challenge the researcher's knowledge claims and conceptions of power (Seely, 2007). Reflexivity further places the researcher in the foreground with the participants and strengthens the integrity of the project through transparent and honest position of the researcher (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). In addition, Mavin and Bryans (2002, p.248) express that, '...reflexivity we build in this research and into the network process allows us to become self-conscious about many issues otherwise hidden'.

Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002, p.118) further highlight that:

...feminist reflexivity is also an invitation to other voices to challenge the researcher's knowledge claims and conceptions of power (though academic feminists experience human difficulties in hearing criticism, and potential threats to academic careers in being openly criticized).

Reflexivity being an important aspect of my study, I situated myself during the interview both as an insider and an outsider (Thapar-Bjorkert and Henry, 2004; Naples, 1996). As a Kenyan, woman academic with cultural, educational background and work experience in Kenya, an MA and PhD degrees from UK as some of the respondents, I shared several similar life and career experiences with my interviewees.

In certain instances the interviewees requested me to share my experiences on how I cope with some of the challenges facing women in academia and in particular, family and career responsibilities. Since I work abroad, in a different socio-cultural setting from Kenya, some of the interviewees expressed the fact that I experience more career and cultural freedom than many of them, making me an outsider to a certain extent (Naples, 1996). Common issues affecting women academics across different cultural contexts were evident from the conversations (see chapter 5 and 6 for analysis and discussion).

#### ***4.7 Data Analysis***

Data analysis involves focusing on a review of all information to gain a sense of the overall data (Mason, 2002). Huberman and Miles (1994) also note that data analysis involves such processes as data reduction, display, conclusion drawing and verification. According to Huberman and Miles (1994) data analysis involves developing a detailed description of each case and situating the case within its context. In managing data, Blaxter et al., (2006, p.202) suggest that data analysis involves two closely related processes, both of which they urge as essential to research:

- managing your data by reducing their size and scope, so that you can report upon them adequately and carefully;
- analysing your managed set of data, by abstracting from it and drawing attention to what you feel is of particular importance or significance.

Creswell (2003) in addition, highlights the analysis steps in a qualitative research to include:

- Preliminary exploration of the data by reading through the transcripts
- Coding data by segmenting and labeling the text
- Using codes to develop themes by aggregating similar codes together
- Connecting interrelated themes

The next section gives a detailed description of the principles of thematic analysis.

#### ***4.8 Thematic Analysis***

This research followed the principles of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) 'it is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes data set in (rich) details'. Furthermore, thematic analysis interprets various aspects of research (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is not grounded in any particular theoretical and epistemological framework and can therefore, be applied across a wide range of qualitative research approaches, making it flexible (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While this is an advantage, it can also be a disadvantage in that 'it makes developing specific guidelines for higher-phase analysis difficult and can be potentially paralyzing to the researcher trying to decide what aspects of their data to focus on (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.97).

In addition, Attride-Stirling (2001, p.387) highlights that 'thematic analysis seem to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels, and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes'. While it is widely used, 'there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79). It is for that reason that Boyatzis (1998) characterizes it not as a specific method, but a tool to use across different methods.

A variety of methodologies may be referred to as thematic analysis and may be aligned with a range of ontological and epistemological positions and theoretical frameworks (Boyatzis, 1998). The nature of its flexibility made thematic analysis a preferred method of analysis for the present study.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.81) point out:

Thematic analysis can be essentialist or realist method, which reports experiences, meanings and reality of participants, or it can be a constructionist method, which examines the ways in which events, realities, meanings, experiences and so on are the effects of a range of discourses operating in society.

This study looked at the experiences, meanings and realities of participants in conducting the analysis. I sought to go beyond merely describing the themes but rather, attempted to 'theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.84).

Some researchers particularly grounded theorists may believe that research predates theory and that the researcher starts with a *tabula rasa*, and elicits theory from the data (Charmaz, 2006). It is for such arguments that thematic analysis was employed in the present research rather than using grounded theory. I agree with many feminist researchers (Morley, 1999; Currie et al., 2002) that 'individuals begin a particular theoretical perspective and this informs the type of questions asked, the methodology used, and even the interpretation that creates the narrative' (Currie et al., 2002, p.58).

In carrying out thematic analysis, the study followed suggested procedures to ensure rigour in data analysis which is grouped in six phases as presented in Table 4.3 in the next section.

**Table 4.3 Phases of thematic analysis**

Phase	Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes: (Level 1)	Checking if themes work in relation to coded extracts and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming the themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

*Extracted from (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.87).*

The present study adopted all of the six phases of thematic analysis as indicated above. I transcribed the data myself (as earlier mentioned), retaining the original the verbatim quotes of the participants while re-reading and noting the initial ideas and allocating initial codes using coloured pens and Post- It to write notes. The next step (3), I sorted different codes into potential themes (see Table 4.5).

In the reviewing of themes, I checked for those themes which did not have enough data and those that had similarities and could be merged. In defining and naming the themes, I detailed the story line with clear names of each theme. Producing the final report involved detailed analysis of each theme in relation to the research questions (chapter 1) and literature review (chapter 2) (see chapter 5 and 6 for data analysis and discussion).

#### **4.8.1 Coding**

The process of coding (sorting and organizing data) is part of analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Coding is a way of classifying data into more meaningful categories and further reducing data. Blaxter et al. (2006, p.203) suggest coding as one of the techniques for managing data, where 'items or groups of data are assigned codes which may involve some reduction in the quantity of the data'.

According to Boyatzis (2006, p.83), codes can be data-driven (inductive), meaning the 'themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves or theory-driven (deductive) which tends to be driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytical interest in the area, and is thus more explicitly analyst driven'. Boyatzis (1998, p.161) defines a theme as, 'a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon'.

Coding can be performed manually or through a software programme (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.89). Although data management programmes such as Atlas Ti or NVivo are described as systematic, step-by-step processes, the data in the present research was manually coded by 'writing notes, on the texts you are analyzing by using highlighters, or coloured pens to indicate potential patterns and post-it notes to identify segments of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.89). Similarly, Blaxter et al. (2006, p.203) suggest that one of the techniques for managing data is, 'annotating... underlining or highlighting the text, -this process draws attention to what is considered significant sections'.

Manual coding was preferred for this study as it engaged and immersed the researcher in the data, allowing deeper understanding of the process.

Boyatzis (1998) further suggests that it's important to develop a coding manual which serves as a paper trail for verification of the analysis, making transparent to the reader the relationship between codes and data, and also, makes explicit the process involved in the construction of analysis and the presentation of the interpretation of the research.

A coding manual should consist of five elements according to Boyatzis (1998, p.31):

- Label/name
- Definition of what the themes concern
- Description of how to know when theme occurs
- Description of qualifications or exclusions to the theme
- Positive and negative examples to eliminate confusion when looking for themes

A 'good code is one that captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon' and adds more value to interpretation based on context of the themes identified (Boyatzis, 1998, p.31).

The present research put into practice three of the five elements of the coding manual above. The codes were allocated labels/name (see Table 4.4) and also, the themes were defined (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). The other two elements were made use of indirectly in the process of coding.

A sample of hand-coded transcripts is shown in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4 Hand coded Transcripts**

Transcript	Themes/sub- themes	Codes
I wanted to become a Prof like my uncle [W8].I just wanted to teach [3]	Motivation, role model, love for teaching	MTV RMDL TCH
I love teaching. I knew where I would be, I wanted to be in an academic environment. I wanted to be around books [W1].	Love for teaching, career aspiration,	TCH CRR
Sleepless nights when I have to finish up a conference paper or meet deadlines for marking at the end of the semester [W13].	Strategies: Sacrifice/ hard work	STRT HW
	Publication	PBLC
I call it double shift or triple shift, the first shifts begins with preparing children to school, cooking then teaching, marking, research and the circle continues [W9].	Family and career conflicts	FML CRR

Having coded the transcripts, the themes and sub-themes were identified in the process of analysis and interpretation (using the six phases of thematic analysis on Table 4.3) as shown by extracts on Table 4.5 in the next section.

**Table 4.5 Data Extracts with codes.**

Data extracts	Codes for themes/sub-themes
'..I knew what I wanted to do. I have a passion of reading. I knew I would be around books, in an academia, I just wanted to teach. 'I work hard' [W1]. I wanted to fulfill my dream of being a professor [W8].	Motivational factors: being self-driven to joining academia/passion to read Hard work
I have had to put off my marriage for career. I am 34 year old and unmarried. I can't combine family responsibilities and career [W7]. Do I go or don't I go? Arguments continued with my husband whether to pursue my MA and PhD abroad. Can't you wait? But I'm 44 years, the biological clock was ticking. I finally took it up with relationships remaining strained. Four children back in Kenya, I did more worrying than reading [W6].	Family-career conflict/ sacrifice Family-career conflict Challenges
I spend sleepless nights or sleep late in the wee hours after my children are asleep to do my marking, write papers to conferences or catch up with reading [W13].	Strategies: Sacrifice/hard work
I first met a mentor during my PhD course in South Africa. Prof. X mentored me and introduced me to the world of research and publication. My first article was a joint publication with her [W1].	Mentoring/research and publication
'Publish or perish' is a common slogan in my institution. All promotions are pegged to publication and research. I failed to get promotion to Associate Professor because the panel felt that one of my publications was not scholarly enough [W6].	Research and publication Promotions
.... those lonely moments as one climbs the academic ladder...with just two women in the university council... that feeling of an outsider, an academic isolation [W3]. My institution still practices the old-boys network/boys club thing, isolating women and going for lunches and drinks with only men...two cultures; men's and women's [W11]. Great support from my institution [W10, W4, W7].	Institutional culture: 'academic isolation' 'outsiders', lone female Institutional culture- 'old boys network/boys club- and women's- 'two cultures' Cultural attitudes Institutional support
Women work really hard any way, they just need to work smart; know what they want to do, how they want to do it [W1]. I love reading, to get to the professor level is not easy, it has been a long journey, 25 years in academia. I have published several articles, won various grants. My life is surrounded by books, at home, office- I sleep after 1.00 A.M and wake up at 5 or 6 A.M daily [W13].	Strategies: hard work/working smart Hard work Commitment Sacrifice Publication

#### **4.9 Ethical considerations**

In social research, two fundamental ethical issues arise from the kind of problems social scientists investigate and the methods they use. First is the problem of potential deception and negligence during research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Second is the impact the research may have on the lives of the participants (Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996). However, Hesse-Biber (2007, p.17) claims that 'ethical considerations are normally detached from the research process yet the moral integrity of a researcher is critically important to ensuring a trustworthy and valid research process findings'.

Being aware that as a researcher I may have been faced with problems of consent from the participants or institutions of learning, I got a letter from Lancaster University introducing me as a PhD student in the process of my data collection (Appendix 3). The letter made it easier when I approached the participants. In addition, I wrote an introductory letter explaining details of the aim and the procedure for my research (Appendix 1) and each respondent signed a consent form (Appendix 2) as suggested in Cohen et al., (2007) for accepting or not accepting to take part in the interviews. The letter further indicated that anonymity as suggested in Wengraf (2001) would be respected and that their real names would be replaced with the letters (see Table 4.1). I also assured the participants of making available the completed thesis if they so wished to read. Participants were made aware that they had the right to withdraw from the study at anytime and that their participation was voluntary as suggested by (Burns, 2000).

In her discussion of ethics in feminist research, Priessly (2007) emphasizes the importance of how the research participants attributes are represented which is especially important in gender studies where sensitive issues were likely to arise. With respect to the participants' sensitivity, the information shared was carefully selected so as not to cause 'harm to the participants' (Bryman, 2004, p.509). Upon completion of the research, I promised to destroy the data and the taped information.

Hesse-Biber (2007, p.9) further notes that a feminist might not be too troubled by 'slipping a radical project past the powerful in order to investigate abuse of power' but would still bear responsibility for negotiating consent that is fully informed as possible. I therefore, kept the data obtained from respondents confidential (Burns, 2000; Robson, 2002) as mentioned in my introductory letter (Appendix 1).

On honesty and accuracy, Guba and Lincoln (2000) argue that all data gathered in any research should be accurate and it's the moral responsibility of any researcher to report the data exactly as obtained. Hence, in this research, I transcribed the data and verbatim quotes in the analysis maintained the original words of the interviewees (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5, and chapters 5 and 6).

Confidentiality and anonymity according to (Bell, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Robson, 2002) was assured to the participants and any quotations were attributed to individuals. In hope of avoiding deception, I explained to the interviewees the nature and reasons for the study (Appendix 1) as advocated by (Cohen et al., 2007; Burns, 2000; Bryman, 2004).

According to (Creswell, 2003; Bell, 2007; Patton, 2002) issues of validity and reliability were considered throughout the research process of data collection, analysis and interpretation. I paid careful attention to details during data collection and analysis to ensure trustworthiness of the research process (Cohen et al., 2007).

Furthermore, in enhancing reliability, I personally audio-taped, transcribed the interviews and consulted some interviewees for confirmation as part of member checking to verify the accuracy of the interview (Burns, 2000). The notes I made during the interviews supplied verification of the interview data.

#### ***4.10 Limitations***

Gaining access to suitable respondents was a problem as there are few women academics and fewer senior ones in Kenyan universities (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). This forced me to interview women academics from three different universities. Of those approached, two turned down being interviewed. One of them cancelled the interview after I had made an appointment and was actually at her office, as she insisted on rushing home to collect her children from school. The other one categorically expressed a lack of interest in research that concerns gender issues as she did not see the need for such a study in the Kenyan context, terming it as a foreign ideology.

Sampling was confined to sixteen women academics in Kenya, reflecting experiences and attitudes of a relatively small number and thus, limiting the degree to which research findings could be generalised. However, as noted in earlier chapters, the primary objective of this research was to examine and interpret the individual experiences of the respondents in this particular context. Any generalization of the findings to other contexts should be undertaken cautiously.

The study focused on experiences, motivations and, strategies of successful women academics with no attempt to compare their male colleagues' experiences and also, no comparison was made by subject areas.

Lack of time was an issue, both to the researcher and the interviewees. Although most of the women academics were willing to share their career experiences, the majority were very particular about the time spent during the interviews. This lack of time could have restricted an in-depth reflection on issues that could have been expressed in details. The researcher had limited time during in her summer vacation and had to travel abroad to resume her duties, accomplishing only ten interviews (between July and September 2008) and postponing the remaining six for a later date (December, 2008).

#### ***4.11 Conclusion***

In this chapter, I have presented an overview of methodology and methods adopted in this study. I have outlined the theoretical concepts, the framework and the methods that were used within this research. The chapter has also demonstrated how feminist methodology supports and strengthens the critical approach and the intent of this research. I have also provided an in-depth review of individual interviews and explained how this technique supports the research. In addition, the researcher's role and reflexivity were explored.

I have shown how feminist methodology is relevant to this study. The sampling criteria, data collection and thematic analysis have been discussed. A sample of coded extracts is presented (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). Ethical considerations and limitations of this study were also addressed.

## **Chapter 5: Data Analysis (I) and Discussion**

### ***5.1 Introduction***

Chapter 5 presents results and discussions of the data collected from in- depth interviews with sixteen women academics from three universities in Kenya. I begin with highlighting verbatim quotes from the participants while analysing their gendered experiences. I do so while recognizing the dangers of generalizing narratives as each woman's experience is unique (Harding, 1987). The concept of career can be located within individual and structural experience (Coffey and Delamont, 2000). A discussion of the data follows in light of the literature review and connects the themes to the theoretical framework.

As Blackmore (1999, p.62) reminds us, 'feminist research places emphasis on the lived experiences, ...the representation of self emerges as an issue in the messy nexus of research, theory and feminist practice'. By focusing on the similarities among the respondents, the feminist research focuses on and hopes to produce new collective truths which in turn will frame other women's stories (Blackmore, 1999). This helps to reinforce the premise of feminist theory and praxis in which the personal, political and professional are interwoven (Coffey and Delamont, 2000).

Each analysed theme is discussed in light of the literature reviewed (chapter 2).The links with the theoretical framework (chapter 3) is then explored. The common themes emerged from the data and were organised in according to the interview questions.

