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Full Length Research Paper

Influence of strategy formulation on the performance of catholic parishes in Kenya

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Measuring organizational performance has been a major preoccupation of many organizations in the modern times. Traditional indicators of performance have been largely financial based. However, with the help of Balanced Scorecard model, all organizations are adopting performance measuring techniques that incorporate non-financial indicators of performance. This study set out to establish the influence of strategy formulation on the performance of Catholic parishes in Kenya. This study was anchored on Resource Based View theory, Dynamic Capabilities theory, and the Balanced Scorecard model. The research employed mixed methods approach using convergent design. Quantitative data was collected by use of survey questionnaire, while qualitative data was collected through interviews. The target population was ninety members of parish pastoral council and nine parish priests from nine parishes found to be applying strategic plan. In analyzing and interpreting the quantitative data, descriptive techniques were employed. Thematic analysis technique was used to analyze qualitative data. Study findings revealed a positive influence between strategy formulation and performance of parishes. The parish priests who were interviewed reported that strategic plan enabled the parishes to have a sense of direction and helps in promoting the collaborative ministry between the priests and the lay Christians. The study concluded that strategy formulation plays an important role in enhancing performance of Catholic parishes in Kenya. The study restricted itself to Catholic parishes and therefore, further research on influence of strategy formulation on performance of other churches is recommended.

Key words: Strategic plan; parish performance; catholic parish; parish priest; parish pastoral council.

INTRODUCTION

This part of the study introduces the two main variables, that is, the independent variable which is strategy formulation, and the dependent variable which is performance. Strategy formulation concerns itself with the ends, means and conduct of the entire organization. It is a managerial process which starts by identifying the

objectives of the firm. It is a cyclical and continuous process, where objectives are constantly reviewed and updated (Cole, 2004). Planning process has to be orderly and the management team should demonstrate clear understanding of the organizational goals and how to attain them through execution of specific steps. Strategy

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formulation has a futuristic perspective as it involves identification of potential threats and opportunities in the external environment as well as strengths and weaknesses in the internal environment (Gupta, 2009).

Njeru (2015) observes that the idea of organizational performance is not new in the literature yet it is very complex to define. As such, it has different meaning in different contexts and because of this there is no universal definition of this concept. Ngui (2015) explains that organizational performance is evaluated by its actual output against its projected output. Otieno (2013) defines organizational performance as the achievement of an organization with respect to some set standards like quantified objectives of profitability.

To measure organizational performance, both monetary and non-monetary dimensions of the organization are critical. A combination of both aspects of performance helps the stakeholders to gain insights on testing and comparing their organizational performance, especially the extent of efficient and effective utilization of resources, ability to compete, and readiness to respond to any external pressure (Ali and Qun, 2019). Performance measurement is therefore indispensable in all organizations whether profit or nonprofit organizations.

The degree to which an organization's objectives have been realized is a measure of performance for that organization. Depending on the institution there are several ways of measuring the competitiveness and performance of the organizations. Churches, for example would use increase in membership, retention of old members, and increase in offerings as indicators of growth and performance.

Statement of the problem

Several studies on churches have established that many church leaders are inadequately prepared in the area of management especially planning. As such, very few churches have strategic plans. Chatira and Mwenje (2018) in their study concluded that church ministers in Zimbabwe faced management related challenges such as leadership, development, fund-raising, time management, and managing church's budget. Soko (2012) found out that church organizations in Kenya are not able to respond to changes since their managers are not skilled in change management skills. Kung'u (2007) noted that mainstream denominations in Kenya have serious challenges in implementing their strategies.

This study focused on parishes that were already applying strategic plans with the aim of establishing whether this practice was contributing to enhancing the performance of parishes. The small amount of literature on church and strategic management practices points to an area that is least studied and hence the current study aimed at adding new knowledge in this field. Of the studies reviewed, none focused specifically on the

Catholic parishes in Kenya and the study was deemed appropriate to generate a new perspective in the area of church management.

Theoretical framework

Any academic work must be anchored on a strong theoretical orientation for it to have an authoritative force in a given area of study. Kombo and Tromp (2006) defined theoretical framework as a set of related concepts founded on theories. It entails rationalized collection of materials which are originated from and collaborated by data. Resource Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities (DCs), and Balanced Scorecard (BSC) theories were selected to guide this study.

Resource Based View (RBV)

RBV is a technique of identifying and analyzing an organization's strategic uniqueness based on assessment of its distinct collection of skills, assets, intangibles, and capacity. Each firm develops competence from its resources to gain its competitive edge. The concept of competitive advantage is central to the strategic management literature (Barney, 2007). Key contributors in the development of RBV theory include Jay B. Barney, Gary Hamel, George S. Day, and Shelby D. Hunt.

Dynamic Capabilities (DCs) Theory

DCs theory is essentially an extension of the RBV. Although RBV recognizes the strategic advantages that the leverage of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources can offer a firm, RBV does not directly address the competitive implications of market changes as they relate to an organization's ability to adapt their resources and competencies to a rapidly changing environment (Teece et al., 1997).

This theory is proposed as a strategic framework to help explain the competitive advantages related to a firm's abilities to continually develop and adapt their competencies in anticipation of and response to environmental changes. The focus of DCs is the dynamic nature of the external environment (Teece et al., 1997). Capabilities represent an organization's capacity to identify distinct internal and external competencies and subsequently coordinate, reorganize and reshape them as environmental changes dictate. Dynamic capabilities evolve over within each firm making them a source of a sustainable competitive advantage.

DCs theory was considered appropriate for this study since the core subject matter of the study was strategy formulation. Parishes as organizations operate in a rapidly changing environment especially changes coming

with modern secularism. As such, parish ministry must always align itself to these changes for it to be able to address the complexities that come with secularism and religious indifference. For the parish to play its prophetic role in addressing these complexities, it must develop its own unique capabilities and which must keep evolving so as to address the ever increasing challenges.

Balanced scorecard (BSC) model

BSC is a performance measurement instrument devised by Robert Kaplan and David Norton in 1992. Its goal is to transform an institution's mission and vision into actions (Vliet, 2014). At the time of its development, there was a strong view that financial based measures of performance were less effective for modern business organizations. Kaplan and Norton embarked on a study to develop new techniques of measuring performance. The starting points of the BSC are grouped into four categories namely; finance, customer, internal business procedures, and innovation and learning (Yahanpath et al., 2017).

Today, BSC has been modified and is being applied by nonprofit and public sectors (Vliet, 2014). According to this theory, there has to be a balance between the short and long term objectives, leading and lagging indicators, financial and non-financial aspects, and external and internal dimensions. It is about harmonious interaction in which an improvement in one perspective must not hinder another perspective.

BSC has been employed in many organizations because it emphasizes the need for a balance between both monetary and non-financial indicators in a firm's system of managing performance (Kaplan and Norton, 1996). In this case, BSC underscores the necessity of managing and measuring intangible assets to achieve a competitive edge (Kaplan and Norton, 2004). This contribution of BSC makes it more ideal for measuring performance of a religious organization whose main objective is spiritual well-being instead of financial performance. Kaplan and Norton recommended a nine-step procedure for designing and executing the BSC in an organization. These steps are; conducting an overall firm assessment; establishing strategic points; defining perspectives and strategic goals; developing a strategic path; driving performance criterion; refining strategic moves; automating and communicating; executing the BSC in the entire firm; and finally collecting and evaluating data (Vliet, 2014).

Churches as human organizations require a performance measuring system such as BSC to enable them assess their soundness and relevance if they are to wither the complex and competitive atmosphere, even if they are non-profit organizations with transcendent goals (Yahanpath et al., 2017). In the recent decades, church members are increasingly demanding accountability from church leadership. Even the highly formalized churches

like the Catholic Church have not escaped the demand for accountability and transparency as noted by Economist (2014).

BSC was chosen as appropriate for the study because it goes beyond financial status as the sole measuring yardstick of organizational performance. Though financial measures are important for churches, they are not absolute and as such other measures of church performance must be sought. BSC accommodates other performance measurement parameters and hence its importance in this study. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2008), observe that the BSC model has gained popularity in organizations because of its expanded scope of performance measurement.

