

Qualifying and Supporting Women in Industrial Tea and Energy Production Enterprises

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Abstract

Women are often victims of a glass ceiling, and face numerous obstacles in reaching the highest positions in most companies. In two tea and energy production companies with a diversity policy, our study shows that, in addition to obstacles linked to the organization's policy, barriers persist at individual level, but also at the level of organizational culture. Based on research carried out on human capital, we highlight three dimensions of career development: personal factors, family organization and organizational context. The study is based on survey questionnaires and in-depth interviews focusing on the career analysis and reactions of seven 6 female managers and 5 female co-workers from these companies, specifying the factors that enabled them to progress, but also the obstacles they encountered.

Keywords

Job Qualification, Women's Support and Assistance, Woman, Career, Glass Ceiling, Company, Burundi

1. Introduction

The mandate of the International Labour Organization is that every woman and man should have access to decent and productive work in conditions of equity, security and dignity (Jonya et al., 2023; Ndayisenga & Sindayigaya, 2024a, 2024b; Nduwimana & Sindayigaya, 2023a, 2023b; Sindayigaya, 2023). The four strategic points are based on the promotion of rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue. Combating unemployment and underemployment is one aspect of decent work, but it must also be of acceptable quality (Oumba, 2016). The position of women's jobs in the INSSEE nomenclature appears to be

a statistical aggregate with imprecise contours: women are three times less numerous, reflecting segregation (Jonya et al., 2023; Sindayigaya & Toyi, 2023a, 2023b; Toyi & Sindayigaya, 2023). The majority of women have little access to professions (Buhendwa et al., 2023; Jonya et al., 2023; Sabiraguha et al., 2023; Sindayigaya & Nyabenda, 2022; Sunzu, 2022), reflecting a gendered socio-political construction of occupations and qualifications (Amossé, 2004).

From a managerial standpoint, managers and employees in high-stress occupations must address the issue of employability, which is linked to employee longevity and health in the workplace (Tabti-Salmon, 2019). New technologies are making it possible to rethink employment and forms of work organization, which have come up against a model of full-time work and fixed working hours (Ciza & Sindayigaya, 2023; Mpabansi, 2023; Niyongabo & Sindayigaya, 2023; Nyabenda & Sindayigaya, 2023; Sindayigaya, 2020, 2022; Sindayigaya & Hitimana, 2016; Sindayigaya & Nyabenda, 2022). The new jobs created are atypical, and the future of the new generations is at stake (Fofulo, 2020).

In Canada, migrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa rely on qualification strategies, refresher training, work experience, volunteering, social networking and door-to-door canvassing to find jobs in their fields of specialization, with disadvantageous conditions. Institutions do not treat them fairly, their integration is deficient and they end up in less qualified relegation streams (Nikuze, 2011). In Europe, and in Switzerland for example, migrant women find themselves at a disadvantage due to the downgrading of their qualifications and professional experience and are discriminated against on the grounds of their gender and origin. The perception of discrimination leads to a devaluation that causes psychological distress (Goguikian Ratcliff et al., 2014).

In addition, women are used to advertise promotional products and models are seen as objects, and they are victims of body dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders. In China, millions of graduates, including women, have difficulty finding their first job, unemployment rates are still on the rise, and companies and organizations have high expectations of retaining the talents of new generations (Bourelly, 2020). Girls' access to education has enabled young women and girls to improve their living conditions (Mperejimana & Sindayigaya, 2023; Ndayisenga & Sindayigaya, 2024a; Nyabenda & Sindayigaya, 2023; Sindayigaya, 2022, 2023). Stereotypical barriers prevent women from accessing certain positions because of their gender, and a motivational policy favors the advancement of women in diversity and workforce management (Ourzik and Oubaziz, 2019).

In Bangladesh, recruitment to unskilled jobs is unequal, with selection operations resulting in the recruitment of unlikely profits deemed by discrimination (Monchatre, 2018). In North Africa, in Morocco for example, stakeholders' perceptions of the University's contribution to business development point to an alliance between these two institutions. This state of affairs reveals the expectations and obstacles surrounding the match between training and integration into the workplace (El Archi and Benbba, 2022). Moreover, women's access to em-

ployment has become a concern of gender equality, a question of equality between women and men in employment (Louizi and Dinia, 2021). Egypt, like the countries of the Middle East and North Africa, is characterized by a young population: 50% of the population is under 30, the unemployment rate among young women is the highest in the world, and informal employment takes pride of place despite the high number of university graduates. This situation has led to social revolts (Chaker, 2019).

