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# Are Kenyan Campus Ladies Too Generous? An Evaluation of Gender Biases in Staff Appraisal Systems in Kenya

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*Abstract:*
*There is empirical evidence regarding behavioral cross gender disparity with male and female gender will arguably exhibit different behaviors when faced with similar circumstances. One school of management thought postulates that women are socialized to take care of their families and their communities. This socialization has been advanced as a motive of empathy and caring, a precursor to women generosity. On the basis of motivation, previous studies focusing on women generosity in charity giving have attempted to discern why, when and how women have tended to be more generous than their male counterparts. Thus far, generosity has been viewed only on monetary basis. Performance appraisal (PA) has been recognized as one of the most important tools in the human resource management (HRM). PA systems are prone to errors and biases including: tendency, contrast, discrimination, employee appearance, fame, halo, leniency, severity, order, bias, proximity, attitudes, values and recency. The employees are the heart of the company and the success of any organization highly depends on employees' characteristics and qualities. The whole HRM function depends to great extent on the success of PA systems. PA systems are affected by various errors and biases one of which is gender generosity. This study investigates the impact of gender biases in the performance appraisal of lecturers at Meru University of science and technology, school of business and economics over the period between January 2019 and September 2019. The study employed the logit regression model on a Likert scale questionnaire administered on 99 pairs of students drawn from a population of 2352 on performance of a pair of two lecturers. The results correlate positively with empirical affable gender*

*Keywords: Gender generosity, human resource management, Meru University, performance appraisal*

## 1. Introduction

One of the most difficult questions I have ever faced in a job interview was who audits an auditor? The essence of research is at times an attempt to answer relevant but tough questions that face the academia and industry. There is such an urgent question touching a key institution that requires an objective, factual and unprejudiced answer. Meru University of Agriculture and Technology (MUST) is an emerging top notch, world class public university located in the slopes of Mount Kenya. MUST recognize the importance of human resource and engages in management practices that are geared towards staff excellence. The university conducts routine staff performance as way of encouraging feedback. The staff rating is not only conducted by the supervisors but buy the customers as well. The university's main customers are the students. Because the students have a direct interaction with the lecturers, the students' rate their lectures as objectively as possible. Emanating from recent but fast-growing research on gender disparities in actions and reactions we sought to ascertain whether the Kenyan campus ladies are too generous when rating their lecturers. Rusli & Sopian (2013) define performance appraisal (PA) as a system that involves a process of measuring, evaluating, and influencing employees' attributes, behaviour and performance in relation to a pre-set standard or objective. They note its aliases as performance review, performance evaluation, employee evaluation, employee rating, employee appraisal, merit evaluation, or personnel rating. Cole (2002) considers PA as a way of rating an employee's current or past performance against the employee's performance standards. This involves setting work standards, assessing the employees' actual performance relative to the standards set and providing feedback to the employee with the aim of motivating them to eliminate performance deficiencies and to help them perform above par. Mathis & Jackson (1998) Note that performance appraisal aims at clarifying the employees' work expectations, improving employee development, linking pay with performance and assessing workforce development. Dessler (2011) recommends that performance appraisals should involve an evaluation of an individual level of performance and review how well an employee is carrying out the task associated with their job. Ford, Latham & Lennox (2011) postulates that goal attainment can be achieved by providing employees with feedback which enables them to set specific high goals and also helps them see the relationship between what they are doing and the outcome they can expect. Daoanis (2012) equates the success of any organization to the quality and characteristics of its employees. Arguing that, employees are a significant factor in any organization since they are the heart of the company. Armstrong & Baron (2005) and Marchington & Wilkinson (2005) defend PA, as a top-down assessment and rating subordinates. Marchington & Wilkinson (2005) view PA as frameworks set by any organization to track individual contribution and performance against organizational goals and to identify individual strengths and opportunities for