The chapter covers four of the research questions of the study:

- *How did their family background affect their career?*
- *How did their education contribute to their career?*
- *What motivational factors, personal attributes, and skills have been critical in their career?*
- *What significant contributing factors are perceived as barriers/challenges if any, to career advancement?*

## **5.2 Family Socialisation and Attributes**

The narratives by the women academics reveal conflicting roles played by their parents when they were growing up. The roles of their fathers and mothers in their lives seem to differ. The fathers supported and encouraged their daughters to attain education which was important to the world of work. This was contrary to the general cultural perception that women have to stay at home, take care of children and cook (Onsongo, 2005).

All the sixteen respondents were Kenyans, born and brought up in Kenya. Five of the respondents who were born in 1950s cited the difficulty of female education in their early years of schooling where there were very few girls in schools in Kenya and most of them, got married before completing their primary school education. However, there was a gradual improvement and a slight increase in the numbers of girls in schools for those who were born in late the 1960s and 1970s.

The sixteen respondents described different relationships with their families and different personal skills developed from family socialisation. Commonly, the respondents described relationships with parents as 'intimate', and 'loving'.

Culture was embedded indirectly through parental guidance as the girls went through schooling. Some of the respondents cited being reminded of being the only girl in the village in school as all other girls either got pregnant or were married while in primary schools, and that motivated them to work harder. A 'humble' family background was a common expression by some of the respondents [W4, W11, W7, W6, and W16]. Most parents did not have much education especially the mothers. However, three of the respondents W1, W4, and W13 had mothers who were teachers and expressed how their mothers acted as role models, with close 'mother-daughter' relationships. Fathers were cited as being more enlightened in terms of education. Those who were the oldest children in their families and with both parents having little or no education, lacked role models and struggled on their own.

The younger generation born in the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s reported older siblings having had an impact on their career lives and acting as role models. The majority of the respondents' childhood experiences had positive influences on their education and career development, despite the experiences of poverty by some. Regardless of their achievements at school, the early years had influenced respondents in various ways.

### 5.2.1 Fathers

The family environment can influence the self-efficacy of young children through parental support and encouragement. Parents can nurture and support their children, while stimulating their curiosity and encouraging self-discovery and promoting intellectual development (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002).

Most of the respondents had closer relationships with their mothers than their fathers. However, W13, W6, W3 cited special relationships with their fathers who were educated and appreciated their achievements. The fathers were able to ensure that their daughters obtained education because the power of decision making was in the hands of the father or male members of the families. For example, W3's father nurtured her intellectual growth and encouraged her education:

I was my 'father's girl'. He was always proud of my academic achievements and expressed his excitement whenever he met my teachers.

An expression from W4 shows how through family socialization, education was one of her family's virtues:

Education was a household norm. My father was a lawyer and my mother a teacher. Older siblings had made it through to universities no choice for me except to maintain the family's status quo.

Similarly, W13 described how her father nurtured her intellectual growth and encouraged her education:

Education for all' was my father's slogan. As an Education Officer, he extended emphasis on the value of education to the family. I would say he was my first role model and mentor.

W10 attributes her career success to the father who although lacking formal schooling, understood the value of education and became a source of her inspiration. She expressed:

.. my father never saw the inside of a classroom, but I attribute my success to him for his support and encouragement.

Such experiences from the present study support Rarieya's (2007) findings that although both parents played an important role in shaping the career perceptions of their daughters, there appeared to be a dominant contribution by their fathers. Apart from encouraging the participants to get education, their fathers were instrumental in ensuring they experienced a sense of self-confidence and independence.

### **5.2.2 Mothers**

The 'mother-daughter' relationship was expressed by most of the respondents. The majority of the respondents' mothers were less educated compared to their fathers. Some of the respondents perceived their mothers as restricting, encouraging them to follow the stereotypically chosen paths for girls. The respondents felt restricted and controlled by their mothers' expectations that were largely reflective of society's expectations of how mothers should bring up their daughters, to become 'good' wives and mothers.

Despite the limitations imposed on the respondents by their mothers because they were girls, the participants were unequivocal about qualities they perceive to have received from their mothers. These qualities have influenced their careers. For example, W11 claimed to have inherited some personal attributes necessary for a future career from her mother:

...my mum has a strong personality, viewing education as the way to future success. 'Do not be a house-wife like me'. I could see signs of tears from her eyes. My children often say that I have inherited strong personality and high self-esteem from my mum.

Perhaps conscious of their own lack of proper education, some of the mothers had projected their hopes onto their daughters, and encouraged the respondents to study hard. Familial support was highly gendered, with mothers providing resources for early years' of education, often in the form of emotional comfort and discipline as was in the study by (Morley and Lussier, 2009).

From the narratives, parental influence was significant in the women's development of independence and self sufficiency. This finding is in line with that of Hall (1996) and Coleman (2001) who found that parental influence, particularly by the father, was important for education and career development. Due to the support and love from their fathers, most of the participants except W14, did not feel the limitations imposed on girls and women by society.

Their parents' responses during their upbringing were also gendered, with contradictions noticeable from the data. The fathers wanted better lives for their daughters, a situation that was different from that of many girls at that time. The role played by fathers reflected an expression of patriarchy, a dominant role played by males to support women in their educational achievements. On the other hand, some of the mothers felt compelled to fall within the socio-cultural expectations of raising their daughters for their future domestic status. These findings confirm the cultural expectations of women's roles in Kenya as was cited earlier (chapter 3) in (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

Three of the respondents W 1, W4, and W13 whose mothers were teachers reported the virtues of hard work and the emphasis on education from their mothers who acted as role models. They also appreciated some of the traditional virtues from their mothers, playing the roles of a wife and a mother. The strong personalities from mothers became influential on the careers of some of the respondents as cited by W14:

...mum emphasised the value of education, even though I would say she was semi-literate but...always checked my school work, checked my marks in every subject, and would reprimand me for a poor academic performance.

Academic emphasis was enhanced by mothers who trained their daughters to be good girls and this sometimes included being studious as W14 suggests above.

Literature according to Holland (1997) confirms the links between personal attributes, personal identity and career orientations. In particular, the attributes are indicated as powerful determinants of personal behavior, thus a significant influence on career. The personal attributes identified from the respondents included; hard work, independence, self-motivation and perseverance. The different values of self-efficacy as in Bandura (1997) of self-driving forces and time management skills were expressed by most of the respondents. The results from Bailey (1999) showed the relationships between self-efficacy and research.

On their personalities, the respondents in the present study exhibited many similar attributes which proved crucial to their career success in higher education. Independence, commitment, hard work and responsibility were expressed by W11, W1, W13 and W3. Children's home environment plays a role in shaping competency, beliefs and interests. Both parents and teachers contribute to gender differences in motivation through parental socialization, where children's motivation is influenced by role modeling and gender roles (Eccles, 1983). A fundamental concept that emerged from the data was the reciprocal relationship that exists between socialization experiences and the development of attributes. The data revealed how the attributes and socialization experiences of the respondents interacted to affect their identities, values, career orientations, and career strategies. According to Holland (1997), career choice is an expression of a person's personality.

The key findings from the study indicate that the contribution of family members such as mothers, fathers, and siblings played a crucial role in the early academic and career development of the respondents. The respondents reported a significant development in their self-concepts, hard work, sense of responsibility, and research skills. 'Entry into higher education seems to be enhanced by parents who are educated, professional, affluent, ambitious, supportive and enlightened in so far as they do not discriminate against girls' (Morley et al., 2009, p.51).

When capital is added to a community or extended family brimming over with professional role models and a private, prestigious and frequently urban-based education, there is a sure recipe for success (Morley, et al., 2009). Not many of the respondents in the present study had all these preconditions in place at any one time.

### **5.3 Education/Academic Attributes**

The second theme is the contribution of formal education towards career advancement of the women academics. The women academics' sense of self has also been shaped by their school experiences and the particular environments of the schools they attended. As explained earlier (section 5.2), due to family influence, the women were able to seek education which played an important role in motivating them to move into the professional career world. Primary, secondary and university education had significant impact on most of the respondents' career lives. They recalled significant incidents where some teachers, head teachers and supervisors motivated and encouraged them to work hard.

#### **5.3.1 Primary Education**

The schools shaped the respondents' identities in different ways. Most of them view the schools they attended as having had cultures that enabled them to acquire characteristics that were considered appropriate for further career development.

W6 recalled:

I attended a co-education school in primary, learnt to play, fight and wrestle with the boys. That built my confidence and personality which I have maintained to date. I always tell my male colleagues, 'hey guys know I am here, halloo!', and many times they laugh it off but must remember to include me in affairs of the department.

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) agree that behaviour is influenced by personal and environmental factors. The type of school that W6 attended helped to shape her confidence and personality.

The events during primary education made an impact in W2's career life, developing her confidence and language skills as she recalled:

Debates were held every Friday at my school. There was competition between classes and the best student from each class got an Award. This developed my language and confidence at an early age.

The students like W2 could have been motivated to work hard by the awards given after winning a debating competition and in addition built confidence at an early age. In support of such experiences, Eccles (1983) suggests the link between motivation and school achievement.

The description by W12 of how her teachers reinforced her study skills and independence was expressed in the following quotation:

I vividly remember class 7 during evening studies commonly known as 'preps'- we discussed exam papers with friends in class and the teachers also helped and trained us in different skills of answering exam questions. I acquired skills of independent study that become a habit through to secondary and university levels.

Another respondent W14 expressed how through responsibilities and trust from teachers, she built on her leadership skills from an early age and continues to put them into practice in her career:

I was a class Monitor from class five until seven...teachers had so much trust in me. I think my leadership skills were identified from primary school level. I continued to be a team leader at the university whenever we had an assignment as a group. As a DVC, I involve my team in the department's activities and delegate responsibilities.

### **5.3.2 Secondary/High school Education**

Fourteen of the respondents attended all girls' schools either at secondary, at A- level or for both. Two respondents attended co-educational schools for both secondary and Advanced levels. Virtues from teachers included; hard work, competition, personality building and leadership skills which became assets to most of the respondents' academic and career journeys.

Commonly, the secondary schools were boarding schools, as is a common practice in Kenya. This was a social advantage to most respondents, with reports of close relationships with friends and teachers while those in day schools said there was no time to bond with each other as they had to rush home immediately after school. Attending an all girls' boarding school was common among fourteen respondents citing incidences of support and encouragement from their teachers that had significant impact on their academic and professional development. Having female teachers as role models, enhancing independence and willingness to take up challenges was an advantage to some respondents.

In appreciating attending a single sex school, W13 described her experience in these terms:

As a teenager, I felt that an all girls' school allowed me to share feminine views and develop interpersonal relationships but maintained hard work and discipline.

Similarly, W11 expressed having modeled the leadership skills of the headmistress of her secondary school:

I attended an all girls boarding school from form one till form four and for my A-levels. My headmistress became my role model and motivator to hard work and discipline. She instilled in me the virtues of hard work, responsibility. She was tough and firm!

Significant to W12's career were the attributes of responsibility, dedication and hard work which she acquired through the encouragement by her teachers:

...among my teachers who encouraged me to study hard was my Mathematics teacher Mr. X who never missed a lesson for four years that he taught me, I saw dedication, a sense of responsibility and hard work in him- I admired him.

The experience of W12 reflects on the findings on self-efficacy beliefs about teachers which shows that pupils of teachers with higher self-efficacy tend to have better learning outcomes (Bandura, 1997). A similar experience was cited by W4 of role modeling and confidence building from her teachers:

.... role model I would cite was Literature teacher in form 4, Mr. X was self-conceited but, confident who knew his content well. He was an inspiration in my life, developed my literary skills and confidence.

The female teachers were role models and became significant in W11's career life:

I admired those two young female- graduates who taught me Geography and History in form 3, I wanted become teachers like them.

From the respondents' narratives, it seems that each school passed on to the respondents, values which have provided the visions and the basis for development of their personal attributes. Their narratives indicate that gender is a major organizing principle in their school lives (Acker, 1994). Their attendance of a single sex school seems to have contributed significantly to the development of their identities and was a social advantage.

Another advantage of the single sex education mentioned by some of the respondents was the availability of female role models. Counseling from teachers and warm relationships were vital for careers as W1 expressed:

I knew I would make it to the university as I had nothing else in my mind except to read. I did not involve myself in relationships with boys. During my secondary education, I had very warm relationships with my teachers who constantly counseled me.

The respondents view the schools they attended as having cultures that aimed to enable them take up characteristics that were considered appropriate for women at the time. This is in contrast to co-educational schools where the experiences of boys are reinforced and recognized over that of girls.

#### ***5.4 Motivational Factors and Attributes***

The third common theme was the motivational factors that became a driving force to the women academics to pursue a career in academia. As earlier discussed in the literature review (chapter 2), motivation is a complex construct but can be defined as behaviour that is directed by the need or desire to achieve particular outcomes. It energises and guides behaviour towards reaching a particular goal in life. Motivation is internal and is derived from the forces within the individual and in the environment. In the present research, motivation is used with its relevance to those factors or choices that the women academics made or their goals towards academia.

Modern theories of motivation (Stipek, 2002; Eccles and Wigfield, 2002) relate the individual's beliefs, values and goals with actions. In this context, the beliefs about competence, expectancy for success, and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation became relevant to women academics' careers. Socio-economic, intrinsic motivation, family, gender, role models and culture were among the factors cited to have motivated the respondents in the present study towards joining and staying in academe.

#### **5.4.1 Socio-Economic Factors/Escape from Poverty**

Although previous research suggested that socio-economic status as measured by parental occupation as a predictor of individual's career aspiration as in Meece (2006), most of the parents to the successful female academics in the present study were of relatively 'humble' backgrounds, and the majority had not received much education, especially the mothers. Some parents encouraged their daughters to achieve higher education to alleviate the families from poverty, a form of extrinsic motivation according to Eccles and Wigfield (2002) as they hoped to earn better salaries that would improve the family's socio-economic status.

An expression from W10 is an indication that through education, she could be alleviated from poverty:

I wanted to escape from poverty and to me, education was the only way out, there were no girls in my village of my age in school- all had either been married or got pregnant while in primary school. Thanks to my father and mother for their support for my education.

Respondents W10, W11, W16 reported that they wanted to 'escape from poverty', a form of extrinsic motivation according to (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Other respondents reported having been intrinsically motivated as expressed in the next section.

### 5.4.2 Intrinsic and Extrinsic factors

Eccles and Wigfield (2002, p.112) explain that when individuals are 'intrinsically motivated, they engage in an activity because they are interested in and enjoy the activity, while when extrinsically motivated, individuals engage in activities for other reasons such as receiving a reward', a feeling expressed by several respondents in the present study. Most respondents expressed having had intrinsic motivation to pursue their careers.

Intrinsic factors in this context include the attributes of being self-driven, love for reading, a sense of accomplishment and personal growth. Extrinsic factors on the other hand refer to rewards such as salary and job security. Intrinsic rewards are more satisfying and motivating than extrinsic rewards. Eccles and Wigfield (2002) agree that behaviour is influenced by personal factors (motivation or internal factors) and by environmental factors (external or outside influences). W13 expresses different forms of intrinsic motivation:

A perfectionist I think I am, I wanted to work and live my full potential, express and share my ideas, publish, speak for other women, be visible through publication.

A similar form of intrinsic motivation of being 'self-driven' and 'fulfilling a dream' was shared by W1:

I am a self-driven person, I knew what I wanted to do, I knew I wanted to be around books. Being in academia has just fulfilled my dream and ambition. As a young child with a mother as a teacher, I developed an interest in reading story books.

Self-drives are different forms of intrinsic motivations as expressed by W7: 'I'm a self-motivated person, I enjoy my work'. Similarly, W3 expressed that it was her self-driving forces that pushed her into joining academia, to fulfill a personal interest:

Being ambitious, I wanted to move up the professional rank, so I joined the university, a place where my ideas could be acknowledged. That was my driving force, to read hard, get a job at the university where I could express my ideas freely, and publish.

The main motivation in their academic careers was to make a contribution to knowledge development in their respective areas. Most of the respondents regard research, publication and being in academia as core in their academic lives, and they expressed deriving pleasure from discovering new knowledge. Another dominant attribute among the women academics is the passion for knowledge and the discovery of new knowledge. As students, some of them were bright, hard working and eager to learn.

Another form of intrinsic motivation was expressed by W11, whose love for teaching and achieving a prestigious social status drove her to joining academia:

I love teaching and wanted to live my dream... the prestige of being called a Prof., being read about, publishing books and articles.

W1 expression of her love for teaching and a passion for reading could have a positive impact on students and the community:

I love what I'm doing, I enjoy reading and this has influenced my career choice. I can't divorce my work from my passion of reading. It's not that I wanted to lecture but, I knew I would end up in an academic environment.