However, Tunisia is making progress in terms of training time and women's rights. Lack of economic opportunities and unequal access to them has resulted in high and rising unemployment among young people (*La renaissance*, n.d.). In sub-Saharan Africa, the study carried out by the International Labour Organization in six Central African countries—Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo—shows the links between training and migration on the recognition and development between countries, and this region is characterized by a flow of low-skilled and semi-skilled migrants (Werquin & Foka, 2020). In Senegal, economic reforms have had a positive impact on reducing gender inequalities. In Burkina Faso, on the other hand, they have had a negative impact on the economy and gender, by increasing inequality and poverty (Nziengui Mamboundou, 2020).

In Burundi, few studies have been devoted to the qualification and employability of women in tea and energy companies. A case study of seasonal and contract workers carried out in the Moso sugar industry, shows a difference in remuneration treatment between these two categories of workers (Iriho, 2021). The study on the virtues of the tea plant enables farmers to obtain foodstuffs and to overcome the lean period, as well as provide for other needs, and it is a guarantee for contacting a creditor (Bitama, 2021). Analyses of the challenges of producer participation since 1960 help to understand the phases of the Burundian and Rwandan tea conjunctures and the management of this enterprise (Ndayisaba, 2020). In Burundi, as in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, only 15% of the working population has a salaried job, according to the International Labour Organization (Bourel and Vadot, 2022).

These studies have focused on aspects of the treatment of workers without any specific reference to women. They have given quantitative descriptions without delving into their experiences, qualifications, and employability in these industrial companies. These are the questions that remain to be answered in this article, based on quantitative and qualitative survey data from the tea and energy industries.

The aim of this study is to investigate the factors linked to women's recruitment and equality in career development within the Burundian tea and energy industries. In concrete terms, this research aims to find out what measures have been put in place by employers to encourage the recruitment, integration, and professional development of women, and how to support women towards employability in these industries. Social science literature refers to the notion of employability. However, it is rarely directly examined and defined, and remains

in a state of impenetrability. The aim of this article is twofold. Firstly, to show how employability is an essential element for the social sciences; and secondly, to offer readers an introduction to questions concerning gender inequality in industrial and energy companies. The aim is not to be exhaustive, but to encourage the reader to think critically about these issues. While this study aims to be documented and objective, it does represent a scientific viewpoint on the issue.

2. Methods and Methodology

2.1. Research Design

To answer the question raised in our problem, this study is based on survey data collected in state-owned industrial companies (tea and energy, OTB, REGIDESO), covering socio-demographic and academic information, as well as women's recruitment conditions and career development in these companies. Data were collected between April 26 and July 28, 2023, using kobo collect software and analyzed using SPSS software. Sampling was based on François Daniel's formula $N = t^2 N / t^2 + (2e)^2 - (N - 1)$. To complete my data, we used an interview guide that took up the various concepts mobilized in the literature and to provide a better response to my research perspectives.

My field of study was two companies, one an industrial tea company, Office du Thé du Burundi, the other an energy company, Régie de Production des Eaux et de l'Electricité, REGIDESO. We chose to prescribe my survey questionnaire to 50 people per company, i.e. 100 people in all, including 10 people per department, and to interview 12 people in all, 7 for REGIDESO and 5 for the Office du Thé du Burundi, OTB.

In the first industrial company, we spoke to the Director of Human Resources at REGIDESO, the Personnel Manager, the Technical Expert in electricity for the Jiji-Murembwe HydroElectric Project, the Assistant for the Multinational Project to Interconnect the Electricity Networks of the Nile Equatorial Lakes Countries, a female Support Executive in the Electricity Equipment Department, a Meter Inspection and Calibration Technician and a Water Maintenance Technician.