future improvements and assess the level of achievement of organizational goals as a future planning and development tool. The study of Nass Construction Company by the duo through Interviews, focus group discussion and survey questionnaires PA brought about both positive and negative impact on the employees' performance. Kyakulumbye (2013) observes that all organizations are looking for ways in which to enhance the employee performance since the success of any business especially educational lies in the human resources pointing out that success of the PA depends on the perceptions of staff.  MPS (2007) identified PA as very crucial especially in an era of stiff competition. Lillian, Mathooko & Sitati (2011) tiara PA in organizations among the ranking and famous HRM practices globally. Brefo-Manuh et al (2016), advices on the need for frequent assessment of employees to encourage rapid realization of organizational effectiveness and efficiency.  Xavier (2015) suggests that the best approach to ensure peak performance of employees continuously is through PA. Selvarasu & Subbu (2014) recognize the importance of PA but are quick to point out its the relationship with perceptions of fairness and employee engagement. Schaufeli (2002) deems employee engagement  as a multidimensional concept of vigor which is synonymous with high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties; dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work, and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge; and absorption refers to being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work.

Rusli & Sopian (2013) warns that employees who are not happy with the practice of the appraisal activities send a huge impact on the organization's image. Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour (2015) predict that the presence of PA result in improvement of the performance while the absence leads to organizational senility and death.  Decrease in PA errors and bias brings about increase in employee satisfaction.

## 1.1. Objectivity and Fairness in Standards of Performance Evaluation

When PA is objective, fair and free from errors and biases a win- win situation is created enabling and motivating the individual, group and organization to achieve and reach their individual and collective goals and achieve a higher level of work behaviour. PA is then used either as:  a basis of reward through perks, progression, recognition, incentives and appreciation, a pointer to employee's limitations, deficiencies and remedies and to enable proper selection and placement of employees. Despite of its advantages PA has been criticized for its lack of reliability and validity and existence of multiple errors and biases. We list 12 errors and biases inherent in a classical PA system:

Central Tendency: The raters' tendency to avoid making extreme judgments on employees.
Contrast:  the rater compares performance relative to peers instead of the company standard.
Order effect: Individuals who are rated first are rated higher than those evaluated last.
Discrimination: where insiders receive preferential treatment over outsider          .
Appearance: The Rater is enticed by the facial geometry where the salary of an attractive employee would be higher than salary of an employee with modest appearance.
Fame: A famous employee pretends to be important to the accomplishment of group tasks.
Halo: hallo effect is the tendency to rate an employee uniformly high or low in other traits if he is extra-ordinarily high or low in one particular trait.
Leniency and Severity: as some professors are known as easy A's, so are some raters. They may be lenient to avoid such severe consequences such as dismissal.
Personal Bias: influenced by rater's attitudes toward the ratee, i.e. liking and trust in the rater and perceived quality of their relationship.
Proximity: the rater may be influenced by the nearby performance, in case a ratee scores highly on item 1, 2 and 3 the rater rhythmically carries over to the next item on the list.
Rater Attitudes and Values:  rating is greatly influenced by the rater's value system and.
Recency: raters tend to consider the most recent incidents.

## 1.2. Women Generosity

WPI (2015) study sought to explore gender differences in the incidence and amount of charitable giving. Analyzing data from U.S, the study confirmed prior studies' findings that women have a higher likelihood of giving and give than men. Cox & Deck (2006) investigated generosity from data generated by 290 subject pairs and found that women are more sensitive than men to the costs of generous actions when deciding whether to be generous. Chaudhuri & Gagadharan (2003) find that women are more likely to behave generously in an investment game.  Piper& Schnepf
(2007) observes that the predominant part of the literature states that women are more likely to donate to charitable causes but men are more generous in terms of the amount given. They then examined gender differences in giving focusing on the distribution of amounts donated and the probability of giving using UK micro-data on individual giving to charitable causes. Results indicated that most women are more generous than men also in terms of the amounts donated.

