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TRANSPORT AS GENDERED EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE IN KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the conspicuous underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within Kenya's transport sector, with emphasis on elite female engineers, planners, and transport professionals. By focusing on this sector, the study illuminates the wider gender disparities common to employment practices throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Drawing from multiple disciplines, including anthropology, history, business, development studies, transport studies, and feminist theory, this interdisciplinary research adopts an ethnographic method, combining both in-person and virtual interactions.

The study unravels the intricate blend of historical, societal, and policy-related factors that contribute to gender disparity. Among these are the lingering effects of colonial-era educational limitations and present-day 'paper tiger' policies that inadequately guard against gender-based discrimination.

Through an ethnographic lens, this research offers a critical exploration of the intricate social landscapes that shape women's career paths and leadership access. It advocates for nuanced, context-specific interventions that overcome the shortcomings of existing gender mainstreaming strategies.

This contextual analysis has critical implications for the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goal 5, targeting gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. Furthermore, the study offers broader insights into enhancing women's participation in STEM fields, particularly engineering, by laying out practical strategies for dismantling gender-specific barriers.

The research aims to enrich the gender and transport discourse by unpacking some of the complex dynamics within Kenya's transport sector. It emphasises the significant role of socio-cultural norms, patriarchal systems, gendered expectations, limited informational access, and scant mentorship opportunities that hinder women's progress. The study also stresses the importance of increasing female visibility and fostering robust support networks. By providing an extensive analysis of the constraints on women's leadership in Kenya's transport sector, the findings offer key perspectives applicable to comparable global contexts, particularly within the sub-Saharan Africa region, deepening understanding of obstacles and potential pathways to gender equality in transportation.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
DFID	Department for International Development
EAC	East African Community
GBM	Green Belt Movement
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoK	Government of Kenya
IEK	Institute of Engineers of Kenya
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ITF	International Transport Forum
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KEBS	Kenya Bureau of Standards
KENHA	Kenya National Highways Authority
KWFT	Kenya Women’s Finance Trust
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NCST	National Council for Science and Technology
NGEC	National Gender and Equality Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PSV	Public Service Vehicle
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNON	United Nations Office in Nairobi
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WEP	Women’s Enterprise Fund

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDERED PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR

When it comes to gender equality in employment, transport as a sector has done very poorly, not only in Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa, but globally. According to a 2020 report by the International Transport Forum, women remain under-represented in most transport-related industries at only 17 percent on average across a 46-country sample (ITF, 2020). Attracting and retaining female employees remains a challenge in both the public and private sectors. Specific and detailed employment statistics are difficult to find within the sub-Saharan African context in general. This is understandable given the informal nature of most transport related employment for women. However, even anecdotal and local research evidence reveal the significant under-representation of women across the sector. This is of concern given that the transport sector functions as the foundation of the infrastructure necessary for the delivery of goods and services across nations and communities. The further ramifications of access to those goods and services include women's potential for skills acquisition, income generation and general well-being.

The lack of visible female engagement in the transport sector has led to the sector being perceived by women as a male-dominated and male-oriented system, which is not only insensitive to gender specific needs of half of the world's population but also potentially dangerous. This has, in turn, impacted women's access to healthcare services, education opportunities, employment opportunities and on their general wellbeing. The lack of visible female leadership in the transport sector therefore arguably contributes to women's travel perceptions and experiences.

Perceptions about women's competencies in areas such as leadership, accounting, and mechanical/vehicle operation run deeply into the negative across the spectrum of positions. This research study highlights key underlying barriers to women's success in the transport sector in Kenya but also highlights emerging opportunities for the advancement of gender equality.

If gender equality as an SDG is to be achieved, women must be included in the transport sector and engaged not only as users, but also as service providers and decision-makers among other roles (SDG5¹). Employment in the transport sector could also afford women a higher income and more decent jobs (SDG8²) and aid vulnerable women in particular accessing means to reduce the risks of poverty (SDG1³). It would further contribute to addressing social inequalities in sub-Saharan Africa (SDG10⁴) as well as contributing to sustainable cities by increasing responsiveness of public transport to the needs of women (SDG11⁵).

This research study highlights a key gap in achieving gender equality in employment in a major economic sector. It should also have relevance for similar male-dominated fields and aid in

¹ SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

² SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

³ SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere/ Eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030.

⁴ SDG 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.

⁵ SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

understanding the general context for professional women in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly those engaged in highly technical areas. Part of this context involves understanding the historical and current socio-political underpinnings of development and providing some insight applicable to other targets for development in the region. Raising awareness of the relevance of gender equality in employment and particularly in the transport sector can inform important changes to policy and acknowledgement of the role that representation plays in social change.

1.2 INVESTIGATING A KEY RESEARCH GAP – WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR: FOCUS ON KENYA

In this research study, I explore a significant gap in the literature examining women in the transport sector. There is a growing, yet still scanty, body of literature on women in the transport sector particularly within the sub-Saharan Africa region (Porter et al. 2021). However, existing literature largely focuses on women as users of transport services (Tiznado-Aiken et al., 2020) and seldom on their role as service providers and there is a definite gap in research into women in leadership positions within the transport sector. I have therefore chosen to explore the context surrounding the lack of women in transport sector leadership, the silence on gender issues from those few women in leadership and their own perspectives about why this situation exists.

In this study, I investigate the extent to which the absence of gender mainstreaming in Kenya's transport sector can be attributed to the scarcity of women in positions of significant leadership and the constraints imposed by patriarchy on these women. I focus my research on the experiences of women, particularly women engineers, in their career trajectories within Kenya's transport sector. I analyse their narrated experiences within the roughly delineated and intersecting spheres of education, employment, and entrepreneurship as well as social life.

Gender norms affect each of these spheres. As one study on Kenyan women's academic leadership pointed out, work is often designed, communicated, and evaluated, and opportunities made available based on gendered assumptions in organizations and society in general (Beoku-Betts, 2004). Women therefore face a problem, not necessarily in justifying their right to leadership but in being perceived as capable of leadership.

“Women's position in any organization is inseparable from women's position in society. In no region in the world are women and men equal in legal, social, or economic rights” (Odhiambo, 2011).

To extrapolate a step further and explain my reasoning, gender norms affecting one sphere of a woman's life experience are likely to affect others. In this thesis, I examine the spheres of education, employment, and entrepreneurship through the lenses of national gender policy and feminist theory, set against the backdrop of wider colonial and post-colonial interventions and influences.

1.3 STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Utilizing a grounded theory framework (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), the scope of this research is bifurcated. The first prong aims to critically evaluate the relationship between the scant representation of women in pivotal roles and the absence of effective gender mainstreaming in the

transport sector. The second prong investigates how systemic patriarchal elements curtail the influence and agency of women who do occupy significant positions within this sector (Mulongo et al, 2019; Porter, 2008).

The study's empirical focus is anchored in the Kenyan context, specifically targeting professional women—predominantly engineers and planners—in the transport sector. To offer a more nuanced understanding, the research includes a smaller subset of male professionals as a comparative group, aiming to probe the gendered dynamics that could potentially disrupt or advance gender mainstreaming initiatives.

1.4 HYPOTHESIS

In light of this context, the study posits a central hypothesis: the restricted visibility of female leadership and active participation in Kenya's transport sector serves as a major obstacle to the sustainability and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming initiatives, particularly those endorsed by national government and multi-lateral agencies.

1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENTS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Two problem statements have been central in the development of my research questions:

- a) There are insufficient women at work in key positions in the transport sector and elsewhere in associated agencies.
- b) Where there are women in such positions, they are unable to promote gender mainstreaming effectively, despite national guidelines in support of such action.

In this research study, I interrogated why elite professional women, focusing on engineers and planners, who reach seemingly key positions in the transport sector may be unable or unwilling to promote gender mainstreaming. I further sought to present a critical overview of the factors surrounding the current shape of women's engagement in Kenya's transport sector. Consideration of both hypotheses requires careful examination of the elite context which women are likely to have to negotiate if they are to build a professional career in Africa. My research has thus needed to cover a wide range of issues extending from pay, skills development, potential for promotion, working hours, work locations and facilities, to attitudes of male co-workers and the wider institutional environment. The four research questions which I set out to answer at the start of the research were as follows:

1. How have historical, social, political and economic legacies of planning and policy processes impacted on opportunities for women's employment and career development?
2. What do women perceive as the main barriers to skills acquisition and employment prospects in the transport sector?
3. Would stronger visibility of women in professional transport-related roles lead to more gender sensitive practice?
4. If so, how can women's aspirations to work in the sector be expanded and enhanced?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this research study, I have chosen to explore my research questions through the lens of several key theories, further detailed in chapter 2. In this section, I introduce these theories and briefly outline how they intersect with the research context.

Judith Butler's Gender Performativity

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity explains gender as what you do rather than who you are. She postulates that gender is identified in outward signs and actions, in a ritualized repetition that reproduces and reinscribes norms through the rewards of conformity to societal structures. According to Butler, gender performativity constrains the field of possibility for behaviours, actions and bodily enactment. If change is possible but only through subversion or refusal and revision of norms and new gender formulations (Butler, 2013) the workplace and work environment is a key site of change.

Butler's theory serves as a foundational lens for answering Research Question 3, which probes whether increasing the visibility of women would lead to more gender-sensitive practices. By understanding gender as a performance, this theory helps illuminate how societal norms and expectations might change when women become more visible in traditionally male-dominated roles within the transport sector.

Obioma Nnaemeka's Nego-Feminism

I have also drawn from Obioma Nnaemeka's theory of nego-feminism which first argues that Western feminists' lived experiences should not solely dictate the narrative around feminism. She further argues that Western feminism should therefore not be the guiding standard of how feminism should be applied in other parts of the world, in her case, Africa. She coined the term nego-feminism to incorporate the principles of negotiation, compromise and balance in challenging patriarchal systems and norms (Nnaemeka, 2004). In exploring how gender policy is developed and implemented, I concur with her argument that "it is not to Western feminism but rather to the African environment that one must refer" (Nnaemeka, 2005). I use her theory in my discussion to critique a unidirectional approach to feminist intervention. I further use her theory to explain the generational gap evinced in my findings, contrasting nego-feminism and broader Western radical feminism across three generations⁶ of women in the transport sector.

Nnaemeka's nego-feminism theory directly corresponds with Research Question 4, focusing on how strategies can be crafted to elevate women's aspirations in the transport sector. Since nego-feminism emphasizes the need for context-specific feminist strategies, it allows this study to formulate recommendations that are culturally and contextually appropriate for women in Kenya.

Bourdieu's Concepts of Habitus and Social Capital

I examine social networks and 'everybody knows' concepts through the lens of Bourdieu's conceptualizations of habitus and social capital from his sociological approach of 'field theory'. Habitus describes the way people perceive and respond to their social environments based on the environments in which they formed their personal habits, skills and character dispositions. I use this concept to describe how people normalize certain behaviours and ways of thinking/expressing themselves, in this context – regarding gender norms in transport. I further use it to explore how people in decision-making positions navigate transport policy, infrastructure and service provision. I use Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital to explore both my own positionality within the

⁶ A generation is here defined as a roughly 20-year gap between two individuals.

research as well as the positions of my respondents relative to myself and within their spheres of influence. Bourdieu's theory of social capital was one of the earliest influential statements on the concept of social capital as an individual resource, derived primarily from one's social position and status. He postulated that social capital was not a collective resource but one more readily available to those willing to acquire it through the development of goodwill and the achievement of positions of power and status (Bourdieu, 1986) as well as the result of maintaining relationships. I draw from these concepts to explore the social networks that are intertwined with Kenya's employment and entrepreneurship practices as well as to explain the rationale behind transport-related policy and practice.

Bourdieu's theories align particularly well with Research Questions 1 and 2, which examine the historical, social, and economic barriers facing women in the transport sector. The concept of habitus can offer insight into how societal norms and expectations are deeply embedded, affecting women's opportunities for career advancement. Social capital provides an analytical tool for understanding the networking dynamics and structural barriers that may either facilitate or hinder women's career progression in this sector.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

I have approached this study from an ethnographic perspective, developing a qualitative methodology (discussed in Chapter 2) that allows for respondents to describe and reflect on their respective experiences and perspectives. This fits well with the theoretical framework of my study as the respondents' statements reveal elements reflective of the theories therein. It is these responses from my semi-structured interviews and associated participant observation that have shaped my conclusions.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It is critical to acknowledge the limitations inherent in this research. These include the subjectivity stemming from the non-random selection of participants, as well as my own biases as a native researcher utilizing methodologies that are rooted in Western academic paradigms. However, the subjective nature of this study is also one of its strengths, as it enables a deeply contextualized understanding of the phenomena under study. This is further detailed in my thesis conclusion under section **Error! Reference source not found..**

1.9 KENYA AS A FIELD SITE

In examining transport as a gendered employment practice, Kenya offers a nuanced window into the intricate socio-economic and political dynamics shaping this sector. This argument rests on three key pillars: socio-economic dynamics, the political landscape, and implications for the wider sub-Saharan African region.

Firstly, Kenya's socio-economic profile makes it a microcosm of gender disparities pervasive in East Africa. As one of the region's largest economies, it reflects the complexities that its neighbouring countries also grapple with. For instance, the World Bank reveals that only 19 percent of women in Kenya are formally employed in wage jobs, compared to 37 percent of men (2018). This discrepancy is especially stark in the transport sector, a sector integral to Kenya's economy. An ethnographic

approach here will help us delve into a range of socio-economic factors that affect women's employment in this sector. Factors such as wage disparities, occupational hierarchies, and limited access to career progression opportunities come into play. Moreover, the contrasting urban and rural landscapes of Kenya serve as vivid backdrops for this study. Urban centres showcase a burgeoning middle class with evolving gender norms, while the rural areas often perpetuate traditional gender roles, creating a dynamic interplay that impacts women's participation in transport.

Secondly, Kenya's political influence transcends its national boundaries, offering a regional perspective on gendered employment practices. As a hub for regional diplomacy, trade, and security, Kenya's transport sector becomes a crucial space where gender norms from surrounding countries also echo. The country's legal frameworks and policy initiatives aimed at gender equality enrich this study further. Investigating how these policies are implemented in the transport sector will provide insights into the structural challenges that women face, and the broader regional implications of these challenges. Therefore, an ethnographic focus here will help understand how national priorities coalesce with or diverge from the lived experiences of women.

Lastly, Kenya's relevance extends to the broader sub-Saharan Africa. It acts as a bellwether, setting trends that impact regional gender employment discourses. By exploring the gendered dynamics of its transport sector, this study can offer valuable insights into the persisting employment disparities in the sub-Saharan African context. Such an investigation bridges the gap between localized realities and regional trends, amplifying the study's impact beyond Kenya. It also contributes to understanding how deeply rooted societal norms, historical legacies, and economic circumstances influence gender roles in employment, often transcending national boundaries.

In summary, Kenya's socio-economic complexity, its political role in East Africa and the wider sub-Saharan region, and the critical importance of its transport sector make it an exceptional field site for an ethnographic study on gendered employment practices. Such a study promises not only to unravel the complex interplay of gender, employment, and societal norms but also holds the potential to influence policies aimed at fostering gender equality and inclusivity in employment across sub-Saharan Africa. By focusing on the transport sector, the research aspires to contribute to meaningful change, both within Kenya and beyond, illuminating the intricate challenges and opportunities inherent in addressing gender disparities in the realm of employment.

1.10 THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is structured to present the discussion of the research in a way that the reader can gain a more in depth understanding of the context surrounding the problem of gendered employment in Kenya's transport sector before delving into the ethnographies of actors in the sector. Throughout the thesis, there will be broad categories under which discussions will be grouped, namely, education, employment, and entrepreneurship.

In **Chapter 2**, I detail my methodology, explaining the research approach as well as how this links to the aims, objectives and research questions. I explain how the literature review and theoretical framework feed into the methodology to explore the complex social context I am setting out with this research study. I reflect on the factors that influenced my access to respondents, delving into my positionality as an 'inside outsider' and the social capital that I drew from to contact my respondents, mapping the relationships involved. I further examine the ethical challenges of conducting research

within my community and home country. I finally expound on some of the methods I used to mitigate the challenge of conducting my data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chapter 3 delves into my theoretical framework. I begin by identifying and exploring gender norms through selected feminist theories to address how gender issues shape women's experiences in Kenya's transport sector. This frames the relevance of feminism and the discourse around it to understand the underpinnings of gender inequality as a baseline assumption of this research. I then continue with a discussion of the concepts of enskilment, and intersectionality as regards the research questions. I explore Judith Butler's theory of performativity in the context of societal approval and judgement, Nnaemeka's theory of nego-feminism as the norm for gender activism and advocacy in Kenya and the broader principles of radical feminism adopted from popular media and the clashes with current societal expectations for women. I then delve into Bourdieu's social capital to frame the context of the social networks involved in education, employment and entrepreneurship as well as the context of corruption. I also examine decision-making and the perceptions of women in leadership roles through the lens of Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a reflection on the relevance of these theories to the research questions and problem statements.

In **Chapter 4**, I provide a literature-guided overview of the historical context of transport in Kenya and the implications that the colonial legacy of the country holds for gender, development, and the transport sector. This sets the stage for understanding the impact of social norms as influenced by colonization and the shaping of Kenya's sociopolitical landscape by Western educational provisions. I further introduce the impact of more recent mega-infrastructure projects funded in part or wholly by stakeholders external to Kenya's national government and local stakeholders. This provides a setting for the conditional nature of Kenya's development sector and its intersection with the transport sector as regards gender policy. I conclude with an impact statement laying out how the elements discussed in the chapter have influenced the current labor force participation of women in Kenya.

Chapter 5 explores the impact of gender policy on gender and transport in Kenya as a significant factor in gauging the impact of gender mainstreaming on Kenya's transport sector. Policy is irrevocably entwined with society, feeding back on each other to effect change. The discussion in this chapter highlights both how key a role supportive policy has played in changing the sociopolitical landscape of Kenya's economy but also the gaps that have inevitably emerged in the implementation and enforcement of that policy within a social environment that has yet to fully embrace the spirit behind the law. I detail key gender policies affecting women's engagement in Kenya's transport sector, laying out the relevant sections, how they have been implemented and their uptake and influence. I briefly introduce the stakeholders involved in the development of these policies, explored further with discussion from my respondents in Chapter 8. I conclude with a critique on the lip service paid to gender equality as opposed to the reality of existing gender discrimination on the ground.

Chapter 6 marks the shift from a literature-focused discussion to a discussion of my research findings. In this chapter, I explore the social factors shaping women's aspirations in Kenya's transport sector as presented by my respondents and presented chronologically in their lifespan. I begin with reflections on the traditional roles expected of women in marriage, childcare and caregiving and the challenges at the intersection of these expectations with career aspirations. I further discuss the role that the media, including social media, play in the perpetuation and the challenging of those norms and expectations. I conclude with more personal reflections on responses to my research within my community and my observations and reactions to my respondent accounts.

In **Chapter 7**, I explore women's employment experiences in Kenya's transport sector and the diverse roles and environments herein. I discuss women's own perceptions of their experiences and

capabilities within their roles as well as the perspectives of their male counterparts in the sector. Bearing in mind the previous chapter's take on the impact of the social milieu on women's aspirations, this chapter interrogates the opinions of professionals directly in or acting in tandem with the transport sector. I conclude the chapter with reflections on performativity within the workplace and the disparity in the social judgement on women performing by the same metrics as men to achieve success in a male-dominated sector.

In **Chapter 8**, I examine the role of external stakeholders in shaping the environment for women in Kenya's transport sector. I reflect on accounts from respondents in this category and respondents whose work involves interaction with external stakeholders for decision-making. In this chapter, I review the impact of political commitment and the implications of change in leadership for priorities pertaining to gender, development, and the transport sector. This chapter also re-introduces and discusses the role of key external stakeholders identified by my respondents in affecting gender policy as well as education, employment, and entrepreneurship in Kenya's transport sector. I conclude with a reflection on gender as the battlefield on which traditions clash with more modern influences and how that translates into the context for women's aspirations and engagement with the transport sector in Kenya.

In my thesis **Conclusion**, I reflect on each research question and examine how my findings have addressed the problem statements identified in Section 1.5. In this chapter, I identify and explain gaps in my research and lay out my reflections on how my positionality played a role in these gaps. I also lay out my argument for the relevance of this study towards contributing to the wider body of knowledge. I further discuss gaps in the existing systems and frameworks laid out in earlier chapters and research that could be undertaken to address these gaps. I conclude with a summation of my findings and a reflection on how the research study could influence my own aspirations.

1.11 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

I conclude this introduction by reiterating that the aim of this research and this thesis was to interrogate the context surrounding professional women's aspirations and opportunities within Kenya's transport sector. In presenting my findings, I demonstrate within the scope of my research, that while supportive legislature and policy are an important impetus for large scale change, societal attitudes and behavior must still be factored into any considerations and plans to sustain change. Throughout the thesis, I deliberately draw attention to African writers and perspectives to further demonstrate the importance of full contextualization alongside more established Western writers and perspectives. This underscores my broader emphasis and contribution to the field concerning the significance of contextualization particularly within the development sector where Western perspectives have dominated the discourse.

The next chapter addresses my research design and methodology, with detailed reflections on my positionality and the ethical dimension of my research as well as my sampling, rationales and data analysis.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I provide a detailed account of the research methodology employed to investigate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in Kenya's transport sector, with a focus on women in decision-making roles such as engineers and planners. This methodology serves as the foundation for exploring the research questions, revisited here:

1. How have historical, social, political, and economic legacies of planning and policy processes impacted opportunities for women's employment and career development?
2. What do women perceive as the main barriers to skills acquisition and employment prospects in the transport sector?
3. Would stronger visibility of women in professional transport-related roles lead to more gender-sensitive practice?
4. If so, how can women's aspirations to work in the sector be expanded and enhanced?

These questions frame the complexity underlying the problem statements introduced in Chapter 1. The overarching narrative serves to spotlight the glaring underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles within Kenya's transport sector (Trademark EA, 2018). Despite the presence of national guidelines advocating for gender mainstreaming, the implementation of these policies remains less than satisfactory, as further discussed in Chapter 5.

The chapter will cover the research design, data collection techniques, and data analysis methods. It will also discuss the positionality of the researcher, technical challenges encountered, and the criteria for selecting respondents. This framework allows for a comprehensive analysis of some of the issues affecting women's professional experiences in Kenya's transport sector, thereby answering the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

Scope and Justification of Methodology

Given the intricacy of the research questions, the methodology utilized is a synthesis of diverse qualitative research approaches. The aim is to present an all-encompassing analysis of the multiple variables influencing women's roles and experiences, specifically focusing on those in positions of authority like engineers and planners within Kenya's transport sector. The hybrid methodology facilitates an in-depth exploration of several issues including pay disparity, career development, working conditions, and interpersonal gender dynamics as detailed in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

Positionality

Understanding the researcher's positionality is crucial to grasping the context and limitations of the study. My positionality affected not only my biases and assumptions around my research problem statements and hypothesis but influenced my access to my respondents and impacted my sampling as introduced in section 2.2.4 and expounded on in section 2.6. The limitations in my positionality have informed the scope and execution of this research, necessitating a focus on publicly available information, existing literature, and targeted interviews as primary data sources.

Selection of Respondents

Given my constraints in terms of resources and access, a purposive sampling technique was adopted to identify respondents for interview (See 2.4). This approach focused on women who are actively engaged in the transport sector, particularly in decision-making roles like engineering. These respondents were considered most able to provide informed perspectives on the complexities surrounding gender mainstreaming in the sector. To interrogate the broad context implied by the research questions, however, I further identified respondents across a spectrum of stakeholders in Kenya's transport sector.

Research Challenges

The research journey is never devoid of obstacles. In this chapter, I discuss my ethical challenges in section 2.7, cultural challenges in section 2.8.1 and technical challenges in section 2.8.2. I also discuss how I addressed each challenge in the course of my field work. For example, manual coding was employed for qualitative data analysis, eschewing the need for specialized software. A rigorous set of guidelines was instituted for the manual coding process to maintain consistency and reliability in data interpretation, detailed in section 2.8.2.

By detailing the methodology and acknowledging the various challenges faced in the course of my data collection and analysis, this chapter aims to provide transparent, and robust underpinnings for the research findings discussed in the latter half of this thesis.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN: DATA COLLECTION

2.2.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

Given that my research utilises the grounded theory approach, semi-structured interviews were a logical choice, characterized as they are as an organized conversation guided by new information obtained as the interactive discussion unfolds. This method is the most frequently used by qualitative researchers (Alshenqeeti, 2014) and is very useful for understanding multiple viewpoints because it allows the respondent to participate in the interview process in such a way that they can address what they perceive as central to the issue in discussion (Ahlin, 2019). While requiring an outline of topics and questions prepared by the researcher, there is no strict adherence in that the direction of conversation taken by the respondents. This allows for a more flexible approach and questions enhanced along the lines that the respondent is comfortable with (Stuckey, 2013). While it has been argued that unstructured interviews are more the domain of ethnography (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), current understanding holds that no interview can truly be qualified as unstructured. The individual, semi-structured interviews I undertook still allowed me to go to some depth and highlight personal issues (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). I used face-to-face and virtual interviews, conducting 14 of the first and 28 of the latter. These interviews were all semi-structured in that I endeavoured to ask the same questions in each interview (Alshenqeeti, 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The interview checklist of key questions can be referred to in ANNEX 3: Interview Guide.

Face-to-face interviews

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were judged to be the best way to engage with my respondents to allow for a more personal and less formal (though still professional) interaction in order to elicit sharing of personal opinions and experiences (Opdenakker, 2006).

In Kenyan society, it is also the most respectful way for someone of my age to interact with the older professionals as face-to-face introductions and conversations are perceived to hold more weight than

virtual interactions. This can be linked to traditional assumptions of being able to gauge a person's sincerity and trustworthiness better in a face-to-face conversation as opposed to over the phone or virtual communication means. Following guidance from my readings, I endeavoured to present myself as sufficiently (but less) knowledgeable than the respondents and affable enough to elicit a relaxation of any initial wariness (Leech, 2002).

Much like Gokah observes from his social research in Africa, familiarity can be both an advantage in identifying broader context but can detract from deeper details of information that may be seen as disadvantageous for a respondent wary of what an 'insider' could do with the information (Gokah, 2006). He rightly points out that familiarity is not necessarily a guarantee of safety or even cooperation in spaces where the political climate and cultural conservatism are in flux.

My post-interview contacts with respondents involved a thank you email or phone call, and the offer to share the specific respondent's interview transcript upon request in a password locked format with the password shared separately as well as consultation upon request before dissemination of the final research product.

Virtual interviews

Traditionally, virtual interviews have a perceived inferiority in qualitative research when compared to face-to-face interviews (Nehls et al., 2015). According to some early researchers (notably with older software and hardware), video-based conversations evinced a deterioration of visual cues that include head nods and eye gaze as well as fewer interruptions, longer turns between speaker transitions and fewer turns taken by participants resulting in less natural and more formal interactions (Sedgewick & Spiers, 2009). At the time, this resulted in participants exhibiting signs of highly formal conversational behaviours including the establishment of psychological distance and depersonalization. Other research indicates a dearth of evidence supporting the efficacy of virtual interviewing and some would even class virtual interviews as an extension of the face-to-face interview (Sullivan, 2013).

I had initially planned for about 15 (out of an estimated total set of 45) of my interviews to be conducted online, given that I would be dealing with respondents over a range of geographic locations. With the COVID-19 pandemic, however, this went from a last resort plan to the default. I was fortunate that my respondents, by and large, were from households with working computers and internet etc, and were not so affected by the pandemic that they were more than mildly inconvenienced by the interview process or requested paperwork. In an effort to make the latter easier to access, I set up a website with the essential information about my research, as well as my consent form at <https://omwegaphd.wordpress.com> . This proved an easier method of getting my respondents to return the consent form than the initial request to sign and return a PDF document via email. There were some challenges in getting contacted respondents to follow up with the consent form, but polite email reminders generally served to elicit a response within 24 hours. The online consent form is set up to share a copy of the document with the respondent and includes the relevant information about data privacy in the form and on the website itself. I also took the added precaution of explaining about the confidentiality of the interview before recording any interview.

It should be noted that online interviewing was particularly challenging for older respondents less accustomed to using the relevant software, despite the steep learning curve that working from home and communication in general has demanded through the COVID-19 lockdowns worldwide. Unstable internet connectivity also proved a frequent and sometimes insurmountable obstacle to some of the interview techniques used.

2.2.2 Truncated Life History Interviews

While I stood to gain a rich depth of information from semi-structured interviews, the life history interview method would, I assessed at the outset of my field preparations, provide an opportunity to gain an even greater contextual depth to that information. This in-depth work, requiring a series of in-depth interviews with the individual concerned, would be particularly relevant for understanding the contexts navigated over the life course by female transport professionals and engineers in leadership positions within the transport sector.

Life history interviews traditionally afford the researcher a means to understand a concept or issue embedded in the respondent's broader life experience and invites stories, personal perspectives and experiences from the respondent (Chase, 2003). I aimed to adopt this method to gain better understanding of the more complex socio-political dynamics behind the issue I was researching, similar to Yarrow's work in exploring the practices and social relations behind the scenes in development (Yarrow, 2008). In my case, however, the focus was on exploring the socio-political dynamics behind gender representation in female political and technical leadership in the transport sector. When examining the feminist underpinnings of the policy framework around gendered employment in Kenya's transport sector, I wanted to use this method to uncover the diversity of women's experiences in this context and project their voices into areas where they have previously been ignored (Ojermark, 2007). In using this method of narrative interviewing, I wanted to shift the weight of responsibility for the meaning of the conversation to my respondents, thereby giving them power over their narrative (Chase, 2008). This is supported by Atkinson's statement that subjective perspective is to be maintained if the life history is to have relevance, giving an understanding of individual change over time (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006) and a holistic view into the personal experience of the respondents (Tierney & Lanford, 2020).

Prior to COVID-19, it was my intention that life history interviews would be conducted, if possible, in a comfortable setting such as a familiar and private restaurant room or a private home. It was my assumption that it would be best to conduct these longer, repeat interviews in settings that would stimulate the memory of the respondent to recall and converse about their social context (Ostrander, 1993). Any structure would only be used to ensure that key questions were answered but the conversation could be led in its near entirety by the respondent. If prompted properly by the interviewer/researcher, this setting was meant to lead to a situation more conducive to sharing of personal perspective as opposed to official rhetoric, as seen in Yarrow's excerpts in his 2008 article (Yarrow, 2008). Official rhetoric, in this context, refers to impersonal and detached descriptions in response to questions with a focus on corporate image and messaging, as opposed to the individual's personal opinions. In the context of the research, official rhetoric would be impersonal, report style facts and figures as opposed to the subjective perceptions I would probe for, such as personal experiences and opinions.

The pandemic made my plans for life history interviews extremely difficult, given what quickly became the norm of women holding the primary responsibilities for childcare and housekeeping even when working from home. Their domestic duties were often further compounded by a later expansion of caregiving duties to include supervision and administration of home schooling for female respondents.

Due to the nature of conversation with various individuals of my personal acquaintance among my respondents, and an aforementioned tendency for older individuals to want to share their own stories with their juniors, I was able to gain more information from respondents in the course of my interviews

with them, serving as a truncated life history with the highlighted retrospective retelling of their life experiences in the context of their careers.

2.2.3 Participant Observation

In the context of this research, this method can be understood in two ways; firstly, with myself as the researcher engaged in activities with my respondents or potential respondents while observing behaviour patterns (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1998) and, secondly, with myself as the researcher understood to be in a conversation/interview in the position of a researcher but engaging with the respondent on a topic of mutual interest if differing perspective. I concur with Hammersley in my perspective that the researcher cannot study the social world without being a part of it (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). In this research, I engage in narrative ethnography both as an emotionally engaged participant and a detached observer of others' lives. I present in its entirety as I know it, the co-participation of myself and my respondents in the ethnographic encounter (Tedlock, 1991).

Due to the virtual environment in which I found myself doing much of my data collection, as well as the limitations of curated space in which I did my face-to-face interviews, my observations were largely limited to the span of my interaction with my respondents. The only exception was a single conference of transport professionals attended in person at the beginning of my fieldwork. I had initially entertained thoughts of analysing engagement of female participants in virtual conferences. However, by their structure, interactions with individuals who are not panellists tend to be limited to the chat functions or very brief interludes of dialogue that make it highly difficult to extract interpersonal data.

2.2.4 Snowball Sampling

During my fieldwork, I noted that it was quite common for each respondent to recommend that I speak with at least one other individual, guiding my sampling process. This was usually prefaced with a reference to my having said something or pursued a line of thought in the course of the interview that would catch the interest of the person they were recommending. I nonetheless also solicited recommendations as part of my interview process where they had not already been offered.

This is the snowball method of sampling, characterized by its reliance on referrals from initially sampled respondents to other persons believed to have the characteristic of interest (Johnson, 2014). This method was limited by non-random selection processes, correlations between network and probabilities, reliance on the subjective judgements of informants and issues of confidentiality. On the other hand, its advantages include lower cost and efficiency as well as its primary use in locating hidden populations or sub-populations.

In the next section, I discuss access and gatekeeping as experienced through this method.

2.3 ACCESS AND GATEKEEPING

In this section, I discuss my experiences with gatekeeping in my access to my respondents. For clarity, I define gatekeepers as the individuals through whom I gained introductions and appointments for interviews from my respondents. In this study, my primary gatekeepers were my primary supervisor and my parents.

As I delved into the literature to refine my approach to my research study, I encountered a curious phenomenon – a dearth of methodological research into studying elites in the global South, sub-Saharan Africa in particular (Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). The existing body of research focuses more on the ethical considerations presented by this elite sub-populace as well as the challenges of gaining access to the rarefied world of elites (Fay, 2016; Gokah, 2006; Jodhka & Naudet, 2019; Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016). My research study, however, is more aligned to the approach described by Sassen as the excavation of power and its operations in society (Sassen, 2000).

The existing body of research further highlights the more visible economic and political powerhouses of the region; however, my research has explored the world of the less known class of elite technocrats represented by professionals in the development sector as detailed in Chapter 8. It was my working assumption that female decision-makers in the transport sector have access to various opportunities – higher education, public awareness, political meeting forums, and employment opportunities among others. These would require having already been part of the elite social groups that produce policymakers in sub-Saharan Africa. This reflects existing theories on the accumulation of power and the trajectories of power (Daloz, 2003; Peters & Wendland, 2016; Yarrow, 2011b). How then could I gain access to a cadre of respondents outside of my immediate social circles? I detail my answer in the section below on gatekeeping.

2.3.1 Process Of Making Recommendations

The process of making the introduction usually involved an impersonal provision of contact information, either a phone number or an email address. This generally applied to professionals I met via my supervisor's contacts who, while physically located outside of Kenya, had experience with the Kenyan or sub-Saharan Africa transport context. In cases where I had a higher level of rapport with the respondents, they would directly contact the individuals they were recommending for a direct introduction, in some cases while I was still present at the interview. In at least five cases, the gatekeeper proposed to be copied in on an introductory message to provide me with an affidavit of sorts for the recommended potential respondent.

2.3.2 Analysis Of Incentives/Motives for Introductions And Social Capital Involved.

It was explicitly stated in some cases that in the interest of repaying a perceived favour to my supervisor or my parent, depending on who had facilitated the introduction, a respondent would then go a step further beyond the interview itself to give me a recommendation and introduction to the next respondent. In two cases, the respondent recommended me to a former colleague that they had been/were currently in a supervisory role for, indicating an element of passing me on to someone with more on-the-ground information about the context I was interested in. In one case, a respondent repeatedly referred to my mother as her boss and expressed that she would always be available to my questions as a result of that relationship. To clarify, my mother was not in fact her employer in any way but served as a vocal spokesperson for a group of landlords in an apartment block that they both managed units in. In this particular case, it was my perception that her rapport with my mother allowed her to feel comfortable enough to share what would otherwise have been too personal or sensitive information to discuss with a virtual stranger. It helped that my mother had spoken of me with her prior to my fieldwork and that they had discussed their respective children and their personalities so that she felt fairly confident in her judgement of myself as a person she could talk with.