In the second company, I spoke to OTB's Human Resources Manager, a woman with the highest academic rank, Head of the Theicultural Quality Research Department with an engineering degree, a Finance Department Assistant, an Accounting Department Assistant and a Sales Department Agent. During our meetings, I wanted to interview female managers in each of the two host companies, 5 for REGIDESO and 1 for OTB. I produced an interview guide and a survey questionnaire. An interview guide and questionnaire for female managers and a questionnaire for women and men from different socio-professional categories in both companies. 12 interviews were conducted, targeted as follows: 7 for female senior managers, 4 for female associates and 1 for a male senior manager.

2.2. Profile of Interviewees and Respondents

In order to preserve the anonymity of the interviewees, we have chosen to assign

codes to them; to each of our interviews in order to guide readers. These codes are broken down as follows:

- Human Resources Director
- Personnel Manager
- Human Resources Manager
- Technical expert in electricity for the project
- Hydro-Electric Jiji-Murembwe Assistant to the Multinational Interconnection Project of the Electrical Networks of the Equatorial Nile Lake Countries
- Meter Inspection Technician and Calibration
- Head of the Tea Quality Research Department
- Financial Service Assistant
- Accounting Department Assistant
- Trading service agent.

3. Results

The sample chosen was made up of male and female managers, and we were also interested in women and men with glass ceilings (**Table 1**). We targeted male and female employees in these two organizations in order to analyze concrete elements in relation to their career development as women. The present work focuses on the perceived situation of individuals within an industrial tea company on the one hand, and an industrial energy company on the other. The approach used is one of exploratory research, in which I took the time to familiarize

Table 1. Results of the inquiry and survey with workers from tea and energy enterprises in Burundi.

N°	Code	Function	Gender	Age	Seniority in years	Duration in minutes	Date of interview
1	DRHF	Human Resources Manager	F		2	90	13/6/2023
2	RPF	Personnel Manager	F	47	8	60	12/6/2023
3	ETPHJIMUF	Technical expert in electricity for the Jiji-Murembwe Hydroelectric Project	F	40	8	90	17/07/2023
4	APMIREL-PLEN	Assistant Multinational Project for the Interconnection of the Electricity Networks of the Nile Equatorial Lakes Countries	F	53	17	60	17/7/2023
5	CAELF	Support Manager, Electrical Equipment	F	30	1	58	19/7/2023
6	TICEF	Meter Inspection and Calibration Technician	F	57	32	56	19/7/2023
7	TMEF	Water Maintenance Technician	F	48	26	51	21/6/2023
8	RRHH	Human Resources Manager	M	49	19	85	6/6/2023
9	CSRQTF	Head of the Tea Quality Research Department	F	47	17	68	28/4/2023
10	ASFF	Finance Department Assistant	F	39	19	48	26/04/2023
11	ASFF	Accounting Department Assistant	F	46	19	51	26/04/2023
12	ASVF	Sales Service Agent	F	56	31	43	28/04/2023

myself with, describe, and analyze the phenomenon under study. In this phase, we used inductive reasoning to generate coherent hypotheses. As far as the selection of interviewees is concerned, we interviewed a limited number of people in this study: 7 people for REGIDESO, 5 female managers and 2 employees, and 5 for OTB, including 1 male manager and 1 female manager, 2 female employees and 1 female sales agent (**Tables 2-4**).

4. Discussion

Pearson's Chi-Square between gender and function is 0.859 with a degree of liberty of 10 and a value of 5.455 considering 22 cells (100.0%) have a theoretical size of less than 5 with a likelihood ratio of 0.942 while the minimum number of cells is 0.08 (**Table 2**). This means that in the tea and energy in Burundi, the function workers occupy is largely influenced by gender. Energy and tea companies in Burundi need to hear the call-up voice as it has been in Ukraine. It has been remarked that gender issues and gender non-discrimination standards should attract the attention of Ukrainian companies, as compliance with relevant development norms and priorities (Bilan et al., 2020). Gender Balance issue

Table 2. Pearson chi-square tests gender and function.

	Value	dof	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.455 ^a	10	0.859
Likelihood ratio	4.111	10	0.942
Valid Observations	12		

^a22 cells (100.0%) have a theoretical number less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is 0.08.

Table 3. Pearson chi-square tests age and function.

	Value	dof	Asymptotic significance (two-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	80.000 ^a	72	0.242
Likelihood ratio	43.279	72	0.997
Valid Observations	10		

^a90 cells (100.0%) have a theoretical number less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is 0.10.