While some authors suggest that churches need not focus on finances as they measure their performances, other authors underscore the need for churches to incorporate a financial dimension in assessing performance since finances ensure sustainability of churches as organizations, even though they are themselves non-financial institutions. This study holds the latter view and it therefore included finance as one of the performance indicators. Authors who agree with this view include (Yahanpath et al., 2017).

Keyt (2001) employed the BSC to a church set-up where he adopted its four performance aspects, namely; internal business, customers, finance, and innovation and learning, and adapted them to four measurement perspectives for churches. The four perspectives were; membership, ministering, internal ministry processes, and innovation and learning.

To Keyt's modified BSC, Yahanpath et al. (2017), proposed further modification to the adapted BSC model. He suggested incorporation of financial aspect from Kaplan's and Norton's original BSC. The new model therefore included five perspectives namely; Finance, membership, external ministry, internal ministry, and innovation and learning. This study adopted this model as it incorporates the financial perspective thereby making it a more comprehensive measure of performance of parishes.

External ministry has to do with evangelism and as such the church is in constant need of new converts in order to flourish. Just as businesses seek to increase their customer numbers, the church must seek to recruit new members. Under internal ministry, the church should meet the spiritual and social needs of its members. Internal ministry activities according to (Keyt, 2001), include; preaching, teaching, counseling, children and youth pastoral care, care of the poor in the church among other pastoral care related activities. Internal ministry corresponds to original BSC internal business processes.

Finance perspective in the context of a church organization has no profit component which is a key component in the profit making organizations. Finances in the church mainly come from weekly collections, tithes, and donations. These are used to meet church budgets. Innovation and learning seek to foster the improvement of

performance by offering support to the other perspectives (Kaplan and Norton, 1993). Churches ought to constantly adapt to their environment and the emerging needs of their members by embracing new ministerial approaches, forming new leaders and empowering them for the ministry. Thus innovation and learning is meant to help the church recognize and address the ever dynamic needs of their church membership. This model specifically addressed the dependent variable of the study, which is performance of parishes. Performance in this study refers to the extent that a parish attains its pastoral mission effectively.

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE REVIEW

Grobler et al. (2012) studied the ability of Reformed Churches of South Africa to craft and implement congregational strategy. The findings indicated a deficiency of methods and skills to formulate and execute strategy. This study revealed a managerial weakness in the ministers. The study recommended management training of church ministers. The study focused on the reformed churches of South Africa and their capacity to develop a strategy. Lack of training in management skills among church ministers is therefore a major setback when it comes to employment of strategic management practices in running churches.

Chatira et al. (2018) investigated the development of management techniques for managing churches in pastoral formation programs in Zimbabwe. They did a case study with the aim of establishing whether management science can also be applicable in managing churches. The study concluded management was a challenge in the running of churches in Zimbabwe. Challenges faced by pastors included fund raising, managing church's budget, leadership development, and time management among others.

Soko (2012) did a study on change management in Kenya in the context of Catholic Organizations. The study was exploratory and sought to investigate how Catholic organizations in Kenya respond to changes in environment that they operate. Soko found out that these organizations are not swift in responding to change and hence skills in change management are necessary for those in charge of these organizations. A lack of the necessary skills to respond to changes in environment lead us to conclude that church organizations in Kenya do not make effective use of strategic management practices.

Slabbert and Mukhongo (2018) studied the effect of strategic planning on the performance of United Nations Development program (UNDP) in Mogadishu. The study employed descriptive design and a questionnaire served as the instrument of collecting data. The findings indicated there was no significant association between strategic planning practice and performance. This study

took place in Mogadishu while the current study aimed to establish whether strategic planning together with strategic implementation and evaluation have any association with the performance of parishes.

Mohammad and Wang (2019) investigated the relationship between strategic management practices and the performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh. The results concluded that planning, implementing and controlling strategies all have a positive contribution to the growth of SMEs in Bangladesh. The current study tested the same variables but in the context of parishes which are religious and non-profit making institutions.

Karoki (2016) researched on the influence of strategic planning on Christian churches in Nairobi, Kenya. The research applied cross-sectional design. To collect primary data, a questionnaire was used. Research participants were church ministers, pastors, administrators and church members. The research showed that many churches in Nairobi have a strategic plan which enhances the performance of Christian churches. The researcher recommended involvement of church members in the planning process in order to make them own the strategy and expedite its implementation. This study focused on churches in Nairobi only while the intended research will cover catholic parishes in Kenya.

Adetayo (2018) examined strategy formulation in relation to performance of selected manufacturing organizations in Lagos. A sample of 171 respondents was used. The findings showed a positive association between performance of firms studied and strategy formulation. The researcher concluded by recommending that top management should be more active in the strategy formulation process for attainment of set organizational objectives which will in turn facilitate the growth and development of organizations in Nigeria. It was also recommended that it is necessary for organizations to pay attention to the environment in which they operate in and take it into full consideration when formulating and implementing strategic plans (Adetayo, 2018). This study was done on a profit making organization while this study focused on parishes which are not for profit organizations.

Olumuyiwa et al. (2012) did a study whose goal was to find out the connection between planning and organization's productivity and also to assess if planning improves the performance of employees in an organization. According to the findings, planning enhances productivity as well as workers' performance in an enterprise. The research used a questionnaire that was distributed to 120 staff of Sterling bank Nigeria Plc. The study examined planning alone while this study included other two components, namely; implementation and evaluation of strategy.

Mutia et al. (2016), studied how the setting of the strategy direction of a church influences its growth in infrastructure. Descriptive correlation design was

employed and participants included bishops and clergy of the five largest church denominations in Kenya that is, the Roman Catholic Church, African Inland Church (AIC), Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK), Methodist Church in Kenya and Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). Strategy formulation was found to have a positive contribution to the growth of church infrastructure and involvement of church leaders in the planning process was recommended. This study narrowed its scope to infrastructural growth of churches, while this study sought to measure varied aspects of performance with infrastructural growth being one of them.

Taiwo and Idunnu (2010) examined the contribution of strategic formulation on performance and survival of organizations. The First bank of Nigeria was used as the case. In the study, survey questionnaires were given to 100 respondents consisting of both junior and senior employees of different First bank branches in Lagos (Appendix Table 1). This study concluded that planning improves performance of an organization and hence its survival. The study investigated a bank which is a for profit organization, while this study focused on parishes which are non-profit organizations.

Siengo and Kibuine (2015) sought to determine the influence of governance structure on performance of churches. Cross sectional descriptive design was used where sixty two evangelical churches constituted the study population and only senior church administrators and clergy were chosen to be the study participants. Study results showed that governance structure play a great role in the performance of churches in terms of their ministry. This research restricted itself to leadership structure which falls under strategy implementation, while this study in addition examined planning, and evaluating aspects of strategy.

Nango (2017) investigated management of change as a tool for improving performance of churches. Target population was the Anglican and African inland churches of Kenya, where the participants included bishops, deans of provinces, and administration secretaries. Descriptive design was used in this research. Performance indicators tested in the study were; increase in number of church members, ability to retain old members, and increase in tithes and offertories. The study concluded that organizational leadership, culture, and good communication help a lot in promoting performance of the ACK and AIC churches. The scope of this study was ACK and AIC churches, while the scope of this study was catholic parishes.

Awuku-Gyampoh and Asare (2019) conducted a study to assess the role of church governance structure on church development. The study was done in Accra, Ghana. The study employed content analysis and thirty pastors participated in filling questionnaires with open-ended questions. Governance structure was found to have a significant contribution to church development. This study focused on management in general while this research dwelt on strategic practices of management.

Strategy formulation in the context of a Parish

A typical parish pastoral plan like a plan of any other organization contains some key components, such as; mission, values, vision, priorities or focus areas, pillars, goals, timeline, and finally resources needed. A parish mission statement must articulate a mission that is specific to its situation while being consistent with the mission of Jesus Christ (Pickett, 2007).