2.3.3 Role Of Rapport In Respondent Facilitation Of Introductions.

As previously stated, rapport played a big part in determining the manner of facilitating introductions. Respondents who had engaged in an in-depth discussion of personal experiences and opened up enough to share challenges and inspirations that they had faced were more willing to make recommendations of colleagues with similar opinions and experiences. Some even included recommendations of people who would give opposing accounts/perspectives to their own in demonstrations of humour, one even laughingly requesting to be told of the look on their recommended respondent's face at my questions. Respondents who evinced a sense of humour in the course of the interview were most likely to go a step further in recommending multiple potential respondents and contacting them directly for the introductions on my behalf.

Despite my initial assumptions of who I would be better able to build rapport with, the situation varied. Fieldwork is essentially intersubjective, with the researcher and the respondent meeting with their respective feelings, biases, needs and desires (Gable, 2014). Rapport could be dependent on the mood of both my respondent and me, the perceptions that I was asking questions about things that everybody already knew causing irritation in those more familiar with myself before my fieldwork, and even the thought of the work that many were putting aside to speak with me. In short, my rapport was not exclusively based, as I had initially assumed, on age, gender, ethnicity, nature of initial contact or level of familiarity.

It is interesting to note that respondents selected through my personal connections expressed less concern about the confidentiality of the interview compared to respondents sampled through my supervision team's connections. This is likely due to both trust and the availability of myself or my family members for accountability.

2.3.4 Access Challenges And Slow Response To Interviews

At the beginning of my fieldwork, it was slow going as it was the beginning of the year (January 2020) and many respondents were engaged in new year meetings and other planning meetings resulting in multiple cancellations. Just as interviews had started to pick up as people settled into a normal work routine, COVID-19 disrupted all plans. Six key respondents, transport professionals in various multilateral agencies as well as two independent transport consultants were stuck in countries that were not their workstation or had departed from the cities (and major communication infrastructure) in favour of rural homes and were unavailable for interview. Events that I had anticipated as sites for participant observation and opportunities for networking and respondent recruitment were cancelled. My access to these events was also curtailed as physical access was initially more easily negotiated than virtual access due to the early limitations on e-invitations to people within sector-exclusive communication groups and forums. Despite these problems, access opportunities were developed throughout the field research period, largely through family social connections.

2.3.5 Reflections On Access Opportunities Through Social Connections

On my return to Kenya to commence fieldwork, people were curious to know why I was in the country and subsequently interested to contribute to my academic endeavours as these would translate into a family success and an increase in social capital with the addition of a potential technocrat to the family roster. There were several relations, for instance, who were part of my family's social life as I was growing up alongside their own children and I was seen as part of them by extension due to these

shared experiences. These were all individuals who could bring their own social capital to bear on potential respondents within their own circles in turn. One in particular was the younger brother of one of my father's close friends. Despite working in completely different fields, the family friend being in health and his brother a contractor, the family friend's position as the eldest son in the family meant that he held the authority to insist that his brother help his daughter (myself) out. This respondent proved key in breaking into the closed ranks of government engineers as well as providing some unofficial context into the forms of corruption within government bureaucracy and road contracting.

2.3.6 Parents As Facilitators For Introductions Among Extended Family And Social Networks

In my country, there are strong traditional tribal influences on social capital. In this case, I am defining social capital as the resources availed and benefits derived from networks of social relations. This is determined by gender, seniority, marital status, children's conduct and in some cases, financial status and church standing (Mwangi & Ouma, 2012; Nahapiet, 2009; Nyamori & Gekara, 2016). My parents were both in highly networked high schools and universities, in groups of people who went on to be middle or top management across various sectors in Kenya, including academic, government, health/medicine and finance. This has given me, in turn, access to a wider network of individuals than I would have on my own, given that these connections tend to be formed in school and I had spent much of my tertiary education abroad.

There is a generational gap in my networks, with my connections heavily weighted towards my parents' peers and fewer among my own due to a simple lack of familiarity. This reflected in the social circles I had access to after returning from my undergraduate and master's study in the USA. Outside of a smaller church-based social group from the choir I joined, and a handful of family friends that I had grown up with, I did not have the connections that many of my peers had formed in high school and university. I had studied in a British high school in Nairobi and many of my own classmates were no longer in the country and were no longer more than very casual Facebook acquaintances. While close to my university classmates, that network was scattered across the USA and of little relevance to my current research.

2.3.7 Reflections On Access And Gatekeeping

It proved difficult to ensure meetings with potential respondents with whom I had no other 'in' apart from a singular virtual conference or seminar. There were multiple cancellations of interviews scheduled via email though email correspondence was usually possible. Access to government staff proved particularly difficult. My connections did not gain me better access to government engineers until quite late in my data collection when the situation was complicated by COVID-19 and the pre-election meetings and rallies drastically reducing availability of civil servants who are usually available in their offices (with an appointment or an in-person reference). There were also some challenges to asking probing personal questions on the lives and careers of my parents' peers especially those who had known me from childhood and visibly struggled not to find my queries disrespectful of their status as my seniors. In direct contradiction, however, those who had a role as pseudo-parents in my life were more amused and indulgent of such questions as opposed to more distant acquaintances. It was difficult for some respondents to discuss details of corruption and discrimination and their involvement or knowledge of it because of my parents' reputation for honesty and roles with religious leadership. This was compounded by some who held opinions on gender equality that would differ from my own and worried that this would affect my perception of them and, in turn, my parents' perception of them. Conversely, there were some who tried to argue that I needed to adhere to more

conservative views on gender roles and gender equality based on tradition and religion. As much as possible, I respectfully declined to comment, refrained from debate and tried my best to avoid letting my personal opinions colour the tone of the interview as much as possible in these cases.

2.4 RESPONDENT GROUPS

This research aims to examine the complex landscape women navigate while occupying or aspiring to leadership roles within the transport sector in East Africa, with a specific focus on Kenya. To accomplish this, I employed a multi-layered, qualitative approach that involved interviewing a broad spectrum of stakeholders. These stakeholders were carefully chosen to represent various facets of the sector, from front-line workers to policy makers, educators to retired professionals. I selected my initial pool of respondents with guidance from my academic supervisors and subsequently expanded it through snowball sampling and leveraging personal contacts, including my parents' social networks. While this approach enriched my dataset, it is essential to consider potential biases and limitations, which are discussed further in each subsection.

Transport sector engineers/urban planners at any career stage:

Engineers and urban planners hold pivotal roles in the transport sector, often moving into technical and administrative leadership positions. They play a crucial role in policy development, employment generation, and mentorship initiatives. To fully understand the systemic challenges and opportunities that women encounter in these roles, I mapped the career trajectories of several engineers and urban planners.

Understanding career paths included not only tracking promotions and job changes but also gathering insights into the presence or absence of mentorship, attitudes towards work-life balance, and experiences of workplace discrimination, if any. While the topic of salary often remains a taboo and highly sensitive issue, I managed to indirectly gauge whether respondents felt their pay was commensurate to that of their opposite-gender peers. Although the feedback on this issue was limited, it provided invaluable perspectives on the gender wage gap within the sector.

University/technical college engineering/urban planning students, faculty and academic administration:

Educational institutions serve as both the literal and metaphorical training grounds for future professionals. By interviewing faculty members, students, and administrators from engineering and urban planning departments, I aimed to understand the sector's gender dynamics right from the entry point. Faculty provided insights into whether their departments made any intentional efforts to boost female enrolment, either through scholarships, targeted outreach programs, or other initiatives.

Students, on the other hand, helped me gauge the level of awareness and expectation concerning gender roles in their chosen professions. This allowed for a nuanced understanding of how aspirations and ambitions might be shaped by prevailing cultural norms even before entering the workforce. Administrators provided a structural view, revealing if institutional policies—both written and unwritten—either foster or hinder an equitable educational environment.

Transport professionals in national government agencies:

Public sector professionals, particularly engineers in national governmental agencies, are vital respondents for this research. Their roles are often laden with political significance, overseeing key

infrastructure projects that align with national development agendas. However, this segment of respondents proved the most elusive, in part due to the political sensitivity and the general climate of scrutiny around roles that hold substantial power and influence.

Despite the challenges in securing interviews, the insights gathered were incredibly revealing. These government actors often find themselves at the intersection of policy and practice, and their perspectives on gender disparities within this context were enlightening.

Some respondents alluded to the high instance of corruption perceived and reported among civil engineers in government service (Mureithi, 2018; Nyagah, 2020) to explain the elusiveness of government engineers for interview and their opinions on how much access I could gain to them. It should further be noted that the role of government engineer is a highly scrutinized position due to political oversight and direct implications for the political leadership of the country as well as the current role of engineers in Kenya's development agenda (Mureithi, 2018; Mutonyi, 2002; Nyagah, 2020; Okoth, 2014).

Moreover, the avoidance behaviour and the reluctance of these potential respondents to participate in the study can itself be seen as indicative of the complex socio-political terrain that engineers in governmental agencies have to navigate, particularly when it comes to questions of gender mainstreaming, which is a politically charged topic.

Transport professionals outside of national government institutions:

This category was further divided into national/in-country based professionals and internationally based professionals. Due to the number of international organisations based in Kenya and the NGOs, donors and private consultants that operate in the country, there were multiple individuals familiar with the Kenyan transport context.

Non-governmental professionals provided a contrasting viewpoint to their governmental counterparts. These interviews were relatively easier to secure, partly due to pre-existing connections through my academic network. Among these respondents were professionals working for international organizations, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), donor agencies, and as private consultants.

While COVID-19 restrictions limited in-person observations, virtual interviews still offered rich data. These professionals provided information on the role of international standards, the influence of donor-funded projects on gender inclusivity, and the contrast between local and global norms affecting women in the transport sector.

Legal practitioners specialising in gender issues:

Interviews with legal professionals specializing in gender issues offered a unique lens through which to understand systemic challenges women face in the sector. Laws, regulations, and legal precedent can either reinforce or challenge societal norms. Understanding the legal framework around gender discrimination in Kenya helped to identify potential gaps between policy ideals and workplace realities. These legal experts also elaborated on employment law, specifically focusing on policies designed to foster gender equality in recruitment, promotion, and remuneration.

Retired transport professionals who held senior positions in their respective agencies:

Retired professionals often offer unfiltered perspectives, unhindered by concerns of workplace politics or career progression. Most of these respondents were accessed through my parents' social

networks. While this provided a rich source of historical data and first-hand accounts, it also may have introduced biases related to socio-economic or cultural backgrounds similar to my own family.

This group shared insights into how the work environment and attitudes towards gender have evolved over time, offering a longitudinal perspective that was missing from other categories of respondents.

Non-Traditional Stakeholders: Transport-adjacent professionals with decision-making power and/or influence over transport agencies and programs/interventions:

This category includes decision-makers who wouldn't classify themselves as transport professionals but exert significant influence over the sector. Many served on the boards of key transport agencies or held political positions that affect policy decisions. Their inclusion in the study helps to paint a broader picture of the ecosystem within which the transport sector operates, providing insights into how decisions affecting gender equality in leadership roles are made at higher, often less visible, levels.

Transport service providers and contractors:

For a more grounded understanding of the sector, interviews were conducted with owners and operators of transport services. This included taxi owners and road contractors. Their views offered a look into the entrepreneurial aspects of the transport sector, highlighting the particular challenges and opportunities that women face in these roles, which often require a different skill set compared to corporate or governmental positions.

HR professionals:

The HR departments play a key role in shaping institutional gender policies. Interviews with HR professionals offered insights into the existence and effectiveness of such policies and revealed how they are actually implemented—or not—on the ground. Several HR respondents could explicitly discuss gender biases in hiring, firing, and promotions, whether codified in official policies or apparent only in unwritten practices.

2.4.1 Respondent Listing

Transcript No.	Gender	Profile	Sector	Gatekeeper Category	Mode	Date	First Interviewed
UK01	F	35-45. Female engineer in an African national agency.	Public sector.	Self	Physical	12-11-2019	
UK02	F	35-45. Senior female transport professional.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	29-06-2020	
UK03	M	45-65. Senior male transport professional.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	21-07-2020	
UK04	M	35-45. Male transport professional. African working in an international NGO.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	01-09-2020	
UK05	F	35-45. Senior female transport professional.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	01-09-2020	
UK06	M	65-75. Retired transport professional and civil engineer.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	11-09-2020	
UK07	M	45-65. Senior transport professional.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	13-02-2022	
KE01	F	35 – 45 age group. former professor of urban planning	Academia, development sector	Self	Physical	21-01-2020	
KE02	M	65 – 75 age group. Retired UN agency senior official	Development sector	Parents	Virtual	19-03-2020	
KE03	F	65 – 75 age group. Major transport agency board member and retired HR professional.	Public-Private Sector	Parents	Physical	27-01-2020	
KE04	F	65-75 age group. Retired former head of a major international NGO.	Development sector	Parents	Physical	18-02-2020	
KE05	M	Over 75. One of the earliest practicing civil engineers in the region. Also retired head of Engineering Department at national university.	Public sector, education sector	Parents	Physical	21-02-2020	
KE06	M	45 – 65 age group. Senior government official and city civil engineer.	Public Sector	Parents/ KE09	Physical	03-08-2021	

KE07	F	35-45. Practicing civil engineer with major multilateral.	Development sector.	Professor	Physical	27-02-2020
KE08	F	35-45. Senior government official in transport agency.	Public Sector.	Parents, KE03	Physical	28-01-2020
KE09	M	65-75. Practicing civil engineer and roads contractor.	Private sector.	Parents	Physical	05-08-2021
KE10	F	25-35. Journalist and influencer.	Private sector.	Self	Physical	31-01-2020
KE11	F	35-45. Female taxi driver and owner of three rental vehicles.	Private sector.	Self	Physical	21-02-2020
KE12	F	35-45. Logistics officer with international NGO.	Development sector.	Self	Physical	10-02-2020
KE13	F	35-45. Practicing engineer with national agency.	Public sector.	Parents	Physical	24-02-2020
KE14	F	35-45. Practicing engineer with national agency.	Public sector.	Parents	Physical	24-02-2020
KE15	F	Over 75. Retired professor of anthropology and gender and environmental activist.	Private sector.	Self/Parents	Physical	06-03-2020
KE16	M	Over 75. Retired civil official with Department of Treasury/Planning	Public sector	Self/Parents	Physical	01-06-2020
KE17	M	35-45. Practicing engineer with multilateral organization.	Development sector.	Professor	Physical	11-03-2020
KE18	F	25-35. Practicing transport professional with the UN.	Development sector	Parents	Virtual	19-06-2020
KE19	M	65-75. Senior education official and retired multilateral officer/consultant.	Education sector, development sector.	Parents	Virtual	08-07-2020
KE20	F	35-45. Female transport consultant.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	16-07-2020
KE21	M	45-65. Male transport consultant.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	17-07-2020
KE22	M	45-65. Male transport consultant.	Development sector.	Professor	Virtual	22-07-2020
KE23	F	35-45. Senior legal official.	Legal sector	Parents	Virtual	25-09-2020
KE24	M	35-45. Male lawyer.	Legal sector.	Parents	Physical	15-10-2020
KE25	F	45-65. Female roads contractor.	Private sector.	Parents	Physical	16-10-2020
KE26	F	45-65. Senior legal official and gender activist.	Public sector.	Self/Parents	Virtual	05-11-2020

KE27	M	45-65. Male engineer engaged in government consultancy and administration.	Public sector	Parents	Virtual	24-03-2021
KE28	F	65-75. Senior gender professional in the UN.	Development sector.	Parents	Virtual	19-05-2021
KE29	F	Under 35. Female engineering student.	Education sector.	Self/KE29	Virtual	28-05-2021
KE30	F	Under 35. Female engineering student.	Education sector.	Self/KE26	Physical	19-05-2021
KE31	M	45-65. Practicing city civil engineer.	Public sector.	Parents/KE09	Physical	05-08-2021
KE32	F	35-45. Practicing civil engineer.	Public sector.	Parents	Virtual	29-09-2021
KE33	F	35-45. Former senior county level official in transport.	Public sector	Parents	Virtual	15-02-2022
KE34	M	65-75. Retired head of Engineering Department at national university.	Education sector.	Parents	Virtual	25-10-2021
KE35	F	35-45. Practicing civil engineer.	Public sector	Parents	Virtual	21-10-2021

Table 1: Respondent Listing

2.5 RESEARCH DESIGN: DATA ANALYSIS

2.5.1 Grounded Theory Approach

In my research, I utilized the Grounded Theory method for data analysis. This decision was made based on the method's capability to develop theories directly from the data, making it particularly suited for exploring the multi-faceted themes of education, employment, and entrepreneurship in Kenya's transport sector.

Initial Coding and Data Collection

The first step in my analytical process was "initial coding." I meticulously examined each interview transcript, field note, and other data points line-by-line to identify initial categories or codes. This level of interaction with the data was indispensable for gaining preliminary insights into the role of education as a form of social capital in shaping employment and entrepreneurial opportunities. My data collection was an iterative process, influenced by the initial findings from the coding.

Focused Coding

The "focused coding" phase was the next step. This allowed me to consolidate these initial categories into broader themes. During this stage, I discerned that the influence of education often intertwined with other sociocultural factors, such as tribal affiliations and gender roles, which in turn had implications for employment and entrepreneurship.

Memo Writing and Reflexivity

Memo writing was an ongoing exercise throughout these coding stages. In these memos, I captured my thought processes, flagged nuances in the data, and took note of my own potential biases and limitations. Reflexivity was crucial as it helped me critically evaluate how my positionality as a researcher with familial ties to Kenya's transport sector both enriched and complicated my interpretations.

Theoretical Sampling

To enrich the emerging theory, I employed "theoretical sampling." This involved conducting additional interviews and revisiting earlier participants to refine the themes and categories. For instance, the inclusion of British and European nationals in my sample provided contrasting viewpoints, thereby enriching the theory in development.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical complexities of using Grounded Theory were navigated cautiously. The cyclical nature of data collection and analysis meant revisiting certain sensitive topics like corruption and social discrimination. To assure respondents, I emphasized that their identities would remain confidential and that the study would strictly adhere to ethical protocols. This is further discussed in section 2.7.

Reflection on Grounded Theory Approach for data analysis in this study

By adopting the Grounded Theory approach, I was able to develop a nuanced and contextually grounded theory on the intricate dynamics surrounding education, employment, and entrepreneurship in Kenya's transport sector. This methodological choice enabled me to potentially

contribute to larger discussions on socio-cultural capital, structural inequities, and sustainable development in emerging economies.

2.5.2 Thematic Analysis: Education, Employment, And Entrepreneurship

In order to understand and triangulate my research problems within the complexities surrounding the cultural, social, and systemic structures affecting the Kenyan transport sector, I employed thematic analysis as my principal method of data analysis. This analytical approach aligns well with the qualitative nature of my research and offers the flexibility needed to explore a variety of experiences and viewpoints expressed by the respondents.

Three primary themes guided my analysis: Education, Employment, and Entrepreneurship. These themes emerged as recurring patterns during the initial interviews and seemed particularly crucial in understanding the dynamics within the Kenyan transport sector.

Education

Within the theme of education, I sought to understand the influence of academic background on career paths, skill development, and opportunities in the sector. This was pertinent given that Kenya's education system, still influenced by its colonial past and traditional values, often sets the stage for future career opportunities and social mobility through the formation and reinforcement of social networks.

Employment

The theme of employment allowed me to delve into the intricacies of hiring practices, job security, and career progression in the transport sector. Given the sector's importance in Kenya's economy, examining the employment landscape provided valuable insights into systemic issues like gender disparity, wage gaps, and corruption, which are often swept under the rug in official discourses.

Entrepreneurship

The final theme of entrepreneurship served as a lens to explore the ways individuals, often inhibited by traditional employment paths, carve out their own opportunities within the sector. This is particularly relevant in a Kenyan context where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) form the backbone of the economy. Entrepreneurship is also intrinsically linked with the other two themes; the quality of one's education often informs the kind of entrepreneurial venture one can undertake, and the struggle for stable employment may push others towards entrepreneurial endeavours as an alternative.

Reflection on thematic analysis in my research methodology

Methodologically, each interview transcript was initially read multiple times to achieve immersion and to develop a sense of the narratives holistically. Subsequently, coding was performed manually to identify recurrent patterns and to cluster these into broader themes, allowing for a nuanced understanding that is both contextually anchored and interpretatively rich.

2.6 REFLEXIVITY, POSITIONALITY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONDUCTING FIELDWORK AT HOME

In this section, I explore my experience of using family social networks for research purposes. This was an extension of one of the very phenomena under interrogation in the research, namely, networking for opportunities among the same circles that intersect with education, housing choices, employment, business, church etc. COVID-19 precipitated my decision to continue my doctoral studies from Nairobi, presenting the unique opportunity to position myself as an 'inside outsider'. Many of the people I came into contact with during this period of time assumed that I had either suspended or completed my doctoral studies and was home in search of employment. As Munthali said in his 2001 paper on his own experience, the idea that in studying the behaviour of my community, they would in turn be trying to understand me had not occurred to me (Munthali, 2001). I can relate to the feeling of 'de-familiarisation' from my own community that Munthali describes, exacerbated by my absences from home in the course of my studies.

...the local anthropologist may not be taken seriously by informants if he probes types of behaviours that informants view as commonly shared knowledge, such as marriage customs, or he may be considered intolerably crude in broaching other topics, such as sexual practices. Recognised as a member of the society within which he conducts research, he is subject to the cultural expectation of his informants...(Fahim & Helmer, 1980)

While my position as a Kenyan national (readily identifiable by my first name which is typical for a woman of my particular tribe – the Abagusii/Kisii) afforded me easier access and a certain level of initial rapport with my African respondents, there conversely existed an expectation that I already knew some of the information that I was querying. I navigated any direct query on this disparity by citing my long time abroad for my studies during what would be considered my formative years in learning how to navigate Kenyan society.

2.6.1 Reflecting On The Kenyan Perspectives Regarding Anthropology

In order to understand some of the reception of anthropological research that I received in the course of my fieldwork, it is important to understand how many of my respondents perceived anthropology as a field. The first President of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was himself famed for his thesis, *Facing Mount Kenya*, a monograph on the pre-colonial culture of the Kikuyu people of Kenya, first published in 1938 (Kenyatta, 2015). Despite being an anthropologist, he nonetheless made no secret that he considered anthropology to stand for the duplicity of Western 'pretenders to philanthropy' who claimed to 'monopolise the office of interpreting [the African's] mind and speaking for him' (Kenyatta, 1965). Like many contemporary post-colonial states, he distrusted the politics of anthropology and its association with the colonialism that they had just been freed from. It was the stance of the leading scholars of the time, who took on positions of significant leadership in the post-colonial era, that social anthropology had no place in African scholarship. Okot p'Bitek, who had studied anthropology, stated that Africans had no interest in and could not indulge in perpetuating the myth of the 'primitive' so rife in western anthropology (p'Bitek, 1970).

Despite the Western domination of the terms of anthropological discourse, the current anthropological practice of 'natives' in the previously colonised states is now commonplace (Onyango-Ouma, 2006) yet the stain of association lingers. One respondent joked that I should have been

studying 'red Indians' in the USA when I was introduced as a student of anthropology. The assumption remains that anthropology only deals with issues of the past and 'primitive' societies. Confusion therefore ensues when it is discussed in relation to contemporary issues. There is limited public knowledge in the region on the subject matter of anthropology, furthering this misconception (ibid.).

While it has been argued that studying one's own community and culture as an African anthropologist is 'not anthropology but history' (Lévi-Strauss, 1966), I would argue that this was simply a logical progression to the field of anthropology and remains true to the core tenets of anthropology in seeking the unfamiliar within the familiar and vice versa. My chosen role is to examine it from my position within my community – which I go into in more detail about in the next section.

Positionality within the community

In my culture, I am first identified by my family. In introducing myself in a group setting, I will generally state my name and the area I am from. In situations where there may be relations or family acquaintances present, I would also introduce myself as the daughter of my parents or the granddaughter of my grandparents. While this is usually along the paternal lines, I may also introduce myself along my matrilineal line if among people from my mother's home area or sub-tribe. This is relevant as it links to the process of gaining access to a respondent via a related gatekeeper. In introducing myself by my family connection, I am establishing an affidavit of sorts and my access then is partially dependent on my gatekeeper's own standing with that individual. In using my parents as a point of reference, the person I am interacting with then has a frame for how to engage with me in terms of level of formality and accountability that can be anticipated/expected from me. I discuss the role of my parents as gatekeepers in section 2.3.6 above.

Impact of Using Persona

The downside of using parental connections to reach respondents has been the fact that the ties to my parents' reputations has meant that some respondents have been reluctant to discuss experiences contrary to their presentation within that social circle which is based on religious values. This included experiences with corruption, discrimination and sexual misconduct. They felt it inappropriate for me to know about considering my parents' known stances against this behaviour. As mentioned earlier, it can be difficult to probe for detail on things that are considered common place knowledge (Munthali, 2001) and it can even be seen as offensive when I am looking for information about how gender roles and marriage have impacted educational and career paths of people who are my parents' peers.

Reflecting on personal connections and the social capital involved in making introductions.

The question of who introduced me became a key part of my interview process because it determined many things including initial levels of formality, respondent expectations and personal decisions on presentation, and level of cultural sensitivity required as regards unexpectedly awkward questions in the interview process. It became clear in the course of my initial interviews that even asking for such basic information as age and marital/family status could be an issue. In the social circles I grew up in, questions concerning specific age and marital status of those older than me, particularly men, is an unspoken taboo, the latter being more forward than the former (Arndt, 2000).

Where introductions had been made through my parents, and the request to an unfamiliar individual, an air of granting a favour and getting things over with as soon as possible was evident in several interviews. This was evidenced in the initially cavalier treatment of the subject matter and the patronizing tone and language of initial interaction before the ice had been broken somewhat.

Where the request was made to someone already known to me, a challenge existed for both the respondent and I, where we were accustomed to interacting at a different level and a different setting better suited to a largely casual conversation rather than a semi-structured interview. This is evidenced in my transcripts where I contribute more than I normally would to the dialogue. This, however, can further serve to reframe my interview with the respondent in a way that they are sharing their experiences with a professional if younger peer as opposed to someone more alike to one of their children. There exists an added benefit of easier contact for follow up information and any other business.

Where introductions had been made through my supervisors, I was largely treated either as a professional peer or a junior and student. The treatment of a junior varied from a more distant and academically angled discourse to a less formal discussion of interest in my research and what I could anticipate from further engagement with the transport sector professionals from the respondent's own perspectives. This was evidenced in the immediate focus on the research material and not the prefacing small talk that is more common to my community around the welfare of family and mutual acquaintances. It should be noted that, by and large, an estimated half of the respondents interviewed through my supervisors' contacts were not African but rather British or European nationals. My own demeanour and presentation, formal dress and initial speech, could also contribute to the interviews where the respondents took more time than anticipated to warm up to the conversation. Note that I have endeavoured to style my interviews as more of a conversation where possible to allow for greater sharing of personal experiences. Nonetheless, the interviews remained semi-structured in that I endeavoured to ask the same questions in each interview (Alshenqeeti, 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

2.7 ETHICAL COMPLEXITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Social Capital and its Dual Role

The first ethical dimension I had to navigate was the role of social capital in recruiting study participants. Utilizing personal and family connections provided me with a unique avenue for accessing valuable data, especially from individuals who might be otherwise wary of participating in a study of this nature. However, this approach brought forth an inherent ethical dilemma: the potential for coercion. Utilizing social ties could inadvertently pressurize individuals to participate in the research, even if they were not entirely comfortable doing so.

Mitigating Strategies for Coercion

To counter this concern, I took multiple steps:

- *Transparent Communication*: I made it a point to articulate that participation was purely voluntary at every interaction level, whether it was an initial phone call, email, or in-person meeting.
- *Written Assurance*: This assertion was also clearly spelled out in consent forms and participant information sheets, which were made available both as physical copies and on dedicated webpages.

Sensitivity of the Research Topics

The second major ethical concern was the sensitive nature of the topics covered, particularly related to corruption in hiring and procurement practices. Unpacking the complexities of corruption could

bring considerable risk, both to my participants and myself. This is a subject that carries not just social ramifications, but also potential legal consequences.

Risk Mitigation Techniques

To address these issues, I implemented a two-fold strategy:

- *Data Anonymization*: I used pseudonyms and numerical codes for participant identification, thereby ensuring that any published findings would not be traceable to individual respondents.
- *Data Security*: All research data was password-protected and stored in encrypted formats, accessible only to myself and my immediate academic advisors.

2.7.1 Encryption And Data Security

Given the sensitive nature of the topics covered in this research, particularly those related to corruption and social discrimination, ensuring the utmost data security was a primary concern. The study made use of encryption techniques and secure storage solutions available through Durham University to safeguard the integrity and confidentiality of all collected data.

Encryption Protocols

All digital interactions, including virtual interviews, were conducted through platforms that offered end-to-end encryption. This ensured that the data transferred between the interviewee and the interviewer could not be intercepted or decoded by unauthorized third parties during transmission. The video recordings, audio files, and transcripts generated from these interactions were also encrypted using state-of-the-art encryption algorithms.

Secure Storage Solutions

The encrypted data was stored in highly secure servers provided through Durham University, equipped with multiple layers of protection against unauthorized access, including advanced firewall and intrusion-detection systems. I opted for cloud storage solutions that are compliant with the highest international standards for data protection and privacy, such as GDPR and HIPAA, where applicable. This was done to ensure that the data was not only secure but also managed in a manner consistent with global best practices.

In addition to cloud storage, I maintained a local backup on an encrypted, password-protected external hard drive. This ensured data redundancy, minimizing the risk of data loss due to unforeseen technical issues or security breaches.

Participant Autonomy and Consent

Before initiating any form of data collection, participants were thoroughly informed about these security measures. Written consent forms included specific clauses highlighting the extent of the measures taken to safeguard their data. Participants were given the autonomy to request additional security measures if they felt it was necessary, although none availed themselves of this option.

Data Retention and Deletion Policy

All data will be retained for a specified period, as outlined in the informed consent form, after which it will be securely deleted. The process of data deletion will also adhere to recognized best practices, ensuring that it is irretrievable.

2.7.2 Ethical Realities And Dilemmas Encountered In The Field

Once I commenced my fieldwork in Kenya, the theoretical ethical plans I had laid out were immediately tested. In one particular case, I learned after the event that a respondent agreed to an interview due to pressure exerted by a family member, effectively nullifying the 'voluntary' aspect of participation. The interview was conducted at an uncomfortable time for the respondent, leading me to ponder the possible detrimental effects on his health and job performance.

Confronted with this reality, I consulted my supervisory team to evaluate potential courses of action, which included post-interview consent: Reconfirming with the participant about their willingness to have their data included in the study and ensuring clarity concerning anonymity.

The ethical dilemmas were not limited to the recruitment process. One respondent candidly discussed involvement in corruption, plunging me into an ethical quagmire regarding the handling of this sensitive information. The openness about fraud and criminality could have significant implications for the participant, the study, and even my own safety.

To navigate this, I consulted my supervisory team and employed the following strategies:

- **Data Sealing:** I marked the data as sensitive and restricted, ensuring that access would be limited to a need-to-know basis within the research team.
- **Ethical Review:** The situation triggered a re-evaluation of the project's ethical guidelines, with an emphasis on protection of vulnerable individuals who may incriminate themselves during interviews.

The COVID-19 pandemic led me to adapt my methodology to virtual interviews, introducing another layer of ethical complexity. Online interviews meant dealing with data in both textual and video formats, increasing the risk of unintended leaks or breaches. To mitigate these risks, I enacted the measures discussed in section 2.7.1 above. In instances where participants expressed discomfort discussing sensitive topics like corruption associated with sexual misconduct, I gave them the autonomy to request that recording be paused.

The pandemic also imposed physical constraints on many participants, as interviews were conducted in residential settings with limited privacy. This lack of a controlled environment led to interruptions and distractions, which I feared could compromise the quality of the data and inhibit free discourse.

- **Participant Consent:** Before starting the interview, participants were asked to agree to a protocol allowing them to pause recording if an interruption occurred.
- **Post-Interview Validation:** To address any potential biases introduced by the environment, I conducted a post-interview review email or phone call with the participants to check their comfort and satisfaction with the process.

My fieldwork demonstrated the importance of robust, flexible ethical planning, especially when navigating complex, potentially dangerous subject matter like corruption. The experience underlined the need to continue evolving ethical standards in research, particularly as new dimensions of ethical concern emerge, such as virtual ethnography and the study of highly sensitive topics.

2.8 ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

2.8.1 Cultural Sensitivity In Data Collection

One of the less overt but highly impactful factors affecting the quality and integrity of my research was the need for cultural sensitivity in my data collection process. In the Kenyan context, and more broadly in many African cultures, taboos and norms dictate the bounds of conversation, particularly in formal settings like interviews. For instance, asking about specific age or marital status can be considered impolite or invasive, especially when the subjects are older and particularly if they are male. This was consistent with existing literature on African social norms (Arndt, 2000), which elucidate that questions about age and marital status are often considered intrusive and can lead to discomfort between the interviewer and the respondent.

The implications of this sensitivity were two-fold. Firstly, it necessitated a re-evaluation of my interview questions to ensure they would not be received as culturally inappropriate, thereby affecting the openness of the respondents. The necessity for this cultural adjustment was particularly noticeable when the interviews were brokered through social or family connections. In such instances, not only was I representing myself and my research but also the reputation of those who had vouched for me. The weight of this social capital meant that I had to tread carefully to maintain the integrity of those relationships while still gathering meaningful data.

Secondly, this sensitivity extended beyond the questions asked to also include the manner in which the interviews were conducted. Cultural norms influenced whether the interaction was formal or informal, affecting the tone and depth of the responses received. For example, in interviews set up outside of family and social circles, there was a tendency for the conversation to be more guarded initially, adhering to social etiquette before eventually warming up to more candid discussion.

In light of this, I ensured that my research process was flexible enough to accommodate these cultural nuances. Prior to each interview, I prepared by understanding the nature of my connection to the respondent and anticipated how this could affect the range and depth of our conversation. In doing so, I aimed to strike a balance between cultural respect and academic rigor, making it possible to capture richly contextualized data without compromising the comfort or integrity of my respondents.

2.8.2 Technical Challenges And Solutions

Digital Connectivity Issues

One of the significant technical challenges I faced during my research was unreliable digital connectivity, particularly during virtual interviews. To address this, I ensured that both the respondent and I had access to multiple forms of internet connection (both Wi-Fi and mobile data). I also used software that allowed interviews to be recorded locally on each device, minimizing the risk of data loss due to a poor connection.

Data Storage and Security

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shift to virtual ethnography, the secure storage of video recordings and interview transcripts became a paramount concern. To mitigate this, I employed end-to-end encrypted cloud storage solutions and maintained a local, encrypted backup. All data were password-protected and accessible only by me as the sole researcher. I also made sure

to inform the respondents about these measures to alleviate any concerns they might have had regarding the confidentiality of their information.

Software Limitations and Transition to Manual Coding

Initially, I utilized specialized qualitative data analysis software for thematic analysis. However, I soon discovered that the software lacked the adaptability and nuanced functionality I required for a deep, multifaceted exploration of the data. The limitations became particularly apparent when handling complex issues such as corruption and employment discrimination.

Recognizing these shortcomings, I decided to transition to manual coding. I developed a straightforward yet effective set of guidelines for this manual process. Firstly, I created an initial list of codes based on a few exploratory interviews, which helped shape a preliminary coding framework. To ensure consistency, I maintained a simple 'codebook' that listed each code along with its definition and examples from the interviews. Throughout the process, I continually updated and refined this codebook to reflect new themes or subtleties that emerged. To minimize bias and validate the codes, I revisited the data multiple times, comparing older and newer coded segments for consistency. Although I was operating solo, I tried to critically question my interpretations during each cycle of coding, playing devil's advocate to test the robustness of my conclusions. The manual approach, while time-consuming, provided a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the complex issues I was studying.

Virtual Interviewing Challenges

While virtual interviews enabled me to reach respondents across different geographical locations, they presented their own set of challenges. For instance, the absence of/lag in non-verbal cues made it difficult to gauge respondents' comfort levels with certain questions. To address this, I implemented periodic check-ins during the interviews to clarify any ambiguities and confirm the participants' comfort in continuing the discussion.

