

**INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON CAREER PROGRESSION
AMONG POST-GRADUATE FEMALE STUDENTS IN EGERTON
UNIVERSITY, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for of the Degree of Master of Arts in Gender and Development
Studies of Egerton University**


EGERTON UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER, 2024

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in this university or any other for the award of a degree.

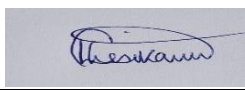
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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my son Havillah Clayson.

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ABSTRACT

The career progression of mature female students has long been challenged by socio-cultural barriers, particularly in balancing professional growth with societal expectations. This study aimed to explore key socio-cultural factors that limit career advancement among mature female students at Egerton University, Kenya. The objectives included examining the influence of household size, gender division of labor, cultural stereotypes, and mentorship on career progression. A sample of 96 mature female students and 8 department heads was selected, with data gathered through interviews and analyzed using both inferential and descriptive statistics in SPSS version 27. The results indicated that household size, gender division of labor, and cultural stereotypes negatively and significantly impacted career progression, while mentorship had a strong positive influence. Notably, household size showed a strong negative correlation ($r = -.914$, $p = .001$), as did gender division of labor ($r = -.960$, $p = .000$) and cultural stereotypes ($r = -.967$, $p = .000$). Mentorship was found to significantly promote career progression ($r = .991$, $p = .000$). The regression analysis explained 99.9% of the variance in career progression. These findings highlight the importance of addressing socio-cultural challenges to support female students' career growth. Policymakers and stakeholders in education and employment should use these insights to develop programs and policies that foster equitable opportunities for mature female students. Gender mainstreaming initiatives could also benefit from these results, leading to more effective planning and development strategies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Career progression is the manner in which one climbs up the ladder during the entire working period. It is about finding new employers, new opportunities and getting new promotions. There are various factors that may contribute to an efficient and successful career progression while having the ability to negotiate for a better pay. For the longest time women have remained in the private sector and this factor has continued despite having liberal minds on issues of gender equality (Ayodeji *et al.*, 2022). The number of mature student questing to progress on their careers has been on the increase since the year 1966 around the world (Walsh, 2020). The existence of student mothers raises concerns on being a mother, being employed, having a family or married and being a student (Asli, 2019). Combing the gender roles and being a student can be of great challenge and when a woman must focus all her attention on her education achievement, then her behaviour might contrast with her traditional role of just being a mother. Some women go an extra mile of emulating their male counterparts with the hope of climbing up the ladder faster and even with the zeal; women continue to be disadvantaged in different career aspirations (Sanagavarapu *et al.*, 2021).

For the longest time women have been traditionally viewed as home keepers and child-bearers and it has continued to exist despite people being liberal-minded on issues of gender equality (Ayodeji *et.al* 2022). Based on the old mentalities about the rightful status of a woman, it presents barriers to women career progression. According to Sanagavarapu *et al.* (2021), traditionally, men had all the fulfilling careers while women are restricted in the private spheres and today women face socio-cultural challenges moving up the ladder such as family size because the number of children in a family has direct relation to the rate of career progression for a woman. Gender challenges in career progression continue to be a major hindrance hence motherhood imposes responsibility burden on students' shoulders and the society at large only focuses on success without the mature female students getting any kind of help.

Taylor *et al.* (2019), notes that gender equality has continued to receive global recognition as an issue that needs a policy framework in order to mainstream gender issues. Education at most times is the source of empowerment and positive development (Nelson *et al.*, 2019). Education also is the starting point of life improvement and has a huge impact on family members. Today, career progression continues to be a priority to most women. Female

employees are caught up between societal norms, family obligations and expectations from the organization. According to Khan (2022), traditional gender roles might overload women especially when tied up with proficient career hence patriarchal pressures on women leads them to be subservient to their husbands.

Gender stereotypes have also had significant impact on career progression on women hence the belief that women belong in the private domains therefore lagging women behind at a greater extent (Ayodeji *et al.*, 2022). Women's underrepresentation in certain career fields is mainly because of traditional roles that hold a woman back for instance; a married woman with several children may have a hard time coping in the corporate society compared to a single woman with no children. In sub-Saharan Africa, the society is male dominated therefore women opting for career progression are often underpaid and are expected to resign once they get married (Akinwale, 2023). From a tender age a girl is taught on the values of being submissive and confined within household chores. Up to date, some parts of Korea still underestimate the value of being a woman in the corporate society (Lahiri *et al.*, 2023).

In 2020, the World Bank reported that the participation of women in the labour force has been on the rise since 2010 in Kenya. On the other hand, only 49% of the females are active in the labour force but the number of women wanting to progress their careers have been hindered because of a number of major indicators (Akinwale, 2023). The situation is even worse for women who opted venture in education as a manner of seeking promotions at their places of work. They face unique set of challenges because they have to cope with the attributes of being a mother, wife, employee or a student.

Kenyan universities have also been able to admit mature female students in the post graduate level. Although women would prefer institutions that deeply tackle their reproductive factors, only institutions such as Egerton University have been able to meet the factors. According to Lustig *et al.* (2018), there are different challenges that come with the aspect of being a mother and being a student. Career development continues to be an essential step for all students in institutions of higher learning. Career guidance to students contributes to the positive development of students and accepted as an excellent and efficient method of bridging the gap between the world of work and education. Careers offer directions on the distinct, creative way into the social systems that give a platform for self-survival, reliance, and income in the future

Liani *et al.* (2021) explains that career progression is a significant decision, and it influences an individual's complete future. Career exploration can be demarcated as the extreme to which possible careers are studied and considered. Exploring career options before committing to a job increases future career inspiration, success, and satisfaction. Today, one requires not only to make prior career planning but also to carry out exhaustive career research before making a career choice to adjust to the evolving socio-economic conditions.

Women in senior positions in the labour market have to make individual sacrifices to ensure that they progress well in their careers. The gap between men and women in the labour forces has continued to widen because women have to adopt to the different socio-cultural challenges (Akniwale, 2023). Women are the most visible victims of the real glass ceiling due to the deeply entrenched attitudes at the lower levels such that they have to do much better than their male partners for them to get a promotion or salary increase.

The Bureau of labour and Statistics states that women would find it easier progressing in careers and occupations that enable them juggle between work, family and other ladders to progress in their careers. Additionally, balancing work and family proved to be a major challenge for women and it takes much more effort to do away with such struggles (Ayodeji *et al.*, 2022). This study, therefore, sought to address the limiting socio-cultural factors of career progression for mature female entry students.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite significant progress since the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, which sought to address gender inequalities, women still face major barriers in career progression. Although more women have entered the labor market, they continue to experience disparities, particularly in income and career advancement. Many women remain stuck at entry-level positions due to a lack of experience, education, and skills, compounded by societal expectations such as caregiving and household responsibilities. Additionally, the absence of role models in leadership and career advancement further hampers their progress. In patriarchal societies like Kenya, these socio-cultural challenges are particularly pronounced. While previous research has examined various factors affecting career progression, little attention has been given to mature female students. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the career progression challenges faced by female students at Egerton University, Kenya, and providing insights to inform strategies for their advancement.

1.3 General Objective

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the socio-cultural factors affecting career progression among female post-graduate students in Egerton University, Kenya.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To investigate the influence of household size on career progression among female students in Egerton University, Kenya.
- ii. To determine the influence of gender division of labour on career progression among female students in Egerton University, Kenya.
- iii. To establish the ways in which cultural stereotypes influence career progression among female students in Egerton University, Kenya.
- iv. To investigate the influence of mentorship on career progression among female students in Egerton University, Kenya.

1.3.2 Research Questions

- i. How does household size influence career progression among female students in Egerton University Kenya?
- ii. In which ways does gender division of labour influence career progression among female students in Egerton University Kenya?
- iii. In which ways do cultural stereotypes influence career progression among female students in Egerton University Kenya?
- iv. How does mentorship influence career progression among female students in Egerton University Kenya?

1.4 Justification of the Study

It is expected that the research findings and recommendations of this study will enable stakeholders in the education sector to improve the uptake and implementation of mature entry students' programs and projects based on the strength of the evidence of information collected from this research. Hence, develop strategies for implementing education programs targeting women who are in class and are employed, mothers or even wives. The research findings obtained are also expected to enable stakeholders in the education sector to overcome socio-cultural challenges in integration of education programs that suit these women properly in their different backgrounds. The research findings may help policy makers restructure the mode of content delivery and admission criteria in order to ensure equitable participation and access to education as well as in different career paths. The

findings will be addition to the existing literatures, additionally, the research finding will help mature post graduate females' students cope with the career growth and management of time.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focused on examining the socio-cultural factors influencing career progression among mature female students enrolled in postgraduate, master's, and doctorate programs across all faculties at Egerton University. Specifically, the research will explore four key socio-cultural factors: mentorship, household size, gender division of labor, and cultural stereotypes, and how these factors impact the career advancement of female students at the university. The study's focus on female students aims to highlight the unique challenges they face in balancing education, family, and professional development within the Kenyan context.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

- i. The study results may not have been a representative of all the female students in the University. The delimitation to this is that general view of study results should be done with extreme caution since the study only focused on a particular group.
- ii. COVID -19 pandemic limited the movement and accessibility to the study area. Delimitation, the researcher carried masks and sanitizers while going to the field for successful data collection.

1.7 Assumption of the Study

In this study, the researcher made the following assumptions:

- i. The respondents would give full information concerning career progression.
- ii. In the process of data collection, all the questionnaires would be filled and collected.

1.8 Definition of terms

Career progression; refers to the process of trying to advance the job status (Harper Collins Publishers). In this study, career progression will be the strides mature female students make to better themselves in terms of education and profession.

Career; An occupation or profession, especially one requiring special training (Oxford Dictionary). For example, nursing, engineering etc. The study will cover this term as specific trainings undertaken by the student as they progress.

Household size; Refers to all the people in a family or a group who live together in a house (Harper Collins publishers). In this study the term will be used to describe the number of people present in one household and a woman actively supports their day-to-day livelihood

Mature; refers to someone or something that is fully grown or in other terms an adult. A mature woman refers to a self-aware, fully developed mind or body female who tries to focus primarily on personal growth, establishes her goals for individual development and equally takes her responsibilities seriously (Oxford Dictionary).

Norms and Values; Norms refer to the behaviours which are considered normal according to the society while values refer to the things that people consider most important to them (Cambridge Dictionary).

Social-cultural; according to Cambridge dictionary, it is used to describe the differences between groups of people relating to the social class and culture in which they live, their traditions, habits and beliefs (Brown, 2014). In this study, it will be used to include the social and cultural differences in certain beliefs and traditions.

Socio-Cultural factors; Factors such as cultural values, migration patterns, socio-economic status and activities and self-identity; combining social and cultural elements (Brown, 2014). The study will encompass different factors that limit career progression. In this study, the term will be used to describe all the activities a woman is tied to that might hinder career progression which may include; child rearing, caring for the sick, and household chores

Cultural Stereotypes; these are overgeneralized ideas or concepts about something or someone and are prescriptive and descriptive in nature (Heilman, 2001).

Student; According to Oxford Dictionary, a student is an individual enrolled in a learning institution. In this study the term will refer to a person who is studying at a university or other place of higher learning.

Triple roles; refer to the productive, reproductive and community roles carried (Moser,

1993). In this study, the term will refer to the responsibilities a woman should do in order to fulfil her societal roles.

Mentorship- According to (Oxford Dictionary), mentorship is defined as the guidance provided by a mentor, especially an experienced person in educational institutions or companies. In this study, mentorship will be used to refer to the support and encouragement that women need or acquire as they climb up the ladder in different careers.

Gender division of labour - it refers to the allocation of different types of duties to men and women in the households such as cooking, cleaning, caring for both children and the elderly and washing (Cambridge Dictionary). Traditionally, some of the duties or responsibilities may be exclusively set for women and men in the society.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE VIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section reviews existing literature on mature female entry students. Specifically, on the general overview of mature female student entry, the cultural stereotypes, family background, the norms and values and the household size. This section covers theoretical framework which the study will be based, conceptual framework indicating the relationship between the dependent, independent and intervening variables within the study.

2.2 Career Progression for Female Students

Globally, while the number of women in the workforce has steadily increased over recent years, significant disparities remain, particularly in leadership roles. For instance, Japan reports only 10% of women occupying top managerial positions, while Switzerland fares slightly better at 20% (Akniwale, 2023). Despite growing female labor participation in cities like London, the career progression of women lags behind that of men, who continue to dominate high-paying and high-status roles. This phenomenon is linked to the "glass ceiling," a term often used to describe the invisible barriers women face in climbing the corporate ladder. The persistence of traditional gender roles globally restricts women's professional growth, as the burden of domestic responsibilities often falls disproportionately on them (Ayodeji *et al.*, 2022).

Regionally, particularly in Africa, traditional beliefs and socio-cultural attitudes remain deeply entrenched. Many African societies still regard women primarily as homemakers, which creates tension for those attempting to balance career aspirations with familial responsibilities. Cultural expectations surrounding motherhood, child-rearing, and other domestic roles often impede women's career advancement (O'Connell *et al.*, 2021). These issues are compounded by systemic challenges, such as limited access to education and fewer career opportunities for women compared to men. In this context, gender-based career progression disparities are widening as men increasingly occupy better-paying and higher-status positions.

Locally, in Kenya, socio-cultural norms heavily influence women's professional opportunities. Kenyan women are disproportionately concentrated in low-paying, low-status jobs that offer flexibility to manage their "triple roles" of reproduction, production, and community care. Despite forming a significant portion of the population, women continue to face considerable gender disparities in career advancement. These disparities are often tied to societal norms that prioritize men's professional growth, labeling them as breadwinners while discouraging women from pursuing ambitious career goals.

Socio-cultural factors such as child-rearing responsibilities, caregiving, and societal expectations play a central role in limiting women's career progression globally, regionally, and locally. As O'Connell *et al.* (2021) suggests, women often find themselves at a crossroads between fulfilling their professional ambitions and adhering to traditional gender roles.

Moreover, The World Bank (2007) highlights that excluding women from educational and career opportunities has adverse effects on national economic growth, further underlining the need for policies that support women's integration into the workforce. As a result, career progression in many parts of the world, including Kenya, is closely tied to education and socio-cultural norms. Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort to promote gender equality in educational and professional settings, and to dismantle the socio-cultural barriers that limit women's advancement.

2.3 The influence of Cultural Stereotypes on Career Progression for Mature Females

In the African context, traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the role and status of women in the society are still very evident and many women are finding it very difficult to move away from cultural traditions. Despite women's struggle to acquire education and entry into the job markets, a woman will always and continue to be a home maker and the man on the other hand continues to be a breadwinner. According to Tabassum *et al.*, (2021) cultural stereotypes can profoundly impact the career progression of mature females, shaping perceptions of their abilities, roles, and opportunities in the workplace. These stereotypes often perpetuate biases that undervalue the skills and experiences of mature women, leading to challenges in securing employment, accessing leadership positions, and receiving fair treatment.