Most respondents indicated that they pursued their career if they felt they enjoyed doing the work. The majority of them used terms such as; being 'self-driven', 'self-motivated', 'love for reading' to describe reasons for their career choices. Personal effectiveness, passion for reading and lecturing as expressed by W1 are strong motivators. For Principals in Pakistan studied by Nyangaga (2007), their key motivator was the opportunity to help students in the classroom. Women in educational leadership frequently cited internal factors as motivators (Coleman, 2001).

The construct of self-concept is a general term that describes a person's self image. According to career theorists such as Holland (1997), this construct plays a significant role in career development of an individual. As the person becomes aware of his or her self-concept, a realisation of requirements to certain occupations and experiences that fits with a particular self-concept. The respondents compared their self-concepts to various core values, roles, and self-efficacy (Bandura et al., 2001).

Self-efficacy was interpreted by the respondents as referring to the personal judgement of their capabilities to produce desired outcomes in accordance with the roles and responsibilities that they had assumed. The evidence from the respondents is an indication of how their academic efficacy was affected by the past achievements, encouragement from parents, teachers, and the expectation of self. Socialisation and achievement experience play an important role in motivation. The child's home environment help to shape their competency beliefs and interest (Bandura et al., 2001).

The family as another motivating factor is discussed in the next section.

### **5.4.3 The Family**

Through parental socialization, children's motivation is enhanced through role modeling, communication about their own abilities, skills and what is valued as important which is later reflected on ones own beliefs and academic abilities (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002).

W8's career ambition began from childhood as she admired and wanted to model the achievements of her uncle:

....my uncle has been a long time Professor and a Vice Chancellor of a public university in Kenya. He encouraged me to work hard and become Prof. I have always admired when my grandma is called *mama* (mother of) Prof. .I said, one day, I also want to be a called a Prof too.

W3 expressed, '...my father believed in me (he has since passed on), encouraged me to read hard' and W13 cited, 'My father encouraged me to work hard'. These experiences suggest the role played by parents on career decisions.

W15 also appreciated encouragement, hard work, and guidance from her mother which she considered as important personal and career attributes:

My mother is a hard worker and a struggler, was my driving force to success, full of praise and encouragement, her words of wisdom and moral guidance have been a 'cornerstone' to my career success.

The association of mothers with emotional, material comfort, an agent of social regulation was noted by W15 and is a noticeable feature of the present study.

A mixed feeling of admiration, bitterness, appreciation, and love from a mother, all became a motivation for W11:

With education only up to class 5, my mum worked tirelessly in her farm to pay my school fees. She has left an indelible mark in my life that hard work pays and that perseverance is key to achieving one's dream... made me who I am today- she instilled in me the virtues of life.- hard work, fear of God... the woman who shaped my life. ...pushed me to read, I wanted to live by her ideals.

The expressions by W15 and W11 support the view that the family environment can influence an individual's self-efficacy through parental support and encouragement. Parents can nurture and support their children, while stimulating curiosity and encouraging self discovery to positively affect self efficacy (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002).

#### **5.4.4 Culture and Gender**

Another significant motivational factor in career decisions to most respondents was their gender and cultural attitude. Both factors had a great influence on the respondents' self-image, others' perceptions of them as academics and as women. Parents reinforce gender roles through socialisation (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). Gender and culture played an important role in some of the career decisions made by the respondents. It had not only influenced their self-image, but also influenced others' perceptions of them. W11 and W3 reported having grown up in environments in which they felt they had been treated unfairly because they were female. Perceptions of gender inequality in a society that is patriarchal had driven some of the respondents like W11 to prove their abilities as she asserted:

I wanted to fulfill my mother's dream, her withdrawal from school at class five just because she was a woman, to be married off became a strong motivation to me to pursue my education and career to the 'sky' in my mother's words. My mother's story has always been an inspiration to me. She regularly re-told the story as if it was happening live each time I came from, and when going to school.

Because of the negative gendered cultural experience, W3 vowed to change her life and career decision to join academia and staying unmarried, as she expressed:

I wanted to be my mother's 'protector'. My dad died when I was 17 years and my uncles took everything, left her with nothing! We are a family of 8 and all girls. To them, Girls are not children. I vowed to read to the highest level possible and promised myself to disapprove my uncles' cultural beliefs about women. It is this negative attitude and treatment to my mother that changed my preference of career to marriage. I am 46 years old and unmarried.

The expression from W3 confirms a feature of feminist perspective that aims to transform institutions by validating women's voice (Cook and Fonow, 1990; Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). Discrimination against girls was sometimes the consequence of deeply embedded cultural practices, with the gendered division of labour playing a major role in interrupting girls' educational opportunities. Socio-cultural influences impact on the development of children's motivation in that, children begin to form gender role conceptions that influence their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour before they enter school (Eccles, 2007).

The comments below confirm the norm of marriage over education in Kenyan society. Like other unmarried academics, W3 seems to have gone against the cultural norm, thus, facing resistance from her uncle through his comments:

...being a woman is only a biological sex factor and should not be used to discriminate in other areas of social life and rights, once my uncle commented, 'no one will ever marry you with those degrees'. I told him I would rather a degree to a man! I hold a PhD, of which I'm proud of!

Compulsory and inevitability of marriage and motherhood as per the cultural expectation for women were evident in the data. Higher Education is perceived as disrupting hegemonic age-related marriage and motherhood norms (Morley, et al., 2009). The experiences of W11 and W3 confirm that culture formed the backbone of their motivation towards academic and career progress. They wanted to blow the winds of change on gender attitudes about women's education and marriage in Kenya.

Expressions from the respondents in the present study show how ingrained the cultural attitudes are about women in Kenyan society and it is through academia that the women hope for change. Although the respondents identified with Kenyan cultural and social values to varying degrees, the data revealed that these values had influenced their career experiences. In many ways, their childhood experiences of family and education had shaped the women's self-concepts, attitudes and the traditional roles assigned to women in Kenyan society, their views on career, family and positions in academia.

Research that has been done in other countries shows how women attribute their career success to personal motivation, hard work and determination among other factors. Nyangaga (2007) in her study of high school Principals in Pakistan found that these women valued accomplishing their work rather than getting promotions to higher ranks.

#### **5.4.5 Role models**

Some of the respondents expressed having had role models from family, friends, teachers in schools and professors during their university education. Most of the role models were men, a clear sign that role models are still scarce amongst women. Respondents, W1, W4, and 13 however, cited their mothers who were teachers as their role models.

W15 admired her male literature teacher who acted as a role model and contributed towards her love for literature:

My literature teacher at A- levels was my first role model. I got my love for literature from him. I wanted to be like him.

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) assert that school environment can influence the self-efficacy of a student through comfort, or whether the school fosters a sense of autonomy.

Like W15 who admired her literature teacher, W1 expressed the positive contribution of her teachers who became her role models as she reckoned:

Motivation did not come easily... it was a contribution from the role models. My teachers, my lecturers who taught me were very vibrant when they spoke before me and as we interacted. My mother (teacher) was actually my first role model. I grew up with books around me.

An earlier assertion from the literature review (chapter 2) that women feel comfortable in the presence of female role models (Morley, 2006) was shared by W10:

During my undergraduate school, this young lady Prof... was a great role model for me...I admired her dedication to work yet very young... just graduated with an MA, very enthusiastic. She guided and counseled me in her office informally.

The majority of the respondents expressed having modeled certain skills and professional behaviour from their teachers, their seniors at work or their heads of schools or institutions of learning. W9 reported having incorporated the leadership skills and styles of her high school headmistress of 'team work, open- door policy, being assertive but approachable'.

The next section examines the challenges/barriers faced by the respondents.

## **5.5 Challenges/Barriers to Career Advancement**

The fourth theme explores some of the challenges or barriers faced by the women academics through their career. The data reveals the family-work conflicts and lack of role models.

### **5.5.1 Family- Work Conflicts**

A personal role is used in this context to refer to family responsibilities such as; childbearing, childrearing, household chores, socialising with friends and family outside office hours. A professional role on the other hand is used to refer to all academic tasks resulting from the position the women occupied in the university.

Research in Canada, Australia, Europe, North America and Africa (Acker and Armenti, 2004; Currie et al., 2000; Raddon, 2002; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2003; Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Kamau, 2004; De La Rey, 2001) show that women experience considerable conflicts and tensions when combining work and family responsibilities. Feminist perspective gives the reasons why women experience more pressure than men because work in the home is generally divided along gender lines (Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002).

The comments from W6 highlight the impact of conflicts and tensions between being a mother, wife and pursuing a career:

I did Masters in United Kingdom and PhD in India. While studying for the MA I had 3 children and ten years later PhD, 4 children .I kept on asking myself, Do I go, or don't I go? I contemplated, while my husband repeatedly asked me. "Why can't you do the courses in Kenya? But these were specific British council and Commonwealth scholarships, I told him. For the PhD, the ceiling age for the scholarship was 44, and I was 44 years that particular year- the biological clock was ticking against me. But my husband kept asking, 'can't you wait?' arguments continued, but I finally took up the studies with the family relationships remaining strained. My parents on the other hand really supported me.

Narratives from W6 above illustrate the position, the expectation of mothers, and the domestic responsibilities that entails motherhood in an African context as earlier highlighted (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

Other studies (White, 2001; Correl and Paik, 2007; Raddon, 2002) report similar conflicts and tensions experienced by women in academia as they try to combine family and work responsibilities. Comer and Stites-Doe (2006) stress that with family responsibilities, women find it difficult to attain tenure and their time is placed against biological clocks, reducing the mobility and career advancement of women in academia. Similarly, W10 expressed the sacrifices she had to undergo when doing her PhD. She was working full time while at the same time had young children. Juggling and meeting the expectations was a pain, despite a lot of support from her husband.

She cited:

I had an opportunity to go to Germany... I felt lucky... as a mother. I left two young children with my husband, another baby was on its way...back to Kenya, still doing the PhD, typing became hard, legs swollen.... at 8-9 months, typing was hard!

Another respondent W5 also expressed how she combined multiple family and career roles as other women colleagues:

I wear many hats, as an administrator, a mother, a lecturer, a wife, juggling, and conflicts here and there. It's like I work 'double or 'triple shifts'. The family issues are crucial in this culture ... calls for a lot of sacrifices...no leisure time with friends. I dedicate weekends to my family and sometimes for grading projects and students' papers. I'm left with no choice but to experience many of those 'sleepless nights' trying to cope. As a mother, I'm forced to miss out on some trips organized by my university. On one hand, I really appreciate my family life. It's only that sometimes the pressure is too much! I get exhausted.

The experiences of W5 above would seem to both confirm and contradict ambitions of successful careers. Within the areas of tension and conflicts there co-exist ambition and joy. She seems to have experienced a tension between her desire to care for the family whilst trying to meet her career expectations.

Figure 5.1 illustrates how Kenyan women academics juggle with multiple family and career roles. According to Wolfinger et al., (2008, p.390), 'Women have less time to devote to their careers when their domestic responsibilities include spouses and children....women do much more household than labor men'.

Respondents W5 and W9 who had child care responsibilities revealed that they had difficulty in finding time to read academic literature, and W5 was forced to forfeit her sleep in order to cope, while W9 had to postpone her career to allow her to rear and nurture her children. In addition, W5 reported exhaustion as a result of wishing to achieve more academically, but not having enough time to accommodate all the duties.

More evidence of family and work conflicts is highlighted in studies by (Mason and Goulden, 2002; Armenti, 2004c). Elsewhere, Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2003) relate family status, and publication and how motherhood affects women's careers. The majority of the women interviewed in the present study expressed that the greatest challenge was as a result of the division of labour in the home along traditional gender roles and the separation between the private and public spheres in Kenyan society as was experienced by the women academics in (Kamau, 2004).

Another research participant, W9, whose children were adults, talked about putting her career on hold while she gave priority to her family roles. At a later stage, the grown up children allowed her to devote more time to her career:

I had to postpone my career until I had given birth to my three children and they were old enough. I started my career at the age of 30. I did my Bachelor of Education course, MA and PhD in U.S. A. I left my children behind with my husband. With grown up children, I can achieve more, attend conferences, mentor—research, publish. But it has not been easy. Most times I work over-time.

As a result of motherhood responsibilities, some of the respondents had to take career breaks or, sacrifice their families to pursue education abroad, while others worked 'double-shifts' to cope. The interviews suggest that career breaks slowed the women academics' chances to advance their careers.

A woman in Forster's (2001) study cites a similar experience of taking a seven year break from her career to take care of the family. W9 and W11 explained that their earlier career decisions had been influenced and their choices were limited by placing the needs of relationships and family first. They exhibited interrupted career patterns as opposed to linear career development as earlier indicated in the literature review (chapter 2) (Blaxter et al., 2006). The women who attained a smoother career progression had fewer interruptions to their careers because they remained single, did not have children or, they had supportive husbands.

One of the respondents, W6, expressed feelings of 'guilt' as she studied abroad and the children kept asking about her:

Whenever I rang home, I was told that my youngest child who was 4 years then kept asking, *mama nikanye?* (Where is mum?). To be sincere, I did more worrying than studying while in UK and India because of the family.

Although the respondent spoke in English, it seems clear that her inner feelings came out clearly in the use of her mother language, as expressed above.

Researches (Coleman, 2001; Raddon, 2002) report how some women are preoccupied with guilt because of their role conflicts as mothers and career women as was experienced by some of the respondents in the present study like W6. This confirms the experience of a female senior lecturer in Kenya who during her interview asserted that, 'Ascending the academic ladder called for sacrifices especially domestic roles, both as a wife and a mother' (Ayodo, 2009, p.1).

In the present study, the single women, in contrast, expressed more freedom in terms of travel and time management into research and publication although some of them 'postponed/put off' marriage for career, another form of sacrifice as W1 cited:

I am always free to attend conferences anywhere. I just have to let my mum know about my schedule. I am single, no burden (family) in quotes.

Making the choice to remain single, childless or divorced is to go against societal pressure to be coupled and procreate (Kanake, 1997).

Respondent W1 indicated that there is a 'cultural stigma' associated with being single in Kenyan society. She reported some of the negative comments from her colleagues:

When I call for meetings, sometimes I could hear some of my male colleagues (old guards) saying in the corridors of my office- 'let's go and hear what that girl has got to tell us'. In this culture, since I'm not married some men feel I don't deserve this administrative position as I lack a family which to them goes with wisdom.

In making a definite choice of career over marriage, W1 was conscious of being one of a few (the lone female) women applying for promotion and talked of male negative attitude, highlighting the impact of her gender especially in management. Like, W1 and W3, W7's priority was career over the family, postponing marriage due to the difficulties of combining both roles. However, a conscious choice to marry, not to have children, or to be a single mother is a choice that disrupts the normalized path of true motherhood and requires the courage to be different in a patriarchal society like Kenya.

Pressure on women to conform to society's norms and expectations come from multiple sources such as the media, family and community as shared by W7:

I have faced several challenges to reach where I am... one of those is sacrificing family for career. At the moment I'm 34 years old, not married, but I'm not thinking of a family very soon, based on the family responsibilities. I have had to put the issue of marriage on hold to pursue my career as I've realized, I may not manage both. How many more sleepless nights would I spend if I had children?

In a patriarchal society, the institution of marriage and the act of having children are the accepted norm. Women diverging from the norm like W1, W7, inevitably invoke resistance from men who are advantaged in an arrangement where women take both emotional and physical responsibility for the home (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

In line with the present study, Armenti (2004b, pp. 217-218) in her study of nineteen women academics in a Canadian university found that some older women academics were planning their pregnancies to deliver babies in the month of May before obtaining tenure, scheduling motherhood, in what was referred to as the 'May Baby Phenomenon' that is, having babies in May, or anytime in the Spring or Summer (a pre-tenure baby). A 'post-tenure Baby Phenomenon' was a situation where the women academics planned having babies in December after securing tenure. The young women had to hide their pregnancies during interviews, 'Hidden Pregnancy Phenomenon' for the sake of obtaining tenure. In addition, the expression from a woman academic in (Acker and Armenti, 2004, p.10), shows significant family and work tension, 'if I walked around pregnant, that would be my doom'. In her study, younger women academics were either childless, or unmarried.