Audio-Visual Quality

The quality of audio and visual data was not always consistent due to varying hardware capabilities on the respondents' end. To mitigate this, I employed post-production audio and video editing tools to enhance the quality for analysis. In cases where the audio was not salvageable, I returned to the participants for clarification, ensuring the highest possible accuracy in my data collection.

Ethical Challenges with Technology

Given the sensitivity of topics such as corruption and social discrimination, some respondents were wary of being recorded. I addressed these concerns by offering the option to conduct the interviews without video and only with voice recording. This not only eased their discomfort but also allowed me to focus on the audio content for a richer thematic analysis.

Synchronization with Different Time Zones

Another technical challenge arose from dealing with respondents in different time zones, especially the British and European nationals. Coordination for interviews was challenging but solved through meticulous planning and the use of scheduling software that adjusted for different time zones.

Quality Control

Lastly, as the sole researcher responsible for all technical aspects of this study, maintaining quality control was a challenge. I mitigated this by implementing a rigorous review process. Each recorded

interview was reviewed multiple times, with critical segments transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy.

Reflection on technical challenges faced in research

The technical challenges encountered in this research were formidable but provided valuable learning experiences that have enriched the research process and the resultant data. Proactive planning, flexibility, and a commitment to ethical considerations were key in addressing these challenges successfully.

2.9 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In reflecting on this study's methodology, it becomes increasingly evident that my positionality played a more intricate role than initially anticipated. My unique standing as a researcher educated abroad enabled me to adopt an "outsider" perspective, allowing me to probe for details that would otherwise be considered common knowledge for an "insider." However, this very status also impacted the reception and candour of my respondents, as it had the potential to introduce bias into their responses.

My familial connections and social capital offered me the advantage of taking on an "insider" role when necessary. While this facilitated a rapport that might otherwise have been difficult to establish, it is crucial to acknowledge that this may have influenced the frankness of respondents' replies, especially when discussing sensitive issues such as corruption and social discrimination. This dual nature of my positionality, as both an insider and an outsider, allowed for a multi-dimensional approach to the research but also presents limitations and potential biases as discussed in section 2.7.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this access to family-based social capital proved particularly advantageous as it enabled me to connect with individuals willing to participate in virtual interviews. The pandemic catapulted my study into the realm of virtual ethnography—a methodological approach still in its nascent stage. While this provided unique opportunities, it also introduced challenges. My experience underlines the need for further scholarly engagement with the ethical, technical, and methodological aspects of virtual ethnography, especially as the research community continues to adapt to new paradigms of investigation no longer bound by geographical constraints.

In summary, this chapter aimed to provide a comprehensive reflection on the study's methodology, including its ethical, cultural, technical, and methodological aspects. The limitations identified in this work should be carefully considered in future research efforts that aim to build upon these findings.

By providing a nuanced understanding of the ethical and methodological considerations in researching sensitive topics within a specific cultural context, this study serves as a steppingstone for future research in this area and the broader academic discourse.

3 GENDER ISSUES SHAPING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

3.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Background

In contemporary Kenya, the transport sector remains an arena characterized by significant gender imbalances. These disparities are not merely incidental but are deeply embedded within the socio-cultural fabric and historical context, affecting not only the workforce but also policy formulation and service delivery. Although the country has made strides toward gender equality, the limited representation of women in decision-making roles in the transport sector reflects a broader systemic issue that impacts the sustainability and effectiveness of gender mainstreaming initiatives (Nyangueso et al., 2020).

3.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

This chapter revisits the foundational research questions of the larger study and explores how Western and African feminist theories can be utilized as analytical lenses to interrogate and explain the various facets of each question.

1. **Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Legacies:** This chapter employs feminist theories to unpack how systemic and institutionalized gender norms, many of which have colonial roots, continue to shape women's roles and opportunities in the transport sector.
2. **Barriers to Skills and Employment:** Through the lens of feminist theory, this chapter aims to elucidate the complex web of societal, cultural, and institutional barriers that women face in their career progression and skill acquisition, particularly in roles that have been traditionally male dominated.
3. **Visibility and Gender-Sensitive Practice:** in this chapter, feminist frameworks will be examined to assess how the increased visibility of women in leadership and decision-making roles could potentially influence more gender-sensitive policies and practices in the transport sector.
4. **Expanding Aspirations:** This chapter delves into feminist strategies for empowering women not just to enter the sector, but also to ascend to roles of influence, thereby contributing to a broader change in gender dynamics within the transport industry.

3.1.2 The Role Of Colonial Legacies In Shaping Gender Norms And Practices

One of the most compelling factors that influence gender norms and practices in Kenya, particularly in the transport sector, is the enduring impact of colonial legacies. This historical context is critical for understanding the unique challenges faced by women in the workforce today. Mabokela & Mawila (2004) elucidate how colonial histories have left an indelible mark on everyday institutional practices, indirectly contributing to a work environment that is often disadvantageous to women's advancement.

Colonialism not only brought economic exploitation but also imposed Western gender norms that often clashed with indigenous cultural practices. These impositions have created a complex tapestry of gender roles that women must navigate in their professional lives. Colonial legacies reinforced a patriarchal system, wherein men were predominantly positioned in roles of authority, and women were relegated to domestic spheres (Beoku-Betts, 2005). Such demarcation has implications for women's participation in sectors that are traditionally male dominated, like transport.

African Feminism, as a counterpoint, attempts to navigate this complex history by adopting a more context-sensitive lens. It acknowledges the systemic inequalities deeply embedded due to colonial rule and aims to rectify them by understanding the multifaceted roles that African women play in society (Awinpoka Akurugu, 2021). African Feminism thus serves as an indispensable tool for dissecting the nuanced barriers that women face in male-dominated sectors, grounded in a historical understanding that Western Feminism often lacks.

While Western feminism has been instrumental in shaping policy, its lack of acknowledgment of this colonial past can sometimes create more problems than it aims to solve (Ijeabunwu, 2018). For instance, applying Western feminist ideals without adapting them to the Kenyan context can perpetuate a cycle of inequality by not taking into account the deeply entrenched gender roles influenced by colonial legacies.

In this chapter, it is important to understand that the colonial history of Kenya has a lingering impact on gender roles and practices, complicating women's entry and progression in sectors like transport. Any effort aimed at gender inclusion must critically engage with this past to create meaningful change.

3.1.3 Comparative Insights: Western And African Feminism In Kenya's Transport Sector

To focus on the relevance of this discussion to the research questions, I offer this brief overview comparing the two major forms of feminism in terms of their role in Kenya's transport sector, expounded across this chapter.

Western and African feminist approaches offer different lenses through which to examine gender dynamics in Kenya's transport sector. Western feminism, influential in policymaking, emphasizes individual freedoms and has been crucial in issues like girl child protection (Kyalo, 2018). However, its lack of contextual understanding, particularly concerning Kenya's colonial history, limits its effectiveness (Ijeabunwu, 2018).

African feminism, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the local socio-cultural fabric, acknowledging diverse women's experiences and challenging entrenched power structures (Awinpoka Akurugu, 2021; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). It has a significant role in shaping social discourse on gender equality in Africa (Beoku-Betts, 2005).

Conflicts arise when all feminism in Kenya is labelled as radical Western feminism. A nuanced understanding of both approaches can facilitate more effective strategies for addressing gender-specific barriers in Kenya's male-dominated transport sector.

Given that this research is set against the backdrop of international and national political commitment to SDG 5 – *Achieve gender equality and empower all women-*, and given that this requires change to

both political and social structures, how can the pervasive aversion to feminism and gender equality still prevailing across a large sector of Kenyan society continue to stand?

In the next section, I begin my exploration of gender norms through the lens of Western and African feminism, integrating discussion of the ramifications of these norms for women employed in Kenya's transport sector. Throughout the chapter, I layer this discussion with consideration of how these feminist theories can address the research questions, as stated in section 3.1.1, and further consider how they can influence gender mainstreaming policy and interventions to address the challenges identified.

3.2 WESTERN FEMINISM

Western Feminism has its roots in the broader socio-political movements in the West, primarily focusing on equal rights, reproductive rights, and combating systemic discrimination against women. Western feminism has been instrumental in critiquing systemic issues around gender inequality and has served as a guiding force for policy development across various sectors, including transport. It offers a plethora of theories that provide diverse viewpoints for scrutinizing societal constructs. Several key theories under Western Feminism provide essential frameworks for understanding gender relations, particularly in the professional settings.

3.2.1 Gender Performativity

Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity is a social constructivist theory that asks the question of how gender norms are established and policed (Butler, 1990). From a feminist perspective, though the theoretical background draws from multiple disciplines including anthropology (Douglas, 2003), philosophy, psychology and sociology, this theory serves to examine the ways in which we formally and informally police the norms of gender and then work to de-fang them in the interest of freedom and equality of gender expression. Butler establishes the difference between sex as biological chromosome assignment, sexuality as the nature of sexual desires, and gender as, broadly, the behaviours used to distinguish between male and female⁷. Butler argues that gender is a product of social convention, defining it as the stylized repetition of acts through time (Butler, 1990). Butler's theory of gender performativity, aligns to my later discussion (in sections 6.6 and **Error! Reference source not found.**) of expectations of traditional gender roles playing out within the workplace, emerging as a prominent finding of my research.

While Butler herself evidently encourages healthy discourse around her work, she highlights the dangers of ignorance and particularly church-led rejection⁸ of the very concept of gender in her interviews and lectures. I refer in this to her statements on the threat that she theorizes that the church experiences. Her work, she suggests, is perceived by the church to challenge the institution of

⁷ For the purposes of this research, I will not be addressing non-binary gender identities as the topic was not raised by my respondents and remains a contentious topic in Kenya. While intersex individuals are now recognized in the national census registration, non-binary gender identity is considered on a par with homosexuality and carries the same stigma. Homosexuality remains illegal at the time of writing this thesis, under laws dating to the colonial era.

⁸ See her discussion in : Who is Afraid of Gender – Makerere Institute of Social Research, Jun-12-2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?V=cqc3ucold08> ; and this interview : <https://sxpoltics.org/judith-butler-on-gender-ideology/20136>

marriage and the role of women in the world. This is particularly relevant for a country like Kenya where over 80 percent of the population identify as Christian and over 10 percent identify as Muslim (GoK, 2019). In the Kenyan context, religions and religious arguments against female leadership are common battlegrounds for the gender agenda (Nyangweso, 2020). Research on gender norms for women's employment in Kenya shows that religion contributes significantly to the formation and maintenance of gender norms. This impacts on public opinion as well as household/grassroots attitudes towards changes in gender roles (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016; Johnson, 2004)

Butler argues that it is not sex that is the determinant of gender, though it is a factor in gender expression. She states that it is behaviour that creates gender, defining gender as a verb – an ongoing set of actions that, while changeable, can be deeply ingrained and enforced by society. According to Butler, our behaviours construct our feelings of gender. Butler views them as ritualistic in their regularity. The key characteristic of gender as a fabricated performance is in the repetition of this performance (Butler, 2006).

In her work, Judith Butler encourages her readers to recognize that different settings may require different performative practices, so necessitating a translation of the theories of gender performativity into the readers' specific contexts (Butler, 1990, 2002, 2006). In this research, I am framing gender performativity in the Kenyan context and specifically the male-dominated transport sector. I posit that the expectations for professional success in the sector are male oriented and biased towards what are considered masculine-presenting behaviours for Kenyan society. This creates an element of dissonance when performed by women in the sector, despite them being expected to assimilate into the environment by male colleagues.

Butler's theory proved a significant lens for this research as it offers an entry point for dissecting the roles and expectations that women, particularly engineers and planners in Kenya's transport sector, find themselves having to 'perform' in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

3.2.2 Enskilment

This subsection briefly explores enskilment in the context of my research, with specific reference to the impact of gender norms on the process of enskilment for women in Kenya's transport sector. While enskilment is not a feminist theory, I am linking it to Judith Butler's performativity in exploring concepts of embodiment and expertise extrapolated to women's skill-building within the transport sector.

According to social anthropologist Tim Ingold, learning is inseparable from doing and place. This theory, called **enskilment**, proposes that learning is not a passive transmission of an established body of knowledge from an authorised being to the recipient but a progressively deepening embodied attentiveness in which an individual learns to self-regulate by becoming more responsive to people and environmental features by 'looking, listening and feeling' (Woods, et.al 2021).

While Ingold's work was based on informal learning situations and his theory crafted from a study of outdoor living skills in a European context (Ingold, 2002) rather than with any reference to gender issues, I draw from his concept to posit that enskilment is an integral part of developing expertise and of being perceived as an expert. I further posit that gender will significantly impact the enskilment process for women in the transport sector of Kenya because of the social aspects of this learning. If we learn by looking, listening and feeling, I ask here – in what spaces is it acceptable for women to engage in looking at their male counterparts? In what capacity can women actively listen and engage in the learning process (Lawy, 2017)? Through which lens can women in a male-dominated sector

express and explore feeling in a space where they are already accused of being too emotional to capably function (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016)?

Enskilment is particularly pertinent in the context of the transport sector, offering a way to understand how perception of skills being gender-specific developed, and how these skills influence employment opportunities and career trajectories.

3.2.3 Intersectionality

The concept of intersectionality was first introduced by Kimberle Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989) and broadly posits that different social identities such as gender, class and race intersect and inform each other in what has been termed “*interlocking systems of oppression*” by Collins (1993). According to this concept, it is the intersection of multiple identities that influences individual worldviews and experiences rather than any single form of social stratification. This concept has been considered by some to be the most significant contribution of feminist scholarship to the greater body of knowledge (McCall, 2005). The concept has been criticised as less a theoretical framework than a way of understanding the divisions and hierarchies of social life, and accused of reflecting a tendency to simplify identities rather than recognise that the social categorizations are themselves manifestations of power within specific contexts and in relation to the state, capital and social relations (Anthias, 2013). Nonetheless, intersectionality is useful and relevant in the context of this research in that it includes a deconstruction of the unitary notion of woman to include various co-constructed identities, significantly social class, which shape relative power (Meer & Müller, 2017).

In this section, I will examine the concept of intersectionality as it relates to specifically Kenyan perspectives. Among the issues I consider through the lens of intersectionality in this thesis is how social status such as marital status, age and profession are important identity categories in African contexts, and also how context – place and history – can inform the identities at stake in my research. Intersectional thinking shows the limitations of focusing only on individual experience and textual storytelling while highlighting the methodological importance of finding ways to explore and analyse the material, structural and political realities that co-construct live and narratives – in this case, the experiences of women working in Kenya’s transport sector.

Gender stereotypes can also intersect with other social stereotypes, such as age, with younger/youthful appearance considered a barrier to gaining respect (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015). In Kenya, research has identified male oriented patronage networks effect on promotion decisions, in addition to other non-merit-based factors which men are also subject to, such as tribalism, perceived political loyalties and nepotism (Raburu, 2015). Unfriendly practice such as networking outside of core working hours, interruption of meetings run by women managers and other forms of male intrusion are rife, creating constraints to women’s career progression (Onsongo, 2006).

Considering that women in Kenya's transport sector must navigate not just gender but also other social categories like class, and ethnicity, intersectionality offers a rich analytical tool for this research (Crenshaw, 1989).

I continue the discussion on intersectionality in the next section under the social relations approach and focus my attention on corruption as a site to observe intersectionality play out.

3.2.4 The Social Relations Approach

Developed by Naila Kabeer in 1994, the Social Relations Approach utilises a post-colonial feminist framework to focus on intersectional factors in gender inequity as socially produced through historical, socio-economic and political processes of colonialism. It has proven particularly useful for institutional analysis of how gender inequities are produced as a constituent part of social relations. In the context of this approach, social relations are defined as describing the structural relationships within institutions that create systemic differences in the positioning of different groups of people (Kabeer & Subrahmanian, 1996). It is relevant for this chapter because the core premise of this approach is that gender analysis should go beyond the analysis of roles and responsibilities for men and women to include how gender inequities are created and perpetuated through the patterns of social interactions in different contexts (Kabeer, 1994).

The key institutions identified in the SRA are the state, market, community and family, which all play key roles in this research project. This approach asks about the rules – how they are created, by whom, and through what means; by whom they are applied; and who benefits. It queries the mobilisation and distribution of resources. It also examines the hierarchical positioning of individuals within a system and the process by which tasks are habitually attached to social groups. Finally, the social relations approach posits that power, decision-making and the benefits from institutional relations of authority and control are inherent in the social relations which allow men to mobilize a greater range of resources and gain access to a greater range of institutional domains and achieve attendant success through intersections of patriarchy and capitalism (Kabeer, 1994). I chose not to focus on racism in this chapter but instead on the intersectionality of gender, socio-economic status, ethnic group and political affiliation as key factors.

It is impossible to look at the context of the Kenyan transport sector without factoring in corruption: as I will show below, this also requires some consideration of gender. Kenya battles deep-rooted tribal rivalries predating but exacerbated by post-colonial government corruption (Blane, 2003). Tribal inequalities are particularly well demonstrated with reference to the roads sector. Examine road placement and quality in Kenya and you will find that a large share of road investments can be explained by political appointments, with political elites influencing the allocation of welfare gains to the district of their birth, upbringing and political stronghold (Burgess, Jedwab, Miguel, & Morjaria, 2010). Despite over 70 percent of Kenyans identifying corruption as a major challenge in Kenya, there has been limited institutional success in addressing the issue (Pring & Vrushni, 2019). While some local research has shown that women in Kenya are less likely to engage in bribery than men (Odhiambo, 2015), most studies focus on the giving and receiving of bribes and do not take into account other forms of corruption with any notable significance. A more recent publication examining case studies from across the world posits that women were socialized and acculturated to be less corrupt but that corruption in (political) leadership is in itself inhibitive of women's entry into that arena (Stensöta & Wängnerud, 2018).

I centre this discussion on corruption because I posit that access to opportunities at every level in the Kenyan context are influenced, if not governed, by the intersecting factors of ethno-political affiliation and socio-economic status. When looking at employment and entrepreneurship in the Kenyan context, networks are key (Ngunjiri, 2010). Professionals tend to network along high school and college networks of their peers or of their parents' peers (Odhiambo, 2015). They also tend to network along tribal lines, through familial connections and the attendant, assumed political affiliations (Waithima, 2011). Ethnic discrimination is institutionalized, notably affecting procurement procedures for transport infrastructure (Mureithi, 2018; Nyagah, 2020). Nepotism and tribalism are also evident forms of corruption within employment. Tribal affiliations can affect everything from educational

opportunities to housing access, employment and advancement opportunities as well as support systems (Hope Sr, 2014; Taaliu, 2017).

The additional dimension of gender into the equation of education, entrepreneurship and employment within the male-dominated sphere of Kenya's transport sector is a potent inhibitive factor. Corrupt affirmative action policies and inadequate methods of circulating information equitably mean that the women who would most benefit from supportive policy and financing are among the least likely to receive it. The Social Relations Approach offers a valuable perspective for examining the gendered division of labour within the transport sector and can help to identify institutional practices that either impede or facilitate gender equality in employment.

3.2.5 Radical Feminism

Radical feminism is a perspective of feminism that calls for the elimination of male supremacy in all social and economic contexts. It focuses on the abolition of patriarchal society by challenging existing gendered social norms and institution, and includes opposition to the sexual objectification of women, raising public awareness of violence against women and challenging the concept of gender roles (Willis, 1984). One Kenyan feminist (Magenya, 2013) writes that:

“...adapting a feminist approach to life is not like joining a club where you expect all the people in it to have your back'. Feminism is largely a journey that you undertake alone, with the hopes that you will learn to value your worth and place as a woman beyond stereotypical assumptions and expectations of women-and men too.”

Magenya goes further to explain how isolated she felt her experience of feminism to be in the Kenyan context, surrounded by a social commentary inundated with sexist and homophobic content that went unchallenged, if not applauded. Radical feminism as it is defined here is the form of feminism most publicized and satirized in social discourse in Kenya (Kyalo, 2018). In its exploration of sexual identity and challenge to social norms, radical feminism appeals to many young African feminists and their struggle to balance liberal education and ideals against stagnant patriarchal gender expectations (Awuor, 2020; Gatwiri & McLaren, 2016; Ijeabunwu, 2018).

It is the specific portrayal of radical feminism as the elimination of men and their standing in society that has been most problematic in media portrayal of the movement in Kenyan media – social or mainstream. The mocking satire of feminist ideals as a fundamental departure from a normal life for women in Kenyan society has led to a shunning of the term feminist and a general lack of understanding of what feminism in general entails (Kuria, 2001).

Radical feminism is relevant to this research as the predominant social perception of feminism in the Kenyan context (Awuor, 2020) and as a feminist approach calling for women's awareness of and control over their reproductive health, which is a fundamental part of determining their educational and career trajectory (Masanja, 2010). Women's educational and career opportunities can be significantly limited by early marriage and parenthood because of the prohibitive, socially proscribed time demands on them for childcare and other caregiving responsibilities (Liani, Nyamongo, & Tolhurst, 2020). In Chapter 5, I expound on this discussion, exploring the role that policy plays in protecting women's rights to pursue education and employment, focusing on the transport sector in Kenya, and elaborate further on the role that Western feminist discourse has played in the development of these policies. Radical Feminism can serve as an eye-opening framework for

understanding the deep-rooted systemic barriers that hinder women's advancement in male-dominated sectors like transport. Its focus on the restructuring of society makes it an ambitious but essential part of the conversation.

3.2.6 Additional Key Theories

While this chapter does not address them in detail, there are key feminist approaches that have influenced the development of those discussed in the chapter. This section presents these theories and their possible applications in gender mainstreaming to enrich the context provided by the lens of the selected feminist theories of the chapter.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal Feminism primarily focuses on legal equality between men and women. It emphasizes the power of legislative change to alter societal attitudes and practices. By advocating for legal reforms, like equal pay or anti-discrimination laws, liberal feminists aim to eliminate obstacles to women's participation in all sectors, including the transport industry. While it may not delve deeply into the context around systemic issues, it offers practical solutions for immediate problems (Kuria, 2001).

Marxist Feminism

Derived from Marxist theory, this branch focuses on how capitalism perpetuates gender inequality. It explores the exploitation of female labour and how economic systems reinforce the subordination of women. In the context of the transport sector, Marxist feminism can provide invaluable insights into pay disparities and lack of opportunities for women, challenging us to consider economic restructuring as a means to achieve gender equality (He, 2022).

These additional theories enrich the landscape of Western Feminism, offering nuanced perspectives that can be utilized to dissect the complex gender issues present in Kenya's transport sector. Each theory provides a unique vantage point for the critical examination of systemic inequalities and can contribute to the formulation of gender-sensitive policies, directly relating to the research questions posited in this study.

3.2.7 Western Feminism And Its Role In Gender Mainstreaming

Intersections with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Western feminism has played a pivotal role in shaping global agendas, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 5 specifically targets gender equality and aims to empower all women and girls. Western feminism's focus on legal frameworks and institutional change resonates strongly with the structured, indicator-driven approach of the SDGs. The feminist theories discussed in this section, among others, within the context of Western traditions and culture, have informed the strategies designed to accomplish these goals, such as the push for equal representation in leadership roles, girls' education or the eradication of gender-based violence (He,2022).

Key Donors: Feminist Understanding and Impact on Gender Mainstreaming

The understanding of feminism by key donors like USAID, the European Union, and World Bank significantly impacts how gender mainstreaming is carried out. Oftentimes, these donors may adopt

a Western feminist lens, prioritizing legal reforms and institutional policies that appear quantifiable and measurable. This inclination shapes funding priorities, often directing resources towards initiatives that yield 'tangible' outcomes, such as the number of women enrolled in STEM fields or occupying managerial positions in sectors like transport (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014).

Influence on Indicators, Interventions, and Funding Priorities

The preference for quantifiable metrics influenced by Western feminist thinking can sometimes overlook context-specific challenges or social nuances, especially in non-Western settings like Kenya. While these metrics and interventions may indeed drive progress, they often miss out on addressing root causes of gender inequality ingrained in cultural norms or informal practices. For instance, even if more women are hired in the transport sector, the deeper issues of workplace culture or job segregation may remain unaddressed, thereby not fully capturing the spirit of gender mainstreaming as conceptualized in broader feminist discourse (Liebowitz & Zwingel, 2014).

In summary, Western feminism has undeniably shaped the global discourse on gender equality, influencing policy frameworks, international goals, and donor funding priorities. However, its emphasis on legal and institutional reforms, often quantified through measurable indicators, may sometimes miss the nuances and complexities of gender issues in varied cultural settings. As I pivot my discussion to African feminism, it becomes imperative to explore how this form of feminism addresses those gaps by offering a more context-specific understanding of gender roles, norms, and inequalities, particularly within the transport sector in Kenya.

3.3 AFRICAN FEMINISM

African Feminism emerges as a critique of Western Feminism, adapting its core tenets to better fit the unique social, cultural, and historical contexts found in Africa. While Western Feminism has its strengths, African Feminism adds layers of nuance that are particularly relevant for understanding gender relations in non-Western settings.

3.3.1 Stiwanism

Leading Nigerian feminist Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie highlights that gender matters as much as culture, race and class in the restoration of Africa (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). In this feminist's view, African feminism by necessity focuses on the need for African women to break the chain of gender oppression, which is true to the core tenet of feminism, the need for African societies to destigmatise the female gender and for both to rethink their involvement in an oppressive postcolonial class culture (Allan, 1995). A key point to consider from this latter author's work is her exploration of the causes for the slow uptake of feminism in Africa, and the pervasive perception that Western feminism is inherently anti-man as opposed to anti-system.

In her chapter, *Stiwanism: Feminism in an African context*, Ogundipe-Leslie highlights male resistance to gender equality and the collaboration of married women in particular with patriarchal systems as key barriers to the progress of feminism in Africa. Like several other African feminists such as Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta, she argues that ***“married women are afraid to shake the status quo; they are afraid and want security through men; they are harsher on other women than men are; they cling to the vanishing respectability of being married”*** (211) (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). Speaking from the Nigerian context her work is based on, Ogundipe-Leslie emphasises that African men may

not necessarily be opposed to the concept of equal rights, pay and opportunities for women but more to their acceptance as equals in society.

The theory aims for Social Transformation in Africa Including Women, seeking equal opportunities in all sectors, including the transport sector. In relation to the research questions posed in this study, Stiwanism serves as a lens to scrutinize the systemic barriers that curtail the active participation of women in decision-making roles within Kenya's transport sector.

3.3.2 Africana Womanism

Coined by Clenora Hudson-Weems in the late 90s, Africana womanism is a theoretical framework specifically designed to speak to the experiences of all women of African descent in opposition to the universalizing Western or Euro-centric feminist canon (Hudson-Weems, 2000). This has later been developed into Africana Melanated Womanism, again by Hudson-Weems, to reconfigure her concept to address a collective of black women, men and children. This latter form is intended to speak towards the African diaspora as well as the local African context (Hudson-Weems, 2019). Specifically, AMW addresses the impact of racism on the economic reality of the African family and community and the struggle for human dignity and parity that the Africana woman is faced with. This approach to African feminism focuses on the woman's role in traditional familyhood and its integration into the personal and professional life of the African woman. It goes further to state the fact of African women's historical battle against sexual, race and class discrimination and has made a statement of challenging African male chauvinism without the elimination of African men as allies in a struggle for liberation and family-hood. It could then be asked what liberation was being sought in this paradigm.

With its focus on race and class, this theory can be employed to investigate the intersectional barriers that women, especially engineers, encounter in Kenya's male-dominated transport sector. Furthermore, it can serve as a lens to examine the integration of expectations stemming from traditional family roles into the professional life of the Kenyan woman. It is also relevant in exploring the experience of training overseas and working as members of a diaspora in the case of female transport professionals.

3.3.3 Nego-Feminism

Nigerian feminist Obioma Nnaemeka developed the idea of no-ego/nego-feminism, arguing that Western feminist lived experiences should not dictate all feminist narrative nor necessarily inform how feminism should be applied in other parts of the world, specifically, to Africa (Nnaemeka, 2004). She described experiences of engaging with empty Western theorizing that was disconnected from the realities and environments in which African feminists negotiated (ibid.). Nnaemeka developed the theory to address a perceived need for a space of engagement allowing for "**the co-existence, interconnection and interaction of thought, dialogue, planning and action**". She cautioned against the dismissal of theoretical feminism, while acknowledging the immediate needs of African feminists in addressing the most looming threats to female welfare and equality.

Obioma Nnaemeka's concept is defined as the feminism of negotiation and 'no-ego' feminism. It draws from a communitarian model of social arrangement associated with shared African values on the principles of negotiation, compromise and balance (Nnaemeka, 2004). It is centred on the belief that African female scholars in particular need to be engaged in presenting an African perspective for women in local societies in the context of development in order to ensure that local context, knowledge and priority is included. One of the challenges to feminism in development is that it fails

to address women's needs where they are and where their communities and societies stand in regard to feminist discourse (Baraza & Kabira, 2012). This approach in African feminism is particularly relevant within the Kenyan context where the conservative and patriarchal society struggles to accommodate feminism and the tendency to satirize feminism as anti-man as opposed to pro-equality (Ijeabuwu, 2018).

The Extended Family As A Reference Point for Nego-feminism

Nego-feminism is deeply ingrained in the African cultural ethos of negotiation and compromise. This theory focuses on what works in a given context, especially in matters of survival and success within patriarchal structures.

In the context of Kenya's transport sector, Nego-feminism could serve as a vital tool for navigating the complex gender dynamics at play. One example that resonates with the principles of Nego-feminism is the role of Kenyan extended families. As identified in the social relations approach, these extended families often serve as essential social networks that provide women with crucial access to educational and employment opportunities, including those in the transport sector (Ngunjiri, 2010). Therefore, Nego-feminism could potentially offer a framework for leveraging these familial networks to improve women's participation in decision-making roles within the sector.

The practice of negotiation, which lies at the core of Nego-feminism, could also inform gender mainstreaming policies. By recognizing and respecting the existing structures and networks, like extended families, that women already engage with, policymakers can design interventions that are both culturally sensitive and effective. This focus on negotiated compromise could be especially relevant in crafting policies aimed at increasing women's representation in leadership roles within the transport sector, thereby addressing the central hypothesis and research questions posed in this study (Nnaemeka, 2004).

By highlighting the negotiating tactics women use within their extended families to access opportunities, Nego-feminism provides an important lens to explore the social intricacies that could either inhibit or facilitate women's professional advancement in the Kenyan transport sector. Therefore, it offers both theoretical and practical avenues for the promotion of gender mainstreaming, grounded in the lived experiences of Kenyan women.

3.3.4 Additional Key Theories In African Feminism

In this section, I introduce some theories that have influenced the development of the theories focused on in this study as well as guiding understanding of the social discourse around feminism in Kenya and wider sub-Saharan Africa.

Ubuntu Feminism

Ubuntu feminism extends the South African philosophy of Ubuntu to emphasize collective values and interconnectedness. It positions mutual respect and community as fundamental to achieving gender equality (Ngunjiri, 2010). In gender mainstreaming, incorporating tenets of Ubuntu feminism could prompt policymakers to design community-based interventions that are culturally sensitive and effective in addressing gender inequities. For example, as Ubuntu feminism encourages a communal ethos in workplace culture, it could lead to a more supportive environment for women to climb the professional ladder.

Motherism

Motherism focuses on the cultural and societal importance of motherhood and the maternal role in African communities. It diverges from Western feminism by embracing, rather than challenging, traditional roles of women. Motherism represents how societal attitudes towards motherhood and traditional roles influence women's opportunities for career development and self-actualization, extrapolating to leadership roles in the transport sector (Ode, 2011). In terms of gender mainstreaming, Motherism suggests that policy and interventions should align with the reality and significance of maternal roles, offering support systems like flexible work hours or on-site childcare to enable women to participate more actively in the transport sector.

3.3.5 African Feminism And Its Role In Gender Mainstreaming

African feminist theories, with their keen attention to local context, offer invaluable insights into the formulation and implementation of gender mainstreaming policies in sectors like transportation, which are predominantly male dominated. These theories provide a lens through which one can examine how social, cultural, and even historical factors can affect women's participation in such sectors.

Intersections with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer a global framework for gender equality, among other things. African feminism can serve as a useful tool for localizing these goals, given its focus on the intersections of gender with other forms of social stratification such as race, class, and ethnicity. For example, SDG 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, aligns well with the principles of Africana Womanism, which emphasizes collective struggle and family-centeredness. Achieving such goals in the African context may involve nuanced strategies informed by theories like Nego-feminism, which advocates for a more flexible, culturally sensitive approach to feminism.

Donor Engagement and Funding Priorities

Donors often play a pivotal role in shaping gender mainstreaming initiatives. However, a Western feminist framework predominantly informs their understanding of feminism, which may not always align with the lived experiences of African women. African feminist theories could serve as an educational tool for donors, offering them a more comprehensive understanding of gender issues specific to the African context. By incorporating African feminist theories into their funding models and intervention designs, donors could more effectively address gender imbalances in sectors like transportation.

Relevance to Research Questions

African feminist theories can offer unique perspectives on the research questions posed in this study. For instance, Africana Womanism and its emphasis on collective action could provide insights into why women in key positions may find it challenging to promote gender mainstreaming. Nego-feminism could offer strategies for women to navigate the patriarchal systems that still dominate sectors like transportation. Moreover, Stiwanism, with its focus on social transformation, could guide policy interventions aimed at creating a more inclusive work environment.

In summary, African feminist theories offer a wealth of strategies and insights that can inform the practice of gender mainstreaming in the Kenyan transport sector. By acknowledging and incorporating these diverse theories, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners can craft more effective, culturally sensitive strategies for improving gender equality in this sector.

3.4 COMPARATIVE REFLECTION: WESTERN AND AFRICAN FEMINISM IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

To focus on the relevance of this discussion to the research questions, I offer this brief overview comparing the two major forms of feminism in terms of their role in Kenya's transport sector, expounded across this chapter.

Western and African feminist approaches offer different lenses through which to examine gender dynamics in Kenya's transport sector. Western feminism, influential in policymaking, emphasizes individual freedoms and has been crucial in issues like girl child protection (Kyalo, 2018). However, its lack of contextual understanding, particularly concerning Kenya's colonial history, limits its effectiveness (Ijeabunwu, 2018).

African feminism, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the local socio-cultural fabric, acknowledging diverse women's experiences and challenging entrenched power structures (Awinpoka Akurugu, 2021; Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). It has a significant role in shaping social discourse on gender equality in Africa (Beoku-Betts, 2005).

As previously stated in my chapter introduction, conflicts arise when all feminism in Kenya is labelled as radical Western feminism. A nuanced understanding of both approaches to feminism can facilitate more effective, context-sensitive strategies for addressing gender-specific barriers in Kenya's male-dominated transport sector.

After delving into the intricate tapestry of Western and African feminist theories, it becomes imperative to ground these frameworks in the lived experiences of women in leadership roles. The following section provides a detailed account of social norms, career progression, and the institutional barriers that African women, particularly in Kenya, face when navigating professional landscapes. Understanding these elements is crucial in enriching our understanding of how feminist theories operate in real-world settings, further contributing to the study's objectives.

3.5 HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Reflecting on the discussion in Section 3.1.1, the transport sector in Kenya, entrenched in historical and societal norms, presents significant gender imbalances. These disparities, rooted in a colonial past (Section 3.1.2), have shaped the experiences of women in this field, resulting in a culture where gender biases and discrimination are prevalent. The transport sector in Kenya presents a complex and challenging landscape for women. Historically male-dominated, this sector is reflective of broader societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles and employment (Maina & Caine, 2013). Women in this field often encounter barriers to entry and advancement, stemming from both institutional practices and cultural attitudes. These challenges are further compounded by issues such as inadequate representation in decision-making roles and a general lack of support systems. Understanding the context for women in Kenya's transport sector is critical to appreciating the nuances of their experiences and the resilience they exhibit in navigating these challenges.