Societal expectations around gender roles and age norms further compound these barriers, creating hurdles for women seeking to advance their careers later in life (O'Connell *et al.*, 2021). Addressing these stereotypes requires concerted efforts to challenge biases, promote diversity and inclusion, and create supportive environments where all individuals, regardless of age or gender, have equal opportunities for professional growth and success. Despite cultural attitudes women's quest for career progression is untamed even if it means having to jungle cultural expectations and their career progression in education.

Throughout history, working women were viewed as immoral and unfeminine. They were accused of neglecting their roles of being mothers. Having a career posed challenges to career women and even their career progression was hindered by cultural stereotypes. Women were and are expected to perform their duties as mothers and wives in addition to fulfilling their professional responsibilities. In Kenya the government has put in place policies and measures to provide equal opportunities for both boys and girls and that has greatly promoted gender

parity in education. Culturally, the society believes that they should remain a homemaker i.e. caring for the husband, taking care of the sick children and the elderly. They should be submissive and meek rather than venture into the public sphere. The dominance of men's careers is in line with conformance to social expectations theory, and assists men's career success while helping to contribute to women's lower pay (Veelen *et al.*, 2022).

Additionally, a wife is less likely to receive support from the husband hence making it hard for women to progress in their careers (Kurowska, 2020). The highest earners were married men who had children, and the lowest earners were single, childless men. While these findings would also appear to support human capital theory, single women were found to achieve similar career progress as married women, rather than outperform them as implied by the precepts of human capital theory. A longitudinal study of managers and professionals revealed that in the private sector, married fathers with stay-at-home wives enjoyed greater career advancement than married fathers in dual-earner partnerships, who in turn enjoyed greater career advancement than single men with no children (Coleman, 2020). This too is consistent with spousal support theory, as the resources provided by wives to their husbands' careers diminish once the wives have their own careers requiring resources, and the single men receive no spousal support at all.

Career decision making is limited to and based on academic performance rather than career education and exploration and students' skills and interests. Gender stereotyping continues to be an obstacle to the achievement of equality between men and women. The education system is a section that just reflects the cultures and values in the society. In most societies' males are educated for the public life while females are educated for the private life and the difference is brought about by the different courses males and females select at tertiary institutions (Tabassum *et al.*, 2021). Females are more dominant in courses that involve health care, education and social sciences while males dominate science, technology, engineering courses and mathematics. Gender stereotypes explain why women choose to earn degrees that lead to lower paying jobs. Most higher paying jobs require degrees in one of the STEM subjects yet men still continue to dominate in such fields.

Harmful social practices and out-dated gender stereotypes have adverse effects for women and girls. They facilitate environments which permits male domination and subjection of women as wives and subordinates to men. Women and girls often face sexual harassments at

all spheres of life limiting women to enjoy their rights and their general well-being (Coleman, 2020). Societal expectations and norm of how women should behave continue to have adverse effects on women and girls and this has serious consequences on the career progression. By investigating the impact of cultural stereotypes on mature females, the study will add more literature on helping to eradicate harmful stereotypes militating career progression among mature female entry students.

2.4 Influence of Household Size on Career Progression

Parenthood is a major cause of reduced labour supply for women and can explain the gender career gap between women and men. Although the gender gap in wages has been steadily decreasing, over the last few decades, women's career paths are less steep than of men. The family structure in Kenya is a mix of traditional family system and emerging family systems structures and after many years of struggle for equality opportunities, motherhood still limits women's career progress even in a feminized occupation (Cooper *et al.*, 2021).

Women with young children attain relatively high activities and the high rates of activities decreases as the number of children increase. Student mothers face completely different challenges that may hinder career progression even though they are willing. The challenges are worse when one does not have a supportive partner or family because there is a way the society expects a woman to behave and respond to norms and beliefs (Morgan *et al.*, 2021). That is the more the number of children the lower the rate of productivity especially in the academic level and the labour force. Highly educated women can reach a better work-family balance, quite probably by externalizing family responsibilities, while low educated women can't afford most services that are important to them. Women are highly underrepresented at the top positions and a substantial share of the persistent difference in men's and women's careers can be traced to differences in career breaks and to shorter working hours these effects are caused by taking care of children and the husband and causes a huge impact on the career progression especially education wise (Kurowska, 2020). Child bearing and child rearing have direct effect on mother's labour supply, both through periods out of the labour market and periods through reduced working hours. According to Morgan *et al.* (2021) Parenthood is considered to have a severe effect on women's career progression even if they get full time employments. However, women's career progression may seem to be less steep than men's before they have children and yet women who intend giving birth may give less

priorities to succeeding labour markets than women with fewer or no children. Cooper *et al.* (2021) suggests that the household size of a family comes into conflict with a woman's career ambition which equally impacts on the outcome of the children in all spheres; socially, academically and mentally. In countries where female labour force participations are high and the returns to human capital continue to rise, career cost may be among the most important decisions.

Some women tend to experience guilt and shame for having to put their careers first because career and family demands are simultaneous. Family influence on career choice may also manifest itself unconsciously (Kurowska, 2020). Familial heritage plays a significant role in occupational choice in that individuals will tend to choose an occupation that enables them to satisfy needs that were unfulfilled in their childhood, and actualize dreams passed on to them by their family. For the longest time, women's careers have been strongly linked to family making and household responsibilities.

The careers women engage in are more of completing a desired aspect rather than having a long-term effect and benefit from the desired career (Kurowska, 2020). It is easy for a woman without a child to make great strides in terms of their careers. They become higher achievers compared to women with children. The amount of time and finances given towards maintaining a family is much more to a woman with children. Making the right choice for a career for women is hard because they believe that major opportunities are linked to men. This study will seek to address whether the household size has an impact on career progression on female students in the postgraduate department.

2.5 Influence of Mentorship on Career Progression

Successful career progression is more than the skills and technical abilities. It requires more strategic inputs such as professional relationships, networking or even better career visions and all these are impacted by the mentorship acquired towards a positive career progression plan (Fernandez *et al.*, 2021). Mentorship involves a relationship between the mentee (the less expert one) and the mentor (the expert) whereby the mentor helps the mentee make significant differences in the life of the mentee. Very few organizations have gone a step further to provide career mentorship programs for women hence becoming a challenge for women to climb up the ladder swiftly. Mentoring is a valuable concept that its effect can be felt throughout the organizational structure. It involves provision of guidance, instructions,

modelling, professional networking or sponsorship. Mentoring is a strategy that allows professional, psychological and personal development.

In the United States, women are the majority enrolling for higher education in quest for progressing in their careers. According to a research conducted by LinkedIn (2011), 1 out of 5 women had never been involved in mentorship programs at their different levels of their work. Often people are likely to be drawn and closer to the people they can relate with positively or see an opportunity of self-development and progression in terms of different career paths (Chauhan *et al.*, 2021). Women also are faced by different challenges as they focus to climb up the ladder and mentorship represent a greater percentage for mature females. Females place more value on professional feedbacks than men. With the large gender disparity differences in societies, many organizations have come up with improved measures to ensure mentorship among female employees.

Over the past few years, female to female mentorship has been a hard task to achieve because there have been fewer females progressing in their careers positively. The lack of female representation in mentoring other women inhibits career progression especially for the African woman (Dashper, 2020). Mentorship represents the best manner in which one can improve their skills and abilities, different scholars have concluded that mentoring could be a major asset to both personal and company developments. However, there have been major strides to accomplish mentorship especially in helping women to balance work and family or any achievement that would make their career progression a success. It is important to consider the influence of career mentorship on females which will help in a positive manner.

Career progression mentorship is a major stride to improving gender equity in the public sphere making progression an easy task to achieve. On the other hand, in African countries it is an uphill task to make career progression a success because of limiting factors such as discrimination in pay, promotions and the total time spent on family for women. It would take much more time to ensure that women get equal representation as men based on lack of mentorship for women (Chauhan *et al.*, 2021).

Mentoring has been greatly linked with social stratification, power and privileges. For instance, in Egerton University it is only until recently that women begun to make strides towards career progression and even for the first time had a female vice chancellor. This by itself could have been a step for other females to make career progression a reality with the availability of a female mentor. Therefore, this study seeks to focus on this particular group

of female students who may still be held back by other social factors that influence on career progression.

2.6 Influence of Gender Division of labour on Career Progression

Over the past few decades, there has been great improvement on gender division of labour which has led to the increment of women entering the labour force and desiring to progress positively in their careers. The gender division of labour within families refers to the allocation of chores between men and women with the household (McMunn *et al.*, 2020). It may change over time and varies from place to place. Different cultural beliefs shape the gender responsibilities between women and men, changes in the gender division of labour are promoting the increase in tensions between the caring responsibilities and employment demands for women. Traditional patterns of task allocation confined women largely in the household spaces. The men in the family tend to engage in productive roles while women focus on community and reproductive roles (McMunn *et al.*, 2020).

Although women have made tremendous improvement in career progression, they still lag behind compared to men because they do twice the work compared to men. Women have to accomplish their gender roles attributed by the society of being mothers, wives or caretakers (Seiz, 2021). Gender division of labour is a context practiced globally whereby women tend to specialize in the private spheres i.e., domestic works while men have the tendency of specializing in the public spheres i.e., the labour markets more so in most developed countries.

Traditionally, it is always the responsibility of the man to provide for the family but in the recent years' women have turned out to equally be the breadwinners of the families which increases the burden load for women especially when they have to take care of young ones and are career oriented. When families have young children at most times the burden is heavily felt by the mother. Different researches have shown that even when men have opted to engaged in household chores, they seem to be engendered as well in that they opt for chores that can be done within their busy schedules (Edgell, 2023). On the other hand, women become engaged on chores that require most of their time and attention such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, laundry or taking care of children. According to Kurowska (2020), care giving is heavily reliant on women since it involves a day-to-day experience

which tends to occupy most of their time which would in-turn militate against the career progression of women.

There have been changes to the gendered division of labour of family care but women still remain disproportionately more likely than men to take care of chores within the family compared to men. As a result, more women are likely to put in more time in the unpaid labour at home. The situation is worse in developing countries whereby cultural values are still deep-rooted with the various societies. In America, the shift to gender equality has prompted women to employ house helps while in Africa, there are still struggles of getting extra help to perform household chores (Edgell, 2023).. Women and men still believe that a woman should be restricted within the private sectors. White women have been able to conquer the societal cultures hence positively progressing in their careers.

Integrating gender issues into career progression promote productivity and economic growth. Due to the gendered roles, women are more likely to have part-time jobs compared to men with full time jobs which translate to how gender division of labour influences career progression because they must adequately have a little time to spend on their families. Additionally, part-time working has become a better and surer way in which women can reconcile family and work responsibilities to facilitate for better career progression strategies. Professionally, venturing into part-time working schedules puts at risk the careers of women hence face the risk of failing to climb up the ladder because of lack of better opportunities (Hartman *et al.*, 2020).

Family is major social context for mature women because students tend to get the highest form of socialization from the family and social information from family may be very influential in their career progression as students. Values and attitudes related to the balancing of work and family are influenced by a number of factors, including the family of origin and exposure to trends in the labour force. Over the last two or three decades, an increasing number of mothers have taken on paid employment (Edgell, 2023).

There is always a relationship between career progression and marital stability because if a wife gets full support from the husband there is a likelihood of easy progression compared to a woman from a woman hailing from a family that the husband does not offer any kind of help in terms of household chores. On the other hand, men with supportive wives' progress swiftly in their careers without much struggle. Hartman *et al.* (2020), concludes that the unequal distribution of labour within the families completely creates a glass-ceiling towards

career progression or even self-development for females who have been trapped within important steps towards career progression. Females who opt to make strides for proper career progression face a unique set of challenges and this literature seeks to bridge the gap on the influence of socio-cultural factors on career progression on this particular group of students.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework combines insights from Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) and Liberal Feminist Theory, both of which are instrumental in understanding the socio-cultural factors influencing career progression among mature female students. SCCT emphasizes cognitive factors such as self-efficacy and outcome expectations, which impact career decisions and persistence in professional environments. By employing these theories, the study aims to explore how personal attributes and socio-cultural influences shape the career progression of mature female students as they navigate the challenges of balancing work, family, and education

2.7.1 Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

The guiding theory of this study was based on Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which is majorly used to make estimates on people's professional contemplations and their career and academic achievements (Brown *et al.*, 1994). The theory was established by D. Brown, Robert W. Lent Gail Hackett & Steven in 1994 and was developed to elucidate how persons, attain job satisfaction set vocational goals, persists in work environments, form career interests and attain job satisfaction. It was first applied to young girls and adolescents. This theory attains some roots in Albert Bandura's (1986) general theory of Social Cognitive Theory which recognizes the importance of people choosing their own career decisions.

SCCT emphasizes several cognitive variables including self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals, which are associated with academic performance as well as persistence behaviour. Super (1963) states that both personal attributes (internal) and environmental and social context (external) factors within the transition's stages will influence individuals' career choices and decisions as well as their vocational behaviours. Intentions and goals lead to activity selection, which ultimately leads to performance attainment. Self-efficacy, a component of SCCT is defined by Bandura (1986) as individuals' ability to judge his or her capabilities to perform specific actions or designated functions.

Hackett *et al.* (1981), focused on self-efficacy theory to explain women's traditional career choices suggesting that low self-efficacy may explain the restricted range women's career options. This theory plays a key role in establishing career progression in women. It is evident that socio-cultural factors still lag women behind in career progression. Outcome expectations are described as an individual's belief concerning the consequences or outcome from certain specific actions.

2.7.2 Liberal Theory

The major founders were Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill and Hellen Taylor. They believe that women's freedom is very important to the society whereby a woman gets to choose what to do with her life. It is largely based on women participating in the public sphere and they argue that women's subordination is greatly linked to women being restricted to the private sphere. It is a suffrage that seeks to promote the emancipation of women's legal and political rights including the right to own their own properties. Discrimination of women arises from stereotyped expectation from women simply because of their sex. All these stereotypes are primarily learnt in the family since it's the basic socialization unit in the society.

In this regard Egerton University being a learning institution that accommodates different kinds of students ranging from diploma, degree, international as well as masters' students. Additionally, the institute also has a sexual harassment code at the institute of gender and a student mother's program within the school. Women have been given the liberty to make their own choices when it comes to the progression of their careers and choose to pursue a course of their own choice. The learning institutions should be able to accommodate mature female students and make flexible workable schedules to accommodate them. This then brings the importance to research on the socio-cultural factors affecting career progression among mature female entry students and how they manage work, family and studies.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework indicates the relationship between independent variable -socio-cultural factors and how they influence dependent variable-career progression among mature females. Career progression for women is highly influenced by social-cultural factors such as norms and values, household size, cultural stereotypes and family background. All these factors can be controlled by intervening variables such as government policy on education and also KUPPS trying to accommodate mature female entry. This will be enhanced by easy

regulations and requirements. Figure 1 summarizes the components of the conceptual framework.