While formulating parish strategy, planners are encouraged to consider the widest possible set of resources that may be applied or developed to support goal accomplishment. The planning process will be helpful in identifying the highest priority resource needs as well as where resource scarcity is affecting mission achievement. General categories of typical parish resources include; People (clergy, religious, paid staff, lay leaders, volunteer ministers), Facilities (church building, office, priests' rectory among others), equipment (owned, leased, shared), financial (operating funds, capital funds).

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study applied convergent design of mixed methods approach. Mixed methods approach involves philosophical assumptions that guide the collection and analysis of data using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bryman, 2013).

Convergent design emphasizes the relationship between the study variables. The study design allowed the researcher to describe the relevant aspects of the study from the respondents. Concurrent or convergent research design integrates both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell, 2014). Two instruments, namely a survey questionnaire for collecting quantitative data and an interview guide for collecting qualitative data were administered concurrently.

The study location was the area covering the 26 Catholic dioceses in Kenya that means all the 47 counties of Kenya. Eleven parishes were purposively identified and selected. These parishes were selected since they were the only ones applying strategic management practices to run their operations. Of the eleven parishes, two parishes were used for piloting purposes, while the remaining nine parishes were used for the main study.

Study respondents were ten parish leaders selected purposively and they included the parish priest, the parish head catechist, and the chairperson of parish pastoral council (PPC). Other officials included parish finance committee chair person as well as the chairperson parish development committee. Other important respondents were the parish treasurer, Catholic Men Association (CMA) chairman, Catholic Women Association (CWA) chairlady, Parish secretary, and the parish vice chairperson. These leaders were selected for the study since they are the parish decision makers and therefore they understand better the affairs of the parish especially when it comes to the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the parish strategic plan. They are also better placed to tell whether the strategic plan is bearing positive fruits or not.

In the research, survey questionnaire and interview guide were used for the purposes of collecting primary data in this study, survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. Some questionnaires were distributed through drop and pick method, while others were sent via email. Sending questionnaire by email was necessitated by covid-19 pandemic restrictions on movement.

Interview guide was used to collect qualitative data. However, since conducting interviews is an expensive activity, only parish

Table 1. Reliability statistics.

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
0.928	29

Source: Author

Table 2. Response rate.

Response	Total	Percent
Returned	58	64.44
Unreturned	32	35.56
Total	90	100

Source: Author

Table 3. Gender of participants (n=58).

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	34	59
Female	24	41
Total	58	100.0

Source: Author

Table 4. Position of the participants (n=58).

Position	Frequency	5
Catechists	10	17
PPC Chairpersons	13	22
Finance Committee Chairpersons	11	18
Development Committee Chairpersons	8	13
Others	18	30
Total	58	100.0

Source: Author

priests were interviewed. Parish priests were also preferred for the interviews since they are in charge of parishes and they majorly determine whether the parish applies a strategic plan or not.

RESULTS

This part of the study presents the findings of the study as collected by both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Reliability test

In this study, the researcher applied Cronbach alpha model to determine the internal reliability of the items in

the questionnaire. Reliability test results of this study are shown in Table 1.

From Table 1, the 29 questions having scale were subjected to a reliability test by the researcher and the value for Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.928 which indicates a very high level of internal consistency for the scale used by the researcher. This implies that the questionnaire administered to the participants was reliable.

Response rate

The study targeted 90 respondents from the nine parishes selected purposively for this study. Ninety questionnaires were therefore administered and fifty eight duly filled questionnaires were returned and this is given in Table 2.

From Table 2, the response rate was 64.44%. According to Bryman (2016), and Wallima, (2016), a response rate of 85% and above is excellent, 70- 85% is very good, 60-69% is acceptable, 50- 59% is barely acceptable, while below 50% is not acceptable. The response rate of 64.44% was therefore within the acceptable range and the researcher proceeded with the data analysis. This response rate is attributed to the frequent closures of the churches due to Covid-19 pandemic which made it difficult for the researcher to collect back all the questionnaires.

Gender of participants

The researcher was interested in knowing the gender composition church leaders in parishes of a church whose membership is dominated by women yet men dominated key leadership positions. Gender distribution is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 is tabulated as follows n =58 representing the total number of participants. Male participants were 34 being 59% while the females were 24 with 41%.

Leadership position of study participants

In an attempt to get authentic findings on the influence of strategic management practices on performance of parishes, the researcher opted to focus on key parish leaders. Such leaders participate in the running the affairs of parishes. Ten leaders targeted in the study were; the parish chair person, treasurer, secretary, development and finance committees chair persons, Catholic men and Catholic women associations chair persons, and parish vice chairperson and vice secretary. Parish priests who are in charge of parishes were subjected to interviews. Composition of parish leaders who participated in the study is given in Table 4.

Table 5. Year of establishment.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
Year of establishment	47	1917	2014	1989.17	21.532
Valid N (list wise)	47				

Source: Author

Table 6. Duration of using strategic plan.

Parameter	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Duration of using Strategic Plan	53	1	10	4.62	2.640
Valid N (list wise)	53				

Source: Author

Table 7. Involvement of parishioners.

Parameter		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	55	95
	No	3	5
Total		58	100.0

Source: Author

From Table 4, it is clear that the majority of the 30% participants were having other roles such as, parish secretary, treasurer, Catholic men Association chairpersons, Catholic women association chairpersons, and parish vice chair persons and secretaries, while 22% comprised of parish pastoral council (PPC) chairpersons, 18% were finance committee chairpersons, 17% were head parish catechists and 13% were development committee chairpersons.

Year of establishment of the parishes

The researcher was interested in knowing the year the target parishes were established. This information was to give a clear picture of the duration the parish has existed in relation to the period it has applied strategic management practices. This is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 presents the descriptive analysis of the year that the parishes were established. From the table it can be tabulated that there were 47 participants who filled the question. 1917 was the year that the oldest parish was established while the newest was established in 2014. The mean for the years of establishment is 1989.

Duration of using strategic plan

The researcher found important to establish the duration

the parish had actually applied a strategic plan. This is necessary since it informs research as to how much parish performance can be attributed to parish performance. The distribution of how long each of the nine parishes has practiced strategic plan is given in Table 6.

From Table 6, the shortest period the parish has used the Strategic plan is one year while the parish that has used the strategic plan the longest is ten years. The mean years that parishes had applied their strategic plan is 4 years. Only five participants did not fill the question since the total number of participants was 58.

Involvement of parishioners in strategy formulation

As to whether parishioners were engaged in the process of formulating the strategy and its subsequent implementation and evaluation, Table 7 presents the response of the study participants.

According to Table 7, 95% of the participants agreed to that fact that parishioners were involved in the formulation of their parish strategic plan while, 5% felt that parishioners were not involved in the establishment of their parish strategic plan.

Streamlining of parish activities

The researcher was interested in knowing whether parishioners felt that their parish strategic plan helped in streamlining parish activities. Table 8 presents the findings.

Fifty-two or 90% of the total participants choose the yes response, agreeing to the fact that by having strategic plan in their parish, it has assisted in streamlining the activities of their parishes while six participants (10%) were of the opinion that strategic plan has not assisted in streaming either of their activities.

Table 8. Streamlining of activities (n=58).

Parameter		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	52	90
	No	6	10
Total		58	100.0

Source: Author

Table 9. Growth of church membership (n=58).

Parameter		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	56	96.6
	No	2	3.4
Total		58	100.0

Source: Author

Table 10. Increase of offertories (n=58).

Parameter		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	57	98.3
	No	1	1.7
Total		58	100.0

Source: Author

Table 11. Growth towards self-reliance (n=58).

Parameter		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	57	98.3
	No	1	1.7
Total		58	100.0

Source: Author

Table 12. Modern infrastructure (n=58).

Parameter		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Yes	54	93
	No	4	7
Total		58	100.0

Source: Author

Growth of church membership

The study sought to establish the extent to which the participants would attribute the increase in the church members to the effective adoption of parish strategy. Table 9 gives the results.

Fifty-six, representing 96.6% participants were of the opinion that their parish membership had increased due to strategic plan. Two members, 3.4% did not respond to the question as per Table 9.

Increase of church offertories

The study sought to establish whether application of strategic plan in the parish had assisted the parish to report an increase in offertories. Table 10 presents the findings.