There is a significant gap in research focusing on professional women in Kenya's transport sector (Kamau & Wright, 2022). Much of the existing literature tends to concentrate on frontline workers, often overlooking the unique experiences of women in professional or technical roles. This oversight

leads to several assumptions: that the challenges faced by women are uniform across all levels of the sector, and that solutions applicable at one level are equally effective at another. This gap in research fails to capture the nuanced realities of professional women, who face a distinct set of challenges (discussed further in this section) not limited to gender bias in leadership roles, lack of mentorship, and work-life balance expectations. While women in professional roles may address thematically similar challenges, their manifestation and solutions/mitigations tend to differ. Addressing this gap is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the gender dynamics within the transport sector and for developing targeted strategies to support women at all levels.

3.5.1 Challenges for Professional Women in Technical Roles in the Transport Sector

Professional women in technical roles within Kenya's transport sector confront distinct challenges that hinder their career progression and job satisfaction. A primary obstacle is the glass ceiling effect, which limits their upward mobility into leadership and decision-making roles. Despite possessing the requisite skills and qualifications, these women often face implicit bias and stereotyping, which can result in their professional capabilities being undervalued (Wright, 2019) and their credibility undermined. Additionally, the male-dominated nature of the sector means that professional women frequently find themselves isolated or marginalized, lacking the mentorship and networking opportunities that are critical for career advancement. The issue of work-life balance is particularly acute for women in technical roles, as the demanding nature of their jobs, coupled with societal expectations regarding domestic responsibilities, creates a challenging dual burden.

Limited Access to Training and Development:

This is the first challenge that many women find in seeking careers in the transport sector. They face significant barriers to accessing training and development opportunities necessary for career advancement, including limited access to educational resources and professional networks. Technical training in this sector also tends to be both time and money-consuming, which further reduce its appeal for many people.

Male-dominated Work Environment:

In Kenya, as in much of Sub-Saharan Africa and the world, the transport sector is predominantly male-dominated, reflecting broader societal gender imbalances. African women in technical roles may face isolation, lack of representation, and limited opportunities for advancement in such environments. They also face discrimination in the form of unequal pay and benefits, with most women experiencing significant wage disparities compared to male counterparts, further reinforcing the assumption that they are less qualified to work in the transport sector. There is a dearth of implemented and enforced equal pay legislation or internal policies with existing reporting mechanisms crippled by fear of retaliation and professional repercussions. Furthermore, the lack of policies that support the unique needs of women (both frontline and professional), such as flexible working hours or parental leave, exacerbates these difficulties. This results in inflexible organizational cultures with rigid structures and hierarchical norms that limit opportunities for both women and men to thrive. The cumulative impact of these challenges not only affects the individual women but also has broader implications for the sector, as it struggles to retain and fully utilize the talents of its female workforce (Wafula, 2018).

Lack of Representation in Leadership Positions:

Professional women in Sub-Saharan Africa are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions within the transport sector, limiting their visibility and influence.

Socio-Cultural Factors:

Societal norms play a significant role in shaping the professional landscape for women in technical and leadership roles. Deeply ingrained societal norms and expectations about gender roles often place women at a disadvantage in this traditionally male-dominated field (Maina & Caine, 2013). There is a pervasive cultural belief that technical expertise and leadership are inherently masculine traits, leading to a bias against women, who are often stereotyped as less capable in these areas. This bias not only affects hiring and promotion decisions but also influences day-to-day interactions, where women's ideas and contributions might be undervalued or overlooked. Additionally, the expectation for women to prioritize family and domestic responsibilities over professional aspirations creates a significant barrier. This societal pressure can lead to a challenging balancing act for women, who may feel compelled to downplay their career ambitions or struggle to devote the necessary time and energy to their professional development. Furthermore, the lack of female role models in leadership positions within the transport sector perpetuates a cycle of underrepresentation, as women have fewer opportunities to see themselves reflected in these roles and may internalize the belief that such positions are unattainable. These cultural factors collectively contribute to a workplace environment that can be unwelcoming and even hostile to women, hindering their ability to advance and succeed in professional and technical roles within Kenya's transport sector.

3.5.2 The 'Everydayness' of Harassment

In the Kenyan transport sector, the concept of the 'everydayness' of harassment is a stark reality that permeates the professional lives of many women. This persistent form of harassment manifests in subtle, yet continuous encounters, ranging from unwelcome comments and gestures to more overt forms of intimidation and abuse. These daily experiences, often normalized and overlooked in the workplace, create an environment where harassment is not just an incident but a part of the regular working day for many women. The cumulative effect of these seemingly minor but frequent occurrences contributes to a work culture that tacitly accepts and perpetuates gender-based harassment. This normalization of harassment is particularly damaging as it not only undermines women's sense of safety and well-being but also hinders their professional growth and job satisfaction. Chapter 7 describes an incident that demonstrates how such normalization of inappropriate behaviour by managers or colleagues can contribute to a toxic work atmosphere, where women are continuously subjected to a spectrum of harassment, thereby impeding their ability to work effectively and assertively in a male-dominated industry. The need for addressing this 'everydayness' of harassment becomes crucial not only for the well-being of women in the transport sector but also for fostering a more inclusive and equitable work environment.

Sexual harassment and gender-based violence are pervasive issues experienced in the everyday with reference to Kenya's transport sector, profoundly impacting women's safety and well-being. These incidents range from verbal harassment and unwelcome advances to physical assault. This is particularly experienced by women using public transport who may not have the resources to own a personal vehicle for daily travel to work. The nature of these abuses is often characterized by power imbalances, with perpetrators typically occupying positions of authority or influence. The prevalence of such incidents is alarmingly high, yet underreported due to factors like fear of retaliation, stigma, and lack of trust in reporting mechanisms. The transport environment itself, often male-dominated and lacking in strict enforcement of policies against harassment, further exacerbates the problem. Recognizing and addressing the prevalence and nature of these issues is crucial in creating a safer and more equitable workplace for women in this sector.

Addressing Gender Based Harassment and Discrimination through the lens of African and Western Feminist Theory

The examination of sexual harassment and discrimination in Kenya's transport sector, as articulated in this chapter, necessitates a nuanced understanding through the prisms of Western and African feminist theories. These diverse theoretical frameworks offer distinct yet complementary perspectives on the complex dynamics of gender-based challenges within this sector.

Western feminist theory, with its historical grounding in advocating for individual rights and legal reforms, provides a critical lens for dissecting the structural nature of sexual harassment and discrimination in the transport sector. This approach, aligning with the discussions on gender performativity (Section 3.2.1), emphasizes the importance of institutional policies and legal frameworks in safeguarding women's rights and establishing accountability mechanisms. The Western feminist perspective advocates for systemic changes, such as implementing comprehensive anti-harassment policies and ensuring robust reporting procedures, to combat these deep-rooted issues. This focus on structural reform is essential in addressing the overt manifestations of gender inequality and creating a safer, more equitable work environment for women.

Conversely, African feminist theories, deeply embedded in the continent's socio-cultural context, provide a vital lens for understanding the cultural and societal underpinnings of harassment and discrimination. Theories such as *Stiwanism* and *Nego-Feminism*, as highlighted earlier in the chapter (Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3), emphasize the role of communal values and the negotiation of power within patriarchal structures. African feminism, with its focus on the intersectionality of gender, class, and ethnicity (Section 3.2.3), brings to light the unique challenges that Kenyan women face, influenced by local cultural norms and societal expectations. This perspective underscores the importance of community-based strategies and the empowerment of women within their specific cultural contexts. It also highlights the need for initiatives that resonate with local communities, ensuring that interventions are not only effective but also culturally sensitive and sustainable.

In bridging Western and African feminist theories, a more holistic understanding of the experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination in Kenya's transport sector emerges. While Western feminism calls for structural and legal reforms, African feminism emphasizes the importance of culturally grounded solutions and community engagement. This integrated approach is pivotal for comprehensively addressing the multifaceted nature of harassment and discrimination. It combines the strength of Western feminism in challenging institutional barriers with the cultural relevance of African feminism in engaging local communities and respecting societal norms.

This exploration of the unique challenges and cultural factors impacting professional and technical women in Kenya's transport sector sets the stage for a deeper analysis in Chapter 7. The underlying themes of gender discrimination, societal norms, and the 'everydayness' of harassment discussed here are not just isolated issues but are part of a broader systemic problem that permeates the sector. The discussion in Chapter 7 delves into how these underlying themes manifest in more overt and systemic forms of harassment. The insights gained in this section provide a crucial context for understanding the more complex dynamics of harassment that will be examined in Chapter 7, including how these issues are addressed, or often overlooked, within organizational structures and policies. Chapter 7 transitions the discussion from an exploration of individual experiences and cultural norms to an analysis of the broader institutional mechanisms that either perpetuate or mitigate harassment in the transport sector.

In conclusion, this section has highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by women, particularly those in professional and technical roles, in Kenya's transport sector. I have examined how deeply ingrained cultural norms and gender biases create a barrier to women's advancement and contribute to an environment where harassment is normalized. The discussion of the 'everydayness' of

harassment reveals how these experiences, though often subtle, have a profound and cumulative impact on women's professional lives and mental well-being. The insights provided here are essential for understanding the broader context of gender dynamics within the transport sector, paving the way for developing strategies to address and overcome these challenges.

3.6 SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA AND ACCEPTABLE FEMALE LEADERSHIP

In this section, I explore notions of leadership and where they clash with social norms for women. I further discuss the specific challenges women face in navigating leadership and the implications for women's career progression.

In recent years, research into gender inequities in leadership roles has moved beyond numerical evidence to examining the underlying socio-cultural and institutional drivers producing inequities for women in their career progression. It has long been established that sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest numbers of women globally in science careers (Beintema, 2017). Among the key factors slowing and reducing the proportion of women visible at the different stages of their career progression are the maternal wall/glass ceiling, performance evaluation criteria, lack of recognition, lack of support for leadership bids and unconscious gender bias (Liani, Nyamongo, & Tolhurst, 2020).

In studying leadership in Africa, it is important to examine why it has been necessary to establish a contextualised concept of leadership. In the literature, there are several authors who highlight the dilemma of applying Western management and leadership theory to the African context, describing it as a new form of colonialism that seeks to reinforce Western ideologies and downplay indigenous knowledge (Blunt & Jones, 1997; Wheatley, 2001). Jackson in particular notes the trend towards research ***“entrenched in the developed-developing world paradigm which mitigates against more constructive theorising and conceptual development”*** (Jackson, 2004). His research on African managers in NGOs across sub-Saharan Africa, however, indicates that African managers tend towards humanistic management practice, with high skills in managing cultural diversity and multiple stakeholders. A study on leadership in Africa highlighted the fact that globally, civil unrest and protests around race, gender and sexual orientation, indicate an increased resistance to ideals that neglect the multiculturalism of our current existence (Heussen-Montgomery & Jordans, 2020). What then does this indicate for women's leadership in Kenya and in Kenya's transport sector?

The body of literature on career progression for African women states that the persistent allocation of the majority of reproductive labour to women significantly slows their career progression (Liani et al., 2020; Nyamongo, 2007). In most African contexts, women are inextricably linked to the social identities of wife, mother and carer, with their most notable disadvantage career-wise in regard to time availability. Multiple studies across sub-Saharan Africa concur that it is expected that women will give priority to marriage and childbearing, usually at the age when they would be in their post-graduate education and entering a phase of their career where their progressions is significantly impacted (Beoku-Betts, 2004). Regardless of marital status, it should be noted that women tend to bear a greater domestic responsibility, so that professional women competing with their male counterparts face this constraint in addition to the time allocated to career progressing activities (Beoku-Betts, 2005; Bloch, Beoku-Betts, & Tabachnick, 1998). Studies of career progression for women across sub-Saharan Africa have shown that reproductive responsibility and the social expectation that a woman must follow their spouse or partner as they develop their career can lead

to fractures and changes in women's career progression, with opportunities lost due to concerns about impact on marriage and young children (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015; Masanja, 2010). Conversely, as one West African study highlighted, many African women cite supportive family relationships as integral to their professional success, usually in the form of moral support and childcare (Mabokela & Mlambo, 2015). For some, as one sub-Saharan Africa study showed, career progression may lead to less socially acceptable costs such as divorce, separation from family or even not getting married at all (Beoku-Betts, 2004).

Several studies and reports on workplace culture across sub-Saharan Africa indicate that bureaucratic power structures tend to be rigid and inflexible, with little potential for women to exert influence, given the common dominance of men in leadership positions. This is reflected in a lack of gender-responsive policy, not merely in their existence, but in their translation into practice and monitoring of their effectiveness (insert reference – FAWE, 2015). A challenge facing Kenyan gender policy is that it is often lacking specific and individual accountability for its enactment with minimal effective sanctions against sexual harassment or violence (Liani et al., 2020). Gendered power relations remain, in effect, enacted and reinforced within everyday institutional practices and the work environment, perpetuating unfavourable working cultures for women's advancement (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004). In disregard to what would be professional demeanour, women in the workplace often find themselves undermined, undervalued and discredited, expected to continue performing family social roles in what should be an equal working space (Beoku-Betts, 2005).

Having examined the social expectations and institutional barriers that influence women's career progression and leadership roles in Africa, particularly within Kenya's transport sector, it is instructive to focus on a single, illuminating case. Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmental and political activist, serves as a powerful example of how one woman navigated these complex social, economic, and political landscapes. Her story not only encapsulates the challenges discussed thus far but also presents a real-world illustration of how some of these challenges can be surmounted. The case of Wangari Maathai demonstrates the efficacy and limitations of applying feminist theories in a Kenyan context and offers invaluable insights into how gender mainstreaming can look in practice.

3.7 CASE STUDY: WANGARI MAATHAI'S CONTRIBUTION TO AFRICAN FEMINISM

One cannot discuss feminism in Kenya and fail to recognize the contributions of Wangari Maathai, first African woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, and also awarded the French Legion of Honour. In this section, I briefly outline her work as an environmental activist in Kenya and its wider implications for women in Kenyan society.

Background

Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmentalist, feminist, and political leader, provides a compelling case study for the role of women in transport and broader decision-making roles within the Kenyan context. Maathai is particularly known for her ground-breaking work in launching the Green Belt Movement, an environmental organization focused on tree planting, environmental conservation, and women's rights (Maathai, 2006).

Contribution to Environmental Conservation and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement presents an approach to environmental conservation that aligns closely with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Her work underscores the

relationship between environmental sustainability and gender equality, especially within the context of SDG 5: "**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.**" By integrating women into environmental conservation projects, Maathai empowered local communities and women to have a stake in their own sustainable development (Mungai, 2012).

Her work in founding the Green Belt Movement (GBM) in rural Kenya was instrumental in directly challenging patriarchy within national structures (Muthuki, 2006). Her outspoken advocacy for women's rights led to divorce from her husband, who famously complained that she was "**too educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn and too hard to control**" (ibid.).

It is significant to note that her status as a divorced woman was used throughout her career to dismiss her professionally, despite her qualifications being significantly higher than the vast majority of her male counterparts in the Kenyan parliament. Despite then-president Daniel Arap Moi also being divorced, this fact was never used against him in the entirety of his political career, highlighting the gender inequality in perceived social respectability between men and women (Presbey, 2013).

Leadership and Gender Mainstreaming in Kenya

Maathai's leadership provides key insights into the factors that enable or constrain women's participation in leadership roles in Kenya's transport sector. She demonstrated the value of inclusive leadership that recognizes the intersectionality of gender, culture, and social norms. Her leadership style presented an alternative model that challenged patriarchal structures, contributing to shifts in gender mainstreaming policy (Ngunjiri, 2010).

Her advocacy for land conservation was a direct challenge to the patriarchal government, at that point in time under scrutiny for serious cases of land-grabbing and illegal acquisition and development of public property, with even the highest of the Kenyan electorate profiting from deforestation and exploitation of public ignorance about their land rights (Graneß, 2018). Her struggle with Kenya's ninth parliament is representative of the challenges that African women face in convincing their (usually-male) leaders to give them an equal space and equal voice in decision-making. She had served as assistant minister for environment, natural resources and wildlife as an elected official in 2002 but was subordinate to a male minister appointed to his post under the banner of regional balance and political expediency (Muthuki, 2006). When the Minister encouraged agro forestry, a holdover from the colonial era, and pushed this agenda with other male politicians, she found herself at odds with the coalition government. Her activism exposed her to all kinds of harassment and outright assault including being tear-gassed, clubbed unconscious by riot police and death threats. Some parliamentarians went so far as to threaten her with female genital mutilation, to which she famously responded,

'I'm sick and tired of men who are so incompetent that, every time they feel the heat because women are challenging them, they have to check their genitalia to reassure themselves. I'm not interested in that part of the anatomy. The issues I'm dealing with require the utilisation of the anatomy of whatever lies above the neck. If you don't have anything there, leave me alone.'

J. Mbaria, 'East Africa Hails Wangari Maathai's peace prize', *The East African*, 11 October 2004

Wangari Maathai notably emphasized empowerment at both the individual and collective community levels. This chapter has repeatedly raised the ongoing challenge of voice for African women and the

spaces in which they are able to both speak and be heard. Maathai's GBM noted the need to increase women's self-confidence (read *empowerment*) and expand democratic spaces for their voices to be heard (Presbey, 2013). It was her fundamental belief that self-empowerment grows best in a context of group support, something that she discovered as she worked with communities and realised the need for women to internalize and express the ideas she was sharing (Maathai, 2003). Maathai's form of eco-feminism espoused collective action in the face of the context of resistance that she and her movement faced (W. W. Maathai, 2006). Most importantly, she challenged the existing framework of empowerment, usually gauged in western capitalist terms of financial gains. Maathai challenged those who wanted God or the government to rescue them, maintaining that women could come together to enact change in their communities and in their countries in conformity with their values (Presbey, 2013).

I take the opportunity here to explore how Maathai's leadership was received by the public. Nancy Worthington's study of how the media covered Maathai's work and her findings reveals the inherent partiality of Kenyan media and the importance of political support in shaping public perceptions (Worthington, 2003). Before President Moi spoke out about her, her media-generated identity was that of a respected and respectable authority. However, after her criticism of his development project (which would have destroyed over half of a prominent public park in downtown Nairobi), the President endeavoured to incite other women against Maathai, challenging them to "***discipline one of their own***" (Cesar, 2010). Maathai's actions were portrayed as a 'lonely fight' despite widespread support (Worthington, 2003). In another section of this chapter, I will further discuss the ramifications of the isolation of the female leader in the media (see section 3.6).

Resistance to Maathai was particularly virulent because her work exposed deep roots of corruption from the office of the president himself, with public lands such as Karura Forest having been parcelled off and distributed to private individuals by the President in a system of rewards for favours rendered (Cesar, 2010). Her non-violent protests and reclamation of public land through mobilisation of women and use of the same gendered norms for treatment of the older women who were the driving force of her campaign were exemplary (Maathai, 2006). Here, I cite the example of using patriarchal norms about exposure to the bodies of maternal figures as a deterrent for Kenyan police in several demonstrations where Maathai and her compatriots threatened to expose themselves if the police tried to disrupt their peaceful protests, demanding if they would do this to their own mothers (ibid.). One researcher in studying her work in the GBM noted that Maathai had women learn from each other in order to demystify the oppressive patriarchal structures that bound them from action and to challenge the social order that did the same (Wolbert, 2011).

While encouraging an integration of traditional values, Maathai decried traditions that would limit women's options and limit their voice in society. Her own experience, where she admitted to having underestimated the pressure that Kenyan men experience to be seen as in charge of the household, had her standing against African and British Colonial traditions that favour men's power so overtly (Maathai, 2006). She continues to stand as role model for Kenyan women who want to chart their own course in life, rather than live subordinate to the dictates of a spouse, notably saying,

"Nobody warned me – and it had never occurred to me – that in order for us to survive as a couple I should fake failure and deny any of my God-given talents"
(ibid.)

I conclude this section on a personal role model by highlighting some of Maathai's thoughts on the limitations of formal education in addressing the challenges faced at the community level, particularly

in areas of abject poverty and under-development. She encouraged women to educate themselves and others, and to avoid letting urban-rural, educational and ethnic distinctions perpetuated by patriarchal political systems divide them in their purpose of mutual empowerment (Presbey, 2013). She expressed her insight that:

‘When traditional cultures are destroyed by Westernism, Africans are left with the gods of commercialism, materialism and individualism, which leave both souls and stomachs empty.’ (Maathai, 2011)

Wangari Maathai and Nego-Feminism

While her example is most frequently linked to eco-feminism, in this discussion Wangari Maathai's life work and leadership style is explored through the lens of nego-feminism. Her approach in negotiating spaces in environmental conservation, a field dominated by men, serves as a form of 'nego-feminism' in practice. By employing culturally specific strategies that honoured Kenyan values and traditions, Maathai was able to navigate both domestic and public spheres effectively. This draws parallels with the extended family structures discussed under nego-feminism, where social networks provide access to and information about opportunities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship (Ngunjiri, 2010).

Implications for Research Questions and Gender Policy

Wangari Maathai's case study serves as an illustrative example in addressing the research questions laid out in this study. Her active engagement with both environmental and feminist causes provide insights into the barriers and enablers that women face in leadership roles within male-dominated sectors like transport. Furthermore, her leadership style and activism offer key implications for the promotion of gender mainstreaming policies within Kenya's transport sector and beyond.

The story of Wangari Maathai, therefore, serves as an insightful lens through which to evaluate the gender norms and policies that affect women's engagement in Kenya's transport sector as decision-makers and engineers. It shows the ways in which feminist theories, both Western and African, play out in real-world scenarios, thereby enriching our understanding of the larger dynamics at play.

3.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I argue that Western and African Feminisms are neither wholly separate nor interchangeable; rather, they can complement each other in nuanced ways. Western Feminism's strength lies in its broad critique of systemic issues, making it essential for policy development and gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, African Feminism, rooted in the unique social and cultural tapestry of the continent, provides a framework more aligned with local cultural norms and complexities. This offers significant advantages for grassroots social discourse on gender equality in Kenya, particularly within the male-dominated transport sector.

The theories presented in this chapter serve not as mutually exclusive options but as synergistic tools for decoding complex gender issues, thereby addressing the research questions laid out in the study.

1. **Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Legacies:** Western Feminism, with its critical focus on systemic barriers, provides the analytical tools to understand how historical, social, political, and economic processes have shaped the current landscape of women's

employment and career development. African Feminism helps to localize these issues, capturing the culturally specific nuances that generic Western theories might miss.

2. **Perceived Barriers:** African Feminism offers the grassroots perspective necessary to understand what women themselves see as the main barriers to skills acquisition and employment in the transport sector. This is particularly important for capturing local attitudes and beliefs that can either support or hinder women's progress.
3. **Visibility and Gender-Sensitive Practice:** The chapter has shown that visibility alone, a major focus of Western Feminist theory, is not enough. While Western Feminism pushes for increased representation, African Feminism ensures that this visibility is meaningful by taking into account the complexities of local culture, thereby potentially leading to more gender-sensitive practices.
4. **Expanding Aspirations:** Western Feminism calls for systemic changes that can make the sector more accessible for women, while African Feminism provides the cultural nuance needed to understand and enhance women's aspirations to work in the sector. For example, negoti-feminism provides insights into how women negotiate with traditional roles and expectations, which is key for understanding how women's aspirations can be expanded.

In light of the prevalent misunderstandings and misrepresentations, particularly magnified by social media, it's important to be cautious not to conflate all feminist theories with radical Western perspectives. To be most effective, policy interventions and societal discourse should draw from both Western and African feminist frameworks. This dual approach is critical for the development of gender mainstreaming initiatives that are both globally informed and locally sensitive.

Thus, it is evident that a balanced, integrated approach provides the best pathway for addressing the gender disparities in Kenya's transport sector, directly aligning with the overarching research questions of this study. By employing both Western and African Feminist theories, we are better equipped to create a transport sector that is not only equitable but also efficient and inclusive, contributing to sustainable development goals (SDGs) on both national and global scales.

4 COLONIAL LEGACIES AND OTHER EXTERNAL INFLUENCES – IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER, DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT IN KENYA

4.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I review the historical context of transport and development in Kenya, incorporating the dimension of gender as it becomes better documented. This review, extending from the pre-colonial period through to the present day, provides an essential base for my subsequent explorations of gender norms in Kenya and their influence on women's aspirations within the transport sector. I explore the impact of colonial and other external interventions and interests (governmental and non-governmental) firstly on the shaping of Kenya's transport landscape and secondly on the shaping of Western educational provision (and associated implications for the configuration of local labour markets). This then enables me to reflect on the implications these have for the formulation, implementation, and acceptance of gender policy within the transport sector. The chapter includes an overview of the impact of 'mega-infrastructure' projects because of the significant implications this has for the questions posed by my research as regards the impetus for women's career aspirations in the transport sector. The overall aim of the chapter is to provide a broad historical perspective on the development of Kenya's transport and education sectors, both of which have critical relevance for gendered employment practice in Kenya's transport sector. In the next section, I situate the chapter content within the research questions and then transition into an in-depth examination of Kenya's colonial history to better understand the origin and perpetuation of the issues at hand.

4.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

In this section, I situate the foundational research questions within the colonial and post-colonial context, offering a preview of the detailed exploration into how these historical legacies contribute to the current gender disparities in Kenya's transport sector.

1. **Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Legacies:** This chapter employs historical analysis to unravel how colonialism, and its lingering effects, institutionalized gender norms that have shaped women's employment and advancement in the transport sector.
2. **Barriers to Skills and Employment:** The historical overview serves as a framework to understand the root causes of societal, cultural, and institutional barriers that limit women's career progression and skill acquisition, particularly in a traditionally male-dominated sector.
3. **Visibility and Gender-Sensitive Practice:** Through an examination of historical records and policies, this chapter lays the groundwork for assessing how increased visibility of women in key roles can pivot the industry towards more gender-sensitive practices.
4. **Expanding Aspirations:** The chapter proposes the historical factors that constrain or promote women's career aspirations, intended to provide insights into strategies for empowering women to not only join but excel in the sector.

By examining these questions through the lens of Kenya's historical landscape, the chapter seeks to offer nuanced insights that will guide the later analyses, grounded in both feminist theory and historical context. The latter informs an understanding of how systemic inequities have been entrenched, supporting the interpretation of the barriers and opportunities women face in their professional journeys. It also illuminates the long-standing structures that make gender mainstreaming a current necessity. The upcoming section provides this crucial historical lens, layering my approach to each of the research questions and shaping the discussion of findings in subsequent chapters.

4.2 CONTEXT OF KENYA'S COLONIAL HISTORY

Here, I present a brief overview of Kenya's history of colonization, from the incursions of Arabian traders in the 1st century AD to British colonization in the late nineteenth century. This establishes the influences on Kenyan culture and political government and lays the foundation for understanding the priorities that have shaped Kenya's transportation infrastructure.

Trade Route for Inland East Africa

Prior to European colonization of sub-Saharan Africa, the Kenyan coast was home to established Arab and Persian colonies from about the 1st century AD, with Swahili emerging as a trade language between Bantu and Arabic (Ogot et. al, 1976). The majority of the Kenyan populace was located further inland at the time due to the location of fertile highlands to the west and ample grazing land to the north. Any transportation referenced during this period focused on trade routes from further inland leading to the Port of Mombasa, which was an important resupply stop for ships bound for the Far East at this time.

Portuguese and Arabic Port Control

The Portuguese arrived in 1498, competing with Arab counterparts until the Portuguese gave way to Islamic control under the Imam of Oman in the 1600s (ibid.). European influence was not prominent in Kenya until the 19th century when the colonial rule of the British Empire started to extend across the African continent.

British Colonization

In 1885, the European powers divided East Africa into territories at the Berlin Conference. The British government founded the East African Protectorate in 1895 and then opened the best agricultural land to white settlers in the western highlands (Ndege, 2009). Even before officially being declared a British colony in 1920, settlers had political representation while Africans and Asians were barred from direct political participation until 1944. It should be noted that under colonial administration, there is little documentation to prove an awareness of gender disparity in the transport sector between men and women. However, men and not women were issued with the ID documents and travel passes required for movement around Kenya in their pursuit of paid work to pay off taxes (Burton & Ocobock).

In 1942, the Mau Mau movement began with the aim of wresting national sovereignty from the British (Cooper, 1988). As a result of this movement, Kenya was under a state of emergency from October 1952 to December 1959, officially gaining independence on December 12th, 1963.

4.3 CONTEXT OF KENYA'S POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL HISTORY

Here I present a brief overview of Kenya's political history since independence. This is relevant in establishing some of the political underpinnings in prioritization of transportation infrastructure and providing some foundation for the chapter to follow on gender norms and their relevance to women's aspirations and careers in Kenya's transport sector.

Kenya has had four presidents to date since Independence, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta (1964-1978), Daniel Arap Moi (1978-2002), Mwai Kibaki (2002-2013) and Uhuru Kenyatta (2013-present/2021). Branch and Cheeseman (2006), studying the political history of Kenya, suggest that the post-colonial state represented the interests promoted and protected during the latter years of colonial rule (Branch & Cheeseman, 2006). The turn of phrase they use to describe the genesis of the current institutional landscape is striking, describing the co-option of a cultivated sympathetic African elite into the bureaucracy, legislature and property-based economy such that this said elite assumed the political and institutional capacity to reproduce colonial dominance over production (*ibid.*). Branch and Cheeseman make the point that such structures of power have continued despite changes to executive and legislature, maintaining this imbalance.

Under the 2010 National Constitution, the country elected for a decentralised system of governance in the form of 47 counties with their own political assemblies and priorities separate from the national government. The ramifications of this change are explored in the next chapter under section 5.8 where I discuss the impact of this decision on the transport sector and women's opportunities therein for employment and entrepreneurship.

4.4 A BROAD HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA

In this section of the chapter, I discuss the impact of colonial transport infrastructure, post-independence transport infrastructure projects and the impact of non-national interests on their development. It is important to establish the way in which colonial transport infrastructure investments transformed the economic geography of East Africa (Jedwab et al, 2017). Here I discuss the transport priorities of the colonial British government in Kenya and what changed or did not with Kenya's independence and national government.

The map below of colonial Kenya rail routes illustrates how colonial infrastructure has influenced current development.

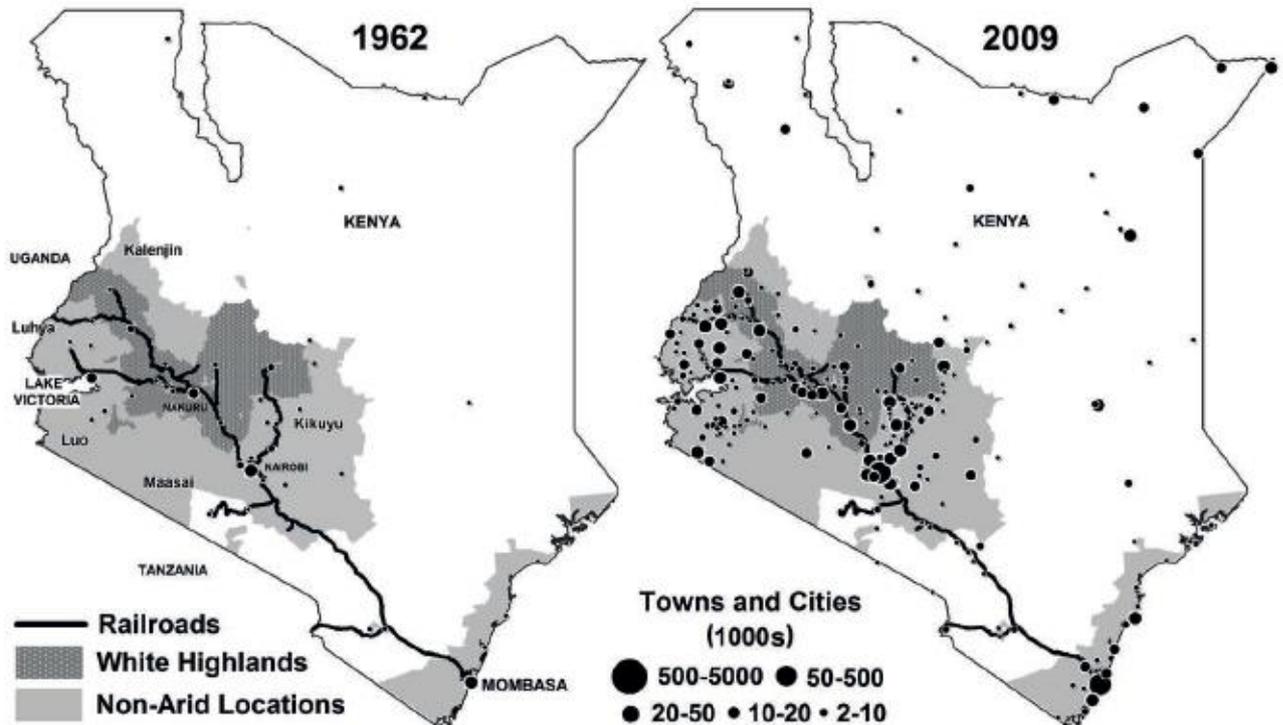


Figure 1: Comparison of Rail Routes in Kenya 1962 -2009

Source: Jedwab et al, 2017

Much of colonial infrastructure, particularly railway lines, was constructed during the scramble for Africa as European powers aimed to connect inaccessible territories, seized inland, to key administrative centres and ports (Enns & Bersaglio, 2020). This infrastructure was further aimed at connecting major ports and administrative centres to the country’s rich natural resources, for ease of exploitation by the white settlers and associated colonial administration.

African mobility was restricted in efforts to meet the labour demands for European settlers in Kenya. Vagrancy legislation was among the earliest passed, used to mobilize and discipline migratory African labour to meet the growing demands of the colonial economy as laid out in the chapter, “The Travelling Native”, in a 2008 publication looking at the case study of colonial East Africa and attempts to control the African labour force (Beier & Ocobock, 2008). In Kenya, the introduction of a poll and hut tax in 1901 forced Africans to find a source of cash with penalties for defaulting ranging from forced labour to forfeiture of property and imprisonment, which would also result in forced labour (ibid.). The restriction and degradation of the African reserves forced male labourers to migrate in search of paid work, but the large numbers involved drew the title of vagrancy and this was used to direct and restrict African labour (overwhelmingly male) to the farms of up to 500 European settlers in the Central and Rift Valley Province – the White Highlands indicated in the map above. Uncontrolled African mobility was seen as the greatest threat to colonial social order (ibid.).

Nairobi, the then and current capital city of Kenya, was not a pre-colonial settlement but a railway town built to accommodate the African, European and Asian labourers brought to construct the Uganda Railway (Hake, 1977). Accelerated urbanization after World War II heralded a change in policy with the increasing demand placed on Kenyan infrastructure with what amounted to the criminalization of unemployment and a homelessness (Beier & Ocobock, 2008). This was considered racially discriminatory by the colonial office but would be among the earliest signs of a conflict

between administrative expediency and legal principle (Morris & Read, 1972) which I extrapolate carries on through to the present day.

Moving into infrastructural planning, one recent study demonstrates that the spatial plans of colonial administrators were built into new infrastructure, addressing global capital priorities rather than actual local need (Enns & Bersaglio, 2020). With the example of LAPPSET, discussed below, one can see the colonial intention of enhancing transnational commodity movement for the benefit of the metropolitan power (Cormack, 2016) but also justified as a means of resolving existing spatial disparities (*ibid.*). As the same study points out, there are similarities in approach, and in justification, between the colonial and Kenyan government in using infrastructure projects to maintain law and order as well as to win the loyalty of the inhabitants and facilitate trade (GoK, 2017). In examining the maps of existing and projected infrastructure, it is clear that the influence of infrastructure as planned by the colonial administration in Kenya continues to shape Kenya's spatial development today.

As we examine Kenya's complex transport infrastructure, it's crucial to consider the broader societal elements that continue to shape it. Among these elements, Kenya's political landscape is particularly noteworthy. Deeply rooted in the nation's colonial past, this landscape brings together the threads of ethnicity, gender, and power in unique ways that have far-reaching implications—especially in sectors like transport.

4.5 COLONIAL IMPACT ON KENYA'S POLITICAL AND ETHNIC LANDSCAPE

Building on the historical foundations laid out earlier, it's crucial to acknowledge the colonial imprint on Kenya, which extends far beyond the transport sector and education system. The British policy of 'divide and rule' worsened ethnic divisions, embedding them deeply in many facets of life, such as employment and resource distribution (MacWilliam, 2012).