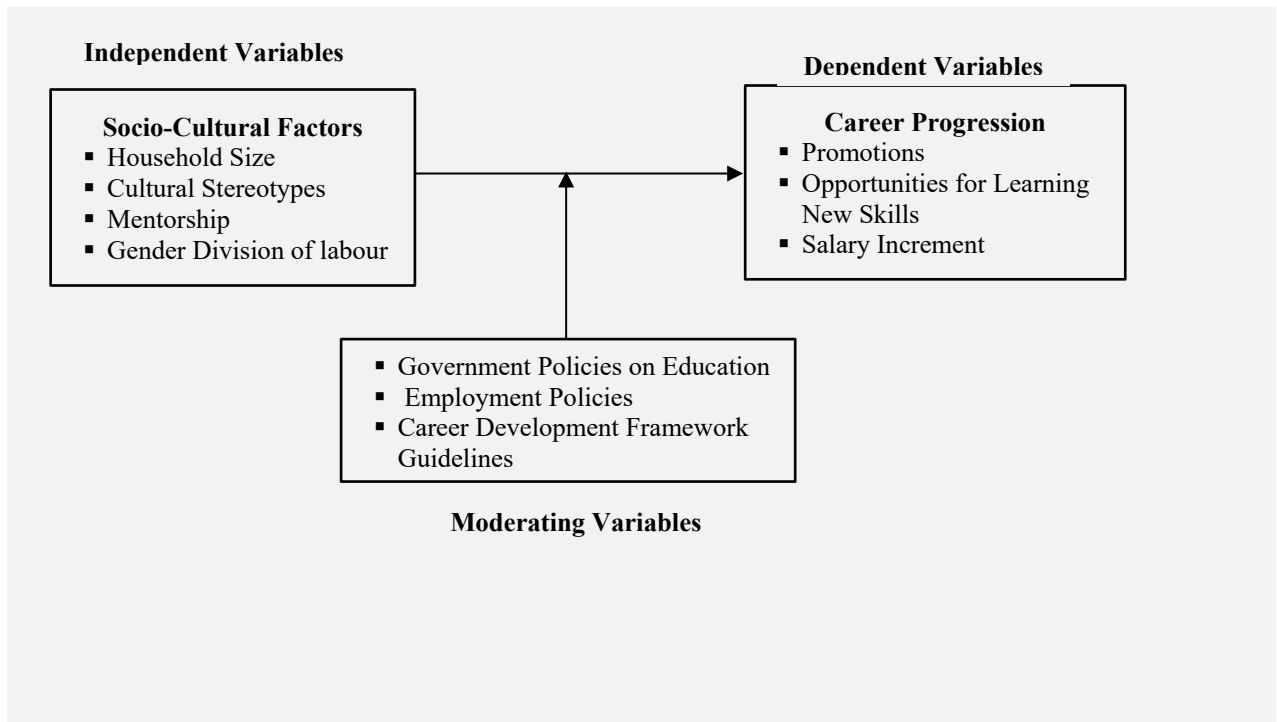


Figure 1: Relationship between Independent, Dependent and Intervening Variables

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures that were used to collect and analyse data. It focuses on the research design, study area, population, sampling procedures and sample size, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

A Research Design ensures that a research problem is effectively addressed hence making it easier for a researcher to be able to integrate different components of the research in a logical and coherent manner. It outlines a plan for collection, measurement and analysis of data. According to Creswell (2014), the research survey offers the researcher with opinions, emotions attitudes, knowledge and characteristics of a population by studying a sample of a particular population. In this inquiry, a case study research design was adopted. Case study research design was the best for conducting this study because it enabled the researcher to obtain an in-depth investigation and multi-faceted knowledge and understanding of a certain complex issue in a real-life view. In addition, it allowed the researcher to capture a wide range of perspectives in the findings of the study to a population, especially if the sample was selected randomly and was representative of all the sub-groups within the population.

Case study research design was efficient as it was comprehensive in that it provided a holistic review whereby the researcher could use a range of tools in the subject of study. It also reduced bias because it captured a wide range of opportunities compared to a single view of perspectives. It is a reputable research design that has been used broadly in a wide variety of disciplines, chiefly in the social sciences. This study used this research design to explain the socio-cultural factors affecting career progression among mature female students' entry.

3.3 Study Area

The study was carried out at Egerton University, which is located in Njoro, Nakuru County, in the Rift Valley region of Kenya. It sits approximately 25 Kilometers southwest of Nakuru town and about 180 Kilometers northwest of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The institution was initially established in 1939 as a farm school and has grown into a leading public university in Kenya, offering programs in various fields including agriculture, education, natural sciences, engineering, and business. Egerton University was selected because it offers a variety of courses and is a government public school. Also, it admits

students regardless of their social background, considering that there is a student mothers' program in the school. Additionally, the school admits post-graduate international students hailing from different faculties. The ideal setting of the study was one that was directly related to the researcher's own interest and was easily accessible to the researcher, hence allowing a good rapport with the respondents. Figure 2, below presents the map of Egerton University where the study was carried out.

3.4 Study Population

The target population comprised mature female students in selected courses in Egerton University in Nakuru County. The accessible population was students who were studying at the university during the time of the study.

Table 1 summarizes information regarding target population and the accessible population.

Table 1: Target and Accessible Population

Egerton University	Sample of Female Students	Accessible Population of Female Students
Faculty of Agriculture	20	10
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	29	20
Faculty of Engineering	11	9
Faculty of Education and Community Development Studies	20	15
Institute of Women, Gender and Development Studies	21	20
Faculty of Science	15	13
Faculty of Health Sciences	11	9
Totals	127	96

Source: Egerton Postgraduate Department

3.5 Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

This section examines how the sample size was determined and also how the sampled population was drawn for the study. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the recommended formula to use when determining a sample size was developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970).

$$S = \frac{X^2 NP (1-P)}{D^2 (N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)}$$

Where S = required sample size, N = the given population size, P = population proportion assumed to be 0.5 as this yields the minimum possible sample size required, D = the degree of occurrence with the highest occurrence and X^2 = the table value of Chi-square for one degree of freedom. Inserting the required information into the formula where $X^2 = 3.841^2$ gives:

$$S = \frac{3.841 \times 127 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2 (127-1) + 3.841 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}$$

$$S = 95.6296 = 96 \text{ mature female students}$$

$$S = 96 \text{ mature female students}$$

Simple random sampling using the lottery technique was used to select the respondents (mature entry female students) from a list of students in the selected faculties of the study area because they were in the range of the desired target population. According to Mutai (2000), this procedure is applied to ensure that the sample selection is independent of human judgment; and that the chance of selection for each member of the population is non-zero. In doing this, the researcher wrote the names of all mature female students in the post-graduate department participating in the study on slips of paper. The slips of paper with the names of the respondents were inserted in a box then mixed thoroughly and then they were drawn (without looking), the required number of slips for the sample one after the other without replacement. In doing so, the researcher made sure that the successive drawings of each of the remaining elements of the population had the same chance of being selected.

3.6 Research Instrumentation

Data was collected using questionnaire for the mature students which were developed by the researcher. The test items were designed according to the researcher's objectives.

3.6.1 Key Informant Interview Schedule for Departmental Heads

The purpose of the interview in this study was to give the departmental heads an opportunity to elaborate on some issues concerning career progression among mature female entry students. The interview schedule was administered to the departmental to examine the in-depth socio-cultural issues affecting career progression among mature female students in Egerton University. The interview schedule had open-ended items to implore in-depth information on socio-cultural factors affecting career progression among mature female

students in Egerton University. According to Creswell *et al.* (2007), interview schedules could collect in-depth information from respondents who were well conversant with the subject issue under investigation.

3.6.2 Questionnaire for Mature Female Entry Students

The study used a questionnaire, which was administered to the selected 96 female students. The questionnaire was appropriate for the respondents as it saved time and the cost of administering them. According to Creswell *et al.* (2007), a questionnaire is a self-report instrument used for collecting information needed. A questionnaire assured a high response rate and a minimum of bias, providing necessary explanations and giving the benefit of personal contact (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Another advantage of the questionnaire was that data processing was cost effective especially because they can be sent electronically and also the data collected is presented in a structured format making it easy for analysis. The questionnaire comprised of open and closed-ended question items developed by the researcher in a Likert Rating Scale. The major items in the Likert scale representing the level of agreement, that is, strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5).

The questionnaire was structured to cover a range of questions whereby section A comprised of the background information of the respondents while section B aimed at obtaining information on the influence of social cultural factors on mature female students with subsections of 1) How household size influence career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University. 2) In which ways does gender division of labour influence career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University. 3) In which ways do cultural stereotypes influence career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University. 4) How does mentorship influence career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya?

3.7 Pre-testing and Reliability.

Before the actual data collection process, the researcher conducted a pre-testing in Kenyatta University, considering it contained similar characteristics to the area of study. The researcher used 10 percent (10%) of the sampled population for the pre-testing, which was the minimum number of cases required for conducting a statistical investigation. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents for equal representation, where 10 female students were selected. A pre-testing was conducted to ascertain the validity, which

was about the accuracy of a measure, and reliability, which indicated the consistency of a measure of the study.

Reliability of any instruments depends on its production of similar results or data after several conducted trials (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). When an instrument measures a variable consistently and accurately and obtains the same results under the same conditions over time, it is then considered reliable. From the theory of measurement, each reply to an item replicated the true score for the proposed construct and, to some extent, some random error (Kothari *et al.*, 2014). It minimized the measurement error, and the relationship between the true score and the observed score was strong. Pre-testing enabled the researcher to assess the clarity of the test items so that those items found to be inadequate or vague were modified to improve the quality of the research instruments. This increased its reliability, and after the pre-test, reliability of the instruments was estimated using Cronbach's Coefficient formula. A coefficient of 0.7 and above indicated the degree to which the test item provided the same results and hence described the internal consistency of the test. This was within the threshold for reliability testing (Bryman, 2004).

3.7.1 Validity

This was the extent to which a test measured what it was supposed to measure. It focused on content validity and face validity. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), internal validity was concerned with the extent to which a study established a factor or variable that actually caused the effect. It was the extent to which extraneous variables were controlled. External validity of the instrument indicated the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and applicability of inferences to the target population (Creswell *et al.*, 2007). All assessments of validity were subjective opinions based on the judgment of the researcher (Orodho, 2003). Appropriate and relevant items were constructed to capture all the research objectives to ensure valid and reliable data. Validity was established by expert judgment (Orodho, 2003); therefore, the instruments were reviewed by the study supervisors and other educational experts from the Institute of Gender, Women, and Development Studies of Egerton University. Validation of instruments was carried out to improve their effectiveness for collecting relevant data.

3.8. Ethical Considerations

For a high level of response, the researcher visited all the respondents, and the instruments were administered by the researcher personally. In times of COVID-19, the researcher

conducted online interviews and discussions. The researcher explained how to fill the questionnaires and interview schedules to the respondents. The purpose of administering the questionnaires and interview schedules in person was done to prevent chances of misinterpretation of the items due to illiteracy as well as to solve problems of time and cost. The instruments were then organized and scored ready for analysis. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of their participation.

The researcher requested an introductory letter from the university's graduate school, which facilitated the issuance of a research permit from The National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) before the data collection process, after approval by the board of postgraduate studies, to enable the researcher to carry out the research in Egerton University. The researcher visited various departments included in the study to familiarize with the study area and informed the respondents of the intention of the study. Department leaders also prepared an introductory note for the researcher for introduction to mature female students. The researcher then visited the students and introduced herself to them, explaining the purpose of the study. Modalities for collecting the required data were discussed and agreed upon before the researcher embarked on the study. A set of questionnaires and interview schedules were administered to the respondents and key informants.

3.9 Data Analysis

The questionnaires administered were checked to determine the results before the actual data analysis. The instruments were coded to facilitate analysis. The specific objectives stated in chapter one called for different statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics provided the opportunity to increase the understanding of socio-cultural factors affecting career progression in mature female students. Inferential statistics, specifically the *mean*, *Chi-square* and *correlation analyses*, were used to analyse data in order to investigate the influence of household size, determine the influence of gender division of labour, establish the ways in which cultural stereotypes affected career progression, and investigate the influence of mentorship on career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University, Kenya. Inferential statistics allowed making predictions across an entire population when given the data from a certain sample of that population (Orodho, 2003). The statistical value for rejecting or accepting the hypotheses of the study was set at a 5% alpha level. A multi-regression model analysis was used with relevant diagnostics tests. Analysis of data was

performed with the help of the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program version 27. The data was presented in tables, charts, and figures

3.9.1 Regression Analysis

A multiple regression was also executed to assess the prediction capability and direction of the dependent variables by independent variables. In this case, career progression was the dependent variable, represents as "Y". The independent variables were household size, gender division of labor, cultural stereotypes, and mentorship. These variables were presented as "X1" (household size), "X2" (gender division of labor), "X3" (cultural stereotypes), and "X4" (mentorship).

The following multiple regression model was adopted:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya (dependent variable)

X1 = Household size

X2 = Gender division of labour

X3 = Cultural stereotypes

X4 = Mentorship

β_0 = Intercept (constant term)

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ = Coefficients for each independent

ε = Error term (residuals)

The goal of the multiple regression analysis was to estimate the coefficients ($\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$) that represent the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable. At the same time, the multiple regression was used to assess the effects of all other variables in the model. In this case, the intercept term (β_0) represented the expected value of career progression when all independent variables are zero. SPSS was used to run the multiple regression analysis to determine the extent to which each socio-cultural factor (household size, gender division of labour, cultural stereotypes, and mentorship) influences career progression among mature female entry postgraduate students at Egerton University. The regression coefficients indicated the direction and strength of these relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This section presents the analysis results, interpretation, and discussion of the study's findings through analysis of the questionnaires and interview responses. The information is summarized in tables, which aid in the visualization of the findings. The information analysed entailed demographic information of the respondents involved in the study. This section is summarized as follows: introduction, general information, demographics, statistical analyses, qualitative analysis, and interpretation and discussion based on the studies' objectives. The focus of this study was to find how the variables; household size, gender division of labour, cultural stereotypes and mentorship influence career progression among mature entry female students.

4.2 Response Rate

During the survey, 127 respondents were targeted. Therefore, 127 questionnaires were distributed to the various prospective respondents. However, 96 informants filled and returned the questionnaires. Therefore, the response rate was 94.12%. The number of questionnaires filled and returned was appropriate for analysis because it exceeds the 80% threshold. On the other hand, the researcher targeted nine members of the faculty for the oral interviews. However, eight (88.89%) were available for the interviews.

4.2.2 Characteristics of Respondents

Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is essential for gaining insights into the background of the study population. This section presents a detailed overview of respondents based on key demographic variables such as age, marital status, faculty, and the master's degree programs they are pursuing. These characteristics help in contextualizing the data and ensuring the representativeness of the sample, which consisted of 96 respondents. The demographic information is summarized in Table 2, with percentages used to describe and analyze the distribution across these variables.