Table 4. Pearson chi-square seniority and function.

	Value	dof	Signification asymptotique (bilatérale)
Pearson Chi-Square	76.000 ^a	70	0.291
Likelihood ratio	44.728	70	0.992
Valid Observations	12		

^a88 cells (100.0%) have a theoretical size of less than 5. The minimum number of cells is 0.08.

has been revealed in European enterprises especially in the financial domain management (De Lucia et al., 2020) as in French Market (Bruna et al., 2019) and affects financial performance as in Spain (Reguera-Alvarado et al., 2017) and Taiwan, China (Wang, 2020). It arrives at delivering a promising speech that does not go along with practices as feminist critiques tell in Sweden and UK (Ahl & Marlow, 2021).

Pearson's Chi-Square between age (how old workers are) and function is 0.242 with a degree of liberty of 72 and a value of 80.000 considering 90 cells (100.0%) have a theoretical size of less than 5 with a likelihood ratio of 0.997 while the minimum number of cells is 0.10 (Table 3). This means that in the tea and energy in Burundi, the function workers occupy is not influenced by age. Enterprises have to take into account the ages of the workers in their careers to determine their retirements but do not take it into account in their position (Bilan et al., 2020; Chadee et al., 2021; Pitafi et al., 2020).

Pearson's Chi-Square between seniority (experience of workers inside the enterprise) and function is 0.291 with a degree of liberty of 70 and a value of 76,000 considering 88 cells (100.0%) have a theoretical size of less than 5 with a likelihood ratio of 0.992 while the minimum number of cells is 0.08 (Table 4). This means that in the tea and energy in Burundi, the function workers occupy is not influenced by seniority. Seniority in the enterprise means or determines how workers are experienced in the administration of their affairs. However, such a situation in Burundian enterprises is disappointing when it is compared to the principle of generating profit for the enterprise due to experience of workers. Such a position is confirmed by other researchers. Experienced workers resist the dynamic capabilities that alleviate enterprises' revenue anytime external shocks shake the enterprises for instance Norway enterprises (Aarstad et al., 2021) and Vietnamese information technology enterprises (Nguyen & Luu, 2023).

A useful extension was made among male managers who work with women and consider that women do not have responsibilities because they don't attend technical schools and higher education for engineering studies (Nduwimana & Sindayigaya, 2023a, 2023b), hence their limited numbers in the decision-making bodies of tea and energy companies. In consequence, this is a source of many issues causing even the phenomenon of street children (Sindayigaya, 2022). In these companies, all the conditions seem to be in place for a successful diversity policy, and while great progress has been made, inequalities persist in certain functions. Finally, it is likely that the context of tea and energy production companies presents particularities, and it would be interesting to carry out similar studies in private companies. In spite of this, it would appear that great progress has been made in recent years to give women the place they deserve in these companies. Thus, promoting a woman would profit humanity in a wholesome and children for their rights would be implemented (Sindayigaya, 2020, 2023; Sindayigaya & Nyabenda, 2022) remarked that they play a great role in house-

hold management and enterprises (Jonya et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion

We have seen from the examples of REGIDESO and OTB that recruiting and promoting women can be part of a policy to develop human capital. The company's diversity policy helps to broaden the pool of managers, including senior executives, by enabling women to break through the glass ceiling. It also opens the door to new talents who can contribute to the company's success. This approach requires us to question certain prejudices about the place of women in business and society. Obstacles remain in these companies, as traditions are ingrained saying that women can't do certain technical jobs. These observations show the value of the gender and employment approach, as it is difficult to limit oneself to causes linked either to individuals or to the organization's policy, or to the wider system in which it is embedded. The balance between men and women is at the heart of discussions at senior decision-making levels. One fact is that no woman has been CEO of either of these companies since they were founded. In the tea and energy companies we studied, the organizational culture favors diversity and is conducive to career advancement for women, and the tools have been put in place through staff by-laws and company regulations. The qualitative and quantitative nature of our study, based on a limited sample of female managers, means that we have to put our results into perspective, and the comments gathered illustrate the main issues raised in the literature on the evolution of female managers and the glass ceiling they often face.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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