When interviewed, W13 acknowledged that it was because of her passion for her career that she ran into conflicts with her family roles as a mother and a wife:

I am academic and a career woman...that I can't hide! So then a problem came, I had three children at the time of my MA and PhD courses both of which I got scholarships to U.K... caused a rift between my husband, I and his family ...my parents really encouraged me...on return from my PhD, my husband was seriously ill and died two months later. ...reaching the rank of a professor has been a 'rugged' and 'long tiring' 20 year journey full of sacrifices and hard work.. .but is worth pursuing.

As cited above, W13 expresses the feeling of 'guilt' at spending her time abroad in pursuit of career, (while feeling quite confident on career) and leaving her children in the hands of someone else to look after. In addition, her husband's death could have been perceived by the family and the society as a sign of negligence by a wife (Onsongo, 2005).

Respondent W4 shared her strategies in managing family and career roles while acknowledging how conflicts are inevitable:

...my working 'shifts' continue at home ,with the children's home work, cooking, marking students' projects, I have to 'multi-task' to cope. Conflicts are inevitable, a husband needs attention, other family guests visit, I have to cook while at the same time meet deadlines for submitting in students grades.

Like the experiences of W4 that may slow her career progress, Wolfinger et al., (2008, p.390) assert how, '... female professors spending more time on domestic chores than men... It may interfere with a woman's ability to perform research and teaching necessary for advancement in academia...' As a result of their gendered social upbringing, many of the women academics interviewed are expected to be mothers, wives, researchers and teachers. They then tend to work 'double' shifts where they take up family responsibilities as well as the profession as those women in (Raddon, 2002; Acker, 1994).

The experiences of W4 and W13 from a feminist perspective reveal some conflict in that, the women academics feel obliged to accomplish their roles in the family, while at the same time meet the expectations of career. The experiences of the above respondents summarise the contradictions they face both as mothers/wives and career women. These contradictions are exacerbated by the socio-cultural expectations of women in society as was cited earlier in (Onsongo, 2005).

Women academics in Mavin and Bryans (2002, p.243) were referred to as belonging to a 'knitting club', a negative metaphor used by both men and women to describe women academics with children. Recent research also confirms that family conflicts extend to academia (Ward and Wolf-Wendel, 2004; Wolf-Wendel and Ward, 2003). In addition, Wolfinger et al., (2008) express how women in their study had less time to devote to career as they spent a lot of their time in family responsibilities, making them experience a lower rate to obtaining tenure.

The majority of the respondents reported working long hours into the night just because they were female, attending to family responsibilities. The married women reported experiencing sleepless nights, stress and exhaustion as they tried to balance the family and work responsibilities. It appears that women's place in the academy still reflects what Aisenberg and Harrington (1988, p.3) calls the 'old norms', a set of historical beliefs and expectations that remain even as new understandings arise. The message of the old norms is that women faculty must choose between family life and work, rather than combining personal and professional lives. Similarly, studies from Hewlett (2002) indicates that at the age of forty, 50% of all professional women remain childless, not by choice but to meet the demands of their career. Similarly, in an interview with twenty five women professors in South Africa, De La Rey (2001) found that the women made conscious plans not to have children because of academic careers.

The narratives of combining family and professional roles in this study reveal the conflicting nature of these roles and the many contradictions involved. Feminist perspective research has attributed the conflict and contradictions to two main reasons: First is that, the division of labour in the home is still conducted along traditional gender roles. Women are allowed into the public sphere but are still left with all the duties of the private sphere. The argument is often that, 'it is fine if a woman wants to be a president as long as she can manage her family's needs for nurturance and support too' (Marshall, 1997, p.70). This division of labour according to Kanake (1997) disadvantages women who have to work a second shift at home while men relax accomplishing their work for the next day. This is the experience of most Kenyan women who have taken on careers.

The second reason given by feminist perspective is that academic careers are based on a male model. This model assumes freedom from competing responsibilities such as family that generally affect women more than men (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). In this model, women are cumulatively disadvantaged (Valian, 1999).

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2004) observe that the idealised trajectory of an academic career from graduate school to assistant professor, associate and full professor in direct succession, may not describe the actual or the expected career of an academic woman. This is because in the interest of children, personal commitment and spouses, women may extend or suspend their graduate school careers, wait to join the professoriate late or attempt to stop or slow the tenure clock (Armenti, 2004b).

Writers about women and Higher Education often describe an environment that creates these tensions for women academics, as Raddon (2002, p.387) comments that, 'women academics with children are both positioned and positioning within complex contradictory discourses notably, the discourse of the successful academic and the good mother'. The women in (Acker, 1993; Armenti, 2004b; Acker and Armenti, 2004) had to compromise their sleep to attend to their family and to meet career expectations.

The single and unmarried respondents (four) experienced less family conflicts but more conflicts with the culture; the conflict of the 'new and old norms', the attitude of 'age', their 'single status', and 'cultural stigma'. Other metaphors such as; 'juggling', 'conflicts', 'putting marriage on hold' 'sleepless nights', feelings of 'guilt' were used to express the sacrifices the respondents underwent while trying to combine the multiple family and career roles. Most of them cited cases where they had at one time or another forfeited or missed an opportunity to advance their career due to family obligations, as is the expectations of Kenyan society. The stories of women academics in this study support the feminist perspective belief that educational institutions contribute to gender inequalities, playing a role in reinforcing sexism and patriarchy (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). A feminist perspective argues that those in position of power have failed to consider the needs of women as regards the issues of combining family and work responsibilities (Armenti, 2004b).

The struggle to balance family and career roles by women academics in the present study is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 5.1 in the next section.

**Figure 5.1 Kenyan Women Academics Balancing Family- Career**

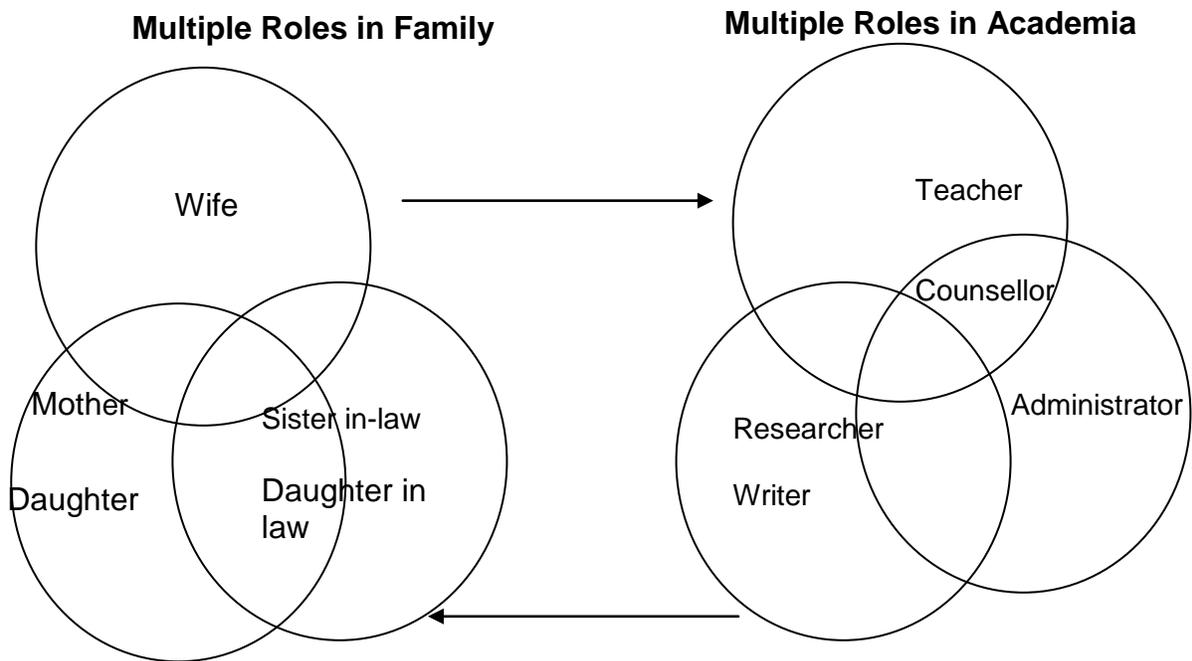


Figure 5.1 above illustrates the multiple roles in family and academia that the Kenyan women academics struggle to balance and to accomplish. The women academics interviewed reported playing the roles of a; wife, mother, daughter, daughter in-law and sister in-law while at the same time having to fulfill the career roles of being a; teacher, counselor, researcher, writer and administrator among others. For most of the respondents, balancing these roles result in inevitable conflicts and tensions.

## 5.5.2 Role Models and Mentors

Another barrier/challenge faced by the majority of the respondents was the lack of mentors and role models (Kamler and Rasheed, 2006; Kamau, 2004), a factor they argued contributed to their slow progress in academia. Resistance or lack of support can come from both men and women accustomed to men in positions of power. W6 described the reactions of some women who had adopted the ways of the dominant culture:

I have struggled to move up my career ladder alone, no mentors. Hardly any support from my senior women colleagues. The only senior woman academic in my university was very cold anytime I walked to her office...it's like she was in her own academic tower and career island I should say. We joked with my men colleagues who nicknamed her the '*Queen Babito*'.

According to W6, some women in senior positions behaved like *Queen Babitos* as they are commonly referred in Kenyan institutions. Other studies (Luke, 2001, p.71; Armenti, 2004; O'Leary and Mitchell, 1990), make similar references to such female academics not willing to help others, labeled as '*queen bees*'.

Lack of support and team work from colleagues especially women was further expressed by W6:

...when I was campaigning to be a Dean last semester, most of the criticisms came from my fellow women... In fact, I lost because of only 2 votes, which were women votes.

Feminist research advances several reasons why women do not support each other in organizations. One explanation is the token status advanced by Luke (2001) arguing that, the few women who achieve high positions tend to feel threatened by the growth of young women in similar careers. These women are strongly individualistic, tend to deny the existence of discrimination against women and do not want to be suspected of an exaggerated identification with women. They are in addition determined to succeed on the basis of their own merit and expect the same of other women. Thus, they fail to support other women to achieve career success.

This behavior by the *queen bees* in academia is likely to elicit negative responses from junior women who withdraw their support (Bagilhole, 1994).

All the respondents reported not having had any formal mentoring, while the majority had been inspired by various people in their career development. Most of the mentors were identified as high school teachers, college tutors, parents and some successful women and men in society. Respondent W1 reported having experienced mentoring when she went to South Africa for her PhD citing the importance of mentoring to her career in terms of writing, research and publication:

I first experienced formal mentoring while pursuing my PhD in South Africa I saw how a mentoring programme works- at the beginning of a PhD programme, after writing a proposal, each student is tagged to a supervisor...my female Prof. I consider as one of my strong mentor- initiated me- not just academic reading but also, I got into the world of research, what research is about. It was not just a matter of writing, but go and read. Four years of research in South Africa opened me up, opened the doors into the world of publication. My first publication I jointly authored with my supervisor to an international journal.

Similarly, W2 experienced informal mentoring through her MA and PhD supervisors and acknowledges the benefits to her career:

I met a mentor very later in my life. During my MA course....this old man Mr X who had no PhD, but his knowledge, skills and talents in music. He mentored me informally through several stages of music. The second mentor I met this time a lady Prof... during my PhD was... I owe a lot to her.

W1 like W2 talked about the support she received from a mentor. She further expressed that the mentoring relationship had mutual benefits to her career. Some of the respondents were mentored by their biological parents. W1, W11, W6, and W3 expressed encouragement and support from their mothers to work hard. 'My mother has been my lifelong mentor' W11. Similarly, W3 cites, 'I saw a father in a mother... very strong... when my father died when I was 17, she played both the role of a mother and father'.

Another possible explanation from a feminist perspective for the lack of support for women academics is the cultural construction of motherhood (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). This is where women are expected to continue with their care-giving and nurturing qualities even while at work. When this maternal nurturance is seen not to be forthcoming, people, especially other women, get disappointed and therefore withdraw their support (Morley, 1999).

One explanation given by researchers for women's under-representation in academia in Kenya is the absence of role models and mentors for young girls and women (Nzomo, 1995; Kamau, 2004; Gachukia, 2002). According to (Kamler and Rasheed, 2006), mentors can act as a guide to women seeking promotion to unfamiliar male-dominated organizational culture and also, to provide sponsorship and legitimate career progress. Morley (2006) reported that, women academics in the study lacked role models and faced hostile attitudes. A continuing lack of positive role models and mentors in academia means that women are handicapped on a daily basis, 'women in a male dominated environment... this affects research production' (Bagilhole, 1993c' p.446).

The respondents' descriptions of their mentors show how they were inspired mainly by other women who had succeeded in their career before them. From their informal mentoring, the women academics gained self-confidence, moral and intellectual support. The respondents in the present study report failure of senior women academics' to support other upcoming younger women. The majority of the women academics cited lack of professional women role models in academia but cited having met role models from family members [W8, W11, W2 and W9].

Although none of the women academics in this study had any experience of a formal mentoring relationship, they acknowledged the value of informal mentoring experiences. For example, W1 reported how her mentor and supervisor 'initiated' her into the world of research and publication.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review (chapter 2), some female academics reported having had mutual relationships with their mentors and co-authored articles, which gave an enhanced sense of self-worth and self-confidence (Gardiner et al., 2007). Those who had not had a mentor lamented the lack of such an important person in their career development.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have analysed and discussed the data that was collected in relation to the four research questions (see section 5.1). The women academics expressed various personal skills gained through the processes of socialisation from family members and through their primary, secondary and higher education. Mothers and fathers became their role models and contributed towards their decision making in their careers. The negative perception of gender motivated some participants to pursue education in the hope of changing the attitude of Kenyan society on women's roles.

The data shows a significant influence by building different self-constructs during the socialization process. The data revealed that teachers at different stages were role models and enhanced skills that became critical to career. The thesis further explored those factors that motivated the women into joining academia; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, culture, gender and family.

The tensions faced by women in trying to combine family responsibilities with teaching, research and publication have been reported in other feminist critical studies in the UK, Australia, the USA, Canada and South Africa (Bagilhole and White, 2003; Acker and Armenti, 2004; De La Rey, 2001; Forster, 2001).

Chapter 6 in the next section analyses and discusses research question 5 and some emergent themes from the data.

## **Chapter 6: Data Analysis (II) and Discussion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Chapter 5 analysed and discussed the first four research questions of this study, and the present chapter analyses the remaining research question as presented to the respondents. This chapter further analyses and discusses emergent themes from the data which were not part of the research questions: The Kenyan HE institutions and gender dynamics within them, the diversity of cultural expectations and parental expectations of women participants and the significance of education abroad.

This chapter examines research question 5.

*What strategies, if any, did they use to attain and maintain their current career position?*

### **6.2 Career Strategies**

Researches in other countries show that women attribute their career success to personal motivation, hard work, and determination (Bailey, 1999).

Some of the career attributes identified by respondents included: research and publication, hard work, time management and academic/professional identity. Blackmore (1999, p. 165) presents a range of strategies that were employed by the women Principals she studied in Australia, when they were '...confronted with political, ethical and moral dilemmas in their work to counter the feelings of anger, frustration and isolation as their early enthusiasm and energy waned'. Such strategies included; 'working harder (and longer), becoming highly task-oriented, and focusing on procedures'.

## 6.2.1 Research and Publication

All the respondents emphasised that research is significant to their career success in academia. Most of them confirmed that for them to have been promoted to senior ranks of senior lecturers, Associate Professors and Professors, their research and publication profiles were considered. Research and publication has been cited by most of the respondents [W1, W6, W10, 13, W9].

As earlier discussed in the literature review (chapter 2), there has been significant discussions on the relative importance attached to research and teaching at universities (Onsongo, 2000; Bagilhole and White, 2003). Some of the previous research has shown that while academics are recruited to teach, it is on the basis of research and scholarship that the universities tend to consider them for academic promotions.

Poorer research output by women according to McCall et al., (2000) may be because of childcare and the gap in research by women academics which slows their advancement, and could be due to having less time, and the spending of energy on family responsibilities (Acker and Armenti, 2004). W11 reported that 'research is the pillar of staff development and promotion'. Such views are supported by earlier findings by (Onsongo, 2000; Acker and Armenti, 2004; Forster, 2001).

W13 recounted how her published articles enhanced her career profile:

I have published widely, been awarded grants and that's how I have ascended to my present position as a professor'. Publishers have shown interest in my work.

W3 also cited the emphasis placed of publication, 'publish or perish' is a popular slogan at my university' while W1 highlights that:

Research is pegged to promotions. I was promoted to senior lecturer after publications. No one in academe is interested in how well you teach or how many hours you spend counseling students in your office, it's just how well you can publish.