According to Table 10, 57 participants representing 98.3% agreed that offertories in the parishes had increased. One participant (1.7%) was of the contrary opinion that offertories had not increased.

Growth towards self-reliance

This question sought to establish whether the parish strategy has helped the parish to be self-reliant in terms of finances. The findings are given in Table 11.

From Table 11, fifty-seven, 98.3% of the participants were of the opinion that having strategic plan in their parishes has helped them to be self-reliant while one, 1.7% of the total participants did not fill the question.

Development of modern infrastructure

This question sought to establish whether the parish strategy has helped the parish to grow in terms of modern infrastructure. Table 12 gives the results.

Table 12 portrays that 54, 93% of total participants agreed to the fact that their churches have improved their infrastructure attributing this growth to their use of strategic plan. Four, 7% of the participants were of the contrary opinion that in their parish though they have strategic plan, their infrastructure is not yet modern.

Influence of strategy formulation on performance of parish ministry Kenyan parishes

The results highlighting the influence of strategy formulation on the performance of parish ministry are presented in Table 13.

From Table 13, Majority of the participants with 60.3 and 15.5% agreed to the fact that strategic plan of their parish has helped them respond to external environment. Nineteen percent of the participants were of the opinion that strategic plan has helped them moderately while 5.2% they posited that the strategic plan has to a less extent helped them in responding to changes in the external environment.

On the question about the extent to which the parish

Table 13. Strategy formulation and its influence on parish performance.

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1. To what extent does the parish strategic plan help the parish respond to changes in external environment?	9 (15.5%)	35(60.3%)	11(19%)	3(5.2%)	0
2. To what extent does the parish rely on its strategic plan for its direction?	16(27.6%)	34 (58.6%)	8 (13.8%)	0	0
3. To what extent does the parish strategy help the parish realize its goals and objectives?	17(29.3%)	29 (50%)	12 (20.7%)	0	0
4. To what extent is the parish strategic plan accepted by the congregation?	13(22.4%)	18 (31%)	26(44.8%)	1(1.7%)	0

Source: Author

Table 14. Performance of parish ministry.

Questions	5	4	3	2	1
To what extent has the parish consistently witnessed an increase in number of Christians attending Sunday masses?	3(5.2%)	2(3.4%)	18(31%)	27(46.6%)	8(13.8%)
To what extent has the parish witnessed increase in adult baptisms?	3(5.2%)	3(5.2%)	24(41.4%)	22(37.9%)	6(10.3%)
To what extent has the parish witnessed increase in infant baptisms?	4(6.9%)	0	18(31%)	23(39.7%)	13(22.4%)
To what extent has the parish witnessed increase in confirmations?	6(10.3%)	2(3.4%)	20(34.5%)	23(39.7%)	7(12.1%)
To what extent has the parish witnessed increase in sacrament of matrimony?	1(1.7%)	6(10.3%)	29(50%)	20(34.5%)	2(3.4%)
To what extent has the parish witnessed an increase in offertories?	3(5.2%)	3(5.2%)	12(20.7%)	21(36.2%)	19(32.8%)
To what extent has the parish witnessed growth in physical facilities like new church buildings and rectories?	2(3.4%)	7(12.1%)	9(15.5%)	20(34.5%)	20(34.5%)
To what extent have the parish income generating projects expanded?	2(3.4%)	4(6.9%)	34(58.6%)	12(20.7%)	6(10.3%)
To what extent has the parish increased its resources towards charity activities to the poor?	2(3.4%)	7(12.1%)	36(62.1%)	6(10.3%)	7(12.1%)

Source: Author

rely on its strategic plan for direction, majority of the participants agreed to a great extent with 27.6% and 58.6% while only 13.8% who were examined said that their parishes depend moderately on their strategic plan for direction. Most of the parishioners 50% and 29.3% agreed to a very and great extent that their parish strategic plan has helped them realize parish goals and objectives.

Twenty point seven percent of the participants portrayed that, moderately has their parish strategic plan helped them to realize the parish goals and objectives.

Performance of parish ministry

The study sought to establish the performance of parishes in terms of several identified indicators in relation to the extent that this performance or achievements were attributable to the adoption of strategic management practices by the target parishes. Table 14 presents the findings.

Analysis of qualitative data

Qualitative data from the interviews revealed the following:

Understanding of a parish strategic plan: The question was posed to enquire about the understanding of the strategic plan in the context of a parish. Analysis of the response to this question established five themes through open coding which were reduced to three themes through axial coding and which further reduced to one main theme. The respondents felt that the parish strategic plan is a blueprint of what the parish should look like at a defined future.

Components of parish strategic plan: As regards to the question on the components of strategic plan, the analysis of the interview report through open coding established ten themes. These themes were reduced to six through axial coding and further reduced to three

main themes. The respondents felt that needs assessment, vision and mission of the parish are core components of strategic plan.

Benefits of parish strategic plan: A question was posed to find out the benefits of strategic plan in the parish. Analysis of interview data established thirty four themes through open coding. These themes were reduced to eleven through axial coding and later reduced to six main themes. The respondents reported that strategic plan creates a sense of ownership of the parish, it enhances collaboration between the parishioners and their parish priest, it contributes to growth of parish population, offertories and other contributions, there is smooth transition and continuity when the parish priest is transferred and generally the strategy offers the parish a sense of direction.

Developing a parish strategic plan: The respondents were asked to describe the procedure of preparing a parish strategic plan and the interview report established twenty three themes through open coding, five themes after axial coding which were further reduced to three main themes. The respondents said that SWOT analysis, formation of a steering committee and constant communication with the parishioners are core to strategy formulation process.

Challenges encountered while developing parish strategic plan

The question was posed to probe the challenges encountered during parish strategy formulation and the report analyzed through open coding established eighteen themes, which were reduced to five through axial coding and further reduced to three main music. The respondents felt that lack of awareness about parish strategy, lack of finances and time were the main challenges they encountered through the process of developing parish strategy.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings made it clear that the existence of parish strategic plan helps in enhancing the performance of parishes. This finding is in agreement with a study by Mohammad and Wang (2019) who investigated the relationship between strategic management and performance of SMEs in Bangladesh. This research concluded that planning has a positive effect on the growth of SMEs in Bangladesh.

Similarly, findings are also in agreement with the findings by Karoki (2016) who tested the importance of strategic planning on Christian churches in Nairobi and the findings revealed that strategy helps in enhancing the performance of churches in Nairobi.

The results of this research also concurred with the findings of Adetayo (2018) who examined strategy formulation in relation to performance of selected manufacturing organizations in Lagos. According to the findings of this research, there was a positive relationship between strategy formulation and performance of manufacturing firms.

The findings further agree with the conclusions by Olumuyiwa et al. (2012) who did a study to find out the connection between planning and organization's productivity. The current study findings revealed that strategy improves the productivity of the firm.

The findings also concur with the results of Mutia et al. (2016) who sought to establish whether strategy of a church has any influence in the growth of church infrastructure. Their findings revealed that strategy contributed to the growth of church infrastructure.

The study's conclusions also concur with the findings by Taiwo et al. (2010) who examined the contribution of strategy formulation on productivity and survival of organizations in Nigeria. The findings showed that strategy improves the performance of organizations.

However, the findings do not agree with the study by Slabbert et al. (2018) on the importance of strategic planning in enhancing the performance of UNDP in Mogadishu. Slabbert did not establish a positive connection between strategic planning and performance of UNDP in Mogadishu unlike in the findings of this study.

Further, a study by Khoshtaria (2018) aimed to establish the impact of strategic planning on performance, concluded that strategic planning had an impact on performance of organizations in Georgia USA. These results are similar to the findings of this study where strategic planning was found to affect the performance of parishes in a positive way.

Accordingly, this study is also in agreement with the findings made by Alosani et al. (2020) who was examining the role of strategic planning on effectiveness of Dubai police. Like the current study, Alosani et al. (2020) found out that strategic planning played a positive role in enhancing performance.

Bert et al. (2019) set out to establish whether strategic planning improves performance of organizations. The findings of the study tallied with the findings of the current study where both studies found a positive contribution of strategic planning on development of organizations.