Breeze & Thornton (2005) report that: "Girls were more likely than boys to have given to charity the last time they were asked (87% vs. 74%)". Iredale, Vugt, & Dunbar (2008) noted that there are important sex differences in human generosity. Whereas women's helping is more often directed towards kin and friends, men are more generous in interactions with strangers. Studies by (Eckel & Grossman1998) and (Eckel, Grossman & Johnston 2005) find Women are more generous than men. (Bolton & Katok 1995) and (List 2004) find no gender difference while (Okunade 1996) and Shapiro & Ridinger (2011) find Men are more generous.     There is therefore adequate theoretical and empirical evidence;

in support of performance evaluation, that performance evaluation is prone to biases and that gender differences may exist on generosity.

*1.3. Objective*

To establish the effect of gender generosity, on the performance appraisal rating of lectures by students at the Meru University of Agriculture and Technology (MUST) in the first semester of 2019.

*1.4. Hypothesis*

- Ha: Student gender generosity affects performance appraisal rating of lectures by students, βgender ≠ 0

## 2. Data, Materials and Procedure

Using probit regression model, the study reviewed the student lecturer PA gender biases aimed at answering the question as to whether ladies were too generous when rating their lecturers' performance, the study interviewed 99 randomly sampled pairs of students drawn from a student population of 2352 students from the school of business and economics (SBE). The students were asked to rank a lecturer draw randomly from a group of four lecturers; two of the lecturers were female while the other two were males. The inclusion of both genders would control for the lecturers' gender for the study although it would be interesting to review cross gender effect on whether for example female students relatively scored male lecturers highly or lowery. The lectures were carefully selected in way that ensured that they would be as ambiguous as possible in terms of their academic qualifications, experience, age, fame, and position or grooming. To qualify for inclusion the lecturers were required to have taught the students within the last year. This was aimed at ensuring that the scores they would receive would not be too diverse. The students were asked to rate the lecturer, scoring a lecturer's performance on; presentation, cooperation, clarity and give an overall performance. One pair of students comprised male students while the second group comprised female students. There were 198 questionnaires with clear instructions on the confidentiality of the data. The respondents were not supposed to write anywhere in the questionnaire other than to rank once on each ranking criteria the lecturer whose photograph and name appeared on the questionnaire. The interviewer had two sets of questionnaires one for each gender. The respondents queued together and were supposed to be seated in a big hall after they filled and handed in their questionnaires. There was a reasonable distance between where the respondents waited to be interviewed from where they approached the response booth. This enabled the interviewer to hand in an appropriate questionnaire camouflaged on respondent's gender. This ensured that the respondents did not have a cue on an interest in their gender. All the questionnaires were tallied and data was coded based on the overall performance. When keying the data only two variables were considered that is the score of a lecturer regardless whether this was lecturer one, lecturer two, lecturer three or lecturer four and the gender of the respondent which was obvious to the interviewer bur conspicuous to the interviewee.

The Model Specification and Output

$$L_{score} = \alpha + \beta_{Gender} + e \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots 1$$

Where: Lscore is the lecturer's overall rating, Gender is 0 for female and 1 for male, e is the probit model regression error. α is the parameter of the intercept and β is the parameter of the slope.

Running our data using Ms Excel Data Analysis Tool pack we obtained estimates indicated in the summary statistics i.e. the coefficient of the intercept parameter was3.95960 while the coefficient of the slope parameter was -0.30303

$$L_{score} = 3.95960 - 0.30303_{Gender} \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots 2$$

From equation 1, our dummy variable gender for female is 0 and slotting this into our model will produce a lecturer average score of 3.95960. The score by male students reduces to 3.65657.