The evidence from the above respondents is a sign of the essential nature of research and publication for a successful career in academia. However, maintaining a good professional profile in research and publication posed a problem for some respondents such as W10 who cited:

I hardly get any time to sleep, attend to my young baby and research. How can I keep up?

Academics in Kenya are also faced with the pressure to do more research, publish, and often women are encouraged to be aggressive in these areas in order to compete with men. A male professor in Kanake (1997, p.37) cited:

Women should pursue higher education (PhD), conduct research and publish in order to compete honourably with men. This will see more of them in senior professional ranks.

W11 emphasized that 'research is a pillar of staff development and a key to promotions', and according to W6 internationally recognized journals is significant as promotion is 'pegged to research and publications'. She expressed:

...last year when I applied for a promotion to professorship, I missed it because the interview panel felt that I did not meet the promotion criteria as one of my publications was not scholarly enough.

Bagilhole (1993) asserts that a successful career woman should focus on research rather than teaching, administration, or the caring pastoral role. In addition, W3 too confirms the importance of publications as a determinant to promotions in academia:

I joined the university because I just wanted to teach, write and research. I was tired of my ideas never being acknowledged. I got promoted to an Assistant Professor after publishing a book and three journal articles.

However, W3 reported that it was difficult balancing teaching, research and administrative responsibilities when she expressed, 'My publication rate has suffered over the last year since I got promoted to this administrative post'.

The number of international refereed articles published by an individual academic is often used by universities to determine promotion and academic reputations, and career prospects depend on research profiles, research grants and published articles. W13 profile meets the criteria:

I'm proud to have researched and published widely, been awarded grants attended conferences in various countries; USA, UK, Canada, South Africa, Japan among others...that's how I have ascended to my present position of a Professor... there is no shorter route... I have had fundings from different research bodies for my institution through my proposals. I'm a research consultant and the several publications enhanced my career advancement to an Associate Professor.

W6 cited how her writing skills helped her to polish her publications in an international journal. She expressed:

...my first two articles to the journals were rejected, but my supervisor encouraged me not to give up and finally got articles published, then I was promoted to a senior lecturer.

Some of the respondents used different metaphors such as; 'pillar' to promotion, 'pegged' to promotion' and 'publish or perish' to describe the significance of research and publication in academia.

### **6.2.2 Working Hard/ Harder**

Juxtaposed to research and publication, *hard work* was expressed by all the sixteen respondents as a crucial career strategy for women to keep in academia as expressed by W1, 'women work hard any way, they just need to work smart-know what they want to do, where they want to go and how to get there' while W13 wakes up at '5 A.M and goes to bed at 1 or 2 A.M'. The need for working harder is echoed by W11 'There is no choice in academia, just hard work, twice as hard as men, triple shift, and it is survival of the fittest'. Their studies found that women academics are under pressure to work harder in order to prove that they are capable (Quina et al., 1998). Quina et al., (1998, p.226) writing on the glass ceiling women experience in higher education, observe that 'women's competence is often devalued and this results in women having to work so hard to prove themselves'.

An expression of hard work was cited by W9:

...to be recognized as a performer, you have to work twice as hard as the men to be appreciated. With a family, community service, mentoring my students, publications and research, consultancies, I tire a lot!

W13 cited that all her life is around books, both at home and in the office. She further expressed that her strategies for accomplishing her work was waking up early and sleeping late:

...I wake up 5am daily and going to bed at 1:00 or 2:00 A.M., especially during conference presentations or deadline for paper submissions.

If women succeed, their success is more likely to be attributed to external factors such as 'luck, ease of the task or effort whereas, men's success is more likely to be attributed to high ability and men's failure to bad luck and hard task' (Quina et al., 1998, p.226).

A confirmation of women's hard work is expressed in W1 words as:

...women really work hard anyway, they just need to work Smart, Where is it I want to go? How do I get there? Know exactly what you want to do. It's productivity in academia; nobody is interested in listening to your domestic responsibilities as a woman, we need to find a way of working three times as hard as the men.

Like women academics in the present study, in Acker and Armenti (2004, p.15) women expressed how they survived in academia by 'working harder' longer into the wee hours, till 3 A.M., 'sleeping less'. Women in Acker and Feuerwerker (1997, pp.126-127) shared their experiences of hard work as, 'what comes out vividly was not just that women worked hard, but that they worked harder' and 'high standards of being a perfectionist or workaholic as strategies for getting work done, skipping breakfast, getting up at 3.00 A.M., sleeping at 9.00 P.M. These women worked beyond the call of duty'.

A woman respondent in Raddon (2002) shares a similar strategy of 'multi-tasking' as expressed by W4:

...some of my strategies are to work hard and to 'multi-task' as a woman: many times while at home as I mark papers, my food gets cooking and at the same time helping my children with their school work, work with communities and even travel to different countries-United Kingdom, South Africa, Italy, and China, to tap and share knowledge and skills.

An expression by W8 is an indication that survival in academia calls for hard work, while combining multiple roles:

I've had to work extremely hard with all the economic hardships, be multi- tasked, 'double' or 'triple roles'; teaching, a PhD student, coordinator of USAID, a funded NGO project on child nutrition, just sheer hard work.

Feminists like Deem and Ozga (1997) have observed that because of the gendered nature of the universities, women must show outstanding abilities if they are to be appointed to higher ranks as was expressed by respondents in the present study.

W11 shared her experience of hard work beyond the outlined duty time like others:

...during my PhD course for 4 years, I got up at 6:00 A. M , went to bed past 1:00 A.M, did full time undergraduate teaching 18 hours a week...counseling to students in my office...3 committees, conferences... my husband, two teenage children, wider family commitments... I really get exhausted...got promoted to a lecturer after 10 years.

The description by W11 emphasises how she has worked extra hours in order to cope with the demands of both family and career. The sexual division of housework or domestic responsibilities along gender lines in the Kenyan society may make it difficult for women in this context to achieve this commitment without making sacrifices. The evidence from the study suggest that women academics interviewed perceived themselves as being expected to work harder in order to prove their worth in academia. The respondents have used different metaphors to express their strategy of hard work such as; 'multi-tasking', 'working smart' and working long in the night, 'twice and three' times as hard as men, waking early and sleeping later.

Although some women tend to attribute their success to luck rather than skill and competence (Meece, 2006; De La Rey, 2001), women academics in the present study attributed their success to hard work, commitment and sacrifice.

### **6.2.3 Time management**

The importance of time was often mentioned in conversations with respondents about strategies; plan, guard, create, sacrifice and manage. To manage her time, W13 trained herself to forgo her sleep in order to accomplish her work:

When working on a paper for publication, exams or during conferences, I either have those sleepless nights or waking up in the wee (very early, at dawn) hours of the morning to complete the work in time.

W5 plans her time and divides it along family and career lines while still adhering to family responsibilities:

One of the things I have managed very well is time ... I keep an agenda and stick to it... I have a diary that I follow. My family time is family time. I try not to take work home but sometimes I'm forced to.

W10 talked about planning her time while taking her children and work responsibilities into consideration:

I plan my time in such a way that I create room for my children. I have three young children, all below 15 years. I try to do most of my work in the office, during the lunch break. I also wake up 5:00 A.M. report to the office by 7:00 A.M.

The respondents suggested different metaphors; 'plan', 'create', 'manage', 'long hours', working at 'odd times', 'borrowing family time' waking up early and going to bed late in managing their time. However, from the interviews, it was evident that most of the respondents had either little, or no time to relax or for their own lives. Thus, working long hours was a norm for majority despite their time management strategies.

#### 6.2.4 Academic/Professional Identity

Through socialization processes, the majority of the respondents had a sense of professional identity, a combination of researchers, mothers, administrators and teachers while belonging to different professional networks and academic communities. This enhanced their chances of attending conferences and publication, a growth necessary for promotion into academia. In Morley and Walsh (1996), men built their identity through their career commitment. W9 cited, 'I belong to several organizations such as FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationists) from where we share professional and academic issues'.

Although each of the respondents had a strong sense of professional identity as being a dedicated researcher, teacher or educator, they worked as a 'teacher-cum-administrator', 'researcher-cum-teacher' or/and 'teacher-cum-counsellor'.

Respondent W3 expressed the metaphors of being 'visible' and being 'heard' as important for an academia. She reckoned:

One strategy up the career ladder is by acquiring an academic identity through research and publication. No one knows how well you teach, how much time you spend counseling students in your office, and how much you read until it's printed on paper, or resented in conferences... this is crucial for promotions.

The need to join professional Associations, research communities and networks to build an academic identity through research and publications was emphasized by W9, 'I have joined professional associations and built an academic identity (Dr.). I've extended my services to my community'.

Bailey (1999, p.357) suggests that, 'gaining higher qualifications will increase one's motivation and self-efficacy for research'. In a similar vein, W12 emphasized the need for attaining a PhD in academia:

... a PhD is a crucial identity in academia, two articles which I submitted when I had my MA were rejected but as soon as I got my PhD and submitted one, it was accepted with minor corrections.

In support of W12's expression, Bagilhole (1993) reinforces that a successful academic builds a reputation through research. W10 too reiterated the importance of women academics' public interactions in different forms:

.... public speaking and giving lectures within the institution or even in other schools and sometimes having interviews broadcasted on radio or television is a form of identity.

Through public speaking on television, giving lectures, W10 makes use of her personal attributes of confidence which supports Raddon (2002, p.390) and emphasises that a career woman is one who exhibits attributes of 'independence and confidence'.

The next section discusses emergent themes from the data.

### **6.3 Emergent Themes**

This section analyses the themes that emerged from the data without being part of the five research questions. Each of the themes below is analysed and discussed while making links to the literature review:

- *The culture of Kenyan HE institutions and gender dynamics within them*
- *The importance of study abroad and the networks, resources and contacts that helped the women attain their scholarships, and why this was important to their career.*
- *The diversity of home backgrounds and parental expectations of the women participants*

#### **6.3.1 The Culture of Kenyan HE Institutions and Gender Dynamics.**

This thesis refers to university culture as the dominant culture or the practices, beliefs, and attitudes of the organisation. The masculine tradition and working styles, referred to as a masculinist culture, is a culture that advantages men, is supported and reproduced by men and advantaged by a gendered working environment according to (Blackmore, 1999).

Furthermore, other researchers (Currie et al., 2000; Currie et al., 2002) describe the universities as greedy institutions and links this to an elite masculinist culture which thrives at and near the top of organizations. In the universities, it is women who are more likely to find difficulty meeting the demands of long hours and sacrifices when they also face the conflicting demands of the family, another greedy institution (Currie et al., 2002).

A supportive work environment is crucial for career success. However, some studies express the 'chilly climate' and lack of family friendly policies in universities (Armenti, 2004a; Currie et al., 2002). Universities' discrimination against women is expressed in (Bagilhole, 1993). The academic procedures, promotions and appraisal systems are created and controlled by males, while the voices of women academics are rarely represented (Onsongo, 2000). The informal decision-making in men- only forums often occurs before the formal meeting becomes a window dressing for decisions that have already been made.

W13 explained how she was made to feel irrelevant to the decision-making process:

...during the meetings with my male colleagues, I always smell a rat, from their discussions, I could feel they had already had another meeting ('the meeting before the meeting') prior to the one I attend... some decisions seem to have been made without me... I just guess in the pub over drinks...but in my absence.

The power imbalances in the academy are both structural and played out in micropolitical struggles (Morley and Lugg, 2009). Informal practices contribute to women's marginalization. For example, in Onsongo's (2000) study, 69 percent of women and 92 percent of men felt encouraged to apply for promotion. She noted how sources of encouragement for men and women were different. Women relied on heads of departments whilst men were able to garner support from heads of departments, senior colleagues and family friends. This could be related to socialization, with career ambition considered 'unfeminine', that is, greedy, pushy, individualistic and competitive.

Morley (1999) uses the term *micropolitics* to describe the gendered subtext of organisational life and the power imbalances which influence every day transactions in institutions. Morley (1999, pp.4-5) further suggests that although feminists working within academic institutions are constrained by hierarchy, which ultimately disempowers, they can push boundaries by developing an understanding of micropolitics:

Micropolitics is about influence, networks, coalitions, political and personal strategies to effect and resist change. It involves rumour, gossip, sarcasm, humour, denial throwaway remarks, alliance building.

Like many other women I interviewed, W6 expression suggests that decisions are already made by those in the male power networks and in favour of those who sing the correct tune:

...I can describe the university work environment as 'indifferent'- nobody is ready to mentor you and appointments depend on 'who knows who' or 'whose tune you sing'-not purely on merit. I have pulled myself up, my own effort, no one has helped me. It's been 25 year of hard work in academia.

W6 felt that the dominance of the boys' club affected the career progress of both men and women. Women who wanted to get on had to 'join the club', 'sing the correct tune', but nevertheless were given a difficult environment that kept them away. W6's experience confirms the earlier findings about how promotions and recruitment practices in Kenyan universities were based on tribal relations as suggested by Kanake (1997), and brotherhood and patronising practices (Onsongo, 2000).

Similarly the 'old- boys' network is echoed by W13 and indicates how women are not usually privy to decisions made outside the work setting, such as over lunches:

...the 'old -boys' network' and 'male-dominance' is practiced in this university. Women do not join their male colleagues for lunch... will ring your husband to tell him you have a relationship, gossips. Women are locked out of promotion and scholarship discussions, many of which take place during such social interactions... a feeling of 'academic isolation'. You can't escape it. The boys are in every committee.

Traditional beliefs about gender roles and the negative attitudes dominant within patriarchal systems, give rise to under-valuing women's skills and abilities, resulting in the exclusion of women from senior positions as expressed by W13 above. The experience of W13 links the *old-boys* club to resistance to change to new ideas and self-interest. The women in Kamau (2004, p.15) experienced what they termed as a 'psychological exclusion' and a feeling of 'outsiders within' universities in Kenya.

The question of merit and what constitutes merit is significant in a culture where the men are in charge and decide what is worthy of merit. Sitting in prestigious committees rated highly whereas actively producing change and making a difference to education remains questionable. Feminist researchers have identified two main possible reasons for gender discriminations in universities. The first reason is the unequal power relations where men tend to hold more power in the academy than women (Morley, 1999; Brooks, 1997). The second reason is that women are excluded from the decision and policy making process because they occupy junior positions within the hierarchy.

In addition, W11 cites, '... if you make an attempt to join the men for lunch, they will make you feel like an intruder'. The expressions of W11 confirms the findings of Kamau (2004) which concluded that gendered career paths in universities, while formally structured by promotion practices, owe much to informal networks and particular forms of visibility linked to power. The process of networking usually takes place during and after office hours. Women may find it hard to take part in the informal social interactions because of domestic responsibilities and also, the fact that such interactions may be perceived by others to mean sexual relationships with the men they are interacting with (Onsongo, 2005; Durrani, 2001). The exclusion of women from the informal networks of the university has been found to be a great impediment to women's career advancement (Luke, 2002). The experiences narrated by some of the respondents are indicative of how men in powerful positions serve as gatekeepers. Bagilhole and White (2003) also argue that, because of the male cultural hegemony in universities, only a few women get to senior positions but often those few women pay a price.

The respondents revealed similar concerns, citing exclusions from male networks as hampering their career prospects. As they moved through their career ranks, resistance took on more subtle forms. The sense of being the 'lone female' intensified when decisions were obviously made in the 'meeting outside the meeting' to which they had been invited. '... often issues were caucused and decided upon by key (male) members prior to meetings' (Blackmore, 1999, p.134).

Similar experiences of discrimination by male colleagues of isolation from drinks, lunches, feelings of being an outsider were reported by Kenyan women academics in an earlier study by (Kamau, 2004). The experiences of W11, W9 and W13 in the present study confirm the continuing practices of male dominance and female discrimination in Kenyan universities. Withholding information is a strategy aimed at disempowerment for those outside the power group. The tactics are subtle, yet obvious to the women who can see what is going on.

W9 explained the tactics of exclusion, which, were often disguised and difficult to expose. She saw them as an indicator of an unhealthy working environment:

Men sit in their corners for tea while isolating women... exclusion of women from informal academic discussions and opportunities... this male attitude- 'go join other women over there'.

