

**EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER POLICIES IN THE PROMOTION OF
WOMEN LEADERS IN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE OF MIDLANDS
STATE UNIVERSITY, ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the effectiveness of the gender policy in the promotion of women leaders at Midlands State University, Zimbabwe. The study adopted both the qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Data were collected through individual key informants' interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaires and document analysis. A comparative analysis of female representation in various university structures and committees in 2005 and 2013 was done. A total of one hundred and thirty-four respondents participated in the study.

The findings have shown that the gender policy has made slight improvements on the status of gender at Midlands State University. The female representation in the Council increased by (15.6%) from (21.9%) in 2005 to the present (37.5%). In the Senate females have increased by (8.6%) from (16.7%) in 2005 to the current (25.3%). Similarly, the gender analysis of academic staff indicated some minimal gains at the Principal Officer level which is now at (40.0%) from (20.0%) in 2005 and chairpersons increased slightly from (22.6%) in 2005 to the present (25.0%). A greater number of women's representation in leadership was observed at deputy dean/director level where females account for (44.4%) while males account for (55.6%). However, at dean/ director level females have decreased from (28.6%) in 2005 to the present (15.0%). Similarly, males account for (100.0%) at Professor level and (83.3%) at Associate Professor level. Results for Student Representative Council (SRC) showed some slight improvements on female representation in the student governing body, from (16.7%) in 2005 to the present (35.7%).

This study found that leadership and decision-making have remained male dominated despite having the gender policy in place. Therefore, the study recommends that the University Academic Appointment Board chaired by the Vice Chancellor should increase the incremental rate of 8% per year to a higher percentage of 20% per year to allow more women to be appointed to leadership positions. The University Registrar should monitor the recruitment and promotion processes to ensure that more female staff are recruited and promoted. The Vice Chancellor should set up a scholarship fund designed to enable women to pursue further studies and attain higher qualifications. The Vice Chancellor should put in place a gender committee which is

mandated to sensitize new members of staff on the policy and ensure its effective implementation, this committee should report directly to the Vice Chancellor. The University Registrar should ensure that Deans and Chairpersons and other members of staff are sensitized into the gender policy through workshops.