Since the lecturers were ranked on a score of 1 to 5 they were rated at 79% by the campus ladies while their mean counterparts scored them 73% with a 6% margin of generosity. Given our sample size of 198, we tested at 5% significance level whether the results could have been obtained merely by chance. We first considered the student t distribution whereby; value t is calculated, such that P(|X| > t) = probability where X is a random variable that follows the t-distribution and P(|X| > t) = P(X < -t or X > t).

| Regression Statistics | |
|---|---|
| Multiple R | 0.14829 |
| R Square | 0.02199 |
| Adjusted R Square | 0.017 |
| Standard Error | 1.0156 |
| Observations | 198 |

*Table 1: Summary Output*

| | Regression | Residual | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| df | 1 | 196 | 197 |
| SS | 4.54545 | 202.16162 | 206.70707 |
| MS | 4.54545 | 1.03144 | |
| F | 4.40692 | | |
| Significance F | 0.03707 | | |

*Table 2: Anova*

|  | Intercept | Gender |
|---|---|---|
| Coefficients | 3.9596 | -0.303 |
| Standard Error | 0.10207 | 0.14435 |
| t Stat | 38.7925 | -2.0993 |
| P-value | 0 | 0.03707 |
| Lower 95% | 3.7583 | -0.5877 |
| Upper 95% | 4.1609 | -0.0184 |

*Table 3: Paramaters*

In our case, the critical t at a probability P = 5%, 96 degrees of freedom would be 1.972141[this can be obtained from t-distribution tables or use of MS Excel function =TINV (0.05, 96)] in case the scores were the same for the two groups. However, our results indicated a t-statistic of 2.09927 and probability of 3.7074%. We then apply discrimination criteria "if observed t-statistic < critical t-statistic, Fail to Reject the Null Hypothesis, else Reject the Null hypothesis". We therefore rejected the null hypothesis that the two groups produced the same scores. Visually as indicated on figure 1, the female students out ranked in awarding lecturers a score of: "Good" (22% against 19%) and "Excellent" (15% against 12 %) while males led in awarding lecturers a ranking of "Very Poor" (1% against 3%) , "Poor" (3% against 5%) and "Fair" (9% against 12%).
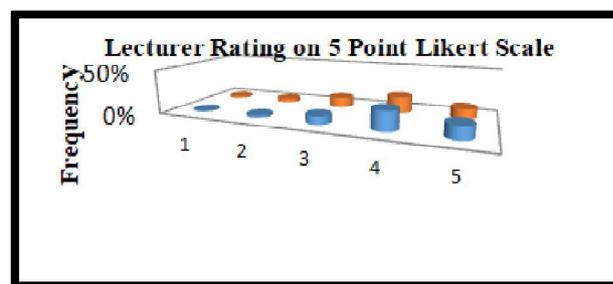


*Figure 1: Comparative Analysis of Lecturer Rating by Gender*

## 3. Discussion of Findings

It was hypothesized that there was no difference in the student lecturer rating across gender, the study sought to ascertain the significance of gender biases in lecturer rating.

The study findings established that the scores awarded by students to lecturers did not necessarily measure to some extent the actual teaching effectiveness and that campus ladies proved too generous. The findings were carried out within a small locality of just one school in one university due to resource and capacity constraints. The study for the same reasons focused on the aspect of gender without decomposing it into more refined aspects such as respondents' age, origin, income levels, family backgrounds and other demographics as recommended by (Piper& Schnepf 2007). Further the scores awarded to the lecturers were aggregated denying us an opportunity to analyze how each appraise fared. The study left out the motivation behind such generosity such as Einolf (2011), engaging in pro-social behaviors, which is often attributed to women's higher motivations to help others or the use of generosity as a mating signal as suggested by Iredale, Vugt, & Dunbar (2008)

## 4. Recommendations

In line with Cox & Deck (2006) we recommend the understanding of gender differences and incorporating the gender effect as an important consideration when making important decisions. Employers should incorporate a bias smoothing factor on scores to remove various errors and biases including generosity when evaluating performance. Trade unionists, labor courts and activists should incorporate the bias parameter wherever considering employee performance. Universities and other policy makers need to urgently undertake development of unbiased PA rating instruments.

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