Moreso, this study confirms the findings of a study carried out by Monye et al. (2018) who sought to examine the function of strategic planning in the improvement of organizations. The findings indicated that strategic planning contributes in the improvement of organizations.

Similarly, the findings of this research concurred with the findings by Maina et al. (2020) who sought to determine the influence of strategy formulation on productivity of state corporations in Kenya. Formulation of strategy was found to be a contributor on the performance of government institutions.

Njoroge (2018) examined the effects of planning on

organizational performance of event organizing enterprises in Nairobi. These two studies concluded that strategic planning helps in enhancing performance of organizations.

The study confirms the findings of Nzuki (2017) who studied the importance of strategic planning on performance of Sandoz GmbH Kenya. Both studies established that strategic planning plays an important role in the improvement of organizations. Similarly, the results of this research concurred with the findings of Opiyo (2016) who did a study with the aim of understanding the contribution of strategic planning on performance of community organizations in Migori County. These two studies found out that strategic planning leads to effectiveness of organizations.

The outcomes of this objective on strategy formulation in this study have agreed with all empirical studies that were reviewed except the study by Slabber et al. (2018). All these studies have established the importance of strategy formulation in promoting better performance of organizations. They have therefore recommended the practice of developing strategic plans for all organizations.

Additionally, the findings from interviews conducted on parish priests indicated a general agreement that strategic planning is very helpful in enhancing pastoral ministry of a parish. According to the interviewed priests, strategic planning creates a sense of ownership of the parish by the parishioners especially where they are involved in the SWOT analysis and the subsequent preparation of the strategy. They indicated that strategic planning promotes the spirit of collaboration because it defines the mission and vision of the parish, and the role each parishioner should play in the process of realizing the vision and mission of the parish.

Further, during the interviews, the parish priests also indicated the growth in membership of the parishes and also in the church associations like CMA, CWA and youth group. They attributed this growth to the pastoral dimension of strategic planning like outreach programs and renewal of the Spirit of small Christian communities. Increase of parish revenue was also attributed to the existence of parish strategic planning. This comes about due to the involvement of parishioners in the planning of projects as well resource mobilization activities in the parish.

Likewise, another benefit of parish strategy that was identified during the interviews was smooth transition when one parish priest is transferred and is replaced by another. Strategic plan helps in the continuity of parish projects in progress at the time of transfer. All interviewees agreed that strategic plan gives the parish the sense of direction, and they all recommended that all parishes should be encouraged to develop strategic plans.

The small number of parishes practicing strategic management approaches confirms the view of Myer

(2013) who holds that some church leaders are skeptical over strategy formulation partly because they lack training in management and partly due to belief that planning has no biblical foundation and as such churches being spiritual organizations should be managed in a spiritual manner.

Conclusion

In general, empirical literature reviewed in this study shows that strategic plan has a positive impact on the performance of organizations both for-profit and non-profit. The findings of this study are also in agreement with these previous studies. Strategic plan therefore helps catholic parishes to improve their performance both in the area of pastoral and spiritual care as well as in the physical development of the parish. Findings from the interviews revealed that strategic plans help in creating a sense of ownership of the parish among the parishioners as they are given a room to participate in affairs of the parish. Strategic plan was also found to be core in providing the sense of direction for the parish. The parish priests attributed the accelerated of growth of their parishes to the development and implementation of strategic plan. This growth is reflected in the increase of parishioners as well as growth of parish infrastructure.

As per the findings of this study, it is recommended that all parishes should be encouraged to embrace the practice of strategy formulation. This practice helps in identifying the needs of the parishioners, possible solutions to these needs and subsequently the strategies to address the needs.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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APPENDIX

Appendix Table 1: Survey Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS

DO NOT indicate your name for confidentiality sake. Honesty will be highly appreciated.

SECTION A: Personal Background

Please tick the appropriate answer

1. Gender of the respondent
Male
Female
2. Which position do you hold in your parish?
Parish Priest
Catechist
Parish Pastoral council chairperson
Finance Committee chairperson
Development Committee chairperson
3. When was the Parish started _____

SECTION B: Influence of strategy formulation on the performance of parish ministry.

1. For how long has the parish employed strategic plan?
2. Was Planning done with the involvement of all parishioners? Yes No
3. Has the strategic plan helped to streamline operations of the parish? Yes No
4. Has the use of a strategic plan helped in the in the growth of Church membership in the parish? Yes No
5. Has the strategy played a role in increasing church offertories from parishioners? Yes No
6. Has the strategic plan helped the parish to grow towards self-reliance? Yes No
7. Has the strategy assisted the parish in the growth of modern infrastructural assets like churches and rectories? Yes No

Use the following scale to respond to the questions that follow:

Key: 1= very great extent, 2= a great extent, 3= moderate extent, 4= a less extent, 5= not at all

No.	Questions	1	2	3	4	5
1	To what extent does the parish strategic plan help the parish respond to changes in external environment?					
2	To what extent does the parish rely on its strategic plan for its direction?					
3	To what extent does the parish strategy help the parish realize its goals and objectives?					
4	To what extent is the parish strategic plan accepted by the congregation?					

Source: Author

Full Length Research Paper

Breaking the glass ceiling: A study of single academic women in one Zimbabwean university

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The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that contributed to the success of single women lecturers who had hit the glass ceiling to become some of the respected PhD holders and professors at one university in Zimbabwe. The study employs the Africana Womanism theory, whereby the effects of the core independent dimensions of the theory are analyzed, namely; self-naming, self-defining, strength and ambition. Using the qualitative research approach, the research employed a case study design where in-depth interviews were used to collect data. Ten single female lecturers who are heads of families were purposively sampled from two departments under the School of Education. Data analysis was done using thematic coding. Findings indicate that factors which assisted single-mother lecturers to achieve their goals in their careers include positive attitudes, strong personalities, mentorship from colleagues and self-motivation. Recommendations were made for universities to promote factors which empower single women lecturers through facilitating discussions of identity issues, eliminating the obstacles that prevent them from advancing, and fostering work environments that allow them to work collaboratively in order to break the glass ceiling.

Key words: Glass ceiling, family, single parenting, women empowerment.

INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe has made great efforts towards equality in the workplace, especially in the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development (MHTESTD). However, despite the progress that has been made for women in the workplace and universities in particular in recent years, there is still a very strong likelihood that the boss is male. If we take a look at leadership employment by gender on universities in the country, currently only two (2) universities out of the

twenty one (21) are being headed by women, meaning that only two women break the glass ceiling in being university vice chancellors.

There is practical evidence that provides suggestions that the number of women lecturers who can be equated to directors is very much lower than those of men. The initial thresholds are also higher for women to achieve success, as reflected in Kurup et al. (2011) works on women directors. Thus, it is imperative for organizations

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to create workplaces where a proper policy framework is in place to improve women's access and opportunities (Abbas et al., 2021). The new policy on Zimbabwe's Ministry of Higher and Tertiary, Science and Technology in March 2017 highlighted the Education 5.0 company best practices that can help close economic gender gaps. The gender gap report of 2017 suggests a few types of changes when it added innovation and industrialization, including cash transfer programmes, equal access to credit and financial services, parental leave, affordable childcare facilities, innovative hiring processes, redesigned career paths, and meaningful mentoring programmes (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2013). To engage in these change initiatives, universities need to adopt tools and techniques to identify and enable women to overcome the challenges they face as academics.