Because of these colonial policies, some ethnic groups had easier access to education and, subsequently, better opportunities in skilled labour markets like engineering and planning (Alwy & Schech, 2004). This layered struggle complicates the push for gender equality, as women from marginalized ethnic communities face dual barriers—both as women and as members of minority ethnic groups.

In Kenya, the ethnic divisions spill over into many sectors, including transport. Corruption often manifests as nepotism and tribalism, influencing employment and promotions based on ethnic affiliations rather than merit (Kodila-Tedika & Asongu, 2020). Such practices further marginalize women from underrepresented communities, making it even more challenging for them to find a foothold in the transport sector.

Corruption and tribalism not only hinder individual advancement but also have broader economic implications. There is evidence to suggest that tribalism adversely impacts financial development (Kodila-Tedika & Asongu, 2020), and it plays a significant role in the corruption that has plagued Kenyan politics and civil services, including in the mega-infrastructure projects most recently seen in 2020/21 (Nyagah, 2020).

By uncovering these colonial roots of intersectional challenges, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how multi-layered the issues that continue to confront women in Kenya's transport sector are. Understanding this complex historical and socio-political landscape

prepares us to delve into the roles and influences of external stakeholders, who operate within this framework and contribute to the current state of Kenya's transport sector.

4.6 EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

Kenya has seen great changes in its economy since the turn of the nineteenth century with systems of production and exchange subjected to a series of external influences with far-reaching alterations and industrial concerns, the establishment of parastatals and the coordination of development planning (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). As a region, sub-Saharan Africa has seen a massive 'global infrastructure turn' in the last two decades, with regional mega-infrastructure projects that dominate both national and global development policy agendas (Dodson, 2017). This is reflective of the previous statement, and consensus in mainstream development that infrastructure is integral to development (Enns & Bersaglio, 2020). This has been attributed to multiple factors such as the need to address capitalist production needs (Dodson, 2017), and infrastructure's perceived role as a solution to underdevelopment (Kanai & Schindler, 2019).

Like many African nations, Kenya has national development plans that emphasise a need to address spatial disparities and has turned to post-colonial schemes emphasising the priorities of balanced regional growth (Schindler & Kanai, 2021). To emphasise this point, one study of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) mega-infrastructure project (jointly funded by the African Development Bank, the European Union and the Government of Kenya) argues that this and similar large scale infrastructure projects carry the same ambitions as the region's colonial past (Enns & Bersaglio, 2020). Among the stakeholders commonly identified in this type of intervention are several multi-donor platforms, including the New Partnership for Africa's Development [NEPAD], the African Development Bank and the World Bank.

External stakeholders can have a major influence on national policy and development strategies, with Kenya, like many other nations globally, taking on international norms such as gender equality as a consequence (Crapol, 1994). One monograph on foreign policy in contemporary Africa points out, regarding Kenya's policies, that:

The direction of Kenya's foreign policy is very much consistent with economic growth as a key principle of its foreign policy. However, much of it still reflects imperatives that had their origin in the colonial period. Notably, these included close political and economic ties to Britain and institutional and economic links with neighbours within the arrangement of the East African Community (EAC)...As in other matters, Kenyatta (Mzee Jomo) was the controlling voice in the formulation of foreign policy, which reflected his moderation, caution and pragmatism and emphasized African solidarity and Kenya's reliance on the West for technical assistance and investment (Onditi, 2019).

4.7 MULTILATERAL DONORS, NEO-COLONIAL DISCOURSE, AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

One cannot discuss the modern dynamics of Kenya's transport sector without acknowledging the significant influence of multilateral donors like the African Development Bank, the European Union,

and the World Bank (Onditi, 2019). While these external stakeholders have generally promoted international norms such as gender equality (Crapol, 1994), there exists an underbelly of neo-colonial tendencies that permeate policy frameworks and developmental strategies. These multilateral organizations have often been the architects of infrastructure projects that carry echoes of colonial ambitions, as is evident from projects like the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) (Enns & Bersaglio, 2020).

In this context, the concept of gender mainstreaming becomes an intricate mesh of foreign and domestic agendas. Much like how Kenya's foreign policy is rooted in colonial imperatives and yet aspires for economic growth (Onditi, 2019), gender mainstreaming initiatives in the transport sector sometimes bear the hallmarks of external influences that do not always align with the lived experiences of Kenyan women. For example, the policy prescriptions offered by external donors may inadvertently side-line indigenous women's grassroots organizations, echoing a form of neo-colonial imposition (Dodson, 2017; Kanai & Schindler, 2019).

Moreover, the heavy financial involvement of these donors, especially China's surge as a major bilateral partner since 2005 (Chege, 2008), adds another layer of complexity. Often, projects funded by such donors come with their own policy conditions, which might not always be conducive for the intricate socio-cultural landscape of gender relations in Kenya (Schindler & Kanai, 2021).

Implications for the Transport Sector

In the transport sector, this means that the women who do break through the barriers to enter this male-dominated field may find themselves in environments that are not entirely conducive to gender mainstreaming, despite the high-sounding policy rhetoric. They might face gender-insensitive practices that are at odds with the objectives laid down by international donors (Jamleck et al., 2015). Additionally, the large scale of these projects and the multinational interests involved might relegate gender issues to a secondary status, getting lost in the broad agendas of infrastructural development and economic growth. Therefore, while the donor-funded transport projects may bring unprecedented opportunities for women in the sector, the neo-colonial undertones and externally imposed norms make it crucial to scrutinize how gender mainstreaming policies are implemented on the ground.

In unpacking the layers of gender mainstreaming influenced by multilateral donors and neo-colonial discourse, it becomes increasingly vital to delve into specific cases that epitomize these dynamics. One such example that demands attention for its sheer scale, financial commitment, and geopolitical implications is China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Kenya. As laid out in the following section, the BRI not only represents a major undertaking in Kenya's transport sector but also serves as a unique case study for understanding how gender mainstreaming policies, imposed or endorsed by external stakeholders, manifest in large-scale infrastructural projects. The Initiative also allows us to investigate how such international collaborations can either advance or impede the broader objectives of gender equality and empowerment in the transport sector alongside higher priority national objectives and commitments.

4.8 CASE STUDY: CHINA BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE

In this section, I discuss the impact of Chinese-funded infrastructure projects on Kenya's transport landscape, particularly focusing on their implications for Kenyan engineers and transport

professionals. This focus is informed by explicit mentions from my study respondents about the significance of Chinese infrastructure development.

China has had a long-standing presence in Kenya, dating back to finds of ancient porcelain fragments in Lamu, as reported in a 2005 National Geographic article (Viviano, 2005). Historically, trade relations between Kenya and China were oriented toward exporting raw materials such as sisal, cotton, and pyrethrum in exchange for manufactured goods (Chege, 2008). While these trade relations have drastically grown in the 21st century, concerns over China's debt diplomacy and influence in Kenya's mega-infrastructure projects, notably in the transport sector, are more recent phenomena (Hurley, 2018).

Political divisions between left and right wing of the ruling party KANU in the early post-independence period meant that relations between China and Kenya, pushed by the minority left-wing, were chilly as both the President and Vice President were suspicious of Chinese political intentions in Kenya, favouring cooperation with Europe as a known quantity instead. This led to a diplomatic break in 1967 which lasted 11 years, until both Mao Zedong and Jomo Kenyatta were out of office (Chege, 2008). Trade relations were resumed under President Daniel Arap Moi, as can be seen in the graph below indicating import trends between Kenya and China from 1980 to 1999.

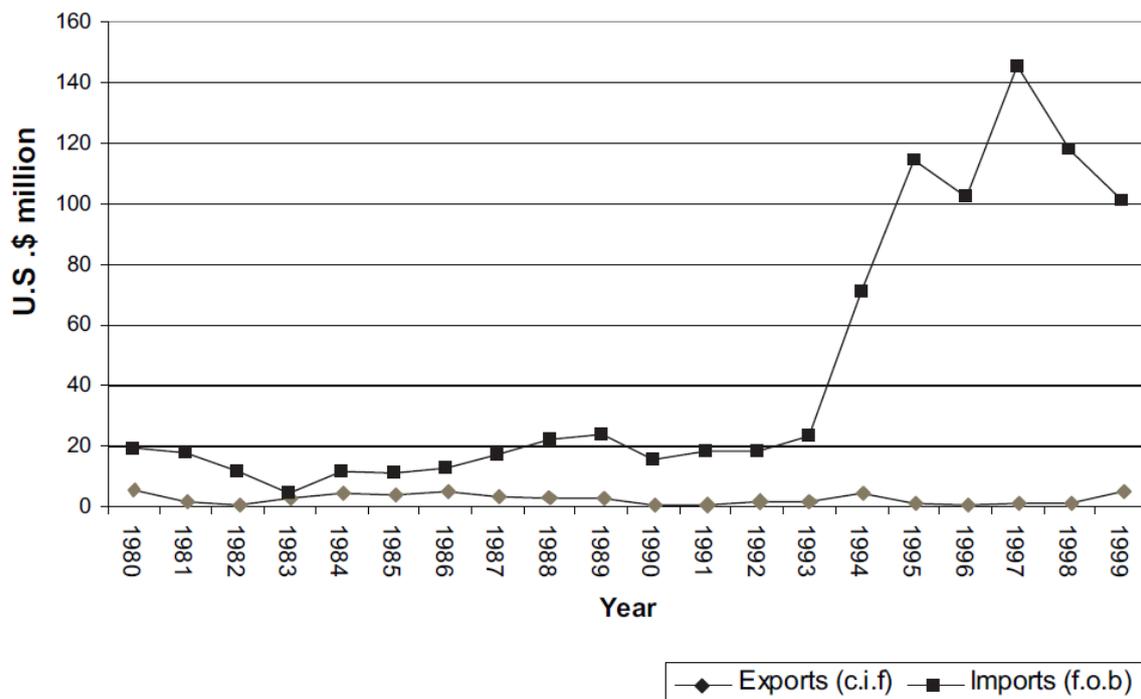


Figure 2: Fig: Trends in imports from China to Kenya (1980-1999)

Source: IMF, *Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbook* (Washington, DC: IMF, various years)

This is in alignment with Kenya's broader approach to multilateral donors and the neo-colonial implications of accepting aid, which has roots in its colonial history and external stakeholder influence (Onditi, 2019).

The Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway

In recent years, Chinese-funded mega-projects, such as the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), have become a centrepiece of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Kenya. The Chinese government's direct collaboration with Kenyan authorities circumvents many bureaucratic hurdles

and accelerates project completion (Hurley, 2018). However, it also raises questions about the employment and educational opportunities available to local engineers and transport professionals, and the nature of entrepreneurship that these projects support or hinder.

Chinese-funded development is favoured for its lack of bureaucratic hoops, collaborating primarily through the Kenyan government directly, and because projects are completed faster than most in this sector, once agreed upon (ibid.) While Chinese economic interests are plagued by persistent propaganda about their lack of benefit for local markets, there is some evidence to the contrary as regards trade, despite evidence regarding the challenges to local industry. Nevertheless, research has shown that mega-infrastructure projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway linking Mombasa and Nairobi lack a knowledge sharing strategy that could grow local technical expertise (Sanghi & Johnson, 2016). This reflects a broader problem in how external stakeholders, like multilateral donors, influence gender mainstreaming in Kenya's transport sector without adequate focus on building sustainable local capacities (Enns & Bersaglio, 2020).

The issue is further exacerbated by the fact that initial reports of employing Kenyan women as train operators have been debunked, revealing that they were replaced by Chinese operators post-launch (Githaiga & Bing, 2019). These employment dynamics indicate not only a gendered gap but also a loss of opportunities for local talent to advance in their respective fields. In light of these developments, the Kenyan government's attempts to exclusively channel cargo transport through the SGR has been met with scepticism, given its potential negative impacts on local industries, such as the trucking sector (Wang & Wissenbach, 2019).

The Kenya-Uganda Railway

At the time of this research, another major project intended to link East African countries via rail has stalled under scrutiny concerning fraud and changing timelines only partially attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic from 2019 – 2021 (at the time of writing). The Kenya-Uganda Railway, illustrated below, was intended to reduce transport cost for goods across Kenya, land-locked Uganda and further into Eastern and Central Africa.



Figure 3: Planned Kenya-Uganda Railway project

Source: Compiled by Bloomberg.com from Kenyan and Ugandan government documents. (<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2019-07-19/china-s-belt-and-road-leaves-kenya-with-a-railroad-to-nowhere>)

With challenges to the release of funds, both the Kenyan and Ugandan governments have decided to link the line to a narrower colonial-era railway and refurbish that instead to reduce costs. This reinforces path dependence on colonial era transport plans and the persistence of this spatial disparity in mobility planning as highlighted in a 2017 study (Jedwab et al., 2017).

Implications for the Transport Sector

This case study illuminates how mega-projects funded by external stakeholders like China can create both opportunities and challenges in Kenya's transport sector. While such projects promise to modernize and optimize transport infrastructure, they also perpetuate systemic gender inequalities and hinder local expertise development. Balancing the need for fast-paced development with the imperatives of gender mainstreaming and local capacity building will be critical for the sector's sustainable future.

Shifting focus from the complex dynamics of foreign-funded mega-projects, it's important to recognize that these external influences don't exist in isolation. They interact with, and often reinforce, local social structures and norms, especially those concerning education and gender roles. The intricate

relationship between such projects and Kenya's education system has a significant impact on shaping the career paths and societal expectations of both men and women in the transport sector. The education system thus acts as not only a cornerstone for professional qualifications but also as a stage where social norms and gender roles are instilled and perpetuated. In the upcoming section, I explore how education plays a role in establishing these norms and what this means for women's opportunities in employment and entrepreneurship within Kenya's transport sector.

4.9 EDUCATION AND THE SHAPING OF GENDER ROLES IN KENYA

In this section I shift the focus of the chapter to the colonial legacy of a gendered education system in Kenya, providing a colonial era historical context, and the implications of gendered education for women's aspirations in the transport sector. Understanding the background regarding women's education in colonial era Kenya is relevant in establishing some of the reasons behind current prevailing gender norms and the lack of female representation in transport sector decision-making today.

Colonial Era

British colonial interests in East Africa date back to the East African Protectorate in 1895 but for the purposes of this review, the narrative will focus on the policy and legislature from 1925 to independence and then detail the early administrative frameworks governing education and labour.

In the earliest years of colonial-era Kenya, the British Colonial Office preferred to support mission schools to run Kenyan education, with a 1925 memorandum stating the British government's commitment to religious and character training of Kenyans (Britain, 1925). This memorandum further outlined government subsidies to approved mission schools and, most importantly, cited the need for attention to girls' education in light of their potential contributions to community welfare as wives and mothers (ibid.). In the wake of what the British government referred to as the Mau Mau Emergency and looming independence of the Kenya colony, the colonial government enacted a *Development Program* for 1957 -1960, instituting crash programs for Africanizing the civil service and expanding educational opportunities for all races beyond what was allowed in the previously segregated systems. A government policy introduced in 1968 mandated 50 percent African admittance into beginner courses for any secondary school receiving government aid. While this improved the overall situation, young women and girls were still at a disadvantage with early marriage and reluctance to invest in children who would belong to other households through marriage acting as a barrier to parental investment in the education of female children particularly at the more expensive secondary and tertiary education stages.

Post-Independence

Achievement of independence in Kenya in the 1960s did not result in revolutionary changes in the gendered division of labour. What did change, however, was an increase in the numbers of both men and women receiving formal education and thus available for formal sector employment. The UN Decade for women (1976-1985) resulted in the Kenyan government creating the Women's Bureau in 1976 in efforts to integrate women in development and women being directly referred to in the third *National Development Plan* (1974-1978). The second UN International Conference on Women, Forum 85, was held in Nairobi in 1985 and was followed by multiple policy statements on the government's commitment to gender equality.

Overall, strides towards gender equity in education have resulted in a reduction of gender differentials in the labour market across sectors (Mulwa & Gichana, 2020). Further affirmative action in education would help to offset gender penalties in the labour market and help equip women with the skills needed to increase human capital and increase their chances of successfully entering the labour market.

4.10 IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER NORMS AND THE GENDERED LABOUR MARKET

Historical Impact on Gender Norms and Education

Understanding the historical and social evolution of gender norms in Kenya provides crucial insights into the longstanding disparities in the realms of education, employment, and entrepreneurship. The roots of gender-based educational inequality can be traced back to colonial times, when girls were seldom sent to schools. Those who were, received a subpar education compared to boys, limiting their access to high-paying, prestigious jobs in the future (Robertson & Berger, 1986). These historical disadvantages have laid the groundwork for enduring gender imbalances in modern Kenya, particularly in sectors like transport.

Linking Education to Employment and Entrepreneurship

The legacy of limited educational access for women has had ripple effects on their employment prospects in key sectors such as transport. The pattern of gendered educational choices, often influenced by societal norms and expectations, further narrows down the range of opportunities available to women (Mberia & Midigo, 2018). Research corroborates that one's field of education is often chosen based on expected future income (Beffy, Fougere, & Maurel, 2012). Given the long-standing norms and limited exposure, women are less likely to opt for technical education in engineering, which is crucial for roles in the transport sector.

Studies from other contexts like India have shown that women in technical fields are more likely to gain quality employment (Sahoo & Klasen, 2018). This trend is supported by local research, where family income and support, especially in child caregiving, emerge as decisive factors in women's labour force participation (Jamleck et al., 2015). These elements collectively influence not just employment but also the entrepreneurial ambitions of women, further limiting their full economic participation.

Reflection on Current Employment Trends

Despite strides in educational participation by women in recent years, the labour market remains gender biased. Women face barriers in gaining first-time employment and also earn less compared to their male counterparts, an observation supported by research from Africa (Kim, 2020; Wamboye & Nyaronga, 2018). This aligns with the first research question of this study, probing the historical, social, political, and economic legacies that impact opportunities for women's employment and career development.

The gender disparities extend to the private sector, where discrimination in hiring practices persists (Mulwa & Gichana, 2020). This is a crucial observation considering our second research question, which interrogates the perceived barriers to skills acquisition and employment opportunities for women in the transport sector. Moreover, the 'age' and 'marital status' factors, previously cited (Kabubo-Mariara, 2003; Kuepie, 2016), suggest that social capital might play a role in mediating these barriers, offering avenues for future entrepreneurship.

Gender and Entrepreneurship

Given the historical legacies and persistent barriers in education and employment, women also face hurdles in entrepreneurial ventures. The social capital needed for entrepreneurial success is often lacking for women due to their limited involvement in sectors like transport. This pertains directly to the third and fourth research questions, questioning if the visibility of women in professional roles would promote gender-sensitive practices and how aspirations can be enhanced.

Currently, the labour force participation of women in Kenya stands at 75.6 percent in contrast to 79.2 percent for men (KNBS, 2016). This statistic underlines the pressing need for a multi-faceted approach to address gender disparities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship. By closely examining the myriad factors that contribute to these disparities, this research provides a comprehensive framework to guide future policy interventions in Kenya's transport sector and beyond.

For the chapter conclusion, I consider these complex interactions and their overarching implications for education, employment, and entrepreneurship. The insights garnered here serve as a critical foundation for the summative discussions that follow in my latter chapters.

4.11 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In closing, this chapter broadly presents evidence of the colonial legacies on Kenya's transport sector, from infrastructure development to education and the transport labour market. When considering infrastructure, path dependence has been evident in the ethno-political distribution of resources in Kenya, with the prioritization of the Central and Rift Valley areas and the former white highlands. The government has also fallen back on reinforcing, refurbishing, and generally following colonial-era planning trends in transport infrastructure development, with few differences outside of the introduction of mega-infrastructure projects. These projects still prioritize the movement of goods to priority towns and areas, most of which were established in the colonial era.

As regards education, gendered education systems and gendered mobility affected the development of early post-colonial female participation in the decision-making of the transport sector, leaving women a step behind and struggling to assimilate into a socio-political network of governance and leadership positions. This further affected women's overall participation in the Kenyan labour force across sectors.

In summary, the colonial legacy in Kenya's transport sector casts a long shadow, affecting various aspects of life and notably impacting women's employment opportunities. The complexities of this legacy cannot be fully addressed without understanding the current state of donor interests and priorities. With this historical context in mind, the next chapter will focus on a broad policy analysis of current gender policies affecting Kenya's transport sector and their effectiveness.

5 GENDER AND TRANSPORT IN THE KENYAN CONTEXT- CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER POLICY AND IMPACT ON KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

5.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I explore the impact of national gender policy on Kenya's transport sector, focusing on the period immediately preceding and after the ratification of the 2010 National Constitution.

Overview of Progress and Gaps in Policy Support

Kenya has a progressive policy structure for gender mainstreaming, addressing different policy areas and institutions. The policy framework reviewed in this chapter serves to promote female economic participation, opportunity, decision-making power, and agency while affording guarantees of safety and personal security. Nonetheless, further analysis reveals that despite the progressive nature of the legal framework and the establishment of key institutions promoting gender equality over the last two decades, women's situation relative to men's has yet to improve. In a recently launched Women's Empowerment Index (2020), the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, in partnership with the State Department of Gender, UN Women and UNICEF, findings indicated that only 29 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 were empowered and a decrease in female empowerment with increasing age was attributed to a disproportionate burden of care (KEBS, 2020).

National Statistics on Women in the Transport Sector

A 2020 report by the World Bank indicated that despite the continued under-representation of women in the urban transport sector in Kenya, the gender ratio for employment in the sector remains higher than that globally reported in the same sector at 14.28 percent worldwide, and 12 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. The lower percentage of women comprising management versus non-management roles at 29.7 and 37.1 respectively in Kenya, indicate that women continue to face barriers in their career progression in the urban transport sector (World Bank, 2020).

The World Bank report speculates that low rates of women's employment in transport globally reflects uneven levels of hiring and promotion at the management level. With respect to my research in Kenya, this indicates a lack of female role models and mentors in the space of urban transport.

Furthermore, a 2017 economic survey (Global Labour Institute, 2019) indicated that women comprise 8 percent of the engineering workforce, 13.6 percent of informal transport operators, 5 percent of informal transport workers, and 9.2 percent of workers in the broader transport and communications industry in Kenya (Tanzarn, 2017). The Engineers Board of Kenya has registered 14,320 graduate engineers, only 1,519 of whom are female. Of the 1,936 professional engineers, only 131 are female and of 408 consulting engineers, only 11 are female (Carter, Kishiue, & Dominguez Gonzalez, 2020).

These statistics highlight the challenges inherent in *implementing* policies that necessitate a change in the social norms of a country. In this situation, the state and other actors continue to work to meet the goals for gender equality set by the country in an effort to implement gender equality for the population.

In this chapter, I chart Kenya's changing policy environment and its implications for women's employment in the transport sector. I also discuss how the selected policies identified in the table below impact on the Kenyan transport sector under three thematic groupings: education, employment and entrepreneurship. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the key gaps in gender policy and the challenges that this research uncovered in their implementation for gender equality in employment and career advancement for women in transport in Kenya.

In the preceding chapters, I have explored various facets of gender inequality in Kenya's transport sector, from historical legacies to contemporary challenges. While I have delved into the theoretical frameworks in earlier discussions, this chapter focuses on a pragmatic examination of the existing policies, their implementation, and the associated challenges in Kenya's transport sector. It is within this context that I revisit my foundational research questions.

5.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

This chapter aims to directly address the foundational research questions of the larger study, focusing on the current policies, implementation gaps, and challenges in achieving gender equality in Kenya's transport sector.

1. **Policy and Implementation Gaps:** This chapter scrutinizes the effectiveness of current policies and regulations aimed at promoting gender equality within the transport sector, identifying areas where implementation lags behind intention.
2. **Barriers and Challenges:** The chapter explores various types of systemic challenges that hinder women, such as corruption, and lack of educational support, even when gender-inclusive policies exist on paper.
3. **Visibility as Normalization:** The chapter will shed light on how entrenched social norms and cultural practices continue to act as invisible barriers to women, despite legislative efforts.
4. **Opportunity and Aspiration:** The chapter aims to explore how women's lack of access to financial resources and social capital can place them at a distinct disadvantage in leveraging opportunities within the sector.

Having set the stage with these questions, the following sections will delve into each in more detail, supported by case studies, interviews, and data analysis. Through this practical lens, we aim to identify where the disconnect between policy and implementation lies and offer a roadmap for potential solutions to bridge this gap.

5.2 POLICY AS A SHAPER OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS

Policy is key among the factors influencing women's employment aspirations and prospects within the transport sector across sub-Saharan Africa (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016). Despite multiple supportive policies listed in the table below, it is clear that policies are inextricable from society and the cultural norms around their implementation and enforcement. It is therefore important to examine the legal frameworks that have shaped women's engagement in the transport sector as key decision-making figures – whether as engineers and urban planners, transport service providers, infrastructure contractors or government officials – within the wider social context. International agreements, local cultural norms and social practice intersect with national policy development to

create the current situation for women's employment in the transport sector (Matagaro, 2013). Kenya's unique situation in East Africa and sub-Saharan Africa requires an in-depth review of the legal and policy frameworks governing employment and development in the country as well as those policies directly intended to influence women's access to education, financing and opportunities within the transport sector.

As this chapter examines the disparities related to gender within Kenya's urban transport sector, it becomes important to position these findings within broader developmental frameworks that have influenced gender policies. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), operational from 2000 to 2015 under the United Nations' mandate, offer a critical lens. This global agenda has had a profound influence on gender equality policies, both internationally and within Kenya. However, the transport sector, essential for socio-economic development, often gets overlooked in the discourse on gender mainstreaming.

5.3 IMPACT OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS ON GENDER AND TRANSPORT IN KENYA

Introduction

The United Nations' MDGs played a significant role in setting the global development agenda from 2000 to 2015. The goals resonate strongly within the sub-Saharan African context, Kenya included. Despite Goal 3 focusing on "*Promoting gender equality and empowering women*," the transport sector in Kenya remains notably underrepresented in gender initiatives.

Progress and Impact Analysis in Kenya

In Kenya, examining the MDGs through the lens of the transport sector reveals an inconsistent picture regarding gender equality. A report from the Engineers Board of Kenya in 2020 discloses that a mere 10 percent of registered civil engineers in the country are women. Similarly, only 8 percent of the workforce in Kenya's transport sector is female. These low percentages reflect a systemic underrepresentation of women, which hampers their economic empowerment and contradicts the aims of MDG 1. The limited female presence in this sector also has broader societal implications; it creates hurdles for girls seeking education, undermining MDGs 2 and 3. Additionally, the transport barriers often result in inadequate access to maternal healthcare, particularly in rural areas, conflicting with MDG 5 objectives (Nyangueso, 2020). Lastly, safety issues continue to haunt the sector, with elevated levels of harassment and violence against women on public transport, thereby counteracting the aspirations of MDG 3 (Kabeer, 2005).

The MDGs serve as both a source of inspiration and a cautionary example. While they have shaped policy frameworks for gender equality at both global and local levels, they have often failed to delve into the sector-specific issues like those evident in Kenya's urban transport sector. The next section will explore the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which succeed the MDGs and promise a more nuanced approach to gender equality. The focus will be on their potential to address the limitations noted during the MDG period within the context of Kenya's transport sector.

5.4 PROGRESS TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

The SDGs, slated for realization by 2030, form an interconnected web of targets that not only aim to improve general well-being but also tackle inequality in various sectors. This interconnectedness makes the transport sector a pivotal area to study, as its efficiency and inclusivity significantly impact other SDGs like healthcare, education, and employment.

In the Kenyan context, transport is more than just a means of getting from one place to another: it's a gateway to essential services and opportunities. Policies such as the National Transport and Safety Authority Act and the Integrated National Transport Policy strive to make strides in this sector. These initiatives are crucial for achieving SDGs like Goal 5 on gender equality. The gender-responsive design of public transport services can lead to a more equitable society. For instance, policies that call for well-lit bus stops, female-only carriages, or security personnel trained to handle gender-based harassment can dramatically impact women's safety and mobility.

Another relevant SDG is Goal 9, which focuses on industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Kenya's efforts to explore sustainable, efficient, and inclusive modes of transport, such as the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, are laudable but still need scaling up.

Regarding SDG 11, which aims for inclusive and sustainable cities, the transport sector plays an irreplaceable role. Improved road conditions, better signage, and more inclusive transport options can profoundly impact the quality of life for Kenyan women, who frequently face increased mobility challenges compared to men (Porter, 2008).

Implementation and Monitoring in Kenya

While these SDGs offer promising avenues for advancing gender equality in transport, their implementation remains a substantial hurdle in Kenya. The Kenyan government's initiative to involve stakeholders like the State Department of Gender and civil society organizations is a step in the right direction. However, the challenge lies in translating these policies and goals into actionable, monitored, and effective strategies on the ground.

In synthesizing the potential of the Sustainable Development Goals for engendering change in Kenya's transport sector, I present a foundational context for what comes next. The crucial intersection of these global goals and Kenya's specific circumstances leads naturally into a deeper exploration of policy analysis. The following sections of this chapter will dissect key policies in greater detail, scrutinized through the lens of these global aspirations.

Immediately following this discussion, a table will summarize these policies, setting the stage for a more nuanced understanding of their effectiveness and impact. The objective is to integrate these global goals with local realities, underlining the need for a multi-faceted approach to achieve gender equality in transport.

5.5 CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF KENYAN GENDER POLICIES

The following table details selected government gender policies as relevant to Kenya's transport sector in chronological order. It is a point of note that the majority of the policies are not specific to the transport sector though they make mention of it or highlight it as of particular relevance.

LEGISLATION	YEAR INTRODUCED	GOVERNMENT POLICY DIRECTIVE
Kenya Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth Creation 2003 - 2007	2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women should have equal access to opportunities and assets for the purpose of sustainable development.
Performance Contract	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote female entrepreneurship in contracting and transport operations through skills development and the provision of incentives. (Not exclusive to transport) • Allocate resources to remove barriers to women's participation in the transport sector relative to men. • Collect sex and gender-disaggregated transport data to inform policy, plans and projects. • Gender awareness creation and capacity building.
Sexual Offences Act	2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlines and defines sexual offences and their punishment.
Employment Act	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender equality-enhancing measure in the workplace. • Equal employment opportunities for women and men. • Provide separate latrine/toilet/bathroom facilities for female and male employees. • Fully paid maternity leave and job security • PSV SACCOS to have documented sexual harassment policies including reporting and response mechanisms.
Vision 2030	2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream gender including with reference to transport policy. • Address women's needs, including transport. • Provide improved access to reproductive healthcare. • Provide improved access to schools. • Address SGBV in construction projects. • Provide women-friendly services, spaces and facilities, including transport services.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address SGBV, including in public transportation. • Gender balance in the governance of roads sub-sector institutions. • Affirmative action for women in infrastructure works/road projects.
Gender Policy in Education Act	2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive education for boys and girls. • Affirmative action for girls' enrolment in secondary and tertiary education. • Partnerships to achieve gender balance and equality in education.
MTPI 2008-2012			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies gender inequalities as a persistent national development challenge.
National Land Policy	2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes women's right to own property on an equal basis with men.
Integrated National Transport Sector Policy	2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of gender inequality in access and mobility
The National Constitution of Kenya	2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender mainstreaming made a national agenda. • Promote/provide appropriate transport technologies for women. • Transport legislation and regulations should be sensitive to women's needs. • Non-discrimination against women. • Affirmative action for women in recruitment and training. • Equal opportunities for female and male-led contracting firms.
Road Sector Investment Programme and Strategy, 2010 - 2024	2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies gender mainstreaming as a critical aspect for the successful delivery of transport projects. • Acknowledges the impact of gender-responsive transport interventions on women's outcomes. • Requires transport planning be informed by a gender analysis. • Allocates KES 2B per annum to gender and equity mainstreaming.
Ministerial Gender Policy	2011		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero tolerance for sexual harassment in the workplace. • Interdepartmental committee to oversee compliance to diversity mainstreaming in recruitment, training, annual planning and routine reporting. • Strengthen internal mainstreaming as a foundation for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in all government policy, legislation and programmes.
Medium Term Plan 2 (MTP2)	2013		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstream gender in transport policy and address women's transport needs • Provide/promote appropriate transport technologies for women. • Transport legislation and regulations should be sensitive to women's needs.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address SGBV in construction projects and public transportation. • Collect sex and gender disaggregated data to inform policy, plans and projects. • Affirmative action for women in infrastructure works/road projects.
Matrimonial Properties Act	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have the right to buy and register land individually, inherit land from their parents and make decisions about land that is bought and sold in their names.
Policy Statements and Guidelines on Mainstreaming Cross-Cutting	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidance on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues, such as Gender Equality and Equity, people with disabilities, observance of the rights of the child, and inclusion of HIV/AIDS in the roads subsector.
National Policy for the prevention and response to GBV.	2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the Ministry of Labour and private sector employers to implement policies to prevent GBV in the workplace.
Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act of 2015	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All procurement and asset disposal planning must reserve 30 percent of the budgetary allocations for enterprises owned by women, youth and other disadvantaged groups. • Allocates resources to enhance women's benefit from transport infrastructure and operations and to remove barriers to women's participation in the transport sector.
Education and Training Sector Gender Policy	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive education for boys and girls • Affirmative action for girls' enrolment in secondary and tertiary education. • Partnerships to achieve gender balance and equality in education.
Land Act	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protections for women's right to own property.
Land Registration Act	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protections for women's decision-making rights as regards properties in their name.
Diversity Policy for Public Service	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every public service institution should ensure that the ratio of men to women progressively achieves the principle that not more than two-thirds (2/3) of its employees shall be of the same gender at all levels. • Prohibits imposition of sanctions or dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy, maternity/paternity leave or marital status.

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat all employees including women equally with regard to pay, benefits, transfers, training, education, and social programs.
Human Resource Policies and Procedures Manual for the Public Service of 2016	2016		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female officers who are required to be absent from duty on account of confinement shall be granted maternity leave with full salary for a maximum period of ninety calendar days exclusive of the annual leave due for the year.
National Land Use Policy	2017		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have equal rights to access and use land resources in Kenya.
MPSYGA State Department of Gender Affairs Strategic Plan 2018-2022	2018		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender policy management, special programmes for women’s empowerment, and gender mainstreaming in ministries, counties and agencies. • Delivery of tangible gender development results to all Kenyans.
Sessional paper no. 2 of 2019 on national policy on gender and development	2019		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mainstreaming gender issues and correcting for gender inequalities at all government levels and sectors. • Integrate women in non-traditional areas of employment including construction and infrastructure development.
National Gender and Equality Commission 2019-2024 Strategic Plan	2019		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance and monitor compliance with the principles of equality and inclusion in State and non-state actors. • Reduce violations of the principle of equality and freedom from discrimination for the SIGs 3. • Promote public awareness on principles of equality and inclusion 4. • Promote implementation of affirmative action and inclusion of SIGs in development agenda. • Increase evidence-based knowledge on issues of equality and inclusion through research and knowledge management.

Table 2: Chronological Overview of Kenyan Gender Policies

5.6 OVERVIEW OF KEY NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

In this section, I outline major policies from the preceding table that have had a significant impact on the development of subsequent gender policy and the implementation/revision of both older and newer policies. I detail the directives of these policies and their relevance to gendered employment practice in Kenya's transport sector. These policies are the National Constitution, Vision 2030 and two Medium Term Plans as followed by the Kenyan National Government.

The **2010 National Constitution** guarantees the right to equality for both women and men, directing the enactment of affirmative action programs to ensure that women, among other vulnerable and marginalized groups, are provided special opportunities to access education and employment in addition to access to water, healthcare and infrastructure. It further dictates that public officials and agencies are to be non-discriminatory regarding sex, pregnancy, and marital status. The Constitution states that the state should afford adequate and equal opportunities for appointment, training and advancement at all levels of the public service. This provides a baseline for the policy framework supporting women's skills acquisition, capacity building and employment in Kenya's transport sector. The constitution dictated a minimum one-third representation of either gender in any government run or funded organizations (GoK, 2013). This has been particularly noted in respect to leadership positions and has resulted in female nominations in parastatals that had previously been male-dominated and has been specifically referenced as a reason for a respondent's employment in my interview with KE01, a senior official on the board of a major transport parastatal.