From a feminist perspective, Hearn (2001) highlights the discrimination against women and how men retain their superior status. In addition, strategies used by men to maintain dominance includes marginalizing women's scholarships and research (Morley, 1999). In another study, the use of patriarchal values and structures relating to appointments and promotions is another strategy of maintaining male dominance (Brooks, 1997).

Delamont (2003) also points out the gendered relations in universities and the inequalities in the distribution of resources and opportunities as expressed by W4:

...as a young mother, I lack child care facilities. There have been efforts on gender policy but not in practice and implementation. .... it's not easy to realise. ...on the surface everything seems fine. I say the institution has its positive points of allowing its faculty to attend conferences with no discrimination on gender.

The isolation of being the lone female, or one of a few, was expressed through a variety of responses, particularly by women at senior management levels. Being the 'lone female' placed such women academics like W15 in the spotlight, taking a toll on their career progress:

There are not so many women academics in Kenya especially at the university level, and this still remains very much a 'man's world'. .... progress for women is slow.

While highlighting the importance of the transformation of institutions, feminist perspective (see chapter 3) poses a central question about why women fare less well than men in their performance as professors, students and in power representation (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). This supports the earlier expressions by W15.

Previous feminist research has shown that the involvement in research projects related to women's issues is not considered as part of mainstream research in universities (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Morley, 1999).

While acknowledging efforts to incorporate women into university management positions, W1 described the university environment as 'skewed' towards the male direction and expresses the feeling of the 'lone female' as some of her colleagues:

...it is 'skewed' towards the male direction, especially as one climbs the career ladder. I'm one of the only two women directors. We are lucky in this institution, because one of the 3 DVCs is a woman. There has been a conscious effort by the VC to incorporate women but a lot more need to be done to make women inclusive even at the pool of the faculty- we need more women, they are scarce... I feel lonely at times especially in the committees.

Although some respondents W4, W7 and W8 perceived their work environment to be generally supportive, others felt the environment in the public universities was not conducive to women academics' performance of duties. The narratives of W1, W4, W15, W9 and W13 show that university structures and cultures are male dominated. The bureaucratic and hierarchical structures of leadership in universities seem to make it easy for men to dominate women in these organizations. Coleman (2001) too explains that these kinds of masculine cultures are enacted to actively maintain power relationships between men and women, leading to certain debilitating effects which explicitly and subtly challenge the women's identities. As discussed earlier (chapter 3), critical policy analysts such as Tierney and Bensimon (1996) points out that the eradication of overt and covert discrimination against women requires critical and gender based appraisal of academic practices and policies.

W3 often expressed a feeling of being the 'lone female' especially at leadership meetings:

... the Kenyan universities are too 'male- streamed' in its recruitment, promotions, and committees... , need to be inclusive of more women, that's why I am a head of an Institute, my department is purely masculine, it, its too bold... very much male-dominated staff... the academic loneliness...why do I feel a foreigner and an outsider within my own institution? ...where are other women? I feel so isolated especially, as I have climbed the career ladder to management position.

An earlier survey showed that women are under-represented in the decision making organs of Kenyan universities (Onsongo, 2005). Coleman (2001) also found that female leaders feel isolated in an environment where the norm is for men to be in leadership as illustrated by W 15:

...the climate is 'cold and chilly' for many women here as the whole institution is being run by I would say 98% male...their attitude based on those old norms... I tried for 24 years, struggling to fit, I got my Masters degree in 1984 from a UK university and soon after, I started PhD back in Kenya, wrote my proposals, changed supervisors male...moved to another university... picked bits and pieces...looked for a female supervisor finally in 2008 I was awarded a PhD!! After 24 years!

W15 links her stagnated career progress to the negative male attitude rooted in the 'old norms' as cited in Aisenberg and Harrington (1988, p.3). This could be an isolated case, but is a reflection some of the practices that exist in Kenyan universities.

The experiences of W3 and W15 confirm the findings of an earlier study by Kanake (1997, p.63) on Kenyan public universities where promotions depended on people's relationships with the top management rather than on competence as shown in the quotations below:

.... the university is based on social groups and members try to join the clubs of important people like the Vice Chancellor and the Deans in order to create good relations... staff who do not belong to these clubs may not get a promotion or opportunities even if they are qualified.

The 'chilly climate' for women academics within the universities is further echoed by other studies (Acker and Armenti, 2004; Morley, 1999; Sandler, 1986; Forster, 2001). Although teaching, management and counseling students are part of the work in academia, research is regarded as crucial to appointments and promotions as expressed by W1:

...a culture of research and publication as this is the 'gate way' to promotion and career advancement. Two years after my PhD, I published two articles in international journals the a promotion to senior lecturer and later to a campus director...no one is interested on how well you teach, how many hours you spend counseling students... those do not count towards promotion.

The expressions by W1 confirms earlier findings by Onsongo (2000, p.1) where women academics in Kenyan universities were under pressure to, 'publish or perish' in order to obtain promotions. However, contradictions about the university culture have emerged. A more positive view about university culture was expressed by some of the respondents from a private university (W4, W7, W5 and W8) although it is not the intention of the present study to compare public and private universities.

W7 seems to have accepted and internalized her position as a woman and does not make any attempt to join her male colleagues. She seems to have accepted gender discrimination as part of the academic discourse and social interaction in this context hence, does not see the need to try to join the men. She reports:

It's supportive to many women faculty...I realize men keep to themselves especially in the cafeteria during lunches, I always join other women.

From a feminist perspective, some women's denial of gender discrimination may be due to the assumption or a belief of traditional gender roles. As discussed in chapter 3, some of the women may be lacking gender awareness and consciousness (Cook and Fonow, 1990). The views expressed by W 4 in accepting that it's a 'cultural thing' shows that she has internalized and accepted her female position, a confirmation of the effect of socialization of women and their gender roles:

I'm one of the beneficiaries, at the moment I have enrolled for a PhD head of HRM (Human Resource management). I have traveled to China, South Africa and Japan on staff development... there are two worlds, of men and women. Men form their own networks and women too...this is a cultural thing in Kenya.

From a feminist perspective, most of the women who do not report direct discrimination may not realise as this could be practiced in subtle ways (Morley, 1999). The women academics from the private university seemed not to have experienced gender discrimination. However, Brooks (1997) observes that the issue of gender discrimination in universities is sometimes difficult to point out because academic institutions frequently see themselves as gender neutral and strongly defend the criterion of academic merit used in selection and promotion procedures. There is also a possibility that some of the respondents may be suffering from false consciousness. This is a concept borrowed from Marxism and often used by Marxist feminists to refer to women who deny gender discrimination (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000). False consciousness as applied to the women in this study implies that they are alienated from male cultural values that determine how they can be incorporated into the university culture (Brooks, 1997).

Although W5 faces challenges, she accepts them and looks at it on a more positive way and as a form of motivation:

...more motivation than challenges....staff development, no discrimination for men and women. Those without PhDs are encouraged to enroll into the programme. I've been on an exchange programme to Canada for 6 months, funded by my institution.

A probable reason for the denial of gender discrimination by some respondents could be due to the subtle and often covert nature (Brooks, 1997; Morley, 1999). As discussed earlier (chapter 3), a feminist perspective of universities has shown that the dominance of men and male culture in universities is made possible by coalitions of men in positions of power determining who is to teach and research and what subjects are valued for research and instruction (Bagilhole and White, 2003). According to Currie et al., (2000), the most valued activities of university culture are those that reflect male patterns of socialization. Currie et al., (2002) further makes a link to an elite masculinist culture which thrives at the expense of women who have difficulty meeting the demands of long hours and sacrifices faced, with conflicting demands and tensions of family and career.

The unsupportive working environment in the public universities is likely to affect the career progress of women academics. Respondents in Currie and Thiele (2001) reported that male cultures serve to marginalize women academics. In support, Currie et al. (2000, p.278) in their interview with staff in two Australian universities, refers to the universities as 'greedy institutions' which make women sacrifice their families by, working long hours. One of the respondents said, 'I mean if you are in academia, it's a 24 hours, 7 days and 365 days thing-it's not a 9-5 period of work'.

Feminist researchers have written about the pervasive influence of the boys' club (Luke, 2000; Quina et al., 1998), the metaphorical centre-point for informal networks and a training ground for young men coming up through the ranks.

According to Morley and Walsh (1996) men go drinking in the common rooms excluding women, a similar experience reported by the participants in the present research where men bond over after-work drinks and shared early career history. Morley (1999) highlights women's exclusions from male social networks and how the institutional culture works on the basis of who goes for a drink with whom, a similar practice in the Kenyan universities. Blackmore (1999) further indicates that in education, women are constructed as nurturing carers and thus dominate the lower level positions. On the other hand, men are seen as administrators and academics and subsequently dominate the top positions.

Earlier studies (Quina et al., 1998; Forster et al., 2002) exposed the culture of the old-boys network, a similar experience by most respondents in the present study. In support, Gherardi (1995) exposes gendered cultures of patriarchal hegemonies in universities, and in its image in terms of norms, dress code and language, while Morley (2006) highlights that such practices can be overt as an expression of prejudice in promotion and recruitment.

Currie and Thiele, (2001, p.92) in their study observe that marginalization is achieved by making men's advantage and male career model appear 'normal and gender neutral' by rewarding those academic women who behave like men by working long hours and leaving their domestic responsibilities to others. Although this argument is based on academic women outside Kenya, it is relevant to the women in this study as evidenced from their narratives. Forster (2001, p.6) in support has illustrated that university cultures uphold a deeply ingrained male view of performance and make promotion to more senior posts more difficult for women as the 'universities are deeply patriarchal institutions and some of them are still in the Stone Age as far as recruiting and promoting women is concerned...many academic disciplines are effectively no-go areas for women unless they have a real motivation and vocation to get on because they are still so dominated by men'.

Women academics have described the university culture and the relationships with their male colleagues using different metaphors: 'intruder', 'foreigner', 'outsider', 'the lone female', 'a man's world', 'old-boys network/club', and 'old norms'.

### **6.3.2 The Importance of Education Abroad**

This section explores some of the reasons given by the respondents that make their study abroad quite significant to their careers, the networks, resources, and contacts that helped them to attain scholarships. The majority of the female academics in the present research cited their experiences of education abroad as a significant life event that helped to lay the foundations for the development of their careers. The experiences abroad had different meanings for various individuals.

Academic network was cited by many of the respondents as being significant to their opportunities to studying abroad. Respondent W6 was grateful to the British Council for sponsoring her Masters and to the Commonwealth for her PhD. This she said was partly through merit and also, the academic networks. Studying in Germany for W10 was due to networks with colleagues she met at international conferences. Similarly, W2 attributes her opportunities abroad to networks with colleagues and friends who had studied in South Africa. With three degrees from the USA, W9 acknowledged how it was through networking, conferences and alumni associations that paved way for her to study abroad. W16 reports, 'I actually got the details of my MA course from a lady I met during a conference, and for my PhD, I was alerted about the ACU scholarships by my supervisor'.

The following comments from respondent W16 reflect the benefits of studying abroad:

In terms of learning about life, my perspective became much wider... the impact on me was very significant. I learnt a lot from the courses I studied, and learning resources were enormous!...ranging from books in the library, to journals, electronic access and most of my professors had vast experience in academia. I would say, education abroad did offer opportunities which I didn't think and wouldn't have got in the Kenyan education. Things like dealing with adverse situations and how to integrate skills and knowledge.

Respondent W6 also reported that it was a great challenge and sacrifice for her family as she had left four children behind and a husband when she studied abroad. She expressed her feelings of 'guilt' at pursuing academic study while she left her children in the care of her husband and child-minders in the quotations below:

I did more worrying while in Britain than studying. With time, I learnt to cope. On one hand, it became a motivational aspect of my study to work hard and to go back to the family and it would be for the better of my career. I got exposed to skills of research and publication, academic writing and mentoring schemes.

According to W6, the time she spent in the UK was not only a challenge in her family life but also, completely changed her direction in life, and subsequently changed her career as it improved her self-confidence and exposed her to research and publication. Other respondents made similar comments on the benefits of being exposed to a foreign environment. Most respondents experienced a growth in character, a change in life direction, and knowledge, all of which took them along the path to a career in academia.

Another respondent W16 considered education abroad as a 'big jump' despite the family challenges faced:

I got a full scholarship to UK for my MA. I had a culture shock but I managed to fit in. The greatest part was that after 9 months of rigorous work it was over! ...children back in Kenya with my husband... this education abroad has been.... a 'big jump' in my career.

For those respondents who spent time abroad or overseas, their experiences were not only narrowed to academic achievement but also, had a positive impact on their personal and professional attributes. Respondents, W11, W6, W10, W2 and W13 talked about sacrifice, perseverance, building confidence, and networking skills which are necessary for career as similarly expressed by (Bagilhole, 1993).

The benefits of education abroad were not limited to academic knowledge but were rather extended to learning about other spheres of life as noted by W13:

I learnt a lot from my MA and PhD studies in Britain and I acquired some skills like a sense of reliance and self-discovery. I'm sure I would have not have got if I studied in Kenya. I was able to manage to deal with different situations and integrated my knowledge and skills.

The respondents from the present study feel a sense of self-reliance which they did not believe possible before hand, where they learned about themselves, their preconceived ideas about the world, and what they are capable of accomplishing without outside support. This process of self-discovery is one of the greatest impacts of education and is brought about outside formal academic environment. This was made possible through interaction with colleagues and tutors, which further enhanced their self-confidence.

Comments from W15 below reflect various ways in which the women academics benefited from their education abroad:

My MA training in Britain was very different from my bachelor degree in Kenya. I was exposed to different ways of arguments and research skills. While overseas, I also learnt that women have greater opportunities to freely mix with men, during discussions, conferences, lunches, drinks without the negative 'gossips', and 'cold looks' we experience in Kenya from our male colleagues.

Most of the respondents experienced a growth in character, a change in life direction because of the new found interest, and a consolidation of knowledge- all of which took them along the path to a career in academia.

The following comments from W11 reflect these benefits of studying abroad:

During my PhD studies in U.K., I had a chance to be taught by two professors who are in the review panels of internationally recognised journals. This exposed me to certain publishing and research skills during seminars and lectures. My supervisor has also published widely.... a privilege. I would say, a 'jump-starter' into academia, or rather the world of research and publication. My supervisor became my mentor, supported, and advised me on how I could publish my thesis to a journal.

The benefits of education abroad are highlighted by W11 in terms of exposure to publication, research, and exposure to mentoring that provided her with guidance. She refers to this experience as a 'jump-starter' into academia.

W10 also reflected upon her 'opportunity' abroad as a turning point in her life, as she refers to it as a 'stepping stone' in her career advancement:

I got a semi-scholarship to study for a PhD in Germany as part of an academic exchange programme ... was a great opportunity, a 'stepping stone' for my career advancement. I had chance to interact with other scholars from different parts of the world attended some conference, as a woman scholar, I felt lucky.

According to W1's report, it was significant to have a mentor who nurtured her research skills 'initiated' her into the world of research, and 'opened the doors' into the world of publication. She described the role of her supervisor who was her mentor in the following terms:

I was tagged to a supervisor and a mentor during my PhD studies in South Africa... this lady Prof. has become one of my mentors, 'initiated' me not just into academic reading, but got me into the world of research, what research is about.. it was not just a matter of writing but, 'go and read'. The four years of research under her supervision opened for me the doors into the world of publication.

Some of the respondents cited networks which they benefited from, either by studying abroad or through networks some of them connected to after obtaining scholarships to study abroad such as, W2, W9, and W10.

While abroad, the separation from family and friends had helped some of the respondents to develop independence and perseverance skills. They reported gaining strength, and that the difficulties in life helped to pave way for their careers in academia. The respondents used different metaphors such as; 'a big jump', 'jump starter', 'stepping stone', 'privileged', an 'initiation' into academia, and an 'opportunity' to describe the significance of their education abroad.

The academic self-concepts were important influences to the respondents' career decisions (Bandura et al., 2001). A distinctive characteristic of being 'researchers, scholars, desire to excel and teachers' that emerged from the data is that, those who reported self-motivation as they pursued their education from childhood, displayed a love for reading [W1, W3, W13], characteristics which extended through their careers.

The effect of studying abroad has continued to influence the respondents' present educational philosophies and approaches. Some referred repeatedly to adopting some aspects of the British, South African's and USA's models of education to higher education in Kenya. In this regard, they often referred to their past educational experiences in discussing student-staff relationships, course structures, teaching and research. It is worth noting that 'because of inadequate material and human resources, brain drain and the politics of Kenya's university education, most higher education degrees and training are still obtained abroad' (Onsongo, 2005, p.231).