It is almost universally acknowledged that higher education institutions (HEIs) play a fundamental role in the progression of advanced knowledge economies (Secundo et al., 2010). Nevertheless, today universities as organizations, like many other institutions, do operate in a volatile and dynamic environment in which they need to respond and adapt swiftly to the changes in the environment (Middle et al., 2007). This is because of a paradigmatic shift from non-profit institutions to for-profit organizations that call for a more entrepreneurial mode in leading the higher education institutions (Gibb et al., 2013). According to Terry (1995, cited in Abbas et al., 2021), empowerment research agrees that the conditions under which teachers work are often accompanied by too much isolation, which denies them a sense of efficacy, success, and self-worth. In order to break the 'glass ceiling' that these barriers form, universities need to do more to eliminate the obstacles that prevent women from advancing and to foster work environments that allow them to work collaboratively to achieve their goals (Akkaya, 2020). This study focuses on the factors that facilitated the success of single mothers in academia as university lecturers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Glass ceiling

The term 'glass ceiling' was used to explain the hidden barriers to women's career advancement that were going unrecognized in the 1970s (Rana and Raju, 2019). Glass ceiling is also described as a well enshrined phenomenon supported by conclusive evidence (Man et al., 2009 cited in Al-Manasra, 2013). Although the glass ceiling could exist at different levels in different organizations or industries, the term naturally is used to suggest a barrier for women from entering into top-level management positions (Akkaya, 2020; Amaefula, 2021). These beliefs of women glass ceiling are similar to the patriarchal thinking where women's place is believed to be in the

kitchen, hence, when given a chance to work, they are not accorded higher posts (Abbas et al., 2021). Al-Manasra (2013:40) avers that while women traditionally encounter a "glass ceiling", men are more likely to be accelerated into management positions by means of a "glass escalator".

The glass ceiling is usually a result of unconscious bias, innate beliefs about ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, social class and religion (Akkaya, 2020). In some cases, glass ceilings have become a problem in the culture of an organization (Rana and Raju, 2019; Abbas et al., 2021). Glass ceilings are unwritten rules and decisions made under the influence of unconscious biases in organizations, that is, families, schools, churches and universities included.

However, glass ceilings are rarely in the form of strictly defined corporate policies and they are almost never deliberately obvious (Akkaya, 2020). It is because of these barriers that women are more likely to face restricted access, limited opportunities, low esteem and lower compensation, which prevent them from gaining promotions (Canning et al., 2020; Abbas et al., 2021). Usually, people at the top deny that a glass ceiling exists, mainly because they did not experience it themselves, or in some cases they fear that acknowledging it would threaten their positions of power (Canning et al., 2020).

In Zimbabwe, it is critical for women to break the glass ceiling since the current emphasis in Higher Education is on Education 5.0, which focuses on the five pillars which are research, teaching, community services, innovation and industrialization. The lecturers are expected to empower their students to use their theoretical content knowledge in the creation of tangible goods and services in order to alleviate the country's unemployment crisis (Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, 2018; Keche, 2021).

Challenges faced in single parenting

Research has proved that single parenthood is associated with a lot of challenges and adjustments. Some of these challenges include financial instability, time management, balancing different responsibilities such as work, social life and child rearing, sometimes with little or no help from others (Mugove, 2017; Mupfumira, 2017; Akkaya, 2020; Abbas et al., 2021). With reference to Korea, Kim and Kim (2020) report that single-parent status of families is mainly caused by divorce, and in most cases single parents often face the challenge of blaming themselves for having failed in life and may be stressed by perceived negative societal sentiments. Kim and Kim's (2020) study established that economic difficulties strongly affected the quality of life in the single mother group, since they had no other adult to split financial responsibilities with, as the case with

married couples. These authors further observed that skills and education help single mothers in securing employment that offers dependable income and a higher standard of living. In the context of this study, pursuing a PhD and subsequent professorial position would afford a single-mother lecturer the opportunity for a better grade, which can lead to a better lifestyle (Canning et al., 2020; Kim and Kim, 2020).

Statement of the problem

The value of this study is to highlight first-hand information on factors that assisted the single-mother lecturers at one university in Zimbabwe to break the glass ceiling in their academic careers. Studies conducted elsewhere (Adisa et al., 2020; Abbas et al., 2021) and in Zimbabwe (Chabaya et al., 2009; Hlatywayo et al., 2014; Motilal and Chakanyuka, 2021) have mainly focused on challenges faced by women in accessing management positions at primary, secondary and tertiary levels as well as in companies. To the best knowledge of the researchers, not much has been documented in Zimbabwe on factors that assist single women to advance to higher levels in academia in a university, against all odds. The study was guided by the following research question: *What factors contribute towards empowering single women lecturers to break the glass ceiling in a university context?*

Theoretical framework

This study is framed and guided by the Africana-Womanism Theory. The theory is a traditional African concept and broadly defined, it is a social theory based on the history and everyday experiences of specifically Black women (Hudson-Weems, 1997). Africana-Womanism Theory is a family-oriented ideology, deeply rooted in African culture and Afro-centricity that focuses on the dynamic relationship between men and women of African descent (Amaefula, 2021).

For the purpose of this study, we shall concentrate on only four aspects of this theory which are: self-naming, self-defining, ambition and strength.

Self-naming is the first of two Africana-Womanist methods for authentically identifying women of Afro-descent. This is best for single-mother lecturers who need to identify themselves. It involves defining oneself on the basis of one's self-perception, life experiences, and personal needs. Self-naming also promotes looking back into the past in an effort to recover one's historical and cultural origin. It promotes flexibility and planning for the future as subjects modify their life experiences based on such reshaped identities. Self-naming offers the power to name oneself (single-mother lecturer) in one's own voice "I am who I say I am" (Msila, 2021; Keche,

2021). Therefore, a single-mother lecturer is her own person operating according to forces in her own life. Most importantly, it translates experience into identity. Self-naming assures single-mother lecturers that they possess an identity that empowers them to act on behalf of themselves as well as their communities. "This is the reality of my existence" is a self-defining method that gives one an identity (Opara et al., 2020; Msila, 2021; Keche, 2021). Self-definition allows Black women to describe their everyday experiences through their own point of view of the world, against that of the dominant patriarchy (Adisa et al., 2020, Opara et al., 2020; Msila, 2021). With reference to the theory of Africana-Womanism, Hudson-Weems (1997) believes that the Africana man does not have institutional power to subdue the Africana woman and neither does the woman see him as her enemy. As self-definers, single-mother lecturers in this study were expected to narrate their own truths irrespective of 'official' stories that previously created uninformed and imagined histories for Black women.

For single women in the Shona culture of Zimbabwe, there is no partner who can help them, especially in a society which treasures role allocation, so they are expected to manage all responsibilities by themselves. Thus, those challenges require a single woman who has physical strength, confidence and courage to do dual duties, similar to the ethic of Africana-Womanism. In the context of this study, single-mother lecturers were expected to express their views, in their own voices, pertaining to how they got the courage to successfully attain their highest academic and professional qualifications in view of the anticipated challenges.

Ambition is another characteristic of the Africana-Womanism theory (Msila, 2021; Keche, 2021) which might be attributed to a single-woman lecturer since she has the desire and determination to succeed as a mother, a provider, and family protector. It would be interesting to learn whether single-mother lecturers in this study were driven by ambition in order to break the glass ceiling. The purpose of this study was, thus, to learn more about the circumstances surrounding the success of single-mother lecturers at one university in Masvingo. The researchers hoped that identification of these factors would lead to more flexible resources and proactive academic planning for female teaching staff.

METHODOLOGY

This paper employs the qualitative research approach. It has been argued, in previous studies, that the qualitative research approach involves the researcher socially constructing reality in a natural setting, and is a systematic interactive approach which is best for gathering feelings, attitudes and values, with superior results, because of its multiple realities where each individual is able to produce his/her reality (Magwa and Magwa, 2015; Akkaya, 2020).

Hence, the case study research design was employed to gather qualitative data from 10 purposively selected single-mother lecturers from the School of Education at one university in

Table 1. Demographic information of the participants.

Pseudonym name	Highest degree	Years in HE	Work environment
Ravai	PhD	17	Teaching, research and student affairs
Nyasha	PhD	15	Teaching and research
Rugare	PhD	14	Teaching and research
Ropafadzo	PhD	15	Teaching and research
Rufaro	PhD	14	Teaching and research
Rutendo	PhD	14	Teaching and research
Ruvarashe	PhD	16	Teaching, research and student affairs
Runyararo	PhD	17	Teaching, research and student affairs
Netsai	PhD professor	19	Teaching, research and student affairs
Raviro	PhD	18	Teaching and research

Source: Author

Zimbabwe. In-depth interviews were conducted with the ten participants who were PhD holders, who all volunteered to participate in the study on how they had managed to break the so called “glass ceiling”. The interview with each respondent lasted at least thirty minutes and the interview sessions were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used for all the participants. The analysis of data was done using thematic coding in line with the research question. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the participants.