This is significant for the transport sector in that it provides a policy-driven foundation for affirmative action to gain a critical mass of women in the sector and necessitated a shift in fundamental social discourse about women's place in the transport sector. This is reflected across Kenya's economic landscape as the top-down approach to affirmative action has served as a 'foot in the door' for female representation in traditionally masculine spaces in income-generation (Matagaro, 2013). While this is not without its backlash, and rejection of what has been seen as Western subordination of traditional values by some detractors (Baraza & Kabira, 2012), the overall effect has been to make gender equality a point for accountability by those in charge and therefore a stage in the change towards stronger female representation (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016).

Vision 2030 is a long-term development blueprint for Kenya, implemented through a series of 5-year medium-term rolling plans beginning in 2007 intended to inform the formulation of sector plans and programs. It is of specific relevance in this thesis as the policy detailed budgetary assignments and therefore accountability and political commitment to gender interventions by the Kenyan government. Preceded by the Kenya Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth Creation 2003 -2007, this policy framework highlights several barriers to female empowerment including restrictions in accessing labour markets and productive resources resulting in relatively higher levels of women's poverty when compared to men's; restricted decision-making power and political voice; limited access to capital, education, training and healthcare undermining women's potential. In response, Vision 2030 outlines government commitments to address gender disparities and vulnerabilities through several strategies including: increase the number of women in parliament; affirmative action for women's representation at all levels of public decision-making; gender mainstreaming in government policies, plans, budgets and programmes; prioritization of women in public sector recruitment, promotion and appointment. Vision 2030 also includes two gender equality enhancing interventions among its flagship projects that are particularly relevant to addressing employment in the transport

sector – increasing women’s representation at the executive level in all branches of government and the private sector; and increasing funds and training available to female entrepreneurs.

This is significant to the transport sector in Kenya in that it integrated gender equality indicators in major performance contracts across national and county level government structures, embedding it in long term government commitments to infrastructure development and political deliverables (Tacitus, 2017). It is worth noting this policy gives specific attention to capacity-building activities for female entrepreneurs who are often neglected or disqualified from financing interventions due to a lack of standardized qualifications.

The first Medium Term Plan (MTP1), 2008-2012, identified gender inequalities amongst the persistent national development challenges. It recognised gender inequalities in the distribution of public resources, in poverty levels and in access to wealth creating opportunities and public services. It included the following:

- Gender mainstreaming in all Government policies, plans and programmes and operationalisation and strengthening of gender divisions in all ministries and state corporations.
 - Collection of gender disaggregated data to inform policy, plans and programmes.
 - Institute the Affirmative Action Policy to ensure that women attain at least 30 percent representation in recruitment, promotion and appointment at all decision-making levels.
 - The Women Enterprise Fund to provide women with access to alternative financial services.
 - Promote campaigns to eliminate retrogressive cultural practices.
- Put in place an efficient legal system to help protect the rights of the people and to reduce gender-based violence and any human rights violations.

MTP1 is significant in establishing an implementation and monitoring mechanism for affirmative action policy for women in parastatals and is of note in this research for highlighting the need for affirmative action at all levels of decision-making, which is key for representation.

The **second Medium Term Plan (MTP2), 2013 – 2017**, underscores the persistent challenges of retrogressive sociocultural norms, low levels of gender awareness, high incidences of gender-based violence (GBV) as well as inadequate implementation of gender responsive policies and laws (GoK, 2013). MTP2 includes several flagship projects explicitly intended to promote gender equality and protect women’s rights. Under gender mainstreaming, the state is charged to:

- Coordinate monitoring of gender mainstreaming across all ministries, departments and agencies.
- Enact a national affirmative action policy.
- Collect gender disaggregated data to guide policy decision making.
- Establish a Gender Research and Documentation Centre. This was achieved in 2013 at the University of Nairobi in collaboration with UNESCO.
- The National Gender and Equality Commission to issue sanctions and recommend prosecution in relation to cases of gender discrimination.

Under women’s empowerment, the state was to implement the 30 percent public procurement preference for women entrepreneurs, including in the transport sector; expand access to finances and promote women-led enterprises at the constituency level through the Uwezo Fund; review, re-brand and re-launch the Women Enterprise Fund (WEP). This is particularly relevant for female entrepreneurship in the transport sector and further detailed in section 5.10 in this chapter. Where

some women would otherwise have challenges accessing startup capital, this fund was intended to address this gap. This is of particular note for the transport sector when one considers the capital requirements for road construction. Heavy machinery is expensive and without access to significant start-up capital, women have less chance of breaking into this section of entrepreneurship within the transport sector. Access to a reliable capital base is a key factor in the success of road contractors regardless of gender (Mwangi, 2016) but becomes crucial considering the social and institutional factors inhibiting female contractors' success in the sector (Mwangi & Ouma, 2012). Further in the thesis, (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**) I will discuss some of the successes and failures of this venture that emerged in my research.

To conclude this section, I want to emphasise the impact of these policies in drawing attention to and endeavouring to address institutional barriers to women's participation, including in the transport sector in Kenya. With legislative support for mandatory female participation in decision-making, a sharper increase in female representation was expected as the result. Similarly, legislative support and push for female engagement in contractual infrastructure development and for prioritization of female entrepreneurs for financing opportunities through the WEP and Uwezo Fund was expected to result in a significant change towards gender equality. Recent studies, however, indicate that corruption and inhibitive social norms can serve to corrupt or even counterbalance the intentions of these supportive policies (Njenga & Tanzarn, 2019). In the next sections on education, entrepreneurship and employment, I explore in more detail the interaction of legislature and social environments that factor into the gendered practices of employment in Kenya's transport sector.

Having laid out the national policy landscape for gender mainstreaming in Kenya, I now narrow the focus to specific sectors that these policies impact. Education stands as a cornerstone for not only gender equality but also economic empowerment and social mobility. The policies enacted at the national level often find their most direct applications—and limitations—in educational settings. As we move into this section, I examine how transportation, as both a physical and metaphorical conduit, intersects with educational access and outcomes for women and girls in Kenya. This deep dive will shed light on the extent to which national policies translate into practical solutions in the educational domain.

5.7 EDUCATION: POLICY IMPACTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN IN TRANSPORT

The Significance of Education in Career Choices

Education plays a critical role in shaping the career trajectories of individuals in any society, more so in a capitalist one. For women in Kenya, education influences not only the opportunities available but also their perceptions of these opportunities (Mberia & Midigo, 2018). It's crucial to scrutinize education because it serves as a gateway to the transport sector, where women's participation is notably low. Educational certification informs the career trajectories and entrepreneurial opportunities available to women. Lack of appropriate certification can therefore be a significant challenge where women have not been encouraged to pursue avenues of education considered essential to success in this sector.

The Gap Between National Policies and Real-world Outcomes

Despite national education policies that promote women's access to education, notably the 2015 Education and Training Sector Gender Policy, women's progress continues to lag behind that of men across many sectors (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016). This disparity is particularly noticeable in the

transport sector, where educational qualifications often dictate the nature of available entrepreneurial and career paths.

Historical Factors Affecting Women's Education Choices

The historical context cannot be ignored when discussing women's educational choices. European missionaries, who were instrumental in shaping African education, propagated the ideology of domesticity that relegated women to subservient roles (Dubel, 1981; Mama, 1996). Vestiges of this history continue to influence educational curricula today, notably in the form of gender-segregated secondary schools with weaker science education for girls (Masanja, 2010). This was already discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 but bears reiteration to provide context for this discussion.

The Gender Divide in STEM

Social constructs have positioned Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields as predominantly masculine, further discouraging women from pursuing such courses (Mbirianjau, Chege, & Oanda, 2019). The U.S. National Science Board's concerns about under-representation of women in STEM (within the USA) are reflected in Kenya, where only 11 percent of females complete STEM courses compared to 21 percent of males (UNDP, 2016). This under-representation in STEM careers subsequently affects their participation in higher-value professions, such as engineering and the transport sector (Brighter Monday, 2018).

Despite efforts to increase women's participation in STEM through national campaigns, female students face multiple challenges, including negative stereotyping, financial constraints, and poor institutional support (Muthoka, 2021; World Bank, 2020c). Such challenges continue to undermine women's technical capacities, perpetuating broader gender stereotypes within Kenya (Hailu et al., 2023).

Spotlight on Technical Training

A 2020 study on factors influencing retention of female students in STEM courses at the Technical University of Kenya highlighted financial limitations, poor government support, marginalization, stigmatization and being affected by negative stereotyping as particular challenges (Muthoka, 2021). Underutilization and underdevelopment of women's capability in science and technology can be traced from their poor performance and participation in Science, Mathematics and Technology Subjects right from primary education level which is influenced by culture and attitude. In addition, the report also points out that women have been outperformed by men in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) (NCST, 2010). A recent study on TVET in Kenya indicated that the key factors influencing female enrolment were career counsellors at the secondary school level, Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) grades and gender stereotypes, with some ambivalence over the impact of global technological advancements (Rotich, Wanyeki, & Dimo, 2020). With another study citing TVET as the foundation of any sustainable technological development (Bappah & Medugu, 2013) and road construction offered as a TVET course, the lack of female representation in the field is of concern for this research.

Signs of Progress: Affirmative Action and Devolution

While the obstacles are substantial, there are encouraging signs. Affirmative action policies have led to increased female enrolment in engineering and urban planning courses. Moreover, women outperform their male counterparts in these subjects once they catch up in technical skills (see discussion featuring KE19 in section **Error! Reference source not found.**). Additionally, the devolution of government in 2013 has opened up opportunities for women at the county level, especially in

bidding for work, which is discussed in section **Error! Reference source not found.** with a respondent who was a former senior county official in transport.

By dissecting the complex interplay between education and the transport sector, especially in relation to national gender policies, we can better understand the hurdles and opportunities facing women in Kenya. Addressing these issues will require continued policy scrutiny, strategic planning, and sustained efforts to bridge the existing gaps.

After a thorough exploration of the role of education in shaping women's opportunities in the transport sector, it is evident that this forms but one part of a broader tapestry. The policies and social norms that influence educational choices have significant implications for employment opportunities as well. In the next section, I focus on the employment landscape, examining how gender policies and societal attitudes translate into real-world career outcomes and opportunities for women in Kenya's transport sector.

5.8 EMPLOYMENT: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE ON POLICY AND PRACTICE IN KENYA

This section of the review addresses the policies that specifically affect women's employment prospects in the transport sector. This includes discrimination and harassment policies, affirmative action policies and other policies supportive of women's working environment, terms and conditions.

5.8.1 Historical Context: Previous Employment Laws And Their Impact

Modern Kenya has no stated legal constraints on women's freedom of movement, decision to work, and receive or issue pay. However, this was not the case in Employment Act no. 2 of 1976. Under this act, women were legally prohibited from working between 6:30 PM and 6:30 AM, intended to bar women from industrial undertakings. This legislation impacted social perception of women's capabilities within the transport sector and therefore perception of women's leadership in the sector. Both the earlier legislation and the stigma against women working at night have acted as a barrier to building experience.

5.8.2 Legal Framework: Modern Laws And Women's Employment

Affirmative Action and Gender Equality

Kenya ratified both the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention of 1951 (No. 100) and the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention of 1958 (No. 111) in 2001, amending the Employment Act in full in 2007. Affirmative action as laid out in the National Constitution of Kenya 2010 and Employment Act 2007 has helped reduce the formal barriers preventing women from serving both as workers in the transport sector and in leadership roles.

Maternity Benefits and Other Provisions

This amendment included gender-sensitive provisions such as paid maternity leave for ninety calendar days exclusive of annual leave due for the year (GoK, 2016). The act further obliges employers with more than twenty registered employees in the formal sector to implement a sexual harassment policy.

Gaps and Challenges in Existing Laws

Unfortunately, it is not mandatory to register a transport related business nor is there a uniform sexual harassment policy under the National Transport and Safety Authority at this time. The policy further does not establish civil remedies for sexual harassment, a key component to effectiveness. Many employers indicate low reporting rates for cases of sexual harassment, highlighting a need to review the effectiveness of existing mechanisms in combating and deterring such behaviour (Flone, 2019).

5.8.3 Reviews And Studies On Women's Employment In Transport

A 2015 study found that there was a gap between gender policy and the actual protection of women's rights in the workplace, despite supportive legislature and mechanisms within the Kenyan constitution (Ngetha, 2015). Another 2015 study pointed out that many of the gender-responsive policies in labour law lacked the capacity to create gender balances in organizations due to the lack of enforcement (Jamleck, Kerre, Kalei, & Irungu, 2015).

Since 2014, Kenyan public transport entities have been required to register a code of conduct for approval by the National Transport and Safety Authority, but the content is not specified by law. Despite regulations, up to 60 percent of female workers remain classified as casual labour with limited job security (Flone, 2020).

5.8.4 Institutional Approaches To Gender Equality

Ministry of Transport Initiatives

The Ministry of Transport has a statutory obligation to mainstream gender through the Integrated National Transport Sector Policy Plan (2009). The Kenya Railways Corporation instituted a Gender Mainstreaming Policy in 2017 (Kenya Railways Corporation, 2017a, 2017b).

National Gender Policy Framework

The cornerstone of national gender policy in Kenya remains the Constitution of Kenya (2010), which stipulates the mainstreaming of gender into national and county development processes with the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC) responsible for spearheading this. As a Constitutional Commission, NGEC is bound by Article 249 of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, which provides the objects of the commissions and the independent offices as being to protect the sovereignty of the people; secure the observance by all State organs of democratic values and principles; and promote constitutionalism. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 has several provisions to guide NGEC in the implementation of its mandate. In particular, Article 10 on National Values and Principles of Governance includes human dignity, equity, inclusiveness equality, non-discrimination and protection of the marginalized. NGEC is responsible for aligning national gender policy with international treaties and conventions, and with detailing national agenda for gender equality and how to realise these ideals, as well as reporting on monitoring indicators with data collected from various ministries and independent research (Muigua, 2020).

Gender Ratios and Compliance

A 2020 study revealed negligible positive change in female staff in Kenyan rural transport institutions since 2011, with none fully compliant with the two-thirds principle stipulated in the Constitution (Nyangueso, Orwa, Ombai, & Sheba, 2019). Most female employees were found to be in support roles rather than technical staff.

Shortcomings in Sexual Harassment Policies

The Sexual Offences Act of 2006, while prohibiting sexual harassment, does not specify forms of sexual harassment and is not applicable in public spaces such as transport systems. Despite the requirement for a sexual harassment policy and attendant mechanisms in all government funded organizations, no SACCOs were found compliant in a Flone study conducted as recently as 2020. Many of the legal protections under the Employment Act of 2007 are not observed because the female employee in the public transport sector is often a casual worker and not a formal labourer protected by contractual terms.

5.8.5 Other Relevant Policies

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

The National Policy for the Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence of 2014 charges the Ministry of Labour and private sector employers with developing and implementing policies on GBV in the workplace. GBV is defined within the Kenyan legal system as any act that results in physical, sexual, or psychological harm (GoK, 2014).

Diversity Policy for Public Service

Kenya's Diversity Policy for the Public Service of 2016 stipulates that public sector entities must monitor gender ratios of employees and implement affirmative action and family-friendly policies (GoK, 2016).

National Policy on Gender and Development

The National Policy on Gender and Development of 2019 notes the need to integrate women into infrastructure development among other non-traditional areas of employment. It identifies barriers such as gender-insensitive recruitment processes, low quality of jobs and pay, and sexual harassment (GoK, 2019).

Reflections on Supportive Policy Frameworks

Despite the existence of supportive legislation, women continue to face systemic barriers at the household, community, institutional, and societal levels (World Bank Group, 2018). Discrimination against women working in the urban transport sector remains rampant due to lack of consistent and positive enforcement.

After a comprehensive exploration of women's employment experiences in the transport sector, it becomes evident that while there are legal frameworks aimed at improving gender equality, much work still needs to be done in terms of implementation and monitoring. As I proceed to discuss entrepreneurship, it is crucial to consider how many of the same barriers that affect women as employees—such as discriminatory policies, cultural constraints, and inadequate legal protections—also have a significant impact on their prospects as entrepreneurs.

5.9 ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship is particularly significant in debates around women's engagement and employment in the transport sector in the field of road contracting and in transport service provision.

Legal Framework for Gender Equality in Procurement

The constitution of Kenya, 2010, Article 227 requires that procurement of goods and services be fair, equitable, transparent, competitive and cost-effective. The Public Procurement and Asset Disposal Act of 2015 takes this a step further and requires that 30 percent of government procurement spending be allocated to women, among other marginalized and vulnerable groups (GoK, 2015). This is implemented through the Access to Government Procurement Opportunities program. While the legal framework provides some promises for gender equality in procurement, there are still gaps in implementation that hinder progress.

Implementation Gaps in Gender-Equitable Policies

Gaps in the legal support for gender equality in transport sector employment remain. Under the Registration of Business Names Act of 1951 and in the 2012 revision, women can legally register businesses, but the act still requires that married women provide the name of their spouse in the statement of particulars while men are not obliged to do the same (GoK, 2012).

Impact of Policy on Female Empowerment

Nonetheless, despite this laudable policy support for female empowerment towards employment in the transport sector, poor implementation and enforcement of the policy allows for the persistence of barriers to progress towards gender equality in the sector and nullifies protections laid out in the policy.

Decentralization and Opportunities at the County Level

Decentralisation in Kenya was instituted in 2013. Devolution, as decentralisation in Kenya is colloquially referred to, has led to a system with more opportunities for development at the county level (including potentially for women entrepreneurs). However, it is at the expense of fostering a set of controversies separate from the national level but exhibiting the potential to exacerbate corruption and fuel ethnic tensions in different localities (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2016). Pressure to address county level interests have put county governors at odds with national attempts to ensure compliance with central priorities creating a robust if financially unwieldy form of decentralisation (ibid.). Even as decentralization presents local opportunities, corruption looms large as a hindrance, affecting entrepreneurs across the board and women in particular.

Corruption as a Barrier to Entrepreneurship

Corruption remains a major issue for Kenyan entrepreneurs and given the financial and ethnic dimensions to corruption in Kenya, arguably particularly for women entrepreneurs. While multiple respondents commented on its relevance to the transport sector, the topic was also one that respondents were least likely to discuss in further depth due to the sensitivity of the issue as well as the political implications for corruption in public service and roadworks.

Factors Affecting Project Implementation

According to a 2017 study on cost overruns in Kenyan road projects, study respondents identified statutory approvals and licensing approvals as the most significant factors in delaying projects (Waithera & Susan, 2017). A 2014 study on road construction projects in Kenya had identified financial problems as the key factor to influence road construction implementation (Nianjun, 2014).

While project delays and financial issues pose challenges, these hurdles can't be fully understood without also examining the resource constraints faced by women entrepreneurs, particularly in terms of land and capital.

5.10 ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Among the factors key to the success of female entrepreneurs is access to resources. As one study on female entrepreneurship in Kenya highlighted, women first faced the challenge of access to capital and technology as economic factors (Wangari, 2017). Social acceptability, conflicting gender roles and networking with outsiders are social factors contributing to performance (ibid.) With this in mind, it is clear that women challenging the male-dominated transport sector would have an uphill task.

Land tenure has been identified as a key barrier stifling economic growth and human capital development in Kenya (Moore & Daday, 2010). Wangari (cited above) had identified lack of access to business premises as a challenge for female entrepreneurs (Wangari, 2017) but women face a challenge in accessing the capital required for cost-heavy enterprises such as road contracting and transport service provision. In the case of road contracting, purchase or leasing of heavy machinery requires capital as well as space for safe parking of vehicles. For transport service provision, purchase and maintenance of vehicles, as well as safe parking or parking fees depending on the location are a consideration for operational costs.

Inheritance of family property is one way for women to gain access to property that can be leveraged for capital. The National Land Policy of 2009 recognised women's right to own property but the Law of Succession Act of 2012 indicates that women's rights to inheritance may be terminated upon remarriage while men are not subject to the same restriction (GoK, 2012b). This limits women's acquisition of assets and their financial security, creating a barrier to business development and management through collateral for credit. As of 2020, women maintain a disadvantageous position especially as regards conflicts between customary and formal law. Anecdotal information in the course of the research revealed that ownership of land, particularly in rural areas, was not necessarily a guarantee of access given the cultural importance of family land and therefore women's inability to use it as sufficient bank collateral for a loan, or to sell for funds. Land use may also be restricted by cultural norms.

There is a gap in the research available, in that the impact of access to resources on women's entrepreneurship potential beyond microfinancing is largely unaddressed. Much of the research focuses on micro-enterprise and micro-finance, neither of which can address the larger capital demands of a construction business. Existing research, however, does argue for an increased focus on business training, including mentoring, as well as increased financial support for female entrepreneurs in order to grow the wider national economy, such as is highlighted in a 2016 study on female entrepreneurship in Kenya (Lock & Smith, 2016).

Having explored the various factors, from legal to financial, that shape the landscape of female entrepreneurship in Kenya's transport sector, it's time to synthesize these insights and consider what they mean for policy and future research in the context of my study.

5.11 INEFFECTIVE MONITORING AND REPORTING: REFLECTION ON GAPS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER POLICY

The integration of gender equality in policymaking and legislation, particularly in the transport sector, marks a progressive step in Kenya. However, the actual realization of these policies' objectives is greatly hindered by ineffective monitoring and reporting mechanisms. This section delves into the ramifications of these inadequacies and highlights the areas requiring urgent attention.

Lack of Gender-Disaggregated Data: One of the most glaring challenges in monitoring gender policy's effectiveness in the transport sector is the absence of gender-disaggregated data (Flone, 2019). Policies mandating the collection of gender-specific data on employment and entrepreneurship within the transport sector often fall short in execution. Without this crucial data, it's nearly impossible to gauge the actual representation of women in the sector, assess progress over time, or pinpoint areas that demand targeted interventions.

Absence of Regular Audits: For any policy to have a tangible impact, it must be accompanied by regular and rigorous audits. The lack of consistent audits in the transport sector means that even if gender-equitable practices are mandated, there's no efficient mechanism to ensure compliance. Non-compliant entities, therefore, face little to no repercussions, perpetuating the status quo.

Inadequate Reporting Platforms: While some mechanisms may exist for reporting non-compliance or gender-related grievances in the transport sector, they often suffer from various shortcomings. These platforms might be inaccessible to many women, particularly those in remote regions, or may be bogged down by bureaucratic red tape, discouraging many from seeking redress. Many interventions further have donor-specific reporting requirements, resulting in data aggregated in silos.

Lack of Transparency: Another related issue is the lack of transparency in reporting outcomes. When gender-related audits or investigations are conducted, the results are seldom made public. This opacity prevents public and private stakeholders, as well as the general populace, from holding accountable entities to task and advocating for necessary reforms (Cheeseman et al, 2019). This was part of the rationale behind decentralization of government to the county level as a sub-national governing unit.

Limited Training and Capacity Building: Many of the officials responsible for monitoring gender compliance in the transport sector lack adequate training on gender sensitivity and equity. Without proper understanding and appreciation of gender nuances, these officials are ill-equipped to identify and address disparities effectively (Njenga & Tanzarn, 2020).

For Kenya to truly capitalize on the benefits of gender equality in the transport sector, it's imperative to bridge the gap between policy formulation and its implementation. Addressing the ineffective monitoring and reporting mechanisms is a crucial step in that direction, paving the way for a more inclusive and prosperous sector.

5.12 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has delved deeply into the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that women encounter in Kenya's transport sector, focusing especially on entrepreneurship. The research questions initially posed have been addressed through the lens of policy, legislation, and actual

practice. While Kenya has advanced legal frameworks aimed at promoting gender equality, particularly in procurement and business registration, the chapter revealed significant gaps in implementation that still need to be addressed to effect real change.

Corruption remains a persistent challenge, affecting women disproportionately due to their often-limited access to financial resources and social capital. This is further exacerbated by issues like nepotism, tribalism, and bribery. Another notable concern is the lack of adequate monitoring in policy implementation, evidenced by the absence of gender-disaggregated data on female employment within the transport sector, despite existing legislative directives to collect such information. Moreover, social norms continue to inhibit women's progress. Whether it's the lack of support for STEM education at foundational levels or the unequal opportunities for advancement in the employment sphere, social conventions are a significant roadblock.

The question of access to resources, particularly capital and land, emerged as a fundamental barrier. Not only do women face systemic hurdles in accumulating and leveraging assets, but these limitations are also institutionally cemented by laws such as the Law of Succession Act of 2012, which creates gender-based disparities in inheritance rights. This forces women to expend social capital to leverage on kinship networks for access to opportunities, leaving them vulnerable to corruption.

While this chapter has focused on policy, legal frameworks, and access to resources as tangible barriers, it is essential to look at another equally pervasive yet intangible factor: social norms and cultural expectations. The next chapter will delve into the societal and cultural barriers that shape women's aspirations and opportunities within Kenya's transport sector. From early educational choices to workplace culture, a closer look will be taken at how gender norms and social factors influence the potential for women to break through the glass ceiling in this sector.

6 SOCIAL FACTORS SHAPING WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

6.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

One of the primary challenges facing gender equality in employment in the transport sector is the gender norms and expectations for women around the world (Porter and Omwega, 2022). In this chapter, I present my respondents' perspectives and experiences of the social factors that shape women's career aspirations within the transport sector in Kenya. I further juxtapose contradictions and agreements with current literature around the changing dynamics of gender in society and in the workplace. It is the aim of this chapter to begin weaving the complex context of women in transport in Kenya with their lived experiences, as related to me in in-depth interviews, to better understand progress and the social barriers towards gender equality in this sphere.

6.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

The underrepresentation of women in key positions in the transport sector, and their limited capacity to enact gender-mainstreaming policies, raises questions of equity and inclusiveness. In this section, I lay out how the chapter addresses my four research questions that dissect these complex issues, offering a nuanced understanding of the forces at play and the factors hindering progress.

1. **Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Legacies:** The chapter delves into the contextual backdrop of women's career development in the transport sector. Through respondent experiences, my discussion explores how past and present intersect, delineating opportunities for women and creating a set of persistent challenges.
2. **Perceptions of Barriers:** The discussion excavates the perceptions held by women and their male counterparts in the sector regarding barriers to skills acquisition and employment. Here, the emphasis is on the internal and external factors—ranging from familial expectations to institutional biases—that act as roadblocks on their professional journeys.
3. **Visibility and Gender-sensitive Practices:** Through first-hand accounts from women who have achieved key positions, I seek to understand if their presence is merely symbolic or if it has any discernible impact on gender dynamics within the workplace and in program implementation.
4. **Aspirations in Context:** This discussion focuses on capturing the complexities of aspirations for women in the transport sector as shaped by culture, traditions, and individual experiences.

By unpacking these elements, I aim to present a comprehensive overview of the current state of women's involvement in Kenya's transport sector. In doing so, the intention is to deepen current understanding of the challenges faced by women but also to identify gaps for actionable fostering of a more equitable sector. The emphasis, however, is not on prescribing specific action points but rather on delineating the context within which women operate, thereby providing a nuanced perspective on their experiences.

Following a vignette that demonstrates the challenges of one woman, the chapter first explores the experiences of girls in their early years, at home and as students at school and university. This

encompasses reflections on early challenges, influences and positive mentorship experiences. The subsequent discussion explores women's experiences with reference to two themes where women's personal lives outside work intersect with their work aspirations and experiences, often with negative implications for their well-being. One of these themes is marriage and the other is childcare and caregiving. Each of these themes encompasses consideration of ethnicity and family structure. Broader reflections then follow regarding women's opportunities across the life course; intergenerational relations, as observed by the older women professionals whom I interviewed; and finally with reference to the role of the media, including social media, in the perpetuation of long-established gender norms.

6.2 VIGNETTE

“Well, it was difficult at first but um being as it is, I started this I started this kind of work when I had not gotten married yet. So, when I got married, I made it very clear to my spouse that um ‘This is the kind of work that I do, it involves a lot of travelling and would you be okay with that?’ And yes, he was open to the idea. Of course, theoretically you are fine with the idea until it gets practical (laughter). In fact, I remember when we first got married, I had to go for a conference during our honeymoon. So, we had planned to honeymoon in another country, but I had to leave for three days... actually five, five days and then come back. So, five days of the honeymoon were cut! (laughter) By the time you are coming back there is no honeymoon.

...you come back (from a trip/project), and your child takes a lot of time before, you know, adapting back and taking you back in, and you find the other baby has made milestones when you were not there. You're being sent videos of your baby walking and you wanted to be there when that is happening yeah so, it's quite... quite challenging. But thanks to technology, you have a little face time here and there. You'll be called to talk to your children but yeah, its uh it's not for the faint hearted yeah.

At first when you are doing research you are doing it in the rural areas, you are not seated in an office somewhere, you are not wearing heels (laughter)! You are always in a t-shirt some jeans and some sport shoes; you don't look really serious (chuckles). So, nobody is taking you very seriously (laughter) until they start seeing the impact and it's interesting because you get calls from, I don't know, the radio and uh TV people, the media personalities got to know about my work. But you get calls, and you are asked for interviews and that's when they (family and friends) see you on TV, ‘You mean this is work you do this is serious!’ (chuckles) While you are being called to shed some light on some issues and you are like, ‘Yeah, you guys, I don't go to the field to play!’ but, to them you look like a farmer, so you are not really serious.

As a mother and as a wife, you struggle with, you know, are you being a good mother to your children, are you missing a lot in their lives? And you enter into that place of self-doubt and it...it takes a toll on you because at some point you ask yourself is what you're doing more important than the children that you're leaving behind. And of course, you'll have people in the society who uh, fellow

women, who will tell you ‘You know, you’re missing out and it will be such a great impact on your children they’ll have an emptiness.’ Ha! An emptiness! And um you’re being told, if you leave, you’re giving room for your spouse to you know... (cheat) And if you found him with someone, would you ask questions and you’re the one who’s doing these things? Is your career more important than your family? And I am thinking ‘What?!’ So, it’s...it’s quite a challenging place and it takes you to sit down and really think and comb through yourself and it takes a lot of self-forgiveness but it’s okay. Yes, I missed the milestones. I missed my son walking but I’ll have so much more to see from the future, and you make every moment count. And growing up through those challenges helps you understand that you don’t have to do motherhood like everyone else. You just have to do your own kind of motherhood and you just have to be the best mother to your children and that’s it.”

Excerpts from interview with KE20, a female transport professional in the private sector in Kenya.

6.3 EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION

My conversations with my respondents revealed that straight from early childhood, the girls that were encouraged by their parents to pursue STEM courses and focus on their education had a greater incentive and drive to pursue a non-traditional career path. In the case of KE20 in the vignette above, it was her mother’s encouragement in her early education and research path (as well as a male boss in one of her first jobs and several subsequent male supervisors) who pushed and encouraged her to take centre stage, make her voice heard and say her piece. This was a story that was repeated by many respondents, sometimes with reference to support from mothers or other women, sometimes with specific support from fathers. Notably, KE07 shared how supportive her father and brothers had been in encouraging her in her aspirations, with one older brother serving as a role model in his career as a civil engineer.

KE03, a retired HR professional over 65 years old, shared that while she was growing up, she benefitted from her father’s progressive attitude towards girls’ education. We spoke over brunch near her family home in upper-class suburban Nairobi. She is a close contemporary of my family and married to a man who was once fairly senior in the civil service. She has always played the role of an informal social mentor to many young women in my church and is often called upon to offer advice to both parents and children navigating disappointments and expectations in their social lives and marital choices. It was interesting to speak of the career I had been unaware of prior to beginning my fieldwork in Kenya. It is a hallmark of women of her generation that they tend to speak of their careers on a need-to-know basis and evidently, I had not needed to know. I had asked about what it was like to go to school in her generation and how she had made the choices that led to her career in HR and her position as a transport sector decision-maker. She spoke of growing up in rural Western Kenya, and of the status of girls in her village at a time when it was considered a waste of family resources to educate a girl.

In her own words,

‘He (her father) was...quite an advocate for the girl child being taken to school, getting an education. Every opportunity he got; he told his friends take your daughters to school – they’ll help you when you grow old.’

This was vastly different from the thinking of her father's contemporaries, who allowed girls' education more begrudgingly because traditionally, girls would marry out of the family home and sometimes the community of their birth entirely. The traditional way of thinking saw girls' education as only being of benefit to the family the girls would eventually marry into. I was particularly struck by KE03's stating that the environment would shape what behaviours and actions were permitted within a community. So, as per her example, while she would not allow her father to teach her how to ride a motorcycle, she would have no issues with her girls learning to ride a motorcycle because they would not be in the village setting where this would 'raise eyebrows'.

These conversations paint a picture that resonates with the current literature showing that parental encouragement is among the determining factors of students choosing STEM courses and careers in their early and high school education, as shown in a US study on parental socialization regarding gendered assumption of children's spatial ability (Muenks, Peterson, Green, Kolvoord, & Uttal, 2020). In the Kenyan context, gender insensitive presentation of career options has been shown to impact parents' and therefore students' education options (Mberia & Midigo, 2018).

I had earlier discussed enskilment in the context of women's learning environment as adults in the transport sector in section 3.2.2, but I wish to expound on that here. I put forward that there is a core assumption among middle class Kenyans that men and women are exposed to the same educational opportunities and environment, especially after decades of concerted efforts to increase female enrolment in primary and secondary education. However, the literature and my own respondents concur in narrating a common experience of gendered expectations affecting their academic and career aspirations. One of my respondents (KE26) put it very aptly, pointing out that the focus of women's education and aspirations remains on their eligibility for marriage and what they could do to support a family. As she put it,

"Many women will say, their dreams of self-actualization were killed by marriage, especially the ambitious uh type. So, in terms of access now, especially for girls in middle class families, uh the obstacles they will face is this socialisation, that your ultimate goal is to get married."

I began my research with the assumption that access to financial resources would be a key factor in determining a woman's academic and career trajectory as engineering is a longer course of study than most, requiring more time and money. Furthermore, in a patriarchal society where male children are expected to carry the family name, in a situation where resources are limited, many families will choose to educate their male children as opposed to female children (Ngunjiri, 2004). As one respondent, KE26, put it, men are considered to 'add premium' to the family.

I recall speaking with UK02, an African female engineer studying in the UK who shared the experience she had of male peers making assumptions about her personality because of her choice of academic track. She explained that she felt the negative social feedback she got from her community and male peers had been quite hurtful, and that she felt the aggression that they labelled her with was a result of the behaviour she had to demonstrate at work. She shared that her own spouse had had similar misgivings and had actually confessed these misgivings to her. In her words,

"I then knew that the guys were talking about me behind my back, saying she is not ladylike. You know they would label it ladylike. Yeah. But then because we [my husband and me] got so close, he got to be my friend and later on, he

proposed. Now because he knew me at a personal level and realised that I'm not an iron lady."

UK02's experience ties into my discussion on social relations theory (see section 3.2.4) and how women are not benefiting in their academic and career progression because of following the rules of feminine presenting behaviour posited by their family, peers and communities.

The example is brought to mind of Wangari Maathai (see section 3.7) and how the powerful male political authorities she was challenging called on her fellow women to 'discipline' her – indicating a clear awareness of how the more conservative customs would prevent her from effectively challenging authority as she had been doing. She was further deliberately isolated by media narratives, depicting hers as a lonely fighter, despite widespread support (Worthington, 2003). This is echoed in UK02's own words, where she was described as 'not like the other girls'. This isolation of women who dare to go against mainstream trends/ gender norms is among the factors significantly inhibiting women's career options in the traditionally masculine transport sector, and this is doubly so for women in leadership.

6.4 MARRIAGE AND CHILDBEARING

Here I repeat what I have pointed out in earlier discussion, (see Motherism under 3.3.4) – that women in the African context are linked inextricably to the social identities of wife, mother and carer, with multiple studies concurring that women are expected to prioritise marriage and child-bearing (Beoku-Betts, 2004, 2005; Bloch, Beoku-Betts, & Tabachnick, 1998). That this occurs at the age when they would be either in their post-graduate education and/or entering a phase of their careers where progression would be significantly impacted has been a critical factor in the shaping of many women's subsequent career trajectories.

KE14, a young female government engineer, laughed as she shared her dating experiences and told me that she never says what she does in the early stages because men are scared off by the legendary stubbornness of engineers. Another female engineer, KE13, laughed at me, telling me that I would be even worse off than them because I was single and pursuing a PhD.

"The moment you say you are an engineer, that's it! That's the end of it!"