Table 2: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Item	Frequency (N=96)	Percentage (%)
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Item	Frequency (N=96)	Percentage (%)
Age		
30 - 37 Years	32	33.33
38 - 47 Years	35	36.46
48 - 57 Years	19	19.79
58 Years and Above	10	10.42
Total	96	100.00
Marital Status		
Married	63	65.63
Others (e.g., divorced, widowed)	13	13.54
Single	20	20.83
Total	96	100.00
Faculty		
Faculty of Agriculture	14	14.58
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	14	14.58
Faculty of Education and Community Development Studies	14	14.58
Faculty of Engineering	13	13.54
Faculty of Health Sciences	14	14.58
Faculty of Science	14	14.58
Institute of Women, Gender, and Development Studies	13	13.54

Item	Frequency (N=96)	Percentage (%)
Total	96	100.00
Master's Degree		
Accounting	9	9.38
Agriculture	10	10.42
Business Administration	10	10.42
Community Development	9	9.38
Education	10	10.42
Gender Studies	10	10.42
Health Sciences	10	10.42
International Relations	9	9.38
Criminology or Languages	9	9.38
Psychology	10	10.42
Total	96	100.00

Discussion

Age Composition: The majority of the respondents (36.46%) were aged between 38 and 47 years, followed closely by those in the 30-37 age bracket (33.33%). This suggests that a significant portion of the mature female students pursuing postgraduate studies are in their mid to late careers, indicating a desire to advance their careers at later stages in life.

Respondents over the age of 58 made up the smallest proportion (10.42%), showing a lesser representation of older women in postgraduate education.

Marital Status: Most respondents were married (65.63%), indicating that a large proportion of mature female students have family commitments. This reinforces the importance of considering socio-cultural factors, such as household responsibilities and the gender division of labor, which can impact career progression. Single respondents made up 20.83%, while 13.54% identified as either divorced or widowed, highlighting a diversity of family situations among the students.

Faculty Representation: The respondents were evenly distributed across the main faculties, including Agriculture, Social Sciences, Education, Health Sciences, and Science (14.58% each). This balance suggests that mature female students are pursuing a wide range of disciplines, and that the challenges they face may vary across different fields. The faculties of Engineering and the Institute of Women, Gender, and Development Studies had slightly lower representation (13.54% each), possibly reflecting traditional gender divisions in subject choice.

Master's Degree Programs: The distribution of respondents across various master's degree programs shows that a significant number are pursuing studies in Agriculture, Business Administration, Education, Gender Studies, Psychology, and Health Sciences (10.42% each). This suggests that mature female students are opting for diverse fields of study, with some gravitating toward professions with a potential for career advancement, while others are influenced by traditional gender roles. Additionally, subjects such as Accounting, Community Development, International Relations, and Criminology were chosen by 9.38% of respondents each, reflecting interest in a broad range of career paths.

4.3 Presentation of Research Findings, Analysis, and Interpretation

4.3.1 Household Size

The informants were supposed to indicate the type of household they come from in terms of number of members. As per the results, 11 respondents (11.46%) came from households with between one and two members. On the other hand, 17 (17.71%) respondents indicated that they came from households with 3-5 members. Most respondents, 68 (70.83%) were from families with more than five members. In regards to family management such as provision, it

was found that 14 families (14.58%) households were female headed while the rest, 82 (85.42%) were male headed.

4.3.2 Influence of Household Size on Career Progression

The collected data was analysed using statistical approaches. Specifically, the Likert-scale mean score and standard deviation for each prompt were calculated. In this case, the respondents were supposed to answer questions or prompts with 1, or 2, or 3, or 4, or 5, where 1 denoted strongly disagree, 2 indicated agree, 3 was for neutral or neither agree nor disagree, 4 represented agree, and 5 was for strongly agree. Table 3 summarises the findings on the influence of household size on the career progression of mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya.

Table 2: Summary of Impact of Household Size on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDEV
The interplay between the size of a household and the nature of academic and career pursuits could potentially shape a woman's journey in higher education and profession	0	2	15	32	47	4.29	0.045
The dynamics within larger households contribute to challenges faced by women in balancing the responsibilities of academia, profession, and family	1	3	10	37	45	4.27	0.044
Familial support systems within larger households significantly impact the trajectory of a woman's career advancement	2	7	9	39	39	4.10	0.042

Women hailing from smaller households have an advantage in channelling their focus towards career aspirations due to potentially reduced domestic demands	3	3	12	33	45	4.19	0.043
Cultural expectations and familial obligations within larger households substantially influence a woman's selection of career paths	1	2	10	29	54	4.39	0.046
The art of managing diverse household obligations within a larger family fosters the cultivation of heightened organizational proficiency and diverse skillsets that resonate within a woman's professional journey	5	11	21	35	24	3.65	0.036
Women from smaller households face lesser hurdles to advance their careers	4	5	7	37	43	4.15	0.042
Generally, the composition of a household affects a woman's career progression?	9	14	34	27	12	3.20	0.033

The results indicate that the size of a woman's household significantly impacts her ability to dedicate time and focus on academic and career pursuits (Likert-Scale Average of 4.29, STDEV 0.045). Additionally, it was indicated that larger household sizes tend to create more challenges in balancing domestic responsibilities with educational and professional

commitments (Likert-Scale Average of 4.27, STDEV 0.044). It was also established that the availability of a support system within a larger household positively correlates with a woman's career advancement (Likert-Scale Average of 4.10, STDEV 0.042). According to the results, women from smaller households have a comparative advantage in focusing on their career goals due to potentially reduced domestic demands (Likert-Scale Average of 4.19, STDEV 0.043). Also, the necessity to fulfil familial obligations within a larger household often influences career choices of women (Likert-Scale Average of 4.39, STDEV 0.046). It was also found that women who can effectively manage household responsibilities within a larger family unit tend to demonstrate enhanced organizational and multitasking skills in their careers (Likert-Scale Average of 3.65, STDEV 0.036). The respondents indicated that women from smaller households encounter fewer impediments in pursuing continuous education to advance their careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.15, STDEV 0.042). Finally, the respondents were not sure whether the composition and dynamics of a household influence the degree of a woman's career progression (Likert-Scale Average of 3.20, STDEV 0.033).

As per the interview results, interviewee 1 said, *“I have witnessed how household size impacts the career progression of mature entry female students at Egerton University. Larger households often result in increased responsibilities for these students, making it challenging for them to fully engage in academic and extracurricular activities.”* Similarly, interviewee 5 indicated, *“and from my perspective, household size does impact career progression. Students with larger families may struggle to allocate sufficient time for studies and networking, which can affect their growth in the field.”* The assertions were supported by interviewee 8, who said, *“the size of one’s family affects their career advancement. For instance, a learner who comes from a family with numerous dependents usually lacks time and finances to fund their higher education and advance their careers.”*

4.3.3 Influence of Gender Division of Labour on Career Progression

The respondents indicated that men and women perform different roles within the households. As per the results, 90 (93.75%) respondents indicated that men and women are in charge of different roles. The rest 6 (6.25%) indicated that they were not sure if there is a difference between the roles played by men and women in the households. Most of those who said there are clear demarcations about the roles played by men and women explained that women were usually in charge of domestic tasks such as homecare chores, while men were supposed to provide for the family. Generally, women were in charge of laundry and dishes,

grocery and shopping, taking care of children and the elderly, and cleaning. In some few cases, house helps and children could assist in activities like cleaning and shopping. Men, on the other hand, were in charge of paying bills and providing for the family. However, women also provided for the family by buying their children food and clothes. As for the unsure informants, they said each family had its unique approach to the activities allocated to men and women. Therefore, there is no distinct role that has to be done by either gender. The informants stated that their homemaker role influenced their career progression by hindering them. For instance, the women indicated that they could not pursue further studies when their children were young because they were supposed to keep an eye on such children's babysitting. Therefore, they could not travel far to study. Table 4 gives an analysis of Likert-Scale Average and Standard Deviation of the responses regarding the gender division of labour and how it impacts career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya.

Table 3: Influence of Gender Division of Labour on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDEV
Traditional gender norms, deeply entrenched in household roles, affect women's career advancement	3	2	6	40	45	4.27	0.044
Pervasive societal expectations that limit women's primary responsibilities to homemakers potentially impede their capacity to pursue academic and professional aspirations	2	3	9	32	50	4.30	0.045
The asymmetric allocation of domestic and caregiving duties potentially serves as a hindrance to women's strides in their chosen careers	6	4	10	33	43	4.07	0.041
In the context of shared household responsibilities, a collaborative approach with partners potentially contributes to heightened prospects of success in women's professional journeys	1	2	4	44	45	4.35	0.046
Societal constructs designating women's central role as homemakers impacts their decision-making process regarding career progression	5	4	6	43	38	4.09	0.042

A robust support structure from family members that facilitates an equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities can bolster women's advancement in their professional pursuits	2	2	8	39	45	4.28	0.044
Women who conscientiously challenge traditional gender roles are highly likely to make higher career achievements	2	1	3	36	54	4.45	0.047
The university environment plays a significant role in empowering women to balance household duties and career aspirations	1	1	4	39	51	4.44	0.047

The findings indicated that gender roles in household chores and responsibilities have an impact on how women pursue their careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.27, STDEV 0.044). Additionally, traditional expectations of women's roles at home were found to affect their ability to focus on academic and career goals (Likert-Scale Average of 4.30, STDEV 0.045).

It was also found that the unequal distribution of household and caregiving tasks hinders women's advancement in their chosen careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.07, STDEV 0.041). Women who share household responsibilities equally with their partners are more likely to have successful careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.35, STDEV 0.046). It was also established that society's expectations of women's primary role as homemakers impact their career progression choices negatively (Likert-Scale Average of 4.09, STDEV 0.042). On the other hand, adequate support from family members in sharing household tasks positively correlates with women's career development (Likert-Scale Average of 4.28, STDEV 0.044). Women who challenge traditional gender roles are more likely to achieve higher levels of career success (Likert-Scale Average of 4.45, STDEV 0.047). Finally, it was indicated that the university environment plays a significant role in empowering women to balance household duties and career aspirations (Likert-Scale Average of 4.44, STDEV 0.047).

The results align with what the interviewees said. For instance, interviewee 6 stated, “*Gender division of labour can play a role in career progression. Female students often face challenges in balancing academic commitments with family responsibilities, impacting their ability to invest fully in their careers.*” Therefore, women usually have to complete numerous home tasks before they can consider doing their studies.

4.3.4 Effects of Cultural Stereotypes on Career Progression

Respondents were presented with cultural stereotypes regarding women and careers and requested to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with them. Analysis entailed the calculation of the Likert-Scale Average and Standard Deviation. The results determined how cultural stereotypes impact career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya. The findings are summarized in Table 5.

Table 4: Impact of Cultural Stereotypes on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDEV
Women should remain in the kitchen areas	39	39	9	2	7	1.95	0.041
Women are natural nurturers while men are natural leaders	31	27	23	7	7	2.26	0.037
Women do not need equal or higher pay than men because they are taken care of by men	24	23	37	9	3	2.42	0.036
Women with children are less devoted to their jobs	38	32	18	5	3	1.99	0.040
Women should not be aggressive in their careers	21	25	23	15	12	2.71	0.034
Women are too emotional to take up certain responsibilities and careers such as CEO positions	23	19	30	12	12	2.70	0.034

According to the results majority of the respondents did not believe that women should only be performing household tasks such as cooking and washing (Likert-Scale Average of 1.95, STDEV 0.041). Additionally, the respondents did not agree that women should be regarded

as natural nurturers while men are identified and treated as leaders (Likert-Scale Average of 2.26, STDEV 0.037). regarding whether women do not need equal or higher pay than men because they are taken care of by men, the informants disagreed with the statement (Likert-Scale Average of 2.42, STDEV 0.036). The respondents also disputed the notion that women with children are less devoted to their jobs (Likert-Scale Average of 1.99, STDEV 0.040). However, the respondents were generally undecided about whether women should not be aggressive in their careers and if they are too emotional to take up certain responsibilities and careers such as CEO roles (Likert-Scale Average of 2.70, STDEV 0.034, in each case).

Furthermore, the respondents were requested to indicate the other stereotypes they had experienced. Based on the responses received, the surveyed individuals faced implicit bias challenges. As indicated by the women, they have witnessed some interesting subtle cues, attitudes, and behaviours. The cues may not be direct discrimination. However, such conduct can hinder the women's progress in their career. For example, the women indicated that they were often questioned by senior faculty members about their ability to excel in certain fields that seemed traditionally male-dominated. Therefore, the biases influenced how the female professionals were evaluated, assigned tasks, and included in projects. Another issue evident from the survey is the unintentional maternal bias, which leads to women's potential to excel in academics and careers being misconstrued.. The informants indicated that their commitment and availability for work and studies had been inherently diminished at their workplaces and institutions.

The results align with the insights from interviews. For instance, interviewee 2 said, *"I have noted the influence of cultural stereotypes on the career progression of mature female students. Some students from certain backgrounds face societal pressures that affect their confidence and choices, potentially limiting their advancement."*

Some women indicated that some professors and advisors had limited opportunities for women with children. The reason is that they assumed the women may not have had time and commitment to fully engage in academic pursuits. Finally, the issue of glass ceiling was evident from the survey. Some informants asserted that their career progression to senior positions such as administrators had been limited by biased restrictions. According to the results, women were denied leadership positions because these roles were traditionally reserved for men. Consequently, women are overlooked during promotions because of the

prevailing notions about their suitability for the roles despite their relevant qualifications and achievements.

In line with the results, interviewee 3 said, *“I believe socio-cultural factors indeed affect the career progression of female postgraduate students. Certain cultural expectations and stereotypes can shape their choices and opportunities, either enabling or hindering their advancement.”* A similar assertion was echoed by interviewee 7, who said, *“Societal expectations and cultural values influence a woman’s career advancement because females are generally restricted by gender norms. A female’s options are usually limited, thus reducing their opportunities to progress in their career.”* Institutions should reduce gender cultural biases that limit females from opportunities.

4.3.5 Influence of Mentorship on Career Progression

Regarding mentorship, the respondents said they had mentors. Particularly, 73 (76.04%) of the informants said they were attached to a mentor at their workplaces and during their studies. Those who affirmed that they had a mentor indicated that such professionals had been within the organisation for at least six years. Therefore, the mentors were experienced, having performed the role for many years. Generally, the respondents had benefited from the mentorship offered. Particularly, it was found that the mentors had influenced the respondents’ career progression positively. The reason is that the mentors offered advice and guidance on what the individuals needed to do to succeed on their careers. Additionally, the respondents were requested to respond to prompts about the role of mentorship in their careers. Table 6 provides a summary of the responses regarding the role of mentorship in career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya.

Table 5: Influence of Mentorship on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDEV
Mentorship plays a pivotal role in shaping the career aspirations and decisions of mature female entry students.	1	3	7	40	45	4.30	0.045
Effective mentorship can	1	2	9	34	50	4.35	0.046

provide insights and guidance that significantly impact a woman's career trajectory.