FINDINGS

The results of this study are reported as themes and sub-themes. These themes are stated below:

1. Factors that facilitated the breaking of glass ceiling which include attitude, personality, courage and mentorship.
2. Suggestions for breaking the glass ceiling.

Factors that facilitated the breaking of glass ceiling

The first sub-theme was on attitude. The participants provided several examples of attitudes that they felt contributed to their career success, such as confidence, goal setting, belief in oneself, perseverance, working collaboratively, having a sense of community and the belief that everyone matters.

Positive attitudes

It was apparent from the participants that these attitudes were so ingrained into who they are today and who they were before. Some of those sentiments, which were expressed by many of the participants on confidence as a factor that enhances achievement in single mothers, are represented below:

The first (characteristic) I have to say is confidence. I

have to say that you have to believe unequivocally in your ability to be successful and run the family as a single parent. Nyasha

You have to have confidence that you're valued as a single parent, and should be valued, and to go into circumstances like these, without allowing them to intimidate you. I think that's important. Netsai

I started to be on a lot of university committees, which was very critical, again to have that broader view, and again, since I was naturally someone who would raise their hand and say, I'll do that, I'm over here, volunteering. And you never know how it's going to play out, where there are opportunities... but I am convinced that you do enhance your potential opportunities if you make it clear that you are interested. Ravai

I have a lot of things I have achieved on my own and I still have to do one or two more. As a single parent there is nothing that can stop me. The sky is the limit for me. Ruvarashe

Some single mothers lock themselves up, maybe due to the views of the society which view them as weak so they think they are not skilled enough themselves. To me, all things and skills can be improved especially in a time we all have advanced technical means. Raviro

We need to have faith in ourselves as women. We need to be confident. Ruvarashe

The vignettes above are some of the pointers towards positive attitudes where single-mother lecturers started involvement in work place issues, environmental issues and policies. Some were very active with a number of women's advocacy initiatives. It shows that they have confidence in themselves.

Negative attitudes that spurred participants to excel academically

The participants also expressed that they had some negative attitudes mainly towards the situations they are in or what caused their singleness. They gave their

answers with straight faces and their voices had some bitterness in them.

I am product of a broken marriage. I was raised by a single mother. To me, history had repeated itself so I did not want to suffer the way my mother suffered. I intend to break the chains in my life by not marrying and staying single for the rest of her life. Nyasha
I was married twice but men are cheats. Rufaro
I think not being married and not having commitments such as looking after a husband means I've been able to focus on my career a lot more than some people. Revai

Negative attitudes were expressed by those who never got married but have children, the divorced ones and the widows, the majority of whom believed that men are just a hindrance to their progress. Some of the single-mother lecturers expressed their anger with their in-laws, their ex-husbands and men in general who they thought was responsible for the situations they are in. They indicated that they work extra hard in whatever they do, to change their academic status as a way of trying to prove their capabilities to the world in general and to men in particular. As a result, they end up winning doing the seemingly impossible. The bitterness and anger inside them gave them the fuel, positive thinking, extraordinary strength and unlimited hope. The negative attitudes were given as the driving wheels.

Goal setting

Participants indicated that they set new goals for themselves and their families which they think can only be achieved if they stay single.

I did my PhD studies alone without him. He couldn't believe that I now hold this qualification. Now I am Dr. Ropafadzo without him. Ropafadzo
My ex-husband was my blocking stone, I would say. I did not have clear directions with him. I think I married a wrong person that's why we divorced. I didn't know what a woman could do for herself or how I could upgrade myself. Rugare

As educated women, these single-mother lecturers proved their ability to fulfil their goals through the attainment of PhDs and professorship. They were convinced that their personal goals could not have been achieved if they had remarried or were involved in some serious relationships.

Personality

The second sub-theme was on personality. Some of the characteristics shared under this sub-theme were: being visionary, adaptability, being able to see the big picture, being a good listener, being helpful, having self-control, being persuasive, knowledgeable, communicative, patient,

having charisma, and being credible. On this theme, some of them had this to share:

You have to be positive in everything you do and plan. You need to prove to the world that you can do it alone. You have to be knowledgeable so you need to research a lot and you have to know the big picture because so many times, people see their own world and only view their own world. Ropafadzo
You need to have enormous strength, but coupled with enormous sense of humour. I am not that loose that's why I had to remain single. Men were afraid of my status. Runyararo
You see most men failed to get along with me because of my PhD. They think that I am a man just like them. Ravai.
I had to control myself and apply some persuasive skills and listening to my mentor as a way of getting her advice. Netsai
Patience helped my communication with my mentor. Revai

This concept on personality forced most of these single-mother lecturers to remain single. They expressed that the Shona society does not accept women who remarry in most cases and to protect themselves, they have to remain single. They indicated that because of their status, most men are afraid to approach them and, in most cases, the married ones are the suitors.

Courage

Majority of the participants believe that they got this far in their careers by putting in that extra effort which men and married women may not need to. That view was expressed by two of the participants as follows:

The most important key to success as a single mother is working hard no matter what others may say because success does not come without effort. Runyararo
A single mother's primary concern should be that of having courage to always be developing herself and nurturing her mind and spirit. Rutendo

It is evident that single-mother lecturers look at life from a positive, optimistic and self-confidence perspective.

Mentorship

Participants revealed that mentors, both men and women, can provide critical role modelling. The majority of the participants indicated that they were inspired by their mentors who acted as their role models. The following vignettes express those views:

But the most important thing was my boss at the time, who was very progressive, supportive, and just a terrific guy. It was great to have him because it was really my mentor who gave me a sense that there was a place at this institution for myself because eeeh, I mean I was

Table 2. Suggestions for breaking the glass ceiling.

Suggestions for breaking the glass ceiling	Frequency
Having faith in oneself.	10
Being clear on what you want to do.	9
Giving priority to one's own development.	9
Participation in educational networks.	10
The ability to let go of every detail and bitterness.	10
The ability to use multiple coping strategies and adaptability to change	8

Source: Author.

definitely a social activist. Ropafadzo

To be mentored by a female full professor would be ideal for most of us single women because some men tend to take advantage of our situations. After all, we have enough female full professors in the School. Raviro

I mean that mentoring is critical because if there's no support for those types of activities such as professional development, or going to trainings where you're learning new skills or doing an internship at someplace eeeh, you might have to get a different job. Rugare

The help I got from my mentor was great. It made me who I am today. Netsai

I'm mentoring employees as much as I can because I was also mentored, and I can say that they are all benefiting from this relationship. Ravai

The majority of the participants cited how they were helped by their supervisors. This study revealed that those single-mother lecturers who were able to finish their PhD studies often cited the assistance they got from their mentors.

According to participants, one of the most effective ways of breaking the glass ceiling in education is the availability of mentors and role models. They suggested that by guided by experienced female mentors who are in the same field, supports the rise of women in general and single-mothers in particular who are in the education sector. The supportive colleagues at work were all seen as a blessing.

Overcoming obstacles

Participants in this study were asked to suggest what single working women should do to overcome obstacles in order to break the glass ceiling. Although they felt that it was not an easy task for women, the participants shared the following ideas which are presented in Table 2.

Having faith in oneself and in one's own ability

Single-mother lecturers pointed out that the biggest concern with women in general is the fact that they keep doubting themselves and what they are able to do. The

lack of acknowledgement, their work from supervisors and others can be used to solidify their confidence so that they can properly do their work and compete with others. This can reduce their doubt, credibility and one's competence on the position one held which one should cherish.

I just decided that I was going to get higher professional qualifications in order to progress from being a general high school teacher. This was my erosional sacrifice, hard work and determination Raviro

Being one's own support system and learning to create win-win situations

The way these single-mother lecturers used to break the glass ceiling while exposed to being scrutinized every time in society and at work, made it difficult for them to do their work. As such they pointed out that a single-mother lecturer needs to have double faith and belief with respect to herself as a human being. She needs double strength and knowledge on how her work has to be done while fulfilling her duties both at home and at work. It is pertinent that she always supports herself as she is the sole decision maker. All the ten participants also stressed the importance of being resilient, recognizing and valuing herself and trusting only herself if she needs to move forward by overcoming the plethora of obstacles. The duties and responsibilities of a single mother need her to be much more aware of what she is entitled to do and a clear understanding of what she is expected to do. All participants indicated that they had to ensure their voices and opinions were put across and given attention they deserved.