The findings of this study clearly indicate however that it is the personal experiences, the self-confidence, self growth, self- discovery, skills of research and publication which students developed during their education abroad which they consider as valuable attributes to take with them.

The next section discusses the diversity of the home backgrounds and parental expectations of the respondents.

### **6.3.3 The Diversity of the Home backgrounds and Parental Expectations of the Respondents**

Data from this study suggests that the division of labour along traditional lines greatly influences women and men's perceptions of their gender roles. On women's perceptions of gender roles, Hall (1996) observes that where women have been successful in reaching the top professional ranks, their perceptions of expectations as women academics influence their behavior. The cultural expectation of women in the Kenyan society is the norm of marriage at an early age, bringing up a family and domestic responsibilities. This determines how some women plan to go about performing academic responsibilities. Respondent W10 shared her perception:

I am a young mother with three small children, forcing me to forfeit attending conferences abroad and even at times late hour academic discussions with colleague as I have to rush home to attend to the children.

Sharing a similar perception was W4 who planned her career around her gender role as woman and mother:

...there were opportunities to pursue my PhD course in USA, but with a young family, I opted to study here, to be with them. I had that obligation...

The social construction of gender, roles, and expectations of women and men in wider society, may have played a role in the women's plan and career advancement as expressed by W4 and W10. In addition to this primary responsibility, women are expected to contribute to the economic welfare of the families. Tamale and Oloka-Onyango (2000, p.5) observed that women academics in Africa carry a dual burden because they 'must pursue both their academic interests while meeting the traditional obligations of childbearing and rearing, cooking and domestic household chores or their supervision'.

However, from a feminist perspective (see chapter 3), these women's perceptions of their gender roles are likely to affect their career advancement especially in terms of pursuing further training to increase their promotion opportunities (Marshall, 1997; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Bensimon and Marshall, 1997). This is because the university's appointment and promotion policies do not take into consideration the women's gender roles. In addition, there is no structural support systems such as day care centres in the universities to support women's dual roles.

An analysis of the reasons given for women's under-representation in academia by women interviewed in the present study suggests that most of the barriers are perceived to be partly socio-cultural and structural. The emphasis on the few numbers as the main reason why women are underrepresented in academia point to the critical mass theory advanced by (Valian, 1999). This theory believes that entry into academe across power and opportunity is determined by the relative numbers of women and men in the organization. Valian (1999) suggests that a critical mass of women in the workforce is required to influence organizational change and remove women from their token status in the organization. This critical mass theory has however been criticized by other feminist researchers as essentialising women as a homogenous group, without reference to social class, ethnicity, age or sexualities (Morley, 1999; Morley and Walsh, 1996).

As Bagilhole (2000, p.13) argues, women are regarded as different in higher education 'due to men's advantage through the thriving patriarchal system and the myth of individualism promoted through their cultural hegemony'. Similarly, Ward's (2000, pp.10-11) survey of Australian professors found that they believed women in general were subject to negative, mostly 'covert discrimination in universities'.

In addition, the majority of the respondents in the present study emphasised the role of socialization, traditional culture, the multiple roles of women and the masculine nature or rather the male domination of the university structure as reasons contributing to the under-representation of women academics and their slow career progress in the Kenyan universities (see Table 1.1 and Table 1.2).

The male-domination of the university structure is viewed as positioning women academics as 'outsiders', a similar findings of an earlier study by Kamau (2004) and that the patriarchal culture of the Kenyan society and the university environment continue to impact on the women academics' career progress. Kenyan culture expects women to play motherly, wifely and, community duties in addition to her academic and career responsibilities (see figure 1).

The effect of this cultural attitude is further echoed by W6:

When I got my scholarship to go and study abroad, I was told women will clinch on my husband if I go to UK...let them clinch , I also know what I'm clinching on... you are separating the family.. Did you marry to read or to cook? Why did you not read enough when still at your father's home?

W1 in a similar context cites cases of cultural attitude about age and gender as a barrier to women's career advancement:

I'm one of the youngest (37 years) women to hold such a leadership, director of a campus and single- unmarried. Comments include, I am a VC's errand girl ...others think that there are sexual favours attached to all my promotions.

The above accounts of W1 shows how ageism and sexism comes into account (Durrani, 2001; Morley and Lussier, 2009). Often, a younger woman would be considered not up to the job, while a woman in her thirties can be considered too young, and a woman in her fifties can be considered too old but men of similar ages will be accepted as the norm in senior management levels.

Another experience of a cultural/gender stigma is shared by respondent W3:

At one of the workshops with Principals of schools, I remember I introduced myself saying my first name. Later in the discussion, one of the male Principals asked if I had a PhD, and his response was, 'that's why men fear you'...I'm single and 46 years old.

As earlier mentioned, the norm in Kenyan society is marriage over career. Going against the cultural norm would result in some resistance or negative attitudes as expressed by W3. Although Kenya has been changing in accepting women's higher education, the cultural attitude of many still remain unchanged (Manya, 2000). Some of the women interviewed attributed their slow career progress in academia to the cultural expectations and attitude to women. Women are perceived as either too old or too young for leadership and women at different stages of their careers experience the dominant culture.

It is evident from the words of W1 that gender, age and single status intensify the stereotypical- perception on women:

...the age, entwined with being single and a woman is a dilemma or rather has become an obstacle to progress. I would call this a 'triple cultural stigma'. In this culture it is assumed that wisdom comes with age and only men or women who are married. To me, this should not be extended to the world of academia which should be about production.

On the other hand, W1 argues that there is a positive side of being single in academia:

...when I compare myself to many women with children, I consider myself light. I do not have the 'burden' in quotes of children or a husband. If I want to do my work, attend conferences, what worries me is just my work.

W1 felt that it was hard to separate attitudes towards her as a woman from attitudes to her position as a director. The reactions of men when reporting to a young female director reflected that culture accustomed to a traditional command and control:

...the delicate balance comes in with the cultural attitude and assumption. As a director, whenever I call for meetings, I often hear older male colleagues (*old guards*) refer to me as *Nyakoni* (this girl) – in a derogatory manner – but I laugh it off. “Let’s go and hear what that girl has to tell us”- that kind of thing- seeing me as too young, a woman, and who is unmarried. As a woman ...and at what level should one be taken seriously- It’s difficult to divorce the three issues- I expect people to see me as a director, young as I am ...just a very delicate balancing. Being unmarried in Kenyan culture...you just remain a girl as far as they are concerned in this culture...those ‘old norms’

The above narrative shows that the culture of HE is highly gendered and many academics seem to have confrontational styles of communication, disrespect for others and unwillingness to listen to another’s point of view rather than focus on articulating their own. The words of W1 above indicate that the barrier of age can be internalized by women working within male norms. This indicates how women are judged more harshly than men; not fitting the normalized image of a leader and constantly evaluated by male norms (Raddon, 2002).

In reporting a gender discriminatory experience, another respondent W3 who is unmarried had this to say:

Being a woman and single in this culture could be a hitch to one’s career. It all began as I bargained on salary during my interview... I remember being asked by a man in the panel why I needed more money yet I’m single with no family responsibility ... the only woman in the panel seemed overpowered by the many men.

The experience of W12 in support further highlights the strong effects of culture on women’s education in Kenya, showing the importance upon marriage over education:

...my parents organised to marry me off to someone without my consent ... after my A-level exams, I got to know at night and sneaked out... thank God I passed my exams and was admitted to a public university. I never saw my parents for 5 years...I told my story to a pastor of my church and many others. I hold PhD... married with three children. I strongly advocate and promote girls’ education ...I run different community programmes in my village to promote girls’ education.

Although this could be an isolated case, such practices as experienced by W12 still exist in some communities in Kenya in 2010. A 10 year old girl who had been married to an old man as a second wife cried; 'I did not want to get married. I wanted to continue with my education but my father forcefully married me off to that old man' (Benyawa, 2010, p.1).

In the above scenario, culture is portrayed in a double fold; on one hand, it negatively impacts on W12's academic and career journey, while that in itself has been a motivational factor towards achieving her success in academia. From a feminist perspective, the lived experience of women should form the main source of data in research (Harding, 1987).

A metaphor expressed is that of the 'triple cultural stigma' (gender, singleness and age) by the three respondents who are unmarried (late 20s, late 30s and early 40s). Youth in Kenyan culture is associated with lack of wisdom and being promoted to a higher rank is not viewed by many as due to competence but rather, in exchange of sexual favours. On the other hand, married female academics could gain respect in society but face the heavy task of cultural expectations of them in their roles.

A summary of the common themes and some sub-themes from the data is illustrated in Figure 6.1 in the next section.

**Figure 6.1 Themes: Women's Survival in Academia**

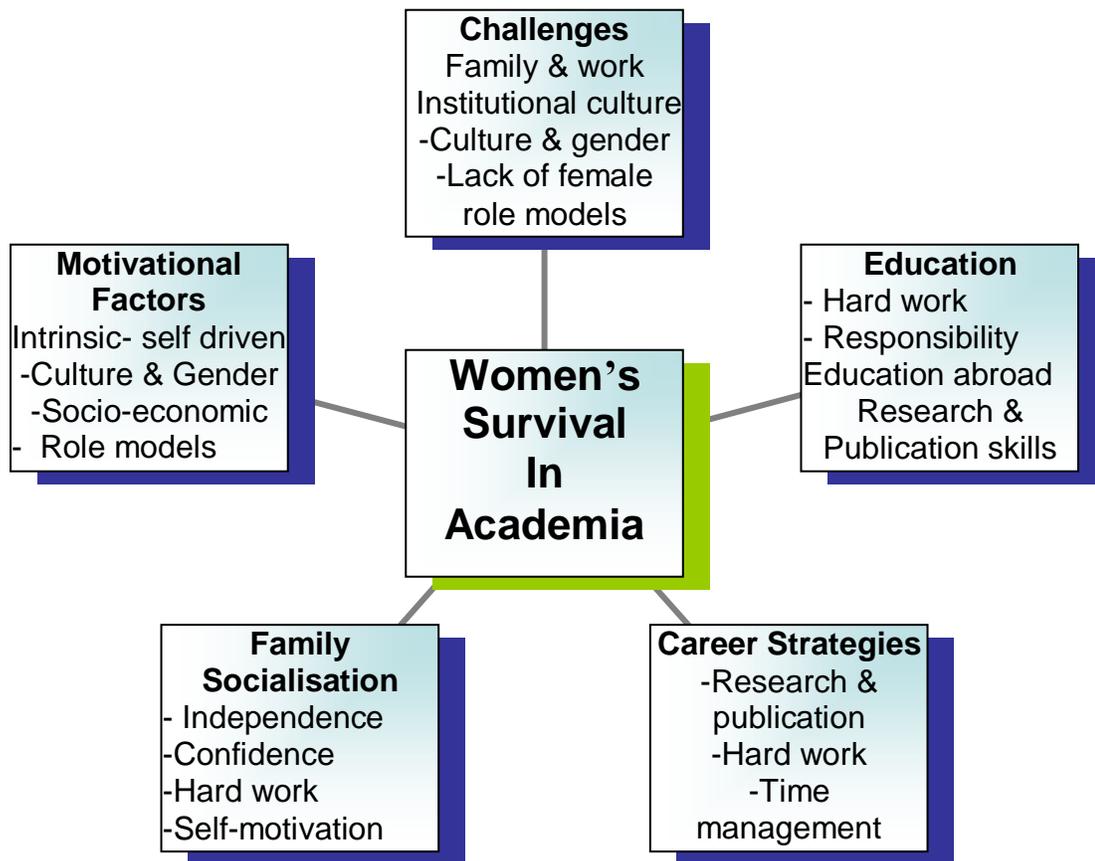


Figure 6.1 above illustrates a summary of the five common themes that have been analysed and discussed from the data as; family socialization, education, motivational factors, challenges and career strategies. Examples of the sub-themes are also illustrated.

## **6.4 Conclusion**

The chapter analyses research question 5 on strategies employed by the women academics through their careers. It explores the strategies employed by women academics in order to survive in academia. It further examines the emergent themes; importance of education abroad, the culture of Kenyan HE institutions and gender dynamics within them and the diversity of the home backgrounds and parental expectations of the women participants. Their experience of education abroad is significant to their careers as the participants acquired different skills.

The responses from the in-depth interviews construct women as 'outsiders', in institutional environments being dominated by a male culture. The experiences of discrimination lead to feelings of frustrations, stress, guilt, self blame by the women. The data suggests women are positioned as 'outsiders' within the university, 'intruders', and as 'outcasts'.

## **Chapter 7: Conclusion**

### ***7.1 Introduction***

This chapter provides an overview of the aims and the purpose of the study, the methodology employed, and the themes that emerged from the data while answering the research questions. The chapter further explores the implications to theory, practice and further research.

As mentioned earlier (chapter 1), the overall aim of this study has been to examine the life experiences that helped shape the careers of successful women academics in Kenyan HE context. The study focused on sixteen female academics in three universities in Kenya. The initial impetus to carry out the present study was further spurred by a call from literature readings, the experience of the researcher and earlier studies conducted in Kenya (Kamau, 2004; Many, 2000; Gachukia, 2002; Onsongo, 2005) which highlighted the need to conduct more research in this area to contribute ideas to enable and facilitate women academics in Kenya to participate in HE.

With that background, it seemed appropriate to address these concerns by designing a study with the following purposes as suggested earlier (see chapter 1):

- Identify the family circumstances and factors that contributed to their careers
- Identify the relationships, educational experiences and crucial events in their lives that affected the development of their careers
- Identify those motivational factors to pursue a career in academia
- Highlight skills and attributes for success in their careers
- Examine any challenges faced through their careers
- Focus on strategies they employed to reach their present career positions

As discussed in chapter 4, an interpretive in-depth interview approach was deemed to be the most appropriate means to understanding the routes traveled by the successful female academics in this study. This methodological decision was made because attitudes, relationships and perceptions cannot be objectively measured or replicated as would be required in a quantitative approach. In contrast, qualitative methods such as the interviews were more likely to yield rich and descriptive data for understanding the human experiences involved (Creswell, 2003).

The main research question of this study was:

- *What in the experiences of the women academics in Kenyan universities has contributed to their career success?*

In addressing this question, five questions became apparent:

- How did their family background affect your career?
- What contribution did their education have to your career?
- What motivational factors and personal attributes if any have been critical in their career?
- What significant contributing factors were barriers or challenges if any, to their career advancement?
- What strategies, if any, did they use to attain and maintain their current career position?

These questions served as a guide while carrying out the interviews with the respondents. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure a spread of respondents and sixteen women academics from a range of academic backgrounds, disciplines and career experiences were included in the study. (Mason, 2002). The respondents were selected from three universities in Kenya (see respondents' profile on Table 4.1).

A pilot study was conducted with two respondents to refine the interview guide and to enhance the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. The data collection began in July 2008 until December 2008 (see details in chapter 4). Data were primarily face-to-face in-depth interviews with the respondents. These data were predominantly respondents' verbal disclosures, body language and gestures which were tape-recorded and notes taken. All the interviews were further transcribed by the researcher and the verbatim quotes attributed to individuals (see chapters 5 and 6).

A thematic analysis was then employed to analyse the data from the interviews. The process involved sorting the data into codes while identifying the common themes as suggested by (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During the coding stage of analysis, the common themes and sub-themes were identified as suggested by (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006). A summary of the themes and sub-themes is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

The next section discusses a summary of the findings in response to each of the five research questions.

## ***7.2 Discussions of Research Questions/Summary***

Each of the research questions has been responded to through the in-depth interviews. Significant to this study was the emergence of the strong effect of culture on gender in relation to women's roles and the family-work conflicts.

*How did their family background affect/contribute to their careers?*

The findings of this study suggest that family plays a key role in shaping personal traits and a motivation towards the careers of the respondents. The study revealed that through the socialisation process, the women academics shared various attributes which were desirable for their career success.

This shows a link between individuals' attributes, the socialization process and their career orientations which evolves over time through different stages in life (Holland, 1997). Those personal attributes which impacted on the respondents' careers included; hard work, self-motivation and perseverance, and time management skills. The parental roles played by fathers and mothers helped to shape the orientations and career decisions of the respondents. Fathers ensured their daughters obtained education and a male dominance in families was evident as the power and the decision making was in their hands. The study reveals how the family environment influenced the self-efficacy of the respondents as their parents nurtured and supported them as children while stimulating their curiosity and encouraging self-discovery (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002).