A well-structured mentorship program enhances the confidence and self-efficacy of women in pursuing challenging career paths. 2 3 10 37 44 4.23 0.044

Mentorship relationships that foster both personal and professional growth contribute to greater success in career advancement. 1 2 4 44 45 4.35 0.046

The guidance and counsel from a mentor can help women navigate the complexities of workplace dynamics and challenges. 3 4 6 43 40 4.18 0.043

Mentorship from successful women in the same field serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for pursuing ambitious career goals 2 2 8 39 45 4.28 0.044

Do you believe that women with access to meaningful mentorship opportunities are better equipped to overcome barriers and excel in their chosen careers? 1 1 4 36 54 4.47 0.047

To what extent does the 1 2 6 36 51 4.40 0.046

influence of mentorship within a university setting contribute to the holistic growth and multifaceted development of women pursuing career progression?

According to the results, it was found that mentorship plays a pivotal role in shaping the career aspirations and decisions of mature female entry students (Likert-Scale Average of 4.30, STDEV 0.045). Additionally, effective mentorship can provide insights and guidance that significantly impact a woman's career trajectory (Likert-Scale Average of 4.35, STDEV 0.046). It was also found that a well-structured mentorship program enhances the confidence and self-efficacy of women in pursuing challenging career paths (Likert-Scale Average of 4.23, STDEV 0.044). The results also indicate that mentorship relationships that foster both personal and professional growth contribute to greater success in career advancement among women (Likert-Scale Average of 4.35, STDEV 0.046). The findings indicate that the guidance and counsel from a mentor can help women navigate the complexities of workplace dynamics and challenges (Likert-Scale Average of 4.18, STDEV 0.043).

On the other hand, the research findings showed that mentorship from successful women in the same field serves as a source of inspiration and motivation for pursuing ambitious career goals (Likert-Scale Average of 4.28, STDEV 0.044). The respondents believed that women with access to meaningful mentorship opportunities are better equipped to overcome barriers and excel in their chosen careers (Likert-Scale Average of 4.47, STDEV 0.047). Finally, the respondents indicated that the influence of mentorship within a university setting contributes to the holistic growth and multifaceted development of women pursuing career progression to a greater extent (Likert-Scale Average of 4.40, STDEV 0.046). The results align with interviewee 4's assertion, who said that, "*my position has given me insights into the importance of mentorship for career progression. Students who have mentors tend to have clearer goals and a better understanding of the steps needed to succeed.*"

4.3.6 Career Progression

An assessment of the potential for career growth was done. The review entails aspects like promotions, salary increments, and opportunities for personal development. According to the results, 91 (94.79%) respondents said that they get promotions at their workplaces. However,

such opportunities came occasionally. Only a few of the 91 informants said that there are annual or semi-annual promotions at their workplaces. However, most of the informants indicated that their workplaces offered promotions once after every two years, five years, or sometimes, after more than five years. Regarding salary increments, informants indicated that their companies offered salary increments, but such steps were actualized occasionally. As per the respondents, the organisations based the increments on various factors such as productivity, performance, educational qualifications, economic conditions, and company performance. Only few companies were quoted to have helped the respondents in acquiring new skills for example Google empowers women to gain IT skills through Women Techmakers and also Microsoft through “DigiGirlz”. For instance, some respondents said that their companies paid for their tuition to pursue advanced studies, especially administrative courses. The organisations also paid for the frequent training sessions that took place. Particularly, some respondents had gained problem-solving, leadership, and customer relations skills recently. The individuals said that they used the skills to perform their roles appropriately, contributing to organizational success. Additionally, the respondents were requested to answer questions regarding how further education enabled or hindered women to or from making good progress in their careers. Table 7 summarises the findings from the quantified questions.

Table 6: Influence of Education on Career Progression

Prompt	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	STDE V
Women who have undertaken further studies are more likely to receive promotions within their organizations	1	2	10	32	51	4.35	0.045
Further studies contribute to women's eligibility for higher-level job positions and leadership roles	1	2	9	39	45	4.30	0.046
There is a connection between pursuing further studies and salary increments for women in the context of career progression	2	7	9	39	39	4.10	0.044
Organisations that create tailored career growth opportunities for women with advanced degrees end up supporting their journey of professional advancement	2	3	11	35	45	4.23	0.046
Advanced degrees facilitate women's participation in specialized training and development programs, nurturing their multidimensional career growth	1	2	8	31	54	4.41	0.043
Advanced degrees amplify women's qualifications and enhance their diverse skill sets, opening up various career	5	8	7	34	42	4.04	0.044

opportunities

Women with advanced degrees gain access to strategic and high-impact projects, enhancing their career advancement and influence	4	5	4	40	43	4.18	0.047
Generally, organizations prioritize creating an environment that empowers women with further studies to excel in their career progression	9	7	14	29	37	3.81	0.046

The results indicate that women who have undertaken further studies are more likely to receive promotions within their organizations (Likert-Scale Average of 4.35, STDEV 0.045). Additionally, it was found that further studies contribute to women's eligibility for higher-level job positions and leadership roles (Likert-Scale Average of 4.30, STDEV 0.046). It was also found that there is a notable correlation between women's pursuit of further studies and receiving salary increments (Likert-Scale Average of 4.10, STDEV 0.045). On the other hand, organisations are increasingly creating opportunities for career growth specifically tailored for women with advanced degrees (Likert-Scale Average of 4.23, STDEV 0.046). It was also indicated that women who pursue further studies often gain access to specialized training and development programs (Likert-Scale Average of 4.41, STDEV 0.043). Further studies enhance women's qualifications and skills, leading to more diverse job opportunities (Likert-Scale Average of 4.04, STDEV 0.044). Most respondents agreed that women with advanced degrees are more likely to be considered for strategic and high-impact projects, fostering their career growth (Likert-Scale Average of 4.18, STDEV 0.047). Finally, the informants believed that organisations are highly committed to providing a conducive environment for women with further studies to thrive in their career progression (Likert-Scale Average of 3.81, STDEV 0.046).

The results concur with the interviewees' indications that institutions are trying to help females advance their careers. For instance, interviewee 1 said, "*I have been keen to ensure my students get a chance to advance in terms of career. For instance, I have made my teaching as flexible as possible. Online tutoring and evening classes are part of the initiatives*

I have taken.” Other interviewees said they mentor learners. For instance, interviewee 2 stated, *“My support for career progression entails mentoring the students under me. I have managed to connect most of my students with other successful former students of the institution to help them professionally by offering support and guidance.”* Interviewee 5 provided a closely-related statement by saying that, *“Our department engages in numerous activities to help female students. For instance, we facilitate networking. We also try to customize our programs to suit students’ schedules and family commitments. We prioritise females whenever there are opportunities.”* Also, interviewee 8 said, *“In my department, we take career progression seriously. Therefore, we offer career-related counselling. We also liaise with advocacy organisations to support females.”*

On her part, interviewee 3 said, *“In our department, the focus has always been to ensure learners are well-versed with the cultural and social issues that affect them in terms of career. We have created a learning environment where everyone feels included, and this minimizes the bias and systematic stereotypes.”* On the other hand, interviewee 4 felt that there is a need to overcome cultural stereotypes. He said, *“I would say the best way we have adopted in the department is encouraging students to try and overcome stereotypes. Our capacity building approach is appropriate in helping students gain confidence and negotiation skills.”*

It was affirmed that mature female learners require help from departmental leaders. Such assistance would help the students advance in their careers. For instance, interviewee 6 said, *“In our department, we focus on giving females an appropriate supportive environment. For instance, we mentor our learners and cooperate with gender equality and empowerment organisations to sensitize people on the challenges that females face as they pursue careers.”* Interviewer 7 asserted that, *“Our department is committed to increase the opportunities available to females. Consequently, we offer scholarship programs to learners, especially females from large families.”*

4.3.7 Correlation between Independent Variables and the Depended Variable

A Pearson Correlation analysis was performed to determine the correlation between the independent (Socio-cultural factors; household size, cultural stereotypes, mentorship and gender division of labor) and independent variables (Career Progression; promotions, opportunities for learning new skills and salary increment). The analysis was executed using SPSS. The correlation findings are summarised on Table 8.

Table 7: Correlation Results

Relationship Assessed	r (Correlation Coefficient)	p (Significance)	Interpretation
Household Size and Career Progression	-.914	.001	Strong, negative, and significant
Gender Division of Labour and Career Progression	-.960	.000	Strong, negative, and significant
Cultural Stereotypes and Career Progression	-.967	.000	Strong, negative, and significant
Mentorship and Career Progression	.991	.000	Strong, positive, and significant

As per the results, household size and career progression are strongly and negatively correlated ($r = -.914$, $p = .001$). The correlation is significant, implying that when the household size increases, career progression seems to diminish or remain stagnant. Strong negative and significant correlations were also found between gender division of labour and career progression and cultural stereotypes and career progression ($r = -.960$, $p = .000$ and $r = -.967$, $p = .000$, respectively). The implication is that when gender division of labour and cultural stereotypes are high, career progression remains stagnant or low. Finally, it was established that mentorship has a strong positive and significant impact on career progression ($r = .991$, $p = .000$). Therefore, an improvement in mentorship contributes to positive career progression.

The correlation results from quantitative data are in line with what the interviewees shared. For instance, regarding cultural stereotypes, interviewee 1 indicated, *“I agree that sociocultural issues, as well as, economic factors sometimes, bar females from progressing with their careers.”* On her part, interviewee 3 said, *“Yes, I believe socio-cultural factors significantly impact career progression. Cultural norms and stereotypes can influence career*

choices, opportunities, and advancement. These factors can create barriers for female postgraduate students, affecting their confidence and decisions”

According to interviewee 2, *“Values and beliefs within societies influence career progression among females. Stereotypes and cultural expectations can shape the choices female students make and affect their ability to pursue higher-level positions. Addressing these factors is crucial for a more equitable academic environment.”* The statement reflected interviewee 4’s indication that, *“Indeed, socio-cultural factors have a considerable impact on career progression. Stereotypes and expectations can shape the paths that female students are expected to follow, affecting their choices and opportunities within their fields of study.”* Similarly, interviewee 5 said, *“I am convinced that socio-cultural factors significantly affect career progression. Stereotypes and cultural biases can shape students’ perceptions of what is attainable for them, potentially limiting their ambitions and opportunities.”*

From the findings it can be inferred that socio-cultural factors absolutely affect career progression. As indicated by interviewee 6, *“Stereotypes and cultural expectations can influence the types of roles and responsibilities female students believe they should take on, impacting their ability to excel in their chosen fields.”* However, Interviewee 7 proposed a solution by indicating that, *“Even though stereotypes and societal expectations can create barriers that hinder female students’ advancement, addressing these factors through awareness and support programs is crucial for their success.”* Interviewee 8 indicated that *“Creating an inclusive and equitable environment is essential for their success.”*

4.3.8 Predictor Relationship between Independent and Dependent Variables

To determine whether household size, gender division of labour, mentorship, and cultural stereotypes can predict career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya, a regression analysis was performed. The regression result was significant ($R^2 = .99946$) as shown in Table 9. It was established that household size, gender division of labour, mentorship, and cultural stereotypes significantly predict career progression among mature female entry students in Egerton University Kenya. The results of the regression indicated the four predictors explained 99.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .99946$, $F(7, 1,391.97) = 0.2539$, $p = .000031$). Based on the results, the following regression equation was adopted.

Career Progression = 3.0480 – 0.1996 Household Size + 0.2064 Gender Division of Labour – 0.3003 Cultural Stereotypes + 0.4083 Mentorship

Table 8: Regression Results

SUMMARY**OUTPUT**

Regression Statistics

Multiple 0.999731

R

R² 0.999461

Adjusted 0.998743

R²

Standard 0.006752

Error

ANOVA

	<i>Df</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Significance F</i>
Regression	4	0.253851	0.063463	1391.97	0.000031
Residual	3	0.000137	0.000046		
Total	7	0.253988			

	<i>Coefficients</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>t Stat</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>Lower 95%</i>	<i>Upper 95%</i>	<i>Lower 95.0%</i>	<i>Upper 95.0%</i>
Intercept	3.048011	0.532711	5.721697	0.010595	1.352687	4.743336	1.352687	4.743336
Household Size	-0.19963	0.040096	-4.97876	0.015573	-0.32723	-0.07203	-0.32723	-0.07203
Gender	0.206414	0.103276	1.998665	0.139506	-0.12226	0.535083	-0.12226	0.535083
Division of Labour								
Cultural Stereotypes	-0.30033	0.030992	-9.69057	0.002334	-0.39896	-0.2017	-0.39896	-0.2017
Mentorship	0.408344	0.061887	6.598224	0.007086	0.211392	0.605295	0.211392	0.605295

Based on the regression results, an increase in household size causes a stagnation or decline in career progression (Figure 3).

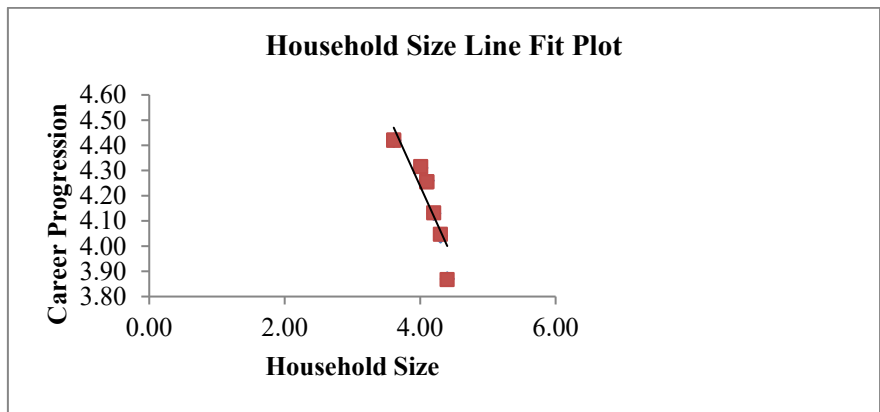


Figure 2: Household Size Line Fit Plot

It was also established that greater gender division of labour results in reduced career progression (Figure 4).

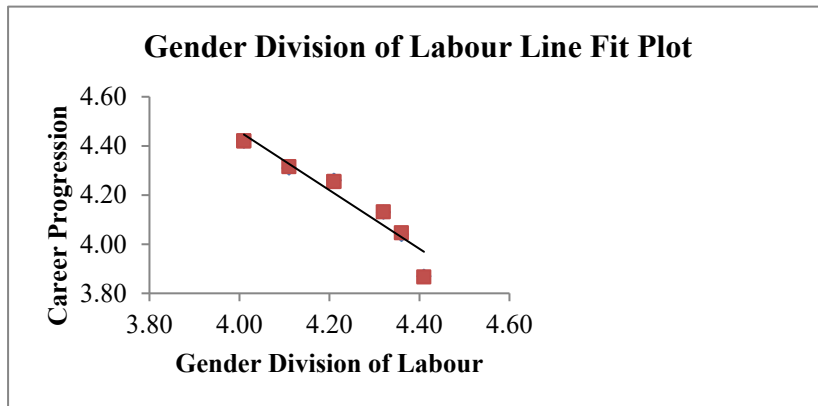


Figure 3: Gender Division of Labour Line Fit Plot

An increase in gender division of labour results in a decline in career progression (See Figure 5).