Both women said that they tried to stay away from office and even community gossip because they were considered 'kind of mad' for their choice of career.

One respondent, KE23, an older female rights activist, pointed out that while the laws and formal government policies changed, mindsets did not. In our conversation, she said:

"It's like you're being punished for your biological role."

Due to COVID-19 we were speaking over Zoom and in between multiple interruptions by her family members seeking assistance with things around the house, she explained that many women have in fact not broken the glass ceiling because of marriage and childbearing interruptions. She gave the euphemism of cultivating a fruit tree:

“It's the men who are controlling where the trees are to be planted not the women, and then the woman will watch this tree - you will be watering it, weeding it, ensuring that the tree pruning it, and everything but the moment the tree bears fruit, see the point right now issues are coming in the power dynamics coming the moment the tree bears fruit and this fruit is taken maybe to the market the money becomes for the man.”

Respondent, KE20, a mid-career female transport professional whose words I drew on in the opening vignette of this chapter, laughed as she shared the story of having to leave her honeymoon halfway through for a conference, saying that her husband had been ‘theoretically’ accepting of courting and marrying a transport professional but had been challenged when facing the realities of her regular travel. The same respondent shared her experience of crying with frustration when she had to express and throw away breastmilk when she had to travel for work as a breastfeeding mother. KE20 strongly felt that to succeed as a professional woman, especially a married one, one would have to be very clear on who and what they wanted to be. She was particularly proud of the positive impact of her own work and felt it was worth the sacrifice of time lost with her young family.

6.5 AGE, WISDOM AND ‘RESPECTABILITY’

In this section, I want to draw on older respondents’ reflections on the changes or lack thereof that they have witnessed in the last 30 years or more. Here, I also present the way age and gender interact within the Kenyan and wider sub-Saharan context – both socially and professionally, while explaining how these two seemingly disparate spheres of social and professional life are entwined inextricably with gender.

I had asked my respondents about their experiences with or understanding of feminism. This was to establish some of their perspectives on gender equality and on gender discrimination as well as to gain further insight into the grassroots understanding of these concepts. One respondent’s answer in particular struck me as interesting. KE28 is a married woman with three grown children. She is in the 50-60 age bracket and a senior gender professional. In her words,

“I have not experienced it (feminism) as something exterior. It’s like I was a born feminist. I found myself there and I have lived what I found – it was not a philosophy...but in my mind.”

As she spoke with me, I could see her look aside to a window I could barely glimpse through the pixelated computer screen. We were speaking online, she from a stately bungalow in upper-class suburbia in Nairobi and myself from a small computer desk at the foot of my bed. She was in a casual housedress, settled for a cup of tea at her writing desk in a library or study with artfully arranged plants bracketing my window into her home.

I found that her views on feminism as it is today resonate with many of my older respondents and are reflective of the generational gap between them and my own peers and those even younger.

“I don’t know how I feel about the current crop of feminists. They are bolder, surer of themselves. They might not be in the public space, you know, doing activism or whatever, but they are feminists...In our time we were more

conformist. If somebody said something that put you down, you kind of retreated and looked for another pathway to escape the danger but you didn't talk back and defy and put your position down.

So, I find the young feminists now are able to stand on their own. They are able to look at people right in the eyes and say, 'I don't like this. I think this is discriminatory. I think this is condescending, this is prejudicial'. And I like that."
(KE28)

This interview was most reflective of the perspective I have heard in conversations with my older relative and female acquaintances in many different settings. In a different interview, KE26, a slightly younger gender activist and legal professional, inadvertently expounded on this, saying that the modern feminist would have trouble, not only in finding a marriage partner who could handle her 'boldness' but in handling the mother-in-law and the social pressures of maintaining traditional roles. She was especially concerned with the home environment considering the modern shift towards shared responsibility between partners. As with several other interviews there was particular emphasis on the traditionally feminine site of the kitchen as well as the implications of modern women not feeling bound to the duties of that space and getting the label of a 'bad woman'.

I think this quote from my interaction with KE03, a retired HR professional, best captures what I wish to convey here:

"People are still so embedded in their traditions, in their beliefs, and maybe the way they were brought up. That's the way I see it. I see a lot of mistrust and it's brought by the way, it's both sides – male and female."

In trying to understand why social pressure is such a significant factor to consider, the need for respectability cannot be underestimated. As the literature showed, Kenyan communities and extended families play a big role in society as networks for information about opportunities in education, employment and entrepreneurship (Ngunjiri, 2010). Actions affecting one's respectability could have devastating impact on one's social standing and even extend to one's family and career. This can be best seen perhaps in Wangari Maathai's experiences (see section 3.7). Despite international acclaim and even winning a Nobel Prize, she never quite lost the label of the 'bad woman' due to her status as a divorcee. This is supported by literature on Stiwanism. Ogundipe-Leslie, a Nigerian feminist, specifically calls out the collaboration of married women with patriarchal systems. In her opinion, married women were more likely to want to avoid changing the status quo and cling to the respectability traditionally bestowed by marriage (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

It has been both my experience and observation that some of the loudest critiques of unbecoming behaviour come from older married women who have, in many cases, the social status and clout, the mandate even, to correct younger women. I recall an incident at an event I attended while on my fieldwork in Kenya – a pre-wedding feast, in which the conservative church-going aunties of the bride-to-be took offence at her workmate's less than modest dress. After much hissed discussion amongst themselves, one auntie set forth with a massive shawl to cover the young lady's scandalously revealed thighs in fear that she might tempt the men attending the event. The young woman in question's opinion on the intervention was neither sought nor considered.

While it is the traditional role of older women in Kenyan communities to train, mentor and guide younger women, what does that look like in a changing world and with changing values and priorities?

Given my experiences and observations during fieldwork, where more than one well-meaning older woman warned me that a PhD would be detrimental to my already dismal marriage prospects, I wonder if this is one of the ways in which the leadership and mentorship role of older women is clashing with the needs and objectives of a younger generation. I close this section with a direct quote from one of my respondents, KE26, an older gender activist who used me as an example to warn me of the kind of pressures I and other women with more than baccalaureate education would face,

“Like for you now, who is pursuing a doctorate. What are the chances that a BA anthropology you know will approach you for a relationship? Close to nil, isn't it? So as your mother, I would say do you really need the doctorate? I think you should first marry. Many women will say, their dreams of self-actualization were killed by marriage, especially the ambitious uh type.

So, in terms of access now, for especially girls in middle class families, uh the obstacles they will face is this socialisation, that your ultimate goal is to get married. So don't do things like studying difficult courses or advanced degrees because uh that kind of pushes you to the back row on the shelf, yeah. Oh, huyo atakusumbua (she will bother you).”

6.6 POLITICS, MEDIA AND GENDER NORMS

Law and policy are shaped by political agendas and effective monitoring is partially determined by political motivations. It has been my observation that within the Kenyan context, political goodwill and courting of international development donors has been a key driver in the uptake of gender mainstreaming and its inclusion in key government legislation. This will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 8. Here, I wish to focus on the impact of politics and the media on the expression and interpretation of gender norms. It is undeniable that politics has played a key part in shaping the national discourse on gender equality. While there has been progress towards gender equality and increased awareness of gender-based discrimination and violence, it is equally undeniable that the first decade of the revised Kenyan constitution has revealed the cracks in Kenya's façade of sophistication and progressiveness.

As previously stated in my gender policy chapter (see section 5.6), the 2010 Kenyan constitution requires a minimum one-third representation of men or women in any state run or funded organizations. This has provided a foundation for affirmative action across the board but with particular reference to Kenya's transport sector and more so leadership in the sector. Two of my respondents, KE03 and KE25, specifically cited this regulation as a reason for their positions in management or administration of a transport related state agency and a private road contracting firm respectively. The provisions in the Kenyan constitution have served as a foot in the door for female representation in traditionally masculine spaces for income generation and a necessary point of accountability in gender mainstreaming (De Giusti & Kambhampati, 2016).

Policy, however, lacks fangs when there is political goodwill but less political consequence for failing to meet required targets for affirmative action. Furthermore, given the awareness of corruption and the infiltration of the quota system of procurement of goods and services within the transport sector, it is clear that change urgently needs to move from well written words on paper to actionable and sustainable progress towards gender equality. As KE24, a male gender advocate put it,

“On the surface, it looks like it is working. But deep inside, the front and those women from so and so, and the people living with disability, we will just show them a few fat meats, and then since we have now, we are saying we have satisfied the law, now let's do the real thing that we want to do.”

One of my respondents is a journalist, KE10, and I had two interviews with her, the second of which focused on how the media shapes discourse on feminism and gender equality. KE10 damningly pointed out that the Kenyan media was more focused on sensationalization of news and less on informing the public of the relevance and importance of gender equality. She acknowledged existing bias within the media sector – as pertained to which gender overwhelmingly got to cover meaty topics such as politics and current events versus what she referred to as lifestyle topics such as film reviews and fashion. Another respondent, KE26, pointed out that the Kenyan media tended to sensationalize female political figures and focus on scandals related to their femininity as opposed to their politics. This is detrimental to increasing the awareness of leadership positions as a desirable and achievable goal for women who are, as previously noted, more adversely affected by negative impact of their social standing and capital.

The media can help to shape public awareness and understanding of both gender policy and the intentions behind it, as well as shape perceptions of feminism and female leadership. While policy can guide this discourse and its initial impressions, it is the day-to-day conversations and quotable, relatable information that would lead to sustainable change.

Over the last decade, social media has also come to play a key role in shaping public perceptions around feminism and how gender discrimination is treated. Seeing what kinds of memes, videos and jokes are frequently shared in relation to harassment, assault and discrimination can tell you what people think about a certain topic even within relatively narrow social circles. The direction of narrative on the radio, the kind of questions asked in TV interviews, the language in a newspaper interview, the popular blog post – all these can show you who the loudest voices are in social discourse and what consequences, or lack thereof exist for infringement on women’s rights.

In an earlier chapter, I discussed media portrayal of Wangari Maathai, and in my conversation with KE10, we discussed how sensationalizing the media was in coverage of female leaders, especially in the political sphere. This research project asks the question of the role that visible female leadership plays in enhancing women’s career aspirations in the transport sector. I put forward the argument that restrictive gender norms and negative visibility of female leadership are among the factors hindering women from seeking positions of leadership in transport and other male dominated sectors. The old adage, ‘the nail that sticks out gets hammered down’ comes to mind. As one of my respondents, KE29, a young engineering student, pointed out,

“Women don’t necessarily want to be involved in big fights and more stress than they already have to face. Not everyone wants to break glass ceilings. We all just want soft life.”

6.7 REFLECTION ON POSITIONALITY IN THIS DISCUSSION

As this study unfolded, it became increasingly evident that my positionality influenced the interactions with respondents in various dimensions. This reflection serves to further dissect these dynamics by

revisiting my gender, my socio-cultural status and my educational background as factors which have affected my rapport with my respondents. While there are other factors, I tie these back to the discussion of my positionality in my methodology chapter (see section 2.6).

Gender Dynamics

Given that the focus of this study is women's experiences within the transport sector, being a female researcher has its implications. As a female researcher, some female respondents may have felt more comfortable discussing challenges they felt I shared or would empathise with, including personal stories. Being a woman may have also encouraged male respondents to explain and expound on their perspectives in ways that they may not have done with a male researcher.

Socio-cultural status and Educational Background

My ethnic roots and family socio-economic status could also have influenced the respondents' willingness to engage and the depth of their responses. Considering that I come from a family of known academics, they could perhaps feel more assured of my academic qualifications to be undertaking the research. I extrapolate that they could then feel more secure in my ethical stance and caution regarding their anonymity with my gatekeepers as inadvertent guarantors.

Another aspect to consider was my ethnicity. As an unmarried woman of my ethnic group, the Abagusii, a certain level of mentorship is an expectation in my interactions with older women. This can be seen in the tone of some of the shared interview quotations with older female respondents where they model perspectives and opinions in a way that I was supposed to emulate. In the case of younger respondents, I would also be expected to model similarly to fulfil the social expectations of my status. This elicited more in-depth discussions around the realities of being a professional woman in our socio-cultural context than many respondents may have shared with a male researcher or a researcher of a different background. I also reflect on my interviews with KE25 and KE28 who are considered peers of my own mother and the 'auntie' tone of our conversations, complete with speculations on who or how I could marry.

Implicit Bias and Assumptions

I also recognize that my own preconceived notions and biases may have influenced not only which questions I asked but also how I interpreted the responses. Despite attempts to mitigate these through methodological rigor, it is important to acknowledge that absolute objectivity is unattainable in qualitative research.

Concluding Thoughts

Understanding the impact of my positionality on this research is not just an ethical requirement but also a methodological necessity. It enriches the data by providing context, shaping its limitations, and informing its interpretation. While I have taken extensive steps to ensure the reliability and validity of my findings, acknowledging the role of my positionality serves as a reminder of the complexities inherent in any ethnographic inquiry.

6.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has aimed to shed light on the multi-faceted challenges and opportunities that women face in Kenya's transport sector. My findings, distilled from in-depth interviews and personal accounts, align intricately with the research questions that have guided this study.

Historic and Systemic Challenges

One key takeaway is that the limitations women encounter are not isolated incidents but rather manifestations of deep-seated historical, social, political, and economic legacies. Whether it's elite women professionals navigating a traditionally male-dominated sector or aspiring engineers encountering barriers in educational settings, the systemic forces that curtail their advancement are firmly rooted in larger societal contexts.

Familial and Societal Expectations

Another critical aspect is the influence of familial expectations and societal norms on women's career choices and progress. Despite making strides in skills acquisition and breaking into male-dominated fields, women often find themselves subject to traditional roles and expectations, particularly when their aspirations intersect with the complex dynamics of familial support and societal norms.

Importance of Early Encouragement

The research also underscores the significant role of early encouragement in mathematics and other STEM subjects in shaping women's career paths. The presence of at least one supportive authority figure, often a father, emerged as a recurring theme in many narratives, validating the importance of early interventions.

Gendered Workplace Dynamics

My findings further reveal that even when women attain key roles, their experiences in these positions continue to be shaped by their gender. This extends beyond the borders of Kenya, as non-Kenyan respondents also attested to the gendered expectations that often undermine women's authority and expertise in the workplace.

The Interplay of Marriage, Childbearing, and Career

It is also noteworthy that marriage and childbearing, while seen as milestones in a woman's life, often hinder their career advancement. The societal pressure to conform to traditional roles of wifedom and motherhood remains an ongoing struggle, affecting women's capacity to fully realize their professional potential.

Reflections

I opine that it is the continuing widespread societal expectation that women prioritize marriage over their careers, regularly observed by my respondents in Kenya, that clashes so often with the gender mainstreaming narrative promoted by many development agencies (see Chapter 3 on feminist discourse). Research in the past decade has shown an increasing trend among the major development agencies in using feminist perspectives to shape gender policy and promoting this with in-country government agencies in charge of developing such policy (Doorgapersad, 2016). As with other scholars based in or studying the global South, however, I see reason for concern in the direction of some of the narrative around gender mainstreaming.

I have received multiple negative responses to my overtures aimed at discussing gender equality among my community as I have done this research, even among members of my own family. I have seen the discomfort with which many receive information about gender discrimination and statements that challenge the norms of gender roles within my community. It is my opinion that gender mainstreaming efforts are focused on income generating activities and the admittedly very real challenges that women face in achieving their career aspirations in those activities.

I propose that the societal pressure to conform to a performance of gender equality in Kenya, while emphasizing an adherence to traditional 'values' of female submissiveness, is the major deterrent to successfully and sustainably changing attitudes towards gender equality. I see this most clearly when my respondents share their experiences of having been criticised as too bold or too well educated to be marriageable. For some, they have had to take a stand against parents, against their church doctrines, or even their spouses or romantic partners to pursue their educational and career aspirations. Even when their family have been supportive, I see elements of patronization in how my respondents say they were 'allowed' to seek employment or 'given permission' to travel for work. I find I must concede a bias towards Western feminist ideals of self-actualization due to influences in my own life but find it significant that even for women with the means to pursue interest in the transport sector, the approval and support of their parents and spouse remain such a key factor in what they report as their success.

Final Thoughts

As KE22 insightfully stated,

"Gradually with time, society changes and people change too."

But for that change to be equitable and meaningful, it must be based on a clear understanding of the terrain we are navigating—a clarity this study aims to contribute.

The questions raised and the findings presented herein could serve as a foundation for future research aimed at delving deeper into the complexities illuminated and to inform policy initiatives aimed at fostering a more equitable sector.

Having explored the complex social, cultural, and educational landscapes that shape women's entry into Kenya's transport sector, this is only the first part of the discussion of my findings. While this chapter has examined the factors affecting women's ambitions and opportunities, it's crucial to delve deeper into their lived experiences once they've entered this male-dominated field. What does the day-to-day work environment look like for women in the transport sector in Kenya? Are the systemic challenges transcended, or do they mutate into different kinds of roadblocks, and if so, how? In the next discussion chapter, I address these questions and more, using first-hand accounts to illuminate the realities women face in their daily professional lives. The study further probed into the intricacies of workplace dynamics, compensation disparities, promotional opportunities, and sexual harassment to better understand how women navigate the challenging yet rewarding world of Kenya's transport sector.

7 WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR

7.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

This research project has focused on the career opportunities and experiences of women professionals working in the transport sector with particular reference to the Kenyan context. In this chapter, I present the experiences and views of my respondents with regard to women's employability, career trajectories, aspirations and challenges in workplace settings in Kenya's transport sector. I examine women's own perceptions of their experiences and capabilities in the job and what men in the same sector think of them, bearing in mind the implications of findings presented in the previous chapter regarding the broader social milieu that tends to shape women's opportunities and aspirations in Kenyan society.

The gendered nature of employment opportunities in Kenya's transport sector has long been a topic of both public and scholarly debate. The sector, historically dominated by men, offers a frame through which to excavate deeper societal norms, practices, and structural inequalities that hinder women's participation and growth. As women break through these barriers, navigating the intricacies of career development and skills acquisition, their experiences offer invaluable insights into the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Yet, to appreciate the full spectrum of their experiences, we need to situate these narratives within the broader frameworks of history, politics, and culture.

Within the transport sector, women work in a variety of environments as diverse as the roles they play. To answer my core research questions about the factors influencing women's aspirations and career trajectories in Kenya's transport sector, I engaged with respondents who could answer my questions about law, about hiring and promotion practices, about engineering education and careers, and about Kenya's history and politics. Of course, I also spoke at length with transport professionals about how they came to enter the sector and their experiences while in it. In this chapter, I aim to bring these multiple dimensions into focus. By interweaving a rich tapestry of lived experiences and expert insights, I address the research questions laid out in section 1.5.

7.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

This chapter serves as a lens through which to examine the unique challenges and experiences of women in Kenya's transport sector. Here, I revisit the four research questions that have guided this inquiry, detailing how each segment of the chapter contributes to our understanding of these complex, interconnected issues.

1. **Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Legacies:** Through the narratives of older and mid-career professionals, I unpack how colonial histories and traditional gender roles have limited women's participation, setting a historical precedent that still echoes in current policies and attitudes.
2. **Perceptions of Barriers:** Focusing on experiences narrated by my respondents, I highlight the unique challenges that women face, such as the disproportionate scrutiny of their expertise and capabilities, as well as the scepticism from employers concerning their suitability for fieldwork and possible family obligations.

3. **Visibility and Gender-sensitive Practices:** Through discussions with women who have ventured into this male-dominated field, I examine whether their presence influences gender-sensitive practices. I present findings suggesting that visibility alone is insufficient; structural and cultural changes are imperative for fostering a more equitable environment.
4. **Aspirations in Context:** The discussion delves into the aspirations of younger female professionals, showing how these ambitions are influenced by societal expectations around marriage and family. My exploration reveals that the industry's masculine image and societal norms do not just limit women's career aspirations but also affect their personal lives, particularly in the realm of romantic relationships.

By dissecting these issues in detail, I aim to provide a nuanced and comprehensive overview of women's experiences in Kenya's transport sector. The objective is not to present an exhaustive list of solutions, but rather to offer a deeper understanding of the multiple layers of challenges these women face, thereby laying the groundwork for future research and action.

Having revisited the research questions that guide this chapter, let's delve deeper into the contexts and conditions that shape women's experiences in the transport sector. I provide brief sketches of the workplaces and spaces of three individual women from these groups, before COVID-19 required a retreat to home-based workspaces.

7.2 SOME PRELIMINARY SCENE SETTING

In this section I provide brief sketches of the workplaces and spaces of three individual women before COVID-19 required a retreat to home-based workspaces.

Woman worker in a Corporate Setting

I recall interviewing a senior transport engineer, KE07, in a major regional donor organization, in carpeted corridors separated by sleek metal and grey walls with clouded glass between the offices of senior staff and the workstations in the open areas for the junior staff. I sat opposite her desk, neatly arrayed with the symbols of white-collar success, tidy in-and-out trays, and a large computer monitor carefully angled so that unless she wished it, I could only see the glare of the lights and not the work she was doing. She was busy when I came in, sending emails and glancing at her schedule to reaffirm how much time she could spare for me. I remember feeling enclosed and stilled by the formality of my environment. I stammered a bit as I introduced myself for the first time in person and not in an email, then carefully sat down and tried to set up my equipment in a way that would not infringe on KE07's little kingdom. I saw a large project map on the opposite wall, calendars and quotes on the wall nearest to me. I could vaguely see the grey Nairobi skies from the large windows behind KE07's desk, barred by her filing cabinet. I could almost feel the oppression of the dark corridor that loomed just behind the flimsy office door separating KE07 from her colleagues and the rest of the world. She showed me where I could get a cup of tea, in the conference room just across the corridor, and I remember just standing there and taking deep breaths, trying to recover from the sense of intimidation that comes from facing efficiency given form. Seated across from KE07 in her immaculately neat Ankara suit and coiffed headcover, I remember staring into my tea as she tapped away at her keyboard, clearly a very busy woman. I waited in respectful silence for her to finish whatever she was doing so we could speak because that's the kind of thing you do when a person as obviously self-confident as KE07 is at work.

The Overseer's Seat

I spoke with KE25, a well-established roads contractor in her early fifties in her office, raised above the dust and debris of the busy side-road where her husband's garage and her machines were housed in a large *mabati* (corrugated iron) compound. Her office was a container, elevated two stories above the ground. I didn't ask what was in the container below as we climbed up, too worried about the space between the metal fire-escape style stairs that led to the only door in or out of the office. I am rather afraid of heights and struggled to hide just how weak my knees were getting as I watched firm earth get further and further away from me between the stairs as I followed her up. The room was poorly lit, two small windows cut into the container at opposite ends and a tiny washroom closed off by the door we entered through blocking some of the lights from the other side. There were filing cabinets along the far wall, glass fronted displays of marker-labelled files from one side of the room to the other. A battered old armchair and two-seater sofa were on the far right, an old coffee table uncomplaining of the weight of yet more files on it. The crocheted doilies that are universal to parlours of nearly every auntie I had ever known covered the sofa, the locked cabinets on the far side and even the water dispenser in the left corner. Above the cabinets, the newest decoration was a picture of the president, the other decorative pictures yellowed with age and dust in their frames, laying out cheerful rules and some roadwork jokes in fading bolded fonts. I was grateful for the sturdiness of the visitor chair, still a bit dizzy from climbing the steep and narrow stairs under the blazing midday Nairobi sun. Her old computer thrummed cheerfully along with the fan perched on a lower cabinet, every surface covered in papers and files. KE25 sat opposite me, an identical setup to KE07's but somehow more welcoming for its organized clutter. With her carefully coiffed weave and lush red lipstick against her blouse and sturdy jeans with comfortable sneakers, KE25 was unapologetically feminine yet prepared to set off on the road at a moment's notice.

Just Getting Started

With the onset of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdowns, I was obliged to move my interviews online where my access to my respondents' workspaces was limited. I collected my data via recorded video calls on Zoom and MS Teams but with challenges to my internet and electricity access and some respondents having relocated to their rural homes for the lockdown, it was sometimes difficult to get connections and commitments for interviews. Still, I was able to continue my data collection along an admittedly more staggered timeline until mid-2022. I interviewed KE28, a young engineering student entering her senior year, in her car over her lunchbreak at her university campus, soon after school resumed briefly for exams to be held. I could hear the honking of school buses and the chatter of passing pedestrians in the background as we set up the call but once we started talking, neither of us really paid attention. She was in the students parking at her school and unconsciously monitoring the movements around her through her car windows as we spoke. I don't think she even noticed she was doing it, as it never interrupted the flow of her words, but her eyes flickered to watch people passing by. The car was a bland little hatchback, fairly clean from what I could tell, but with the back seat and trunk overflowing with her schoolbooks and papers, her gym clothes and some toiletries and an empty bag of fast food from a local chain. KE28's braids were short and practical, curled at the ends in a popular style, her face bare of makeup and she laughed as she explained that she had rushed to get to class for her exam and would otherwise have worn some as she had when we were first acquainted over a hotel lunch in an upscale, overhyped hotel that turned out to be a poor choice of interview venue. Propping her chin on her hands over the faux leather steering wheel cover, KE28 would smile a bit as she thought about the questions I asked her, phone expertly angled on a mounted selfie stand on her dashboard.

With this preliminary scene setting in place, I now introduce a short vignette that highlights some of the themes pursued in the chapter, and then explore key phases/experiences in work and career trajectories in some detail, drawing on the stories of individual women.

7.3 VIGNETTE

“Once you decide to play in the big league, just reconcile yourself with the fact that you can't have it all. I think what women are forced to struggle with is you must, you know, if we speak biblically, you must be a Proverbs 31 woman, even as you attempt to scale the heights of your career, what Leymah (Liberian Nobel prize-winner, Leymah Gbowee) said point blank is you can't have it all. So, you just get to a position where you say, “It's okay for people to look at me and see I don't fit their mould of the ideal woman”.

Because the rules are the same for scaling. You put in long hours, you do extra work, you travel a lot. You just do what needs to get done. And sometimes that means extended periods away from your home. It just means I sit here from nine to five.

No one's looking to me to cook their meal, no one's factoring me in on house chores because you're playing at the big league. So, I also feel this thing of work-life balance is a way of holding back women, especially when it's being interpreted as you must be on call to perform all household chores.”

- *Excerpt from interview with KE26, a gender activist in the 40-50 age group.*

KE26 is a female gender professional in her mid-40s, married with three children. While she is not directly involved in the transport sector, I chose to interview her for her instrumental role in the formulation of the gender mainstreaming aspects of the 2010 Kenyan constitution and her career in gender-related legal matters. I was able to request an interview directly due to social connections between our families. She has an outspoken feminist stance and has a particular engagement with young women's perspectives on the challenges they face. I requested the interview in person as I encountered her unexpectedly while engaged in another task, but due to scheduling conflicts we held the interview itself virtually. My pursuit of further study involving gender equality issues was due in part to her example of supportive female mentorship. The interview flowed quite easily due to our previous acquaintance and mutual interest in gender-related issues. KE26 particularly had a great deal to say about vilification in media of female political leadership but was not hesitant in calling out the support for other women those female political leaders in Kenya had failed to provide, despite many being specifically elected for that reason⁹.

⁹ *Prior to the ratification of the 2010 constitution, there had been less than 20 female members of Kenya's parliament. Currently, a total of 75 women serve in the National Assembly, comprising 21 percent of the assembly, which is still below the stipulated quota of one third in the constitution. Despite a 2017 ruling by the High Court of this failure to meet constitutional obligations of gender representation, the situation has yet to be resolved and a 2019 Committee on constitutional oversight has proposed abolishing the role of women representatives.*

7.4 A FOOT IN THE DOOR: INTERNSHIPS AND FIRST JOBS

In this section, I discuss how women get their first job in the transport sector. I examine observations and findings around gender impact on early career job hunting and the social networking related to that endeavour. While the focus on engineering and transport planning narrows the discussion to women just leaving university, it should be noted that for some of my respondents, especially older women, it was a very different experience from that of today's fresh graduates.

Historical Context

In the early years of public education in post-Independence Kenya, university graduates were recruited straight out of university and sometimes even before they had graduated. The government was eager to fill technical positions across multiple sectors as soon as possible. According to KE03, a now-retired HR professional for a large public service agency, there was rapid uptake of fresh graduates which tapered off starting from 1984 as the job market became saturated with individuals who could and often did work for over 30 years before retirement.

The Current Job Market

This has led to the current situation of a saturated job market. It has resulted not only in intense competition for entry-level positions but slow promotion and career trajectories in the public service sector as well as fundamental generational differences in the perception of job hunting. It is, furthermore, impossible to discuss bureaucracy and administration in any sector of the Kenyan economy without addressing the corruption that is perceived to have become endemic to the country's working processes. Hiring and recruitment are no exception. As KE28, a final year engineering student put it,

"It's no longer about what you know but who you know."

Tribalism, nepotism, and cronyism are rampant to the extent that all my Kenyan respondents joked or said that one cannot get a job without 'knowing someone' in the organization you are trying to enter. While this is, of course, not completely accurate, it has so permeated the Kenyan consciousness that any person on the street, if queried, will make a statement to this effect if asked about job hunting. It should be noted, however, that for the older generation, there is still a significant misconception that any unemployed person with a degree is just not trying hard enough to find or keep a job. It should also be noted that due to a mix of cultural mores that make it rude to ask about work and money, as well as the extensive use of social networks to get work, many respondents were unwilling to discuss the specifics of how they got their first job. This was true of both men and women, though personal acquaintances could in some cases be prompted for more detail.

Some basic statistics demonstrate the scale of the employment problem as it has deepened over the last few decades. A study by the British Council from 2012¹⁰, for instance, found that of the four sub-Saharan African countries covered, Kenya had employers blaming high graduate unemployment on [low] quality of education while universities blamed inadequate job creation for this. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the Kenyan labour market currently absorbs only about ten percent of college graduates.

¹⁰ <https://www.britishcouncil.co.ke/programmes/education/higher-education-graduate-employability>

Unemployment

An article in the September 2021 Business Daily newspaper¹¹, pointed out that half the known unemployed population of youth in Kenya had given up on job searching with businesses still reeling from the economic impact of the pandemic. An estimated 2.49 million Kenyan youth are unemployed with an estimated 730,000 jobs lost in 2020 to restrictions, lockdowns, and school closures. Half that number, an estimated 1.52 million, are said to be biding their time and simply trying to survive from day to day as businesses struggle to access credit and recoup losses. Unemployment in the country averages at 9.93 percent as measured between 1991 and 2020 with the highest recorded unemployment at 12.20 percent in 2009.

The labour market claims a skills shortage while the government has been attempting to decrease a reportedly bloated wage bill by freezing hiring. Note that in Kenya, as of 2020, the government is still considered the largest formal employer in the country. As of the last census in 2019, 14.5 million people are informally employed while 2.9 million are formally employed. A 2018 UN Human Development Report revealed that 4 in 10 Kenyan graduates were unemployed, highlighting a divide between tertiary training and industry requirements as discussed in a Business Today article in 2018 (Gitonga, 2018).

Given this data it is useful to reflect back on the perceptions of my respondents in the 50-60 age range who had entered the transport sector by being assigned or deployed by the Kenyan government and compare that with the experiences of recent graduates. KE08, a senior female executive in a transport department was newly deployed to the sector in the late 90s after declining a lateral move to a different department. She laughed about receiving on the job training abroad and still not understanding all the technical terms at one of her first meetings in an otherwise all-male room of representatives from various government and international development agencies. In regard to her employment, she observed that:

“those days, you know some of us came from rural areas, we had parents who were semi-illiterate so it’s like you didn’t even have anyone to guide you, they don’t know what to tell you, you also don’t know so you’re in school and you pass you go the university and you are admitted for a certain course and without any questions, you just go to the university and study that. You finish and there were jobs.

I remember we went to public service commission to do our interviews with our transcripts. We graduated in December 1989 and by January most of us were in jobs, we did our interviews and we reported on February 1st, 1990. Jobs were available, okay. And everyone, we didn’t have so many universities we were few it was only KU, Egerton, Nairobi and JKUAT was coming up but mostly that time it had only technical, agriculture.”

In contrast, I spoke with several current engineering students about their experiences with the school setting and education system. I also asked about their expectations and experiences with job hunting. For those in their third and fourth years, internship is a part of their grades as well as their preparation

¹¹ <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/half-of-kenya-s-jobless-give-up-work-search-3567772>

for the workforce after graduation. KE32, a fourth year female Engineering student in her mid-twenties, reflected:

“Especially in the Kenyan context for employment, you’d rather have networks, then mentors, mentors, with my interactions, especially as we talk as campus students, now, you’d rather get a job, and then have your boss mentor you, than have a mentor who cannot employ you. Because uh it’s a slap in your face to study something for five years and have nowhere to apply it. (laughs)It’s, you know, it’s, it could be very painful that people who even you could just see the heart, in their souls from being unemployed after a five-year STEM course. So, lots of people gravitate towards having potential employers and then working on your mentorship, they talk later.”

I was asking about who she could see as her mentor but, in her opinion, it was more useful to first get your foot in the door and get started on your career before looking for mentorship to grow well in your chosen path. As we continued talking about her plans for employment after school, she shared her worries, about whether to look for a larger public company with clear rules and hierarchies, or smaller and more passionate private start-ups that could have more complicated interpersonal issues. She further shared her concerns that, as a young woman, there were limits to how far her family would be comfortable with her living in a strange place and on her own. As she put it:

“Maybe when I hit second year, is when I started to look around and see maybe there’s not that many opportunities just for employment. And the ones that are there for women. And with start-ups means smaller teams; with smaller teams means more contact with people. So does that mean less professionalism, because if am working at PwC for example, and a manager hits on me, there’s clear HR. If HR fails me, I’ll go on twitter and blast PwC. And quickly, they’ll settle me with some money, I’ll move on to another company. So, the society around me insulate me from some things. If I go start working with a small start-up, when now at some co working space at 9pm, and a co-worker feels like that is somehow consented to kiss me in the middle of the work floor, who do I report it to? The team HR person who is used by different mediums, because that’s how people in start-ups employ you know the network’s keep small. So, just factors like that you have to think of. Okay, if I would do want to work in this area, um Nairobi is saturated, so I’d maybe go to Naivasha where the other base is. Will I find secure housing in Naivasha as a young single woman? Like do I, will I even be allowed to go there by my parents and live there alone?”

To conclude this section, regarding how women enter the transport sector, it has become clear that gaining employment is not as straightforward as our education would have us believe. As KE28 pointed out, it is not necessarily about what you know but who you know today. If women lack sufficient access to their academic supervisors’ projects or to personal recommendations from within the male dominated networking system, they are at a disadvantage in gaining access to job opportunities and even internship opportunities. There is already high competition for existing positions due to the lengthy careers of many engineers and the Kenyan government’s preference for relying on external

contractors to fulfil major transport infrastructure projects, as pointed out by KE05 who blamed the use of external contractors for major infrastructure project as contributing to the lack of practical experience among young engineers regardless of gender. Women further face more resistance within their families as well as socially if their chosen career takes them away from the perceived safety of 'home ground' and familial protections. Women are also at a disadvantage when it comes to mentorship due to social norms about the level of interaction considered appropriate between teachers and students of different genders, though this is changing. I have also tried to discuss how generational differences in gender norms and approaches to feminism have affected female mentoring relationships with the older generation more inclined to nego-feminism and the younger generation more attuned to radical feminism and the ideals of self-actualization (see section 3.3.3). A saturated STEM market with older professionals who work even past official retirement age due to the strength of their credibility and social networks plays a major role in the high unemployment rates among engineering and urban planning graduates as highlighted at the beginning of this section. These should all be considered in the development of gender mainstreaming initiatives to encourage women to enter the transport sector. Considering that even women such as KE07 and KE14 state that they must work twice as hard to get half as much credit in their chosen field, even after years of working experience and all the right credentials, this suggests that enhancing women's aspirations in this sector remains an uphill task.

7.5 CAREER BUILDING AND MID-CAREER NETWORKING

In a world where social capital remains a major driver in determining career trajectory, women may have some unique potential to access opportunities to increase their skills and status in their chosen careers. With Western donors funding many major infrastructure projects across sub-Saharan Africa and in Kenya, attention to the Sustainable Development Goals is unavoidable and gender mainstreaming objectives must be met for governments to access the support offered as discussed in **Error! Reference source not found..** While this relationship and dynamic is covered in further detail in Chapter 8, here I want to lay the foundation of how this aspect of the context for women in transport can be an opportunity and draw from the experiences of my respondents to support this statement.