*How did their education contribute to their career?*

The data revealed that through education at different stages, the respondents exhibited different academic attributes which became significant to their career lives and decisions. The respondents recalled critical incidents when their teachers, lecturers and head-teachers encouraged, became their role models and motivated them to develop writing, research and publication skills.

Most respondents cited their experiences of education abroad as having changed their social but significantly, academic and professional lives. Having studied for either PhD or Master courses in the UK, South Africa, the USA or Germany, some of them cited having enhanced their research and publication skills. As mentioned earlier (chapter 6), metaphors such as; 'stepping stone', 'a big jump', 'a privilege', 'jump-starter', 'an opportunity' were used to describe their experiences of education abroad in relation to their careers.

*What motivational factors, personal attributes and skills have been critical in their career?*

Socio-economic, intrinsic, extrinsic, the family, culture and role models motivated women academics in this study to join academia. The dominant attribute of passion for knowledge and discovery of new knowledge, a sense of self-motivation cited by different respondents showed a sense of intrinsic motivation according to (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002). The respondents expressed how they wanted to make a contribution to knowledge development in different areas; teaching, research, publication and public speaking. Some respondents expressed feelings of personal satisfaction, being self-driven, and wanting to achieve dreams as motivations to joining academia.

One of the respondents cited her uncle who was Vice Chancellor at one of the universities as her role model. She reported that she had admired him since childhood and always wanted to become a professor like him. This experience supports the view that through parental socialization, children's motivation is enhanced through role modeling their abilities, values and beliefs which are later reflected at a later stage of life (Eccles and Wigfield, 2002).

In addition, some women academics wanted to join academia as a way of escaping from poverty. Their parents urged them to work hard so that they would earn money to alleviate family poverty- a form of extrinsic motivation. Another motivating factor to joining academia was culture and gender. Some of the respondents reported that they wanted to blow the wind of change because of the practices of gendered inequalities and stereotypes in Kenyan society. Such expressions are supported by a feature of feminist perspective that aims to transform institutions by validating women's voices (Cook and Fonow, 1990).

*What significant contributing factors are perceived to have been barriers or challenges if any, to career advancement?*

The findings of this study reveal that, the sixteen women academics interviewed are juggling with combining family responsibilities and career expectations which resulted in inevitable conflicts and tensions. Some of them reported having postponed marriage for career, while others sacrificed their careers to attend to family responsibilities. The women academics are in addition not only working hard, but harder. To survive in academia, the women studied have to research and publish as this is 'pegged' to promotion in the universities where they work. Another common slogan in their institutions is 'publish or perish'. Despite working so hard, their progress continue to remain slow, in a reward system that they argue, does not favour them, and without sufficient recognition of their hard work.

The interviews revealed that women academics still experience socio-cultural and structural barriers to their career advancement within the three universities studied, as was experienced by those in (Forster, 2001; Kamau, 2004). Despite the advocacy for gender equality policies and the Affirmative Action as expressed in Onsongo (2009), practices still appear gender-blind in promotion criterion which focuses on research and publication profiles while failing to consider the time spent in teaching, administrative duties and counseling students (Onsongo, 2000).

In Acker and Feuerverger (1997), women academics have been blamed for spending most of their time teaching and have been advised to focus on their research and reduce the time they spend on teaching and other services. A respondent in Acker and Feuerverger (1997, p.133) noted, ' students crying in your office don't count for a damn on your CV'. Women are thus, left wondering about the quantity of publication required for tenure (Tierney and Bensimon, 1996).

Furthermore, women academics continue to wonder how much they can do with family responsibilities and uncertainty about how much is enough in terms of publication (Armenti, 2004). Respondent W1, in the present study reported that nobody in the university is interested in one's family commitments or the time taken counseling students as what is important in academia is 'hard work and publication'.

The married women academics reported several difficulties of combining children and career, such as rushing home to collect children from school, which is harmful to their career as some of the faculty meetings are conducted after work. They realized that having children whilst working in academia can be what one of the respondents W11 referred to as, a 'career suicide'.

These findings add weight to research previously carried out on family-work conflicts (Armenti, 2004b; Acker and Armenti, 2004; Forster, 2001). The women in the present study emphasised the influence of a culture that continues to lay emphasis on their greater domestic responsibilities. Having internalized and accepted their roles as mothers and wives, they devote their time to domestic responsibilities even if this slows down their career advancement. Although some respondents acknowledged the valuable support from their husbands, there was no evidence that their husbands sacrificed their careers in the same way as the women in the study. The single women on the other hand, reported having sacrificed marriage for their careers. At thirty four [W7] and forty six [W3] years, they may have wished to get married but find it challenging to venture into combining family responsibilities and career. In addition, the biological clock ticks as shown in Hewlett (2002) that at forty years, about 50 % of women were childless.

The findings of this study confirm that women academics in 2010 still struggle to overcome the deeply embedded socio-cultural and structural challenges to survive in these particular universities in Kenya and presumably, all others (see details in Table 1.1 on the under-representation of women faculty).

From a feminist perspective, academic careers contribute to a gender regime in universities because they remain structural, being male-dominated and being the beneficiaries of scholarships (Acker and Feuerverger, 1997).

The structure of the university has not been inclusive of women's needs in terms of child care facilities, women-friendly timings, promotion criteria, old-boys networks and clubs (Forster et al., 2002). Rather than changing the structure, women academics have been immersed into the already existing male-style university structures. Kenyan universities thus, continue to lag behind feminist policy suggestions in providing child care facilities. There is no child care facility of any form at the three universities under study as was cited by W4. Campus child-care centers would benefit women with young children to manage to carry on their research and publication responsibilities after regular time at work (Armenti, 2004a). The women in the present study feel that 'women work hard anyway' [W1] but their work is not valued by their male-colleagues who are part of the promotion networks. The feelings of the 'lone female', that is, being the only female among men or one of the few women (see Table 1.1) is expressed by some respondents especially those in senior positions of management.

I argue that, in addition to the above factors, the feelings of academic 'isolation', 'outsiders', 'the lone female', 'out-casts' in academia combined with 'chilly climate', 'old-boys networks' from the universities result in a situation where women continue to be disadvantaged in their career progress.

In addition, the effect of culture has hampered the career progress of women academics in the present study. Women internalize their gender roles as mothers and wives, a perception that influences their career performance (Hall, 1996). Being primarily responsible for the family, women in Kenya carry the dual burden of a mother and a wife while at the same time trying to accomplish their career obligations (Tamale and Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

As mentioned in the literature review (chapter 2), Eccles (2007) highlights that socio-cultural influences impact on the development of children as they begin to form gender role conceptions that influence their beliefs, attitudes and behaviour in childhood. Most of the women in the present study reported how their gender roles as mothers, wives, and cultural perceptions have impacted on their careers in different ways.

*What strategies, if any, did they use to attain and maintain their current career position?*

Despite the challenges faced, the women in the present study reported different strategies they have employed to advance and keep their professional and academic positions. The commonly emphasised strategy by all the sixteen women academics was research and publication as they realised it is the key to promotions. As earlier discussed (chapter 6), different metaphors were used; 'pegged' to promotion, 'gateway' to promotion and 'publish or perish' while asserting the significance of research and publication to their careers. Some of the respondents reported having had to 'work harder', and 'work smart'. Having met mentors at a later stage of their careers during their PhD and Masters courses and realised the importance of mentoring, some of them [W9, W1] reported mentoring their students. An awareness of these findings thus, has potential for significant practical implications among women academics in Kenya.

The findings on career strategies support research by other authors such as Quina et al., (1998) emphasising the need to encourage the upcoming young academics into joining academia by; providing young academics with female mentors, flexible working hours, organizational culture to be inclusive of women's needs and having an all inclusive and women-friendly promotion criteria. The academic departments ease the burden of teaching, administration, and counseling on women academics in order to give them more time to do their research. Research is significant for universities and allowing women to go for promotion with little or no research only rewards them what they are being lumbered with unfairly (teaching/administration/counseling). Further, it stops women developing as researchers and ultimately being able to mentor other women as researchers.

In another study, Blackmore (1999, p.165) reports strategies used by her respondents to include; ‘...working harder (and longer), becoming highly task-oriented and focusing on procedures and processes...’. Similarly, the majority of the respondents in the present study employed the strategy of working hard and working harder. They expressed that in order to cope in academia, they cited; working over time, waking up early and going to bed late (*wee* hours), sleeping less and multi-tasking. In addition to hard work, the respondents had to strategise on their time management. They used metaphors such as; ‘creating time’, ‘guarding time’, ‘working odd times’, ‘borrowing family time’, and ‘planning time’.

Academic and or professional identity was another strategy employed by some of the respondents who expressed the need to be ‘visible’ and be ‘heard’ through publication, networking and belonging to academic communities. One of the respondents cited holding a PhD as a significant identity in academia. Community services, joining professional networks, public speaking on television or giving lectures were identified as different forms of expressing one’s identity.

The next section discusses the implications of the findings of the present study to the Kenyan HE.

### ***7.3 Implications for Higher Education in Kenya***

The previous studies (Onsongo, 2000; Gachukia, 2002; Kamau, 2004) asserted that there is a need to conduct more research about women in HE in Kenya. The present study contributes to increased knowledge about women academics in higher education. The literature review (chapter 2) of this thesis revealed that studies about women academics in Kenya are scarce, and this study therefore contributes towards filling the gap and while addressing this deficit, the findings might encourage further research in this particular area.

To fully understand the experiences of participants, it is important to explore cultural values and practices. This study examined the career experiences of the sixteen women academics in their cultural settings of higher education in Kenya, and those factors that may have motivated them to joining academia. In addition, by exploring factors that may have hampered their career progress in that setting, the present study can claim to have bridged a significant gap in literature.

The review of literature revealed that women are more likely to look to their own gender for role models (Morley, 2006). The present research has therefore, practical implications for women academics in Kenya by sharing academic attributes and strategies employed for success in academia. To those young women academics aspiring to join academia, the respondents told their success stories and challenges. Most of the respondents had 'humble' family backgrounds faced with many financial and cultural obstacles as they tried to climb the career ladder. They had achieved this by choice, persistence and skillful use of their attributes. The sixteen women academics could serve as academic and professional role models and mentors.

Significant to the findings is the family-career conflicts experienced by women academics as they juggled to fit in with the cultural expectations of women in Kenyan society while at the same time, trying to cope with career responsibilities (see summary illustrations in Figure 5.1). This contributes to the earlier findings from other women academics (Armenti, 2004b; Willams, 2004; Acker and Armenti, 2004).

On the basis of this analysis, university policy makers should be inclusive of women academics' family needs and the study highlights important issues affecting women. The study has enhanced awareness on gender issues among colleagues and, institutional cultures, and such awareness could improve workplace relationships. Of significance for consideration are the cultural attitude and the gender role expectations of women that persist in Kenyan society. The findings of the present study reveal the cultural impact and its contribution to the slow progress of women academics' careers.

## ***7.4 Implications to Theory, Practice and Further Research***

Findings from the present study as presented from in-depth interviews supplement extant literature on women academics. In particular, from a feminist perspective, gender and women's experiences are central to qualitative research (Bensimon and Marshall, 1997; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). The women academics' experiences contribute to an understanding of why there are so few women in HE and why their career progress is slow in higher echelons of academia, a question often raised by researchers (Manya, 2000; Valian, 1999; Kamau, 2004). This issue remains of value to be researched, as women suffer cumulative disadvantage (Valian, 1999; Soliman and Soliman, 1997). From a feminist perspective, the women's stories of life and career experiences show the effect of the interplay between these attributes and their socialization experiences on their own careers.

Women in academia continue to be excluded from the old-boys' networks, lack of access to relevant information for promotions, and experience the chilly climate dominating universities (Sandler, 1986). Despite such difficulties, the women in the present study employed different strategies of hard work, research, time management, and professional identity to survive in academia.

Further research might refine the present theory and or enhance generalisability by expanding and varying the sample population. For example, research could confirm or vary the results suggested here by carrying out in-depth interviews with a larger pool of women academics in Kenya, or women academics in other parts of the world. Future research could also compare how female academics from different cultural backgrounds make selective use of their dominant attributes to achieve their career success.

In addition, further research on female academics in Higher Education could be undertaken in specific areas of conflicts between family and work, coping with multiple demands, university cultures, and mentoring.

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# Appendices

## ***Appendix 1 Research Description***

Researcher: Pamela Raburu, a PhD candidate at Lancaster University, UK (see the attached letter from the university). I am a lecturer at Dhofar University in Oman.

Email: [raburu\\_pamela@hotmail.com](mailto:raburu_pamela@hotmail.com) ; [p\\_raburu@du.edu.om](mailto:p_raburu@du.edu.om); [p.raburu@lancs.ac.uk](mailto:p.raburu@lancs.ac.uk)

Tel: + 254 700911917 / + 968 92513980

### WOMEN ACADEMICS' CAREERS IN KENYA

I thought you might like to know the purpose of my research before agreeing to being interviewed. The focus of my research is to examine women academics' experiences on their careers in Kenyan universities.

I intend to listen to individual narrative interviews from a group of women who have made it to the top with a view of finding out how they have got there, motivational factors, challenges they face/faced and how they overcome them, together with their perception of the role of gender in their career advancement.

#### *What is the interview about?*

I would like you to reflect upon your journey on your career progress as a woman academic at university in your subject, and also to discuss your motivational factors, challenges and strategies (if any). The narrative-interview will last between 45 minutes to one hour and my questions will be related to your practice as in higher education. With your permission, I would like to tape-record the interview which I will then transcribe.

#### *Ethical guidelines*

- I will be the only person to access the recorded discussions.
- Your identity and job role will be anonymised and masked as necessary to make it impossible to identify you as the source of any information.
- The names of the university and its organizational components will be changed
- Any references to people, events or organisational structures within my writing will be amended to make identification impossible.

Thank you.

Pam Raburu

## **Appendix 2 Consent Form**

Please feel free to ask me any questions, before and after the interview.

Email: [raburu\\_pamela@hotmail.com](mailto:raburu_pamela@hotmail.com); [p.raburu@lancs.ac.uk](mailto:p.raburu@lancs.ac.uk); [p\\_raburu@du.edu.om](mailto:p_raburu@du.edu.om)

Tel: +254 700911917 OR +968 92513980

I am seeking your consent to interview you about your views on your career advancement as a woman academic in a Kenyan university. This will be through an interview which I would like to tape-record with your permission. You will have an opportunity to comment on my analysis of the interviews at a later stage, if you so wish. I will make available the completed thesis in case you would like to read.

1. Your participation is entirely on a voluntary basis and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.
2. I will maintain confidentiality and anonymity (use of pseudonyms) throughout this study. Confidentiality will be maintained by not divulging identifiable information to other parties, except those directly involved in supervising and examining the study. Such parties will not be able to link the data to identifiable participants, as the data will be anonymised by using codes on the interview transcripts.
3. Arrangement for the documentation and dissemination of findings will guarantee individual anonymity through the use pseudonyms.
4. Data will be protected by keeping transcripts and interview tape recordings in a secure place. Once the study has been examined, the data will be kept until my final assessment then will be destroyed.

---

### WOMEN ACADEMICS' CAREERS IN KENYA

I agree/ Don't agree to take part in the above research project.

I have read the project descriptions above and agree to undertake the following:

Be informally interviewed (interview to be tape-recorded) by Pam

I understand that any information I provide is confidential and that no information will lead to identifying individuals or institutions involved in this research project.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can choose to withdraw at any stage.

Name: ----- Tel: ----- Email: -----

*Please tear off and return to Pam before or on the interview day.*

## Appendix 3 Introductory Letter

LANCASTER  
UNIVERSITY

Department of  
Educational Research



Our Ref: MT/AS

9<sup>th</sup> July 2008

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

**Pamela Raburu – ID: 05385974 Lancaster University**  
**Doctoral Programme in Educational Research**

Pamela Raburu is a registered PhD student with the Educational Research Department at Lancaster University. Pamela is now in her third year of the 4/5 year doctoral programme and is now in the process of carrying out interviews for her research.

Any assistance that can be given would be greatly appreciated.

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Postgraduate Co-ordinator  
Educational Research

Professor Malcolm Tight  
Course Director  
Doctoral Programme in Educational Research

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**David McConnell**, BA, Dip Ed, PhD  
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