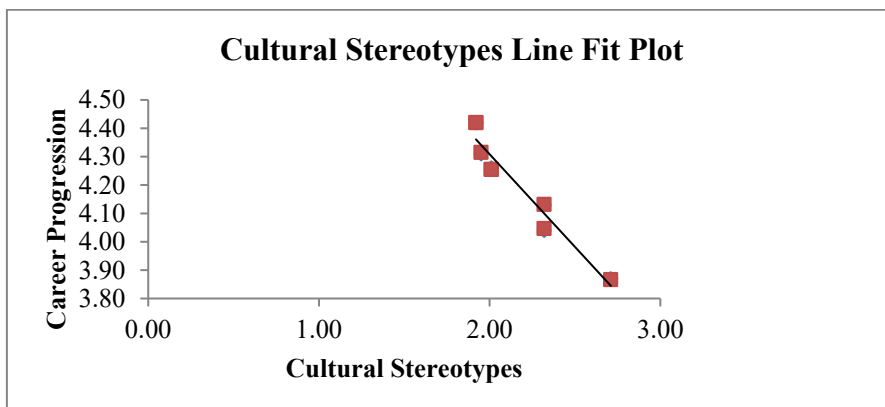


Figure 4: Cultural Stereotypes Line Fit Plot

Finally, it was found that an increase in mentorship leads to an increase in career progression (See Figure 6).

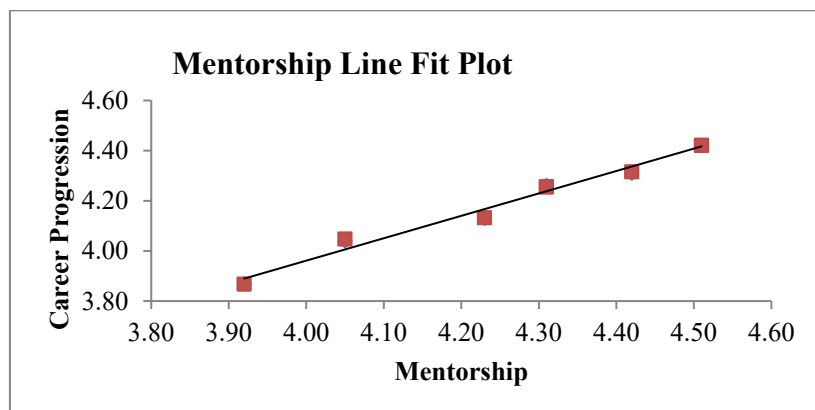


Figure 5: Mentorship Line Fit Plot

4.4 Discussion of the Research Findings

Career development is widely regarded as the foundation of professional and personal growth in today's world, enabling people to achieve their aspirations and make important contributions to society. However, as the study demonstrates, a number of complex circumstances might obstruct females who are seeking to advance their careers. However, as the study demonstrates, a number of complicated circumstances might obstruct female students, such as those enrolled at Egerton University in Kenya, from successfully advancing in their careers. Household size, gender-based work division, and cultural prejudices are three interconnected adverse effects that have a detrimental impact on these women's lives. These elements work together to create a significant barrier that prevents female entrance students at Egerton University from advancing in their careers. In order to develop successful ways to advance gender equality and enable these women to overcome the limitations that have long held them back, it is imperative to have a thorough understanding of these difficulties.

According to the findings of the study, household size significantly affects female students at Egerton University in Kenya's ability to advance in their careers. It demonstrates how negative influences increase with family size and vice versa. The study also shows that among female students at Egerton University Kenya, the gender labour division within Kenyan society significantly hinders career advancement. The study demonstrates how cultural prejudices have a negative and significant impact on female students' career advancement at Egerton University Kenya. Mentorship proves to have a beneficial effect on career advancement among female students at Egerton University Kenya, which is another important conclusion of the study.

4.4.1 Household Size

Female entry-level students who are older frequently balance academic expectations with personal obligations. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Zhao *et al.* (2021), who found that household size significantly affects the amount of energy and time available for career-focused activities. These learners could have more duties for looking after young children, senior family members, or siblings in huge families. As a result, they are limited in their capacity to devote a significant amount of time to professional development, such as attending seminars, networking events, or seeking more education.

Because opportunities for promotion are delayed or missed, the cyclical nature of caring responsibilities might cause a slower rate of professional growth.

Ge *et al.* (2022) found that among older female entering students, the financial ramifications of home size can have a significant impact on career selections. Households with more dependents have a more evident demand for secure and adequate income, which is consistent with the findings of this study. These students may choose to pursue stable but less demanding or personally rewarding careers that provide immediate financial security. Due to worries about being able to provide for their family, they may be less willing to take risks connected with pursuing unusual or highly competitive occupations (Ge *et al.*, 2022). People from smaller homes, on the other hand, could have more freedom to explore a variety of job possibilities that match their real objectives.

The career choices of mature female entering students might be significantly influenced by cultural conventions concerning gender roles and household obligations. According to traditional gender norms, women are given the major job of caring for others and maintaining the house in various Kenyan communities (Heisniam, 2022). Larger households may heighten these expectations, giving rise to the sense that placing priority on job advancement goes against societal standards. As a result, older female entrance students may restrict their career goals to occupations that are thought to be more compatible with their mandated domestic responsibilities, impeding their ability to grow professionally.

Having a decent work-life balance is essential for job advancement. According to Busher and James (2020), who agree with the findings, bigger homes frequently need more time and effort, leaving mature female entry students with less time and energy to seek professional progression. Finding a balance between family and professional duties becomes more difficult. The unwillingness to uproot bigger families may also hinder regional mobility, which is sometimes necessary for job advancement (Busher & James, 2020). Mature female entry-level students may choose to work locally or remotely, restricting their access to professions or jobs that would offer faster career advancement.

Contradicting the theory, some research show that bigger homes can provide a sense of belonging and emotional support. This assistance is essential for supporting the mental and emotional health of older female entrance students (Walker, 2021). However, they could be discouraged from pursuing job prospects that require relocation or significant time commitments because they are worried about upsetting these familial ties. Therefore, even if

it means sacrificing job advancement, the desire to be near to one's support networks may influence career decisions.

In general, home size has a considerable impact on mature female admission students at Kenya's Egerton University's career growth. The professional paths of these people are shaped by the complex interaction of parental duties, financial demands, cultural standards, work-life balance, and emotional support networks (Heisniam, 2022). To create an atmosphere where mature female entering students may choose careers that fit their objectives, regardless of familial obligations, it is crucial to acknowledge and address the influence of household size. To develop supporting measures that help these students strike a delicate balance between family obligations and professional development, policymakers, educators, and employers must work together. We can only fully realize the potential of mature female entering students and support their meaningful career advancement via thorough knowledge and focused interventions.

Among older female entrance students at Egerton University, the detrimental impact of family size on career advancement is a complicated topic that may have diverse effects on these individuals. To foster a supportive atmosphere that supports their academic and professional development, it is critical to recognize and address these problems. The provision of flexible learning alternatives is one way to address this problem. Due to the size of their households, older female entering students frequently have additional duties, such as caregiving and home chores, which the school should be aware of. According to Kabwete *et al.* (2020), providing flexible learning alternatives like part-time, evening, or online courses can aid students in juggling their academic obligations with domestic duties.

Financial assistance is another excellent way to overcome this difficulty. Aloka (2023) asserts that household size might put financial strain on students, making it challenging for them to devote time and money to their studies. Giving older female entering students financial aid in the form of scholarships, grants, or other financial aid would help them relax and concentrate on their academics instead of worrying about money. The school should also offer family support services and child care. The strain on these students can be lessened by establishing on-campus childcare facilities or collaborating with neighbourhood groups to offer cheap childcare services, enabling them to attend courses and participate in academic activities more successfully.

The institution should establish mentoring programs that pair up experienced female entry-level employees with those who have overcome comparable obstacles in the workplace. Additionally, delivering counselling services that focus on the particular requirements and issues of this population might give direction and emotional support (Aloka, 2023). Additionally, it must include workshops on stress management, time management, and career planning that are specially designed for the needs of older female entering students. They can get useful skills from these workshops that will help them manage their domestic duties while advancing their jobs.

Additionally, the students ought to work with the university's leadership and important parties to promote regulations that aid mature female entering students, such as longer deadlines, flexible exam times, and accommodations for unexpected family needs (Kabwete *et al.*, 2020). To better comprehend the unique difficulties experienced by older female entering students at Egerton University, they should concentrate on doing research. Their requirements can be efficiently met by focused support systems and interventions that are informed by this data.

Through peer networking opportunities, support groups, and social gatherings, Egerton University could also promote a feeling of community among older female entering students. Making connections with people who have gone through similar things may motivate and make you feel like you belong. Additionally, the institution should host seminars and awareness campaigns to emphasize the value of assisting mature female entrance students and removing obstacles to their professional advancement. In the context of the university community, this may foster a more accepting and understanding atmosphere (Tokbaeva & Achtenhagen, 2023). They can work together with outside parties as well.

4.4.2 Gender Division of Labour

Numerous manifestations of inequality, such as differences in educational and employment possibilities, have been linked to the gender division of labour (Seiz, 2021). As the data demonstrate, women are frequently burdened with home duties as a result of conventional gender roles, which might limit their capacity to fully engage in educational pursuits and therefore impair their job advancement. The purpose of this article is to investigate and provide data supporting the major detrimental effect of gender division of labour on career advancement among mature female entrance students at Kenya's Egerton University.

Like many other societies, Kenyan culture has been shaped by deeply ingrained gender stereotypes and customs that assign women predominantly domestic tasks. In line with the findings, Seiz (2021) makes the case that his division of labour frequently prevents women from pursuing further education and advancing in their careers. Women's capacity to seek higher education and prioritize career-building activities may be constrained by the conventional expectation that they will put family and caregiving duties first. Gender-related obstacles that prevent mature female entering students from completing their degree are common. According to a research by Kiburi (2022), home duties including cleaning, caring for children, and cooking take up a large amount of their time, giving them little opportunity to concentrate on their academics. As a result, these women could find it difficult to succeed academically, which would have an impact on their whole school experience and potential job paths.

Extracurricular activities are essential for networking, developing skills, and creating a well-rounded resume for job advancement. However, the gender wage gap frequently prevents older female entry-level students from fully engaging in these activities (Edgell, 2023). Home obligations may make it difficult for them to participate in clubs, groups, internships, and other activities that advance their personal and professional development. In a different study, Seiz (2021) finds that older female entering students find it much harder to balance household duties with scholastic obligations. According to Seiz (2021), balancing family responsibilities with coursework, assignments, and examinations might result in increased stress and burnout. As a result, there may be a decline in desire, a decline in performance, and a general loss of confidence in pursuing challenging professional goals.

The gender division of labour may make it more difficult for older female entry-level students to participate in the networking and mentoring activities that are crucial for professional progression. Edgell (2023) claims that because of time restrictions and cultural expectations, women frequently have less opportunity to network with professors, business leaders, and classmates outside of the classroom. Their inability to network may make it more difficult for them to acquire helpful counsel, direction, and employment prospects. Edgell (2023) further indicates that the gender wage gap might affect the career decisions made by older female entrance students. Due to cultural expectations, they can decide to pursue careers that are more "suitable" for women rather than following their genuine interests and inclinations. As a result, they could choose careers with fewer room for advancement and lower income potential, which would feed the inequality cycle even more. After joining the

employment, the effects of the gender wage gap still have an impact on career advancement. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance may be difficult for women who have been raised to emphasize family and domestic duties (Kiburi, 2022). This may force you to make challenging career-related decisions, such as choosing less demanding responsibilities or devoting time off to care for your family.

It is evident that the gender wage gap has a major detrimental influence on mature female entering students at Kenya's Egerton University's ability to advance in their careers. Domestic responsibility inequality puts obstacles in the way of networking, extracurricular activities, education, and professional options. In order to give women, the freedom to pursue their educational and professional aspirations without being constrained by conventional gender roles, efforts to solve these obstacles should include changes in society norms, regulations, and support structures. In order to empower women and promote an inclusive and fair society, it is essential to acknowledge the significance of gender equality in the workplace and in education.

It takes a thorough and proactive strategy to address the detrimental effects of gender division of labour on career advancement among mature female entering students at Egerton University. Some of the suggestions of dealing with this challenge include workshops for awareness-raising campaigns and education. Organising workshops and seminars to inform teachers and students on the effects of the gender wage gap on career advancement could be beneficial, as indicated by Kurowska (2020). The school should convey the value of providing equal opportunity for people of all genders in the academic and professional realms. There is a need for gender-neutral career guidance. Therefore, staff members should encourage mature female entry-level students to choose a variety of professional choices by offering career counselling that questions established gender norms (Busher & James, 2020). The school should also provide information on unconventional jobs and sectors, highlighting the fact that everyone may pursue them regardless of gender.

On the other hand, flexible work and study arrangements would be beneficial. The university should work with employers and business partners to develop flexible work-study plans that will let older female entry-level students combine their obligations to family and school (Kurowska, 2020). This way, the institution will provide students with flexible part-time or remote employment options. There is a need to create support for child care responsibilities. This will entail the creation of child care facilities on campus or collaborate with

neighbourhood day-care services to assist students who have kids (Aloka, 2023). The university will have to create leadership development programs that emphasise discouraging gender stereotypes, boosting self-assurance, and enhancing leadership abilities in mature female entering students. It is important to ensure that course materials and instructional strategies dispel gender stereotypes and offer illustrations of successful people who have broken free from conventional gender norms.

It will be essential to ensure that persons of all genders have equal access to leadership roles within the institution, including faculty and administration. Therefore, there is a need to encourage and aid female entry-level students who are mature to pursue leadership positions in on-campus activities and student groups (Seiz, 2021). Through research and advocacy, the institution can gather information on the difficulties mature female entering students have as a result of the gender wage gap and utilise it to promote initiatives and lobby for legislative reforms. However, it is important to collaborate with neighbourhood companies and groups to develop internship, job-shadowing, and mentorship opportunities that advance diversity in the workplace and gender equality (Aloka, 2023). Additionally, the university should evaluate, monitor, and improve the solutions continuously. The role requires the use of input from students and teachers, and then make the required modifications to assure progress (Chacha, 2021).

4.4.3 Cultural Stereotypes

The study's findings demonstrate that cultural stereotypes—deeply embedded social attitudes and expectations connected to certain cultural or gender groups—have been acknowledged as a substantial roadblock to job advancement in a variety of circumstances. These preconceptions might emerge in negative ways in the academic setting, especially influencing the career paths of older female entering students (Gitonga, 2021). This study highlights the numerous difficulties faced by older female entering students at Kenya's Egerton University by demonstrating the detrimental and considerable influence of cultural stereotypes on their career development.

A varied student body is drawn to this renowned school of higher education in Kenya, including older female entrance students who have chosen to continue higher education after taking a break from formal education. Numerous cultural misconceptions that these women frequently encounter prevent them from advancing in their academic and professional careers. One of the prevalent preconceptions, according to a research by Kiburi (2022), is the

idea that women, particularly older ones, are largely in charge of domestic chores and caring obligations, which collide with the requirements of pursuing higher learning. This misconception places pressure on these women to put family responsibilities before of their academic goals, which hinders their capacity to fully participate in their studies and obtain the best academic results.