Being clear on how one intends to go about in one's career path

Six participants indicated that there is need for a single woman to combine her objectives and executions of her work. She has to be clear with her career path then be focused to accomplish her aspirations, giving priority to

one's own development.

Participation in educational networks

According to participants, the participation by women in educational issues is one of the factors that can facilitate the breaking of the glass ceiling.

Women should not leave each other behind. This is the only way they can make friends and straighten communication between them. Revai

I really got help from the workshop I attended. This is when I realized that networking is good. Raviro

Women should not be jealous of each other and should not see each other as rivals. Ropafadzo

The participation of single women in these educational networks was considered as contributing towards their break-through in life. Therefore, according to participants, there is need for women to support each other and build a collaborative network.

DISCUSSION

This discussion is based on the two themes. Theme consisted of factors that contributed towards breaking of the glass ceiling by our research participants which are attitude, personality, courage and mentorship. Theme two was on suggestions on how other single mothers in academia can excel and fulfil their dreams. The findings showed that women in this study were ambitious and had positive attitudes which contributed towards their success, thereby breaking the glass ceiling. The study established that the single-mother lecturers had all the freedom to make final decisions which could be quickly implemented. These sentiments are echoed in the Africana-Womanism theory, that women are self-namers. It is also noted, from the findings of the current research, that most single-mother lecturers adequately run their homes and that their projects and decisions on career improvements face no obstacles. Our findings are similar to those of Al-Manasra (2013), which confirmed that family obligations do not appear to be a great barrier since Jordanian women in their study were able to combine work and family. Women in Al-Manasra's (2013) study also proved that they had ambition and self-confidence.

Under positive attitudes, participants indicated that there was a smooth flow in single-mother lecturers' ability to break the glass ceiling as PhD holders at university level. This success was viewed as due to the absence of stress from partners' pressure. The current findings refuted those of Kail (2002), who attributed parental stress as inhibiting single parents' home monitoring. The findings in our study revealed that most participants had

all the time, ability, courage, knowledge and power to advance their careers and other personal pursuits (Akkaya, 2020).

Under negative attitudes, it was interesting to note that the findings show that these negative attitudes actually spurred the participants to break the glass ceiling. The bitterness inside them gave them the power to gather strength to soldier on as single-mother lecturers in order to look after the families alone and to reach high academic levels. Whatever they do is as if they are trying to prove to their ex-husbands, families and to the society at large that they are also humans who can excel in life.

Courage was another factor which was regarded as contributing towards hitting the glass ceiling. According to Kapoor et al. (2021), women are not independent but are dependent, sentimental and submissive most of the time. Single-mother lecturers in this study were different since they portrayed a positive self-concept, are independent and productive. To be courageous means having self-confidence where one should stand up to one's belief, being assertive and bold, speaking with conviction, willing to face challenges and communicating effectively (Akkaya, 2020).

On goal setting, participants exhibited strength in planning, communication, human relations skills, and the ability to focus on ends as well as means. The participants' experiences as women and mothers, in addition to their acquired academic skills and human relations skills, made them better home managers and leaders (Harlesden, 1990). This study revealed that the characteristics of successful higher education women (PhD holders) are a result beyond attitude and personality traits and required an action on goal setting in order to advance one's career. This study revealed that in order to step up the ladder in higher education, sometimes one must be willing to move to a new job at their current institution or perhaps move to an entirely different institution (Akkaya, 2020).

This study revealed that there were few challenges encountered by single-mother lecturers along their career journey. Multiple roles (role conflict) are sometimes viewed as an obstacle to advancement for women (Mugove, 2017; Mupfumira, 2017). Role conflict is the concurrent appearance of two or more incompatible expectations for the behaviour of a person (Opara et al., 2020). Findings from the study revealed that there were no such role conflicts as single-mother lecturers indicated that they had all their time for both work and family. It was proved in this study that work and life balance might not be taken to be a serious challenge since being a single-mother lecturer with responsibilities was regarded as not having limitations (Al-Manasra, 2013). The barriers cited in other studies for women in higher education, such as salary gaps, comparative merit and promotions, fiscal and social inequalities, institutional sexism and racism, and inclusive and protective memberships, such as the "good old boys' club" and others documented in the

literature (Oakley, 2000; Jackson and O'Callaghan, 2009; Rana and Raju, 2019) were not valid here.

Family constraints when relocating was expected as one of the challenges with women. Women in this study came from different regions in Zimbabwe without a "trailing spouse". The need for geographic mobility in academic careers means that single-mothers often move far away from the extended family members who might otherwise have helped out with the children and home chores. The single-mother lecturers in this study stated that it was rather an advantage for them to work independently without relying on male partners.

This study revealed that having a mentor and professional networking are also important factors for the success of a single-mother lecturer in higher education. Community organizations like universities can establish strong support systems to increase women's visibility. Being involved in community organizations, as stated by Pearson and West (1991), can give women an opportunity to break the glass ceiling. Monkes (1998, cited in Kapoor et al., 2021) state that women can learn and advance themselves more rapidly with a mentor.

Adisa et al. (2020) and Akkaya (2020) suggest that for one to get advancement in life, one needs skills and ability in analyzing oneself, the environment, and the other players. Hence, the current study regards mentoring and networking as external influences that can be used by single women lecturers to be PhD holders. Mentors serve a variety of purposes; therefore, seeking their assistance is a wise career move (Livingston and Cohn, 2010). Almost all of the single-mother lecturers agreed that an increase in the number of women in senior lectureship roles means an increase in role models especially for single-mother lecturers. This is a spirit of sisterhood found in Africana-Womanism.

Therefore, these participants share the belief from Kirmak (2017) that women need to communicate and cooperate with each other for raising social awareness about the need to increase female presence on management boards.

According to Kirmak (2017) and Akkaya (2020), networking is one of the sources for women's progress in career. Akkaya (2020) concludes that women often disregard networks as most women want to rise through the evaluation of what they did, and not through communication. Our findings refuted this view since the study revealed that participants regarded networking as an important aspect that enables single-mother lecturers to break the glass ceiling. Our study findings indicate that participants did not have any problems in finding role models and mentors as revealed by Kirmak (2017) and Akkaya (2020) who state that in management, women are deprived of mentors who can guide and help them, hence it becomes hard for them to rise in career stages. The usefulness of Africana-Womanism and understanding of the theory on the factors that can be used by women to break the glass ceiling were demonstrated in this study.

Conclusion

Several factors were found to be responsible for the success of the single-mother lecturers' breaking of the glass ceiling in the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology. Taking the African-Womanism lens, the study set out to explore the factors that enable single women lecturers to break the glass ceiling at one university in Zimbabwe. A lot of literature is there on the challenges faced by women in management, in different organizations, but very few studies have explored how single-mothers in academia managed to break the glass ceiling. With the orientation to single parenting as socially constituted and being dynamically situated social practice, this study highlighted the importance of courage, goal setting, one's visibility, faith in oneself, networking, ability to let go of every detail and bitterness, giving priority to one's own development and the ability to observe skills of the mentor. Our study makes a strong empirical and theoretical contribution to our understanding of the factors that may facilitate the breaking of the glass ceiling by single women who are university lecturers, as study participants managed to give a name to themselves as family heads with a strong grounding in the Africana-Womanism theory.

Recommendations

In view of the results of the study, the following recommendations are being made:

- 1) Universities should promote factors which empower single women lecturers through facilitating discussions of identity issues, eliminating the obstacles that may prevent them from advancing, and fostering work environments that allow them to operate collaboratively in order to produce goods and services in line with expectations of Education 5.0.
- 2) Mentorship should be promoted where women are encouraged to present their papers and learn from women professors and doctors.
- 3) Women academics should be encouraged to set their goals clearly and share their experiences since they have the strength and spirit of sisterhood as defined by Africana-Womanism (Msila, 2021).

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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