The difficulties experienced by mature female entrance students are further exacerbated by societal norms that uphold the notion that some courses or fields are more suited for males than women. Egerton University provides a wide range of academic degrees, according to a research by Gitonga (2021), but many of these subjects, especially those in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), are still dominated by male students and professionals. As a result, older female entry-level students who want to enter these disciplines run face implicit prejudices that deter them from doing so. These students are prevented from pursuing their hobbies and have fewer career alternatives due to the widespread perception that women are less qualified for STEM subjects, which eventually impedes their advancement and representation in these sectors.

Moreover, among adult female entering students at Egerton University, cultural preconceptions take the form of impostor syndrome. Despite proof of ability, imposter syndrome is defined by a constant worry of being discovered as a phony (Gitonga, 2021). Cultural stereotypes encourage self-doubt and erode self-confidence, which contribute to this issue. These pupils are more inclined to doubt their own abilities and fit for particular jobs when they adopt unfavourable preconceptions about those things. This self-doubt might cause aversion to applying for competitive internships and jobs, pursuing leadership positions, or seeking out advanced academic programs, all of which are necessary for career advancement.

The impact of cultural stereotypes is not limited to psychological factors but also extends to tangible barriers in the academic environment. According to a research by Goerisch *et al.* (2019), female students, especially those who are older, frequently encounter barriers to mentoring and resource access. Mature female entry-level students may be excluded due to cultural constraints that prevent them from actively participating in extracurricular and networking activities, restricting their access to important possibilities for professional advancement. Additionally, faculty members and advisers could unintentionally support these assumptions by providing mature female entering students with less advice and mentorship than they do for male entry students (Goerisch *et al.*, 2019). This lack of assistance prevents

these students from advancing professionally by depriving them of the resources and contacts they need to be successful in their chosen industries.

In general, cultural prejudices have a detrimental and considerable effect on mature female entering students at Egerton University in Kenya's career advancement. These misconceptions exacerbate impostor syndrome, support established gender roles, prevent women from pursuing specific careers, and obstruct access to resources and mentoring. However, Egerton University can lessen the effects of these stereotypes and establish an inclusive environment where mature female entry students can succeed academically and professionally through concerted efforts to raise awareness, offer tailored support, and promote diversity and representation (Kiburi, 2022). The university can help create a fairer and empowered society by helping to destroy cultural prejudices and unleash the full potential of these students.

Undoubtedly, a multifaceted strategy is needed to counteract the detrimental impact of cultural stereotypes on career advancement among older female entering students at Egerton University. For instance, campaigns for education and awareness are necessary. There is a need to regularly conduct lectures, workshops, and awareness initiatives that aim to dispel societal norms, gender prejudices, and cultural stereotypes (Oddone *et al.*, 2021). Additionally, it is important to share details on accomplished women who have defied gender norms in a variety of professions, highlighting their accomplishments and motivating older female pupils. Another approach is to create a structured mentoring program that matches mature female entry-level students with accomplished female professionals and graduates who can provide support, advice, and assistance (Chacha, 2021). In order to provide visible role models, the school should also arrange networking events and panel discussions with prominent women from all backgrounds.

On the other hand, it is beneficial to give older female students access to specialised leadership and professional development programs that are suited to their particular needs. Therefore, they should get instruction in communication, self-advocacy, assertiveness, and negotiating techniques so they can deal with prejudice and seek job possibilities with confidence. Institutions must create environments that are acceptable for honest discussions about cultural stereotypes and how they affect career progression to promote a diverse campus culture (Oddone *et al.*, 2021). There is a need to celebrate other cultures, traditions, and life experiences through fostering inclusion and diversity via events, festivals, and

programs that promote cultural interchange. The systems should be tailored for flexible learning and support: To meet the demands of adult female students who might have additional obligations, it is essential to provide flexible learning choices, such as online courses or evening sessions (Seiz, 2021). To lessen the stress of caring, the institution should create childcare facilities on-campus or collaborate with nearby day-care providers.

To encourage fair evaluation methods and enhance awareness of unconscious biases, the institution should provide frequent training for teachers and staff. There is a need to implement consistent assessment standards and guarantee openness in the selection procedures for leadership positions, research opportunities, and internships. Collaboration with employers will also be essential. Therefore, the university should establish alliances with neighbourhood businesses to develop internship and employment opportunities that dispel myths and provide a nurturing setting for professional development (Chacha, 2021). The approach will entail encouraging firms to offer mentoring and training initiatives that are especially geared toward older female entry-level students. It will also be important to establish policies that actively support gender equality, diversity, and embrace inclusion at all levels of the institution (Busher & James, 2020). The university should establish a zero-tolerance policy for any type of harassment or discrimination based on gender.

Senior female faculty members should gather information through research on the experiences and difficulties experienced by women entering students, as this will help to create tailored solutions. Therefore, the researchers should utilise the data gathered to monitor success and continually improve strategy for overcoming stereotypes and fostering professional growth (Chacha, 2021). Female learners should create peer groups and support networks to talk about difficulties, exchange experiences, and encourage each other. However, it will be essential to incorporate university administration, professors, students, alumni, and outside partners in the implementation of these solutions.

4.4.4 Mentorship

A strong technique for accelerating job advancement and personal development is mentoring, a dynamic interaction between a more experienced person and a less experienced one. Mentorship is essential for directing students toward fulfilling professions, especially in the context of higher education (Dashper, 2020). In order to shed light on the transforming impacts of mentoring on students' academic and professional journeys, this study

concentrated on the beneficial influence of mentorship on the career development of mature female entrance students at Egerton University in Kenya.

The findings demonstrate how mentoring strengthens academic counselling. Female entrance students who are older typically encounter particular difficulties, such as juggling family obligations and returning to school after a break. These students have a supporting channel to obtain individualized academic advice through mentoring, which enables them to successfully navigate their curriculum, create effective study habits, and excel in their chosen industries. Mentors help students enhance their performance and build their confidence by sharing knowledge about academic resources, time management strategies, and productive study habits. According to a research by Oddone *et al.* (2021), mentoring exposes entry-level older female students to a wider variety of skills and competences needed for successful career advancement. Mentors, who are frequently seasoned professionals, provide practical industry insights and aid students in acquiring information and skills outside of the classroom. Additionally, mentors help students network by introducing them to pertinent connections and possible employers. This helps students grow their professional networks and improve their employability.

Scholars concur with the findings, adding that mentoring also helps people develop their sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Among older female entering students, the mentor-mentee connection provides a sense of belonging and empowerment. According to Lefferts (2023), mentors assist students identify their abilities, talents, and potential by providing continual support and encouragement. This increases the students' self-efficacy and confidence. These students become more eager to take chances, accept leadership positions, and actively look for professional progression prospects as they internalize their skills.

Gender-based hurdles still exist in a number of areas, including education and employment, in a patriarchal country like Kenya. Cheairs (2023) makes the case that mentorship may work as a catalyst for change by tackling prejudices and building a supportive atmosphere, which is in line with the study's findings. Entry-level mature female students benefit from mentors who act as role models, dismantling gender-related barriers and motivating them to pursue challenging career objectives with tenacity. Mentors provide older female entrance students with individualized career coaching based on their own goals (Cheairs, 2023). Mentors assist students in exploring prospective career options, setting attainable objectives, and developing workable strategies to reach those goals through one-on-one sessions. Mentors offer insights

into industry trends and expectations, which is particularly helpful for students who may be switching to new sectors or re-entering the job after a break.

Furthermore, mentorship improves emotional wellbeing, according to previous research. According to a research by Phaswana-Mafuya (2023), the mentorship connection gives older female entrance students a secure place to voice their worries, discuss their struggles, and get emotional support. Feelings of loneliness and impostor syndrome, which are frequently felt by those who join higher education later in life, can be considerably reduced by the advice and compassion provided by mentors (Phaswana-Mafuya, 2023). An increase in emotional health has a significant impact on their overall academic success and job advancement. Another research by Tokbaeva and Achtenhagen (2023) found that mentoring also fosters appreciation and a desire to return the favour. Female entry-level students who have experienced the benefits of mentorship on their professional development are more inclined to pay it forward by taking on the role of mentor themselves in the future. As a result, a loop of empowerment and support is created, promoting a culture of mentoring both inside the university and the larger community.

At Kenya's Egerton University, mentoring has become a powerful influence in determining the career paths of older female entrance students. Mentorship gives these students the skills they need to overcome obstacles and realize their professional objectives by offering academic support, skill development, networking opportunities, and self-confidence. Universities may spend more in mentorship programs as they become aware of the transforming impact of mentoring, giving older female entrance students more agency and helping to create a workforce that is more inclusive and varied.

In order to combat harmful influences and support the personal and professional growth of female students at Kenya's Egerton University, mentoring programs will be very beneficial. Tsang (2023) claims that one of the main ways mentoring programs may be beneficial is by offering direction and support. Female students who are mentored have a reliable source of direction, counsel, and support. They can learn from mentors how to negotiate difficulties, make wise decisions, and create plans to get around hurdles. In order to increase the students' competitiveness in the job market, they can offer tailored coaching on skill development, whether it be enhancing technical abilities, leadership skills, or communication skills. Building confidence is one of the study's beneficial effects. Female students' self-confidence may be increased by having a mentor who supports them and has faith in their talents (Tsang,

2023). Their self-assurance will likely encourage them to work hard to achieve their ambitions.

Mentors also act as role models since they have successfully followed comparable academic and professional routes. Female students are motivated to set greater objectives for themselves because they can personally attest to the fact that it is possible to overcome obstacles and achieve success. According to Banwell *et al.* (2021), mentors may also connect female students with their professional networks, opening doors to job shadowing, internships, and career progression chances. Mentorship programs may introduce female students to a range of professions and fields, allowing them to explore their interests and uncover previously unconsidered future paths. Even after graduating from college, mentorship connections may continue to offer support and direction. Students who are mentored receive both intellectual and emotional help. Female students can talk about their personal and academic struggles in a secure environment provided by mentors. Their achievement in school and general well-being can both be influenced by this support. In order to trust in their potential and pursue greatness in their chosen disciplines, female students can question and overcome unfavourable preconceptions and prejudices through mentoring (Dashper, 2020). For female students, mentoring programs may provide a sense of community and belonging, lowering feelings of loneliness and enhancing the college experience.

Mentoring also promotes leadership and self-determination. A cycle of leadership and empowerment within the university community is facilitated by the development of mentors into mentees as they gain self-assurance and skills (Banwell *et al.*, 2021). A friendly and inclusive campus culture where the potential of all students, regardless of gender, is acknowledged and encouraged may be enhanced through effective mentoring programs. Generally, a variety of detrimental factors, such as home size, gender division of labor, and cultural preconceptions, have a major negative impact on the career growth of mature female entering students at Egerton University in Kenya. These elements have a part in restricting chances and impeding women's professional progress. Implementing successful mentoring programs at Egerton University in Kenya can assist combat harmful influences, empower female students, and support their overall personal and professional development (Dashper, 2020).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of household size, gender division of labour, cultural stereotypes, and mentorship on the career progression of mature female students at Egerton University, Kenya. This chapter presents a summary of key findings, conclusions drawn from the results, and recommendations for practical actions based on these conclusions. Additionally, suggestions for future research are provided.

5.2 Summary

5.2.1 Household Size

The findings indicate that household size significantly impacts the ability of mature female students to focus on both academic and career development. Larger households often present challenges in balancing domestic duties and professional pursuits. However, women in larger households with strong support systems experienced positive career progression, as the distribution of responsibilities allowed them to advance. On the contrary, smaller households were advantageous due to fewer domestic demands, which allowed women more time and focus for career-related activities. Additionally, managing larger families fostered organizational and multitasking skills, which benefited career growth.

5.2.2 Gender Division of Labour

The study found that the unequal division of labour between men and women in households continues to hinder the career progression of women. Traditional gender roles often assign domestic responsibilities to women, which negatively impacts their ability to focus on studies and career goals. Women who share responsibilities equally with their partners experienced better career outcomes. Societal expectations of women as primary caregivers create additional obstacles, though support from family members in redistributing domestic duties was associated with enhanced career development. This highlights the importance of challenging traditional gender norms and encouraging equitable sharing of responsibilities.

5.2.3 Cultural Stereotypes

Cultural stereotypes were found to significantly impede the career progression of mature female students. Implicit biases and assumptions about women's roles in the workforce, particularly in male-dominated fields, create barriers to their advancement. These biases result in women being perceived as less suitable for certain roles or tasks, and women with children often face additional challenges due to assumptions about their availability and commitment. Respondents rejected the notion that women should be confined to household duties and advocated for challenging stereotypes that limit women's career potential. Women who received family and institutional support were more likely to overcome these biases and succeed in their careers.

5.2.4 Mentorship

Mentorship emerged as a critical factor in the career development of mature female students. Positive mentorship experiences significantly influenced women's career aspirations and achievements. Mentors provided guidance, boosted confidence, and offered inspiration, enabling mentees to pursue ambitious career goals. Well-structured mentorship programs were found to enhance women's ability to navigate workplace challenges and develop professionally. Successful mentorships contributed to holistic growth and allowed women to overcome barriers to career advancement.

5.3 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that household size, gender division of labour, cultural stereotypes, and mentorship are pivotal factors influencing the career progression of mature female students. Larger households tend to challenge women's ability to balance domestic and career commitments, while smaller households offer advantages due to reduced demands. The unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities, rooted in traditional gender roles, impedes women's career advancement. Furthermore, cultural stereotypes perpetuate implicit biases that restrict women's opportunities, particularly in male-dominated sectors. Lastly, mentorship has a transformative impact on career progression, empowering women with the tools to navigate complex career paths. The study emphasizes the need for structural changes at the household, societal, and institutional levels to support women's career growth.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

i. **Promote Transferable Skills and Mentorship**

The government, NGOs, and educational institutions should create and promote mentorship programs that pair experienced female professionals with newcomers. These programs should also focus on developing transferable skills that enhance career progression.

ii. **Implement Career Development Programs**

Institutions, with government backing, should establish inclusive career development programs that specifically address the needs of mature female students. These programs should provide support in areas like skill development, work-life balance, and career planning.

iii. **Incentivize Flexible Policies**

The government should incentivize organizations to adopt flexible policies that accommodate the needs of mature female students, including family leave, study leave, and flexible maternity policies.

iv. **Establish Support Networks**

Institutions and employers should foster peer support networks, create women's groups, and establish flexible work arrangements that support women's career progression and help them balance work and domestic responsibilities.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Studies

The study recommends future research in the following areas:

i. Conduct similar studies in other universities across Kenya to compare and validate these findings in different settings.

ii. Investigate the specific ways household composition and dynamics influence the career progression of women, particularly focusing on comparative analyses between different regions or groups.

iii. Undertake longitudinal studies to assess how changes over time affect the relationship between household size, mentorship, cultural stereotypes, and gender division of labour on women's career progression.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MAP OF THE STUDY AREA

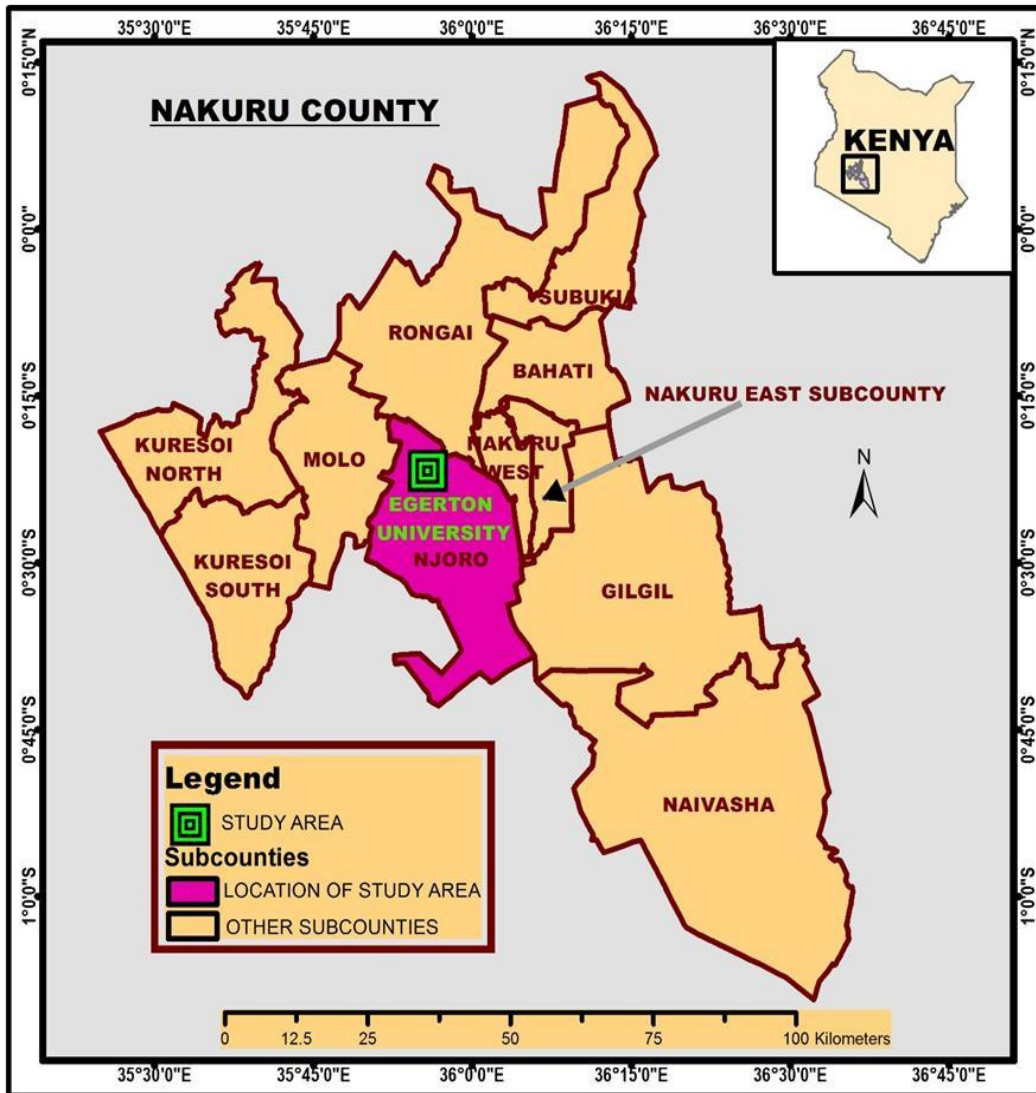


Figure 6: Map of the Study Area

Source: Egerton University Geography Department

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MATURE FEMALE STUDENTS

I am a Master's student of Egerton University carrying out a research titled socio-cultural factors affecting career progression among mature female masters' students in Egerton University, in Nakuru County Kenya. Any volunteer information is highly welcomed and will be treated with high confidentiality and the information acquired will be used for academic purposes only. As part of the course am in the process of carrying out a research project and hereby request you to the respondent in the data sample population.

Thank you in advance.

Instructions

- Kindly do not write your name
- Tick where appropriate

Section A: Background Information

1. What is your age bracket?

30-37yrs ()

38-47yrs ()

48-57yrs ()

above 58yrs ()

2. What is your marital status?

Single ()

Married ()

Others ()

3. Faculty

.....
.....

4. The following are some of the degrees offered in Egerton University. Please tick (√) the degree you are pursuing.

Master's degree	Tick	Master's degree	Tick
Psychology		Environmental science	

Business administration		Agriculture	
Accounting		Community development	
International relations		Education	
Gender studies		Health sciences	
		Others (specify)	

SECTION B: SOCIO-CULTURAL AND CAREER PROGRESSION FACTORS AFFECTING CAREER PROGRESSION OF MATURE FEMALE STUDENTS

1) Household size

What is your type household head? Please tick appropriately.

Female headed ()

Male headed ()

Please indicate your household size

Number of members	
1-2	
3-5	
Above 5	

Please response to the following:

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
The interplay between the size of a household and the nature of academic and career pursuits could potentially shape a woman's journey in higher education and profession					
The dynamics within larger households contribute to challenges faced by women in balancing the responsibilities of academia, profession, and family					
Familial support systems within larger					

households significantly impact the trajectory of a woman's career advancement					
Women hailing from smaller households have an advantage in channeling their focus towards career aspirations due to potentially reduced domestic demands					
Cultural expectations and familial obligations within larger households substantially influence a woman's selection of career paths					
The art of managing diverse household obligations within a larger family fosters the cultivation of heightened organizational proficiency and diverse skillsets that resonate within a woman's professional journey					
Women from smaller households face lesser hurdles to advance their careers					
Generally, the composition of a household affects a woman's career progression?					

2) Gender Division of Labour

i. Do men and women perform different roles?

Yes ()

No ()

If yes, please explain further how the roles in your house are divided amongst the members.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ii. Does the role you play in your household influence your career progression?

Yes ()

No ()

If yes explain how the division of roles influence your career progression?

.....
.....
.....
.....

iii. Please indicate by ticking who does the following in your house

Role	Man	Woman	House help	Children
Laundry and dishes				
Grocery Shopping				
Taking care of children				
Cleaning				
Bills eg health, rent, electricity				
Taking care of the elderly				
Cooking				
Nursing the sick				
Home maintenance				

Please Respond to the following:

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Traditional gender norms, deeply entrenched in household roles, affect women's career advancement					
Pervasive societal expectations that limit women's primary responsibilities to homemakers potentially impede their capacity to pursue academic and					

professional aspirations					
The asymmetric allocation of domestic and caregiving duties potentially serves as a hindrance to women's strides in their chosen careers					
In the context of shared household responsibilities, a collaborative approach with partners potentially contributes to heightened prospects of success in women's professional journeys					
Societal constructs designating women's central role as homemakers impacts their decision-making process regarding career progression					
A robust support structure from family members that facilitates an equitable distribution of domestic responsibilities can bolster women's advancement in their professional pursuits					
Women who conscientiously challenge traditional gender roles are highly likely to make higher career achievements					
The university environment plays a significant role in empowering women to balance household duties and career aspirations					

3) Cultural Stereotypes

The following are some of the cultural stereotypes please tick appropriately on which ones you agree or disagree with.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Women should remain in the kitchen areas					
Women are natural nurturers while men are natural leaders					
Women do not need equal or higher pay than men because they are taken care of by men					
Women with children are less devoted to their jobs					
Women should not be aggressive in their careers					
Women are too emotional to take up certain responsibilities and careers e.g C.E.O positions					

i. Please indicate further on other cultural stereotypes you have experienced.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

ii. Has any of the cultural stereotype influenced your career progression at any one time?

Yes ()

No ()

iii. If yes then please explain how.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) Mentorship

i. Do you have a mentor within your organization?

Yes ()

No ()

ii. If yes, how long has he/she been within the organization?

.....
.....
.....

iii. Has your mentor made any influence towards your career progression?

Yes ()

No ()

iv. If yes briefly explain what the mentor has positively contributed towards your career progression?

.....

Please respond to the following:

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Mentorship plays a pivotal role in shaping the career aspirations and decisions of mature female entry students.					
Effective mentorship can provide insights and guidance that significantly impact a woman's career trajectory.					
A well-structured mentorship program enhances the confidence and self-efficacy of women in pursuing challenging career paths.					
Mentorship relationships that foster both personal and professional growth contribute to greater success in career advancement.					
The guidance and counsel from a mentor can help women navigate the complexities of workplace dynamics and challenges.					
Mentorship from successful women in the same field serves as a source of inspiration and					

motivation for pursuing ambitious career goals					
Do you believe that women with access to meaningful mentorship opportunities are better equipped to overcome barriers and excel in their chosen careers					
To what extent does the influence of mentorship within a university setting contribute to the holistic growth and multifaceted development of women pursuing career progression?					

5) Career Progression

A) Promotions

i. Do you get promotions?

Yes ()

No ()

ii. If yes how often do you get a promotion in your organization? Tick appropriately

Promotion rate	
Yearly	
Once every two years	
After every five years	
Above five years	

B) Salary increment

i. Does your company offer salary increment?

Yes ()

No ()

ii. If yes, please indicate further on the basis for salary increment in your company

Basis	
Productivity and performance	
Education	
Creativity	
Company success	
Economic conditions	

C) Opportunities

i. Does your company support you in acquiring new skills for career progression?

Yes ()

No ()

ii. If yes explain please explain further by listing the different skills you have acquired.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

iii. When was the last time you learnt a new skill in your current place of work?

.....

.....

.....

.....

iv. If any, have the skills offered you any chance to make any progression towards your career?

Yes ()

No ()

If yes, briefly explain how the skills have you in your career progression.

.....

Please respond to the following:

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Women who have undertaken further studies are more likely to receive promotions within their organizations					
Further studies contribute to women's eligibility for higher-level job positions and leadership roles					
There is a connection between pursuing further studies and salary increments for women in the context of career progression					
Organisations that create tailored career growth opportunities for women with advanced degrees end up supporting their journey of professional advancement					
Advanced degrees facilitate women's participation in specialized training and development programs, nurturing their multidimensional career growth					

Advanced degrees amplify women's qualifications and enhance their diverse skill sets, opening up various career opportunities					
Women with advanced degrees gain access to strategic and high-impact projects, enhancing their career advancement and influence					
Generally, organizations prioritize creating an environment that empowers women with further studies to excel in their career progression					

APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANTS' INTERVIEW (DEPARTMENTAL LEADERS)

1. a) What is your current position and how has it impacted career progression among mature entry female student in Egerton University?

.....
.....
.....

b) What specific measures have you taken or focused on to have effective career progression?

.....
.....
.....

c) In your opinion, do you think that socio-cultural factors affect career progression of female postgraduate students? Kindly state your reason.

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.....
.....

2. From your experience and knowledge, state other factors that hinder career progression among mature female postgraduate students.

.....
.....
.....

3. What special challenges do you think mature entry female students face in their quest for career progression?

.....
.....
.....

4. To what extent do balancing work and family responsibilities affect mature female students at post-graduate level?

.....
.....
.....

5. What you recommend measures that the government would adopt to facilitate the career progression of mature female students?

.....
.....
.....

b) That is, do you have any ideas or thoughts about activities, programs and strategies that could help in improving career progression among mature entry postgraduate female student?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your cooperation and participation

APPENDIX E: Ethical Clearance Approval from Egerton University

EGERTON

TEL: (051) 2217808
FAX: 051-2217942



UNIVERSITY

P. O. BOX 536
EGERTON

EGERTON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

EU/RE/DVC/009

Approval No. *EUREC/APP/158/2021*

21st December, 2021

Joyce Wacheke Ndung'u

P.O. Box 153

Egerton

Telephone: 0716 569 617

E-mail: johnsjoyce144@gmail.com

Dear Joyce,

RE: ETHICAL APPROVAL: INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS ON CAREER PROGRESSION AMONG MATURE ENTRY POST-GRADUATE FEMALE STUDENTS IN EGERTON UNIVERSITY, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA.

This is to inform you that *Egerton University Research Ethics Committee* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *EUREC/APP/158/2021*. The approval period is *21st December, 2021 – 22nd December, 2021*.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements:

- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Egerton University Research Ethics Committee*.
- iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Egerton University Research Ethics Committee* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Egerton University Research Ethics Committee* within 72 hours

"Transforming Lives through Quality Education"

- v. Clearance for Material Transfer of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Egerton University Research Ethics Committee*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely,



Prof. R. Ngure

CHAIRMAN, EGERTON UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS CTTEE

RMN/BK/



APPENDIX G: Research Authorization from County and Sub-County Directors of Education

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING OF BASIC EDUCATION

Telegrams: "EDUCATION",
Telephone: 051-2216917
When replying please quote
Email: cdenakurucounty@gmail.com



COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
NAKURU COUNTY
P. O. BOX 259,
NAKURU.

Ref. CDE/NKU/GEN/4/1/21 VOL iv/33
7TH January, 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION – JOYCE WAFERU NJOROGE
PERMIT NO. NACOSTI/P/21/14077

Research authority hereby granted with Njoro Sub-County.

Sub-County Director
of Education
Njoro Sub County
P. O. Box 508
NJORO

[Signature]
31.1.2022

Reference is made to letter NACOSTI/ P/21//14077 dated 15th November, 2021

Authority is hereby granted to the above named to carry out research in Nakuru County, Kenya on the topic: *"Influence of Socio-cultural factors on Career Progression among Mature Entry Post-graduate students in Egerton University"* for the period ending 15/11/2022

Kindly accord her the necessary assistance.

[Signature]
Lilian Anode
For: COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
NAKURU

**COUNTY DIRECTOR
OF EDUCATION
NAKURU COUNTY
P. O. Box 259 NAKURU**

Copy to:
- Egerton University



<http://www.ijssit.com>

INFLUENCE OF GENDER DIVISION OF LABOUR ON CAREER PROGRESSION
AMONG MATURE FEMALE ENTRY STUDENTS IN EGERTON UNIVERSITY
KENYA

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Abstract: This study explores the socio-cultural factors influencing career progression among mature female entry students at Egerton University, Kenya, with a particular focus on the impact of gender division of labor. Despite increasing participation in the labor market, women continue to face barriers in career advancement due to entrenched gender roles, which prioritize domestic responsibilities over professional ambitions. A case study research design was employed, targeting 127 mature female students, with data collected via questionnaires and interviews with departmental heads. Findings reveal that gender roles within households significantly hinder women's career progression, as women are often responsible for caregiving and domestic tasks, limiting their ability to pursue further education and professional development. The results also highlight the role of organizational support, mentorship, and societal expectations in shaping career trajectories. Regression analysis showed that factors such as gender division of labor, household size, mentorship, and cultural stereotypes strongly predict career progression. Other challenges identified include financial constraints, self-doubt, mental health issues, and language barriers. The study concludes that addressing these socio-cultural barriers is crucial for enhancing career opportunities for mature female students.

Keywords: career progression, gender division of labor, mature female entry students, socio-cultural factors