With political commitment to SDG5 widely expressed, many organizations, programs and interventions have quotas and targets for gender representation to be met. A key example in the Kenyan context is the 30 percent gender representation in leadership for any organization or agency affiliated with the Kenyan government. This affirmative action provides unique opportunities for women to access resources that they may otherwise have been implicitly or explicitly barred from.

I refocus on my conversation with KE33, a former senior official with a country-level transport ministry and her insistence that the devolution of administration and resources along this gender quota was a fantastic opportunity for women despite her own experiences with being side-lined in her position. KE33, a highly educated and efficient lady between 35 and 45 spoke with decisive authority from her seat in my living room, where we were conducting the interview. It was only until halfway through the interview that I realised we were positioned like we were in her office, with her at the head of my table and I sat to the side, taking my notes in the course of the conversation. Even in casual clothing, jeans and a flowered top, KE33 maintained the pose of a professional leader, seated in a casual power pose as she spoke. When I asked her why she had left that job, she laughed wryly and shook her head.

"It is too hard to fight these systems sometimes."

She said, revealing that she had been side-lined from decision-making meetings, first for being a woman of a minority ethnicity in that county, for being more qualified than many of her fellow senior officials, and eventually, for trying to crack down on the loopholes in the procurement and monitoring systems of that bureau through which corruption and nepotism were rife.

The need for agencies and stakeholders to be accountable to their commitments to SDG5 and gender mainstreaming objectives means that women are more marketable than men in specific scenarios. Furthermore, the need to present oneself as progressive and therefore marketable in and of themselves may drive more men in positions of authority within the transport sector to support early and mid-career women under their supervision. Women are therefore uniquely located as marketable technocrats with a niche that is still filling fairly slowly.

Research has shown that women saturating a sector causes it to become devalued in terms of financial compensation for services (Cohen & Huffman, 2003). There are also elements of resentment and competition that emerge and will be further discussed under the female mentorship section of this chapter. My respondents, such as KE32, KE26 and KE13, women at late and early stages of their careers respectively, noted that they had experienced a lack of support from their female forbears in the sector. KE13 and KE14 observed that, when interacting with older female engineers in their organization, these women had, instead of supporting them, been resentful that the younger women were not facing as much harassment and discrimination as they were. KE26, an active political figure, pointed out that one of the reasons that women representatives in the National Assembly were not being more outspoken in their advocacy for equal representation was that they would then lose their unique position and the perks of being 'othered' in that setting.

The element of competition is unfortunate but also part of how women are acculturated to view other women, and especially younger women, as competition, rivals and even enemies. The general social discourse is rife with stories of younger women as mistresses and 'side chicks', as well as pressure on older women to appear younger than they are. Maturity is an asset in being taken seriously as a professional, as shared by UK03, a senior female transport professional who emphasised that she was treated far differently after she was older and married as opposed to her early days in meetings and conferences.

KE25, a well-established female roads contractor, spoke of a fellow contractor she alleged had gained many contracts through the exchange of sexual favours. It should be noted that even between women, advancement and promotion are often suspected to be due to the exchange or solicitation of sexual favours. The element of competition among women often mars the experience of having a female supervisor and the negative friction can be a barrier to the career trajectory of both women, with the younger women vulnerable to negative reports and the older women subject to scrutiny and criticism over the forms that women's power-plays typically take in a workplace.

KE26, a legal professional specialising in gender advocacy, spoke of women in leadership acting as barriers instead of gateways for other women, citing a specific incident in Kenyan politics.

“One of the tragedies of the, in politics at least, was that the 47 women who had been nominated (female representatives) actually blocked the affirmative action bill that would have opened up for nomination of additional women to meet the quota (30 percent representation) because you know, for whatever reason, and now with the changes in government, there is a risk that we're doing away with the 47 seats, simply because those who are in a position to open the door in their wisdom wanted to keep it shut.”

Further conversation with KE26 revealed her opinion that, in many cases, what should be a collaborative effort between women becomes a competitive field where women count on their gender as a unique factor in their marketability within their profession outweighing their professional qualifications. From this, I extrapolated how it would affect supervision of women by women and female mentorship between women.

My own experience with a female supervisor in an NGO outright stating that my higher academic qualifications posed a threat to her own position colours my views on this but has been revealed to be a norm rather than an outlier. Social roles of seniority between older, often married, women, and younger, often unmarried, women also play a role in this element of competitiveness. Beoku-Betts pointed out that women in the workplace are often expected to continue performing family social roles even in professional settings (2005). Clashes between professional expressions of equality and the expectation of deference to age and marital status derived seniority can manifest as competitiveness to quash the rebellion against tradition inferred by the emergence of younger women as professional equals.

In the next chapter, I will explore the concept of gendered competitiveness in the workplace within the context of the development sector where gender can be considered a unique draw factor for organizations meeting internationally set quotas under SDG 5.

7.6 SOCIAL ROLES AND MENTORSHIP OF WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

One of the key questions posed in this research was the role that mentorship in the workplace plays in shaping the aspirations of women in Kenya's transport sector. In my conversations with my female respondents, I asked each of them about a role model in their careers and to share what the people they looked up to had said or done to inspire them in the choices they went on to make about their education or career path. I have previously discussed in section 6.3 the role that supportive parents played in determining their daughters' choices in terms of higher education and early career choices. I now want to focus on the role of other authority figures in my respondents' lives, with reference to the workplace, and to explore the dynamics that their answers revealed as well as some of the questions that arose from them.

7.6.1 Women As Mentors Of Women In The Workplace

In an earlier chapter, under section 3.2.2, I reviewed and reflected on the literature outlining some of the challenges women face in enskilment within the context of expertise in the transport sector. In my research, as noted above, both male and female respondents cited largely negative experiences with female supervisors and explicitly pointed out the tendency for senior-placed women to compete with younger, early career women, instead of providing positive mentorship. KE28 cited one such incident where her male supervisor had to defend her presence at a senior level meeting to older female colleagues who had been offended by her perceived lack of respect for their seniority. This belies many of the assumptions made in gender mainstreaming programming about the role that female leadership would play in supporting women and encouraging gender equality in male-dominated sectors.

Based on older female respondents (aged 50-70) like KE04 and KE28 expressing discomfort and disapproval regarding the conduct of their younger counterparts, I hypothesize that one of the reasons for the lack of positive mentorship for younger female professionals by their seniors is the social role

traditionally played between women of different generations. In my culture, for example, older women of the community regardless of blood relation are expected to provide guidance on conduct—essentially giving guidance regarding the social rituals and unspoken rules of feminine behaviour in public as well as private spaces (as discussed in section 6.5). Considering some of the conflicting values and priorities emerging more strongly, as well as the expectations for masculine presenting behaviours in the workspace as markers of success, I can see where there would be clashes of opinion between older and younger generations. There would furthermore be perceptions of poor attitude between generations of varying severity depending on the space in which this ‘constructive’ criticism is occurring. If a young professional is chided by older women for wearing trouser suits, as an example, rather than with reference to some negative work performance, then within the professional setting, this would be seen as offensive by the more junior/younger woman whereas it would have been acceptable from an older member of her community warning her of a potential social gaffe.

Younger female professionals that I interviewed, KE13 and KE14, also spoke of older women being denigrating and patronizing towards them because they have not had to go through the same level of outright discrimination and harassment their elders faced as trailblazers. Despite having worked, and in some cases even advocated, for greater female representation, these seniors are actively offended by, and I quote, ‘how easy’ their successors have it. One young woman specifically said that older female engineers in her organization had undergone so much stress that it was known they now suffered from mental health issues such as depression. I link this to Ogundipe-Leslie’s narration of married women maintaining their social status and the status quo by enforcing sometimes outdated or ill-suited gender norms (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

However, KE26, the older woman cited at the start of this chapter, proposes a more positive role for senior women:

“I feel the first responsibility is to know that as women, you are actually the first image that people have of women’s leadership and to take that responsibility seriously – that these people are observing and gaining from this. The other important one is, as women leaders, we must open the door for other women.”

What role then, do men play as mentors in the workplace?

7.6.2 Men As Mentors Of Women In The Workplace

Given that representation of women in leadership remains a challenge across all sectors in Kenya, and particularly in the transport sector, it is not surprising that many of the women I spoke with had more experiences with male mentorship than female. In essence, given that there are very few senior women in the sector as a whole, few women are available to take up potential mentorship roles. In the section immediately preceding this, I focused on women mentoring women and the influences that would shape that interaction. Here, I want to draw from several interviews to discuss men mentoring women. It should be noted that this cannot be wholly separated from my observations on challenges facing women’s enskilment in the transport sector. It is nevertheless my perspective that the dynamics of male mentorship bear different implications for women as I show in the next paragraph.

Overwhelmingly, with the exception of two older female respondents (KE26 and KE32), who identified female peers and older female leaders who had advised them about career moves, my female

respondents pointed to male supervisors who provided what I saw as a push out of their comfort zones to take on more challenging roles. These roles often required more assertive behaviours than they would have ordinarily displayed at that point in their careers i.e., junior team members presenting at international conferences or leading field teams. I look to the example of KE20 who spoke of her supervisors on a transport research project who insisted that she take the lead in presenting her part of the project at an international conference and pushed her to do so despite there being no discernible benefit for them. This enabled her to gain visibility in her field and to eventually become an expert working at the same level of seniority and decision-making power as one of these supervisors on a different project. It should be noted that there were other examples of supportive supervision, such as the case of KE13 and KE14 mentioned in section **Error! Reference source not found.**, but I viewed this as different from actively encouraging junior female staff towards activities that would allow them to further develop their skillsets and lead to promotion or career advancement.

KE20 is a mid-career female professional, a consultant specialising in transport-related research. I was introduced to her by someone she had worked with alongside the person she later identified as a mentor, KE21. KE20 is in her mid-thirties and married with two young children. When KE20 described her experience with her then supervisor, she said,

“I remember him taking me to the field, doing research, educating people...and he saw me light up. Then he told me, ‘Okay, there is this project I have, and I’d like you to go to the field with me.’ So, that’s how it began. I went to the field, collected data and then I was told to do a paper on it.”

According to her, KE21 was the one to help her develop in the more technical aspects when she was starting out and writing the aforementioned paper on her research project. She also mentioned two other senior male project managers who were insistent that she take a lead role in not only writing up the research but presenting it at international forums. In her words,

“I had people like them fighting, saying that no, we need the young female researchers to tell us about people in the field. They were adamant and they pushed me forward (at the conference) saying ‘No, no. no. We should listen to what she has to say.’ And I presented my paper, and everybody got to hear it.”

KE21 was a man in his late fifties and in the late stage of his career as a transport consultant. He is married with two children. According to him, he, and his wife both had careers involving extensive travel and sometimes even relocating the entire family for work. He was very matter of fact about this and somewhat amused to realise, when I asked for information around home-based responsibilities, how little childcare responsibilities had played a role in his decision-making around his career. It is interesting to me that while he was willing to speak at length about the project that he had worked on with KE20, he did not discuss his interactions with her. This could be due to my own lack of probing for more in-depth information, but it has been my previous observation that when you mention a former colleague, people tend to speak at least a little about their interaction with them. Casual conversation with another individual who had worked with the two of them on a project indicated that there had grown to be a professional sort of competitiveness between the two for research consultancies and that she had emerged more successful.

The conversation and lack thereof around KE20 and KE21's interactions bring to mind some of the dynamics and power relations observed in patriarchal contexts. Male authority figures tend to be viewed and discussed exclusively as such, i.e., as figures with few or no flaws or conflicts. While KE20 and KE21's mutual colleague noted that it is in the best interest of both to maintain at least a polite veneer in their interactions, I found KE21's silence on his mentorship of KE20 telling. It is my suspicion that his support for her at the earliest stages of her career was in training someone who could support him, not anticipating that she would later come to compete with him.

Although not explicit in this case and due to the sensitivity of the topic during other interviews, it is plausible that there are examples of tokenism by male colleagues, who fail to foresee the effect of their actions, whether this be positive or negative. For example, I noticed that while KE20 acknowledged and detailed his influence in her work and career, he did not do the same despite being prompted to discuss his experience working with her. I wondered if he felt discredited when she appeared to be taking a position as the face of the research at the conference where she presented it. It could also have been simply a matter that he did not consider particularly important or significant in comparison to explaining the details of the transport related projects he had undertaken in eastern Africa.

7.7 PROMOTION, RESPECT AND PERCEPTIONS OF CAPABILITY

Perceptions of women at work in transport was a key query in my research. I consider promotion and career trajectories to be inextricable from the perceptions of capability and assumptions of competence of women in this sector.

For many of the female transport professionals I spoke with, regardless of age, there was a certain sense of self-confidence that they had already proven themselves. As KE20, a female transport researcher put it,

"I was willing to fight for my space there and um I fought for it, and I sat at the table and thanks be to God I was hard and the issues I was bringing to the table were relevant. You know you're not just you're not just coming in with a pretty face as a young girl or a young researcher, you're coming in with brains and facts and that's what matters at the end of the day. Facts beat everything else."

KE26, a female gender professional and former senior member of Kenya's judiciary pointed out some advice she had for any woman in nearly any profession.

"Don't take people coffee. Don't be the one to pray or take notes every time."

She said this in response to a thread of conversation querying the sociocultural norms around gender norms and how that would play out in a woman's professional life.

I also recall my interview with KE01, an urban planner by training in her late thirties. She mentioned in our conversation something that she had experienced while teaching at a national university in Kenya, saying,

“Everybody else would be referred to by their title, Dr So and So, but when it would come to me it would either be ‘that girl’ or ‘madam’. So, it would be like ‘Dr So and So has said this and Dr So and So has said that, so maybe we could hear from the Madame?’ But this refusal to acknowledge that we are there as peers and so everybody at the table has earned the right to be there by merit.”

Her experience was by no means singular. After one too many incidents of impolitic corrections to mostly male colleagues regarding her status as a fellow academic, in addition to her open antagonism towards the exchange of sexual favours among both staff and students, her contract as a professor was not renewed at that institution. KE01 went on to leave academia for private entrepreneurship, having firstly been unable to break into the social networks governing urban planning jobs in both the private and public sector, and subsequently being disillusioned by the cronyism and cover-up of harassment and poor behaviour in academia. I asked her to clarify on and observation about the dysfunctionality of the workplace environment she encountered, and she had this to say sadly about her female peers,

“They will become participants in some of the behaviour, those behaviours of oppressing others. So, they themselves are oppressed and nobody acknowledges them, and so they will find people who are under them, of over whom they wield influence to also oppress, right? And so that cycle of oppression continues.”

This leads into the next subsection of this chapter, looking at women’s role in furthering negative attitudes towards other women in the workplace, and at the implications of poor female mentoring for young women professionals in the transport sector.

7.8 HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Throughout their careers and lives, women face harassment and discrimination. Social media has been rife with videos criticising society’s contradictory expectations for women when it comes to everything from bodies to choices in career and homemaking. Working in a male dominated sector such as transport, women are not exempt from this and may, in fact, be even more vulnerable to criticism due to male oriented standards for success vying with feminine standards for dress and behaviour. In this section, I explore what my respondents shared about their experiences and my own reflections on why harassment and discrimination persist despite policies ostensibly in place to protect women from this behaviour.

Earlier, in section 7.4, a young respondent, KE32, shared a matter-of-fact expectation that I extrapolated to indicate that harassment was not only expected to be part of her workplace experience but anticipated to be handled unjustly. Here, I want to link this to Bourdieu’s habitus, first discussed in section 1.5.

Habitus and Harassment Habitus, as conceptualized by Bourdieu, represents the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that individuals acquire through their life experiences, particularly through their upbringing and social environment. These dispositions influence perceptions, thoughts, and actions in a way that tends to perpetuate the status quo, including existing power structures and social norms.

Harassment, particularly in the context of gender within professional settings, can thus be understood as a manifestation of a habitus that normalizes and perpetuates gender inequalities. This occurs because the social structures within which individuals operate (including workplaces) are imbued with power dynamics that favor certain genders over others, leading to behaviors and attitudes that marginalize or disadvantage women. The normalization of harassment is a reflection of a broader societal habitus that views certain forms of power exertion and gender interactions as acceptable or unavoidable.

The habitus, therefore, not only shapes the likelihood of harassment occurring but also influences the responses to such behaviors, both by victims and by bystanders. It creates an environment where harassment may be overlooked, excused, or dismissed as part of the natural order of things, thereby reinforcing the very structures that allow it to flourish. This cyclical nature of habitus and harassment highlights the complexity of addressing gender-based harassment, as it requires challenging deeply embedded social norms and practices that extend beyond the immediate context of the incidents themselves. Through this lens of habitus, I came to understand harassment as both a product and a reinforcement of existing gendered power dynamics playing out not only in the transport sector but across a multitude of contexts.

The conversation in my research that perhaps best laid out these norms, expectations and experiences of discrimination and harassment was my interview with KE13 and KE14, two practicing engineers whom I interviewed together in their shared office space. They laughed about most of the experiences they shared, with wry humour that told me they had faced such before and expected to do so again. They reflected on an incident where a client wanted to intimidate them out of making a routine inspection after an issue had been raised. They are mid-career engineers in their mid-thirties in a major parastatal and joked that, as field engineers, they called themselves *watu wa mkono*¹² (handymen/persons). They recounted experiences where clients would ignore and even insult them¹³.

¹² Note that being called **watu wa mkono** is Swahili for being a manual labourer as opposed to office workers i.e., the people who do the groundwork. It can be used in a demeaning fashion especially as it usually refers to construction workers not technical staff.

¹³ Note here that the extensive interweaving of English and Kiswahili in this conversation denotes the level of rapport as this is considered a fairly informal and casual level of interaction.

Original Version (English and Kiswahili)

KE14: Um another thing, another challenging thing in our work um we go out there, we are sorting interference or whatever the issue then we will meet men.

KE13: Especially the old men.

KE14: Then, they tell you they cannot deal with a young lady.

BOKE: (chuckles)

KE13: Then there was one who asked us, if we know what we are talking about because it was me and her, we had gone to the fields and yet, he asked us if we knew what we were talking about. I've never been so mad, she walked away. (laughter)

KE14: I was so mad! I was here! I was actually explaining!

KE13: She was so mad she walked away.

KE14: I was so pissed! Cause one, this guy looks at you judges you from how you look, and just anakuundermine from there. Anasema there is no way you know what you are doing.

KE13: The other day like um, how many weeks ago, like it was in January. I go to a place and ati something, and uh immediately I want to sort an issue they call me and they tell me; I know your boss, kwanza aliniandikia message I even have the text here .I know your boss um I know she cannot allow this to happen and wait for my lawyer mwenye anaitwa Mr. M who? The one who was saying?

Translated Version (English Only)

KE14: Um another thing, another challenging thing in our work um we go out there, we are sorting interference or whatever the issue then we will meet men.

KE13: Especially the old men.

KE14: Then, they tell you they cannot deal with a young lady.

BOKE: (chuckles)

KE13: Then there was one who asked us, if we know what we are talking about because it was me and her, we had gone to the fields and yet, he asked us if we knew what we were talking about. I've never been so mad; she walked away. (laughter)

KE14: I was so mad! I was here! I was actually explaining!

KE13: She was so mad she walked away.

KE14: I was so pissed! Cause one, this guy looks at you, judges you from how you look, and just undermines you from there. He says there is no way you know what you are doing.

KE13: The other day like um, how many weeks ago was that? Like it was in January, I go to a place for

KE14: Yeah, Mr M.

KE14: Mr. M, we address you. You see so we have this because you are a lady(chuckles)and you look eh somehow low. Kwanza the report I got, they wrote of course ati alikuwa anaitwa anajua our boss, the big boss akasema ati they look like kanjo ladies. They came very forceful and they didn't look like anything official. My boss akawauliza graciously, my boss is very nice ,she is also a lady akawauliza - I know kanjo. Kanjos ask for money, did they ask for money? Did they introduce themselves? Yes. Did they show you their ID cards? Yes. Then why did you treat them like that?

So, now I was so pissed because of that. That matter, I had to take it up legally. Normally we sort it. Hiyo tunamalizana hapo na negotiations. Cause, kwenda kotini it's hell. Unajua kesi za gava haziishangi ni zile za five years, ten years. So mtu akisha kwambia ulikuja unakaa kanjo um you did...

KE13:You look like a quack

KE14: Not look like anything, you look like a quack and am calling you, Mr. M, to negotiate. You see what is that? Intimidation, right? So, there is a lot of that out there.

KE13: There is a lot of chauvinism.

something, an inspection, I think and uh immediately I want to sort an issue they call me and they tell me; I know your boss, she even sent me a message. I even have the text here. I know your boss um I know she cannot allow this to happen and wait for my lawyer Mr. M. Who? The one who was saying?

KE14: Yeah, Mr M.

KE14: Mr. M, we address you. You see so we have this (referring to the situation) because you are a lady (chuckles),and you look eh somehow low (as in easy to bully/intimidate). First of all, the report I got, they wrote of course since they said they know our boss, the big boss. They said that we looked like we were from the city council (city inspectors). They said that we came very forcefully and didn't look like anything official. My boss then asked them graciously - my boss is very nice; she is also a lady. She asked them, 'I know city council people. They usually ask for money, did my team ask for money? Did they introduce themselves?' They said yes. 'Did my team show you their ID cards?' They said yes. 'Then why did you treat them like that?'

So, now I was so pissed because of that. That matter, I had to take it up legally. Normally we sort it. We usually deal with such cases with negotiations. Cause going to court is hell. Government cases are never-ending, they last five years. Ten years? But essentially when someone tells you that you came looking like a city council official what they're saying is...

KE13: You look like a quack.

KE14: Not look like anything, you look like a quack and am calling You, Mr. M, to negotiate. You see what is that? Intimidation, right? So, there is a lot of that out there.

KE13: There is a lot of chauvinism.

- Excerpt from transcript of interview with KE13 and KE14.

In my interview with KE13 and KE14, the friends and colleagues noted that their romantic prospects had suffered from their profession due to perceptions of female engineers being more aggressive and argumentative than their peers in other professions. In their words,

Original Version (English and Kiswahili)

KE14: I used to date...Ah, no... I was introduced to some guy by my cousin right. I never told him that you know bado mnajuana [you know each other]. I never told him what I do, whatever but I just told him mimi nawork side ya kazi ...that was in twenty niseme...twenty sixteen .So this guy tries to impress me so he brings lunch huko chini anasema anataka kuona Stella. Hio time hata hatukuanga na hizo masecurity mingi so akaulizwa ,which Essie? Essie wa

Translated Version (English Only)

KE14: I used to date...Ah, no... I was introduced to some guy by my cousin right. I never told him that you know (I am an engineer) since we were still getting to know each other. I never told him what I do, whatever but I just told him I have a job at XXX parasatal ...that was in twenty let me say...twenty sixteen .So this guy tries to impress me so he brings lunch and downstairs at the reception, he asks for Essie. At that time, security wasn't as tight as it is

legal, Essie assistant kwa FSM ama Essie Engineer. So now Oh, okay it must be Essie wa X Department. The guy eh nikaitwa nikapewa lunch nini...

KE13: Is there a...?

KE14: Eventually he calls and tells me 'You know Engineers, you are hardheaded, no offence.'
(laughter) oh yes!

KE13: By the way, me, I got used to it,

KE14: Ata Mimi.

KE13: You go out with someone the first date, Then the second date.

KE14: The second.

KE13: That's when he asks like, oh what do you do? Oh, am an engineer ah, that's it! The moment you say am an engineer, that's it.

KE14: You are done.

now, so he was just asked, ' Which Essie are you asking for? Essie in Legal, Essie the assistant with X department or Essie the engineer?' So he assumed and asked for Essie the assistant. Anyway, eventually, they got to me and he gave me the lunch but...

KE13: Is there a...?

KE14: Eventually he calls and tells me 'You know Engineers, you are hardheaded, no offence.'
(laughter) oh yes!

KE13: By the way, me, I got used to it,

KE14: Me too.

KE13: You go out with someone the first date, Then the second date.

KE14: The second.

KE13: That's when he asks like, oh what do you do? Oh, am an engineer ah, that's it! The moment you say am an engineer, that's it.

KE14: You are done.

- Excerpt from transcript of interview with KE13 and KE14.

KE13 and KE14 further noted that their older female colleagues seemed to almost resent the increased support they had as young female engineers in their organization. They also said that they did not expect to advance very far in their careers there and would not advise younger women to enter the sector due to these struggles unless they really had a passion for engineering.

Chapter 3's discussion on African and Western feminist theories sheds light on how these normalized discriminatory behaviors can be challenged and reformed. African feminism, with its emphasis on communal values and negotiation (Nego-feminism), offers strategies for navigating and transforming patriarchal structures that marginalize women. In essence, gender-sensitive policies and practices need to be informed by both the lived experiences of women in these sectors and the theoretical insights provided by feminist research.

This leads me to discuss a significant gap revealed by my discussions pertaining to this chapter. The next section expounds on my analysis of a networking and mentoring gap that spotlights a key difference in how men and women can leverage social capital to gain access to opportunities. The next section explores this question: How can you rely on a social connection in a hierarchical, patriarchal society when one part of the chain of connections is missing?

7.9 BETTER LATE THAN NEVER: THE MISSING GENERATION

Earlier in the chapter, I mention the difficulty I faced in accessing respondents of retirement age. In this section, I discuss the possible reasons why this was so. In my chapter on the colonial legacies and other external influences on Kenya's transport sector, I discuss the role of education in shaping societal understanding of gender roles and the implications thereof for society in general and the transport sector in particular (see sections 4.9 and 4.10).

In my interview with KE05, one of my oldest respondents (in the 70-80 age group), KE05, a retired civil engineer with work experience across eastern and southern Africa mentions that he recalls no women in his university cohort nor in the years before and after him. Another respondent, KE19, a near retirement Kenyan urban planner stated that he could recall only two women in his university cohort with only one that he knew of going on to become a practicing urban planner. KE19 went to university over two decades after KE05. The lack of women in these groups indicates a similar dearth entering employment, which as stated earlier (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**) was assigned by a department of the Kenyan government until the late 1980s. Given the established historical influence of social connections on the Kenyan job market and the importance of those connections in circulating information about industry trends and career opportunities (Hughes & Mwiria, 1989), this reveals a significant gap in women's career networks. This is further indicative of the lack of female leadership in the transport sector as leadership roles tend to be given by academic qualifications and work experience with the latter particularly weighty in civil service.

If there are no senior female officials and transport practitioners in the Kenyan transport sector, this reflects directly on the awareness of women concerning the opportunities to be found for income generation and career building in the sector. If there are no aunties to drop a casual mention of their job in the transport sector in social settings such as family gatherings, to laughingly point out how this young relative is just like them when they were younger and that they should consider studying to become a transport professional like them as well; if such conversations are not normalized with older women to stand as examples to the younger, it is directly reflected in the lack of representation for women in the highest levels of leadership within the Kenyan transport sector.

In summary, I refer back to my conversations with KE05 and KE19. Both pointed out the increase of female enrolment in civil engineering and urban planning programs attributable to concerted awareness raising efforts and affirmative action in lowering grade requirements for female applicants in STEM courses. Both expressed positive expectations for this increase to continue and pointed to the generally good performance of female students in their courses of study as evidence that girls and women could and should continue to strive to build their careers as engineers and transport professionals. Though women are a step late to this sector, strides continue to be made towards equitable access to academic and professional opportunities.

7.10 REFLECTION ON GENDER DYNAMICS IN THE TRANSPORT SECTOR JOB MARKET

This section delves into the nuanced gender dynamics that permeate the job market within Kenya's transport sector, drawing on observations from earlier discussions (sections 7.5 to 7.9) that highlight the multifaceted challenges women face in this field. The transport sector, emblematic of broader societal and economic structures, presents a unique confluence of challenges and opportunities for women, deeply influenced by entrenched gender norms and the historical evolution of the industry.

Navigating Societal and Professional Expectations

Women entering the transport sector confront a dual challenge: they must navigate not only the technical and operational demands of their roles but also a complex web of societal expectations that dictate 'appropriate' career paths for women. The historical context, as discussed in earlier sections, underscores a significant shift from a period of seemingly straightforward career progression for women to a current scenario where gender biases and systemic barriers are more pronounced. This shift is not merely reflective of changes within the transport sector but is indicative of broader societal transformations regarding gender roles and expectations. Recent studies support this, exposing similar patterns of discrimination, harassment and professional isolation encountered by women in the transportation section that can be linked to the intersectionality of gender and societal norms (Porter et al, 2023).

The intersection of societal norms with professional environments in the transport sector provides a fertile ground for academic exploration. The persistence of gender biases and discrimination against women in this field echoes the broader societal constructions of gender roles. The concept of habitus, as applied to gender dynamics in the workplace, offers a valuable theoretical lens through which to examine how deeply ingrained societal norms influence individual behaviors and organizational cultures. Future research could explore how the habitus of individuals in the transport sector contributes to the perpetuation of gender disparities, drawing on qualitative studies that capture the lived experiences of women in this field.

Impact of Gendered Networking and Mentorship

The reliance on informal networks for career advancement, a pervasive feature of Kenya's job market, disproportionately disadvantages women in the transport sector. This disadvantage is amplified by gendered expectations that limit women's access to these critical networks. Mentorship, or the lack thereof, plays a pivotal role in shaping career trajectories. As observed in sections 7.7 and 7.8, the dynamics of mentorship are fraught with complexities, where gender biases often influence the availability and quality of guidance and support women receive. The insights from female engineers and professionals in the sector reveal a landscape where mentorship is not just a resource but a battleground of gendered expectations and biases.

The role of informal networks and mentorship in career advancement, particularly in male-dominated sectors like transport, presents another area for academic inquiry. Gendered access to networks and mentorship opportunities raises questions about the mechanisms through which social capital is accumulated and leveraged in professional settings. Research could focus on identifying the barriers to effective mentorship for women in the transport sector and developing strategies to foster more inclusive networking practices. Such studies would contribute to a deeper understanding of the social structures that underpin professional advancement and the ways in which these structures are gendered.

Harassment and Professional Isolation

Harassment and discrimination, as detailed in section 7.9, emerge as critical barriers to women's participation and advancement in the transport sector. These issues are not isolated incidents but are symptomatic of deeper gendered power dynamics that pervade professional environments. The experiences shared by women in the sector illustrate the everyday realities of navigating a workspace where gender discrimination and harassment are anticipated challenges, reflecting a broader societal habitus that normalizes such behaviors.

Theoretical Implications and Future Research Directions

Reflecting on the gender dynamics within the transport sector's job market, as discussed in sections 7.5 to 7.9, compels a deeper theoretical exploration of the underlying causes and implications of these dynamics. This inquiry not only sheds light on the specific challenges faced by women in this sector but also contributes to the broader academic discourse on gender inequality in the workforce.

The issue of harassment and professional isolation faced by women in the transport sector warrants a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from sociology, gender studies, and organizational psychology. Investigating the prevalence and impact of harassment requires a comprehensive framework that considers the psychological, social, and organizational factors contributing to such behaviors. Porter et al (2023) underscored the impact of an affective atmosphere filled with threat and foreboding, the stress of anticipating, mitigating and avoiding incidents and how this pervasive environment enveloped most women's work experiences in the transport sector in Kenya.

Future research could aim to delineate the specific conditions within the transport sector that facilitate harassment, examining the interplay between organizational policies, workplace

culture, and individual attitudes (Porter et al, 2023). This line of inquiry could provide the basis for developing more effective interventions to combat harassment and promote a more inclusive workplace environment. It is crucial, in addressing harassment, to understand the nuances of the aforementioned affective atmosphere of shame, fear and anticipated violence and how this shaped women's experiences. That this further influenced women's strategies for navigating these challenges would greatly inform interventions aimed at dismantling the structures and norms perpetuating women's exclusion from Kenya's transport sector, with ramifications for the wider Sub-Saharan and global norms for women.

To sum up this section, the exploration of gender dynamics in Kenya's transport sector job market opens up multiple avenues for academic research, offering insights into the complex interplay between gender, society, and professional life. By delving into the theoretical underpinnings of these dynamics, scholars can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gender inequality in the workforce and inform the development of strategies to address these disparities. This academic endeavor is not only about documenting challenges but also about envisioning a more equitable future for all individuals in the transport sector and beyond.

7.11 REFLECTION ON POSITIONALITY AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DISCUSSION

Factoring Age in a Hierarchical Society

As a young Kenyan professional conducting this research, my age positioned me in a unique spot, especially since the majority of my respondents were older and more established in their careers. This age dynamic possibly influenced the kinds of responses I received, as senior professionals may have been more open or reserved due to my junior status.

Insider-Outsider Perspective

Being a Kenyan afforded me an insider's perspective that was invaluable for interrogating cultural nuances. However, being younger and less experienced professionally allowed me a certain outsider status. This dynamic enabled me to question things that 'everyone knows,' offering fresh insights or challenging established ideas. My insider-outsider status complicated but enriched my data, allowing for a layered understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing women in Kenya's transport sector.

Unpacking 'Common Knowledge'

My dual positioning provided me the leeway to interrogate what is commonly taken for granted. This unique vantage point permitted me to delve deeper into subjects that may have been dismissed or overlooked if they were raised by someone fully entrenched within the sector or the culture.

Ethical Awareness

Given my unique positioning and the sensitive topics under investigation, I remained vigilant about ethical considerations. My awareness of power dynamics—be they based on age, professional standing, or social location—helped me approach the research process cautiously, aiming for a respectful and equitable dialogue.

Bridging Theory and Lived Experience

My unique positionality served as a constant reminder of the gap between academic theories and real-world experience. I continuously strived to make sure my discussion remained grounded in the lived realities of my respondents, even while leveraging theoretical frameworks to make sense of these experiences.

By detailing my positionality, I aim to be transparent about the ways it could have influenced this chapter's discussion. Having established the unique vantage point from which this research was conducted, I conclude the chapter with a reflection regarding the critical findings that have emerged from the study, illustrating the complexities and challenges women face in Kenya's transport sector.

7.12 CHAPTER CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

In this chapter, I have delved into the multi-faceted structural barriers that women face in Kenya's transport sector. Through interviews and analyses, I've uncovered a reality where the institutional framework and historical legacies disproportionately impact women. Policy processes, often designed without gender sensitivity in mind, have entrenched these barriers, making it difficult for women to progress in their careers as straightforwardly as their male counterparts. This lack of gender inclusivity in planning has severe consequences, not just limiting women's career growth, but also stifling the sector's potential for innovation and diversity.

Key Findings:

Unpacking the Subtle, Yet Powerful, Forces of Gender Roles

The persistence of traditional gender roles has proven to be another crucial barrier for women in this sector. My research highlighted how these roles are continuously reinforced through daily tasks and interactions in the workplace. From serving coffee to taking meeting minutes, seemingly inconsequential tasks are assigned to women, especially those in junior positions. These actions, though minor, perpetuate a cycle of gendered expectations that erodes women's professional standing, ultimately impeding their career progress.

Societal Pressures: The Personal Is Indeed Professional

Beyond the workplace, I've also found that societal norms and expectations significantly impact women's professional journeys. Often, these social pressures serve as invisible barriers that restrict women's career mobility. This is evident in the way society values marital and familial success over professional accomplishments for women. Interviews with younger professionals in the sector, such as KE13 and KE14, reveal that their career choices have had spill over effects on their personal lives, which adds another layer of complexity to this issue.

The Tightrope of Aspirations and Gender Norms

Navigating gender norms while aspiring for career growth poses a unique set of challenges for women in the sector. Through my discussions, I noted that women face a dilemma—they are expected to be assertive but not aggressive, confident but not rude. These biased societal expectations create a tightrope women must walk daily, affecting not only their career trajectories but also their abilities to be their authentic selves in various social environments.

Policy Implications: A Call for Comprehensive Reform

What has become increasingly clear is that tackling these challenges requires more than just policy changes; it necessitates a systemic overhaul. For meaningful and lasting transformation, the approach must be multi-faceted, spanning from grassroots activism to high-level policy reform. This ensures that changes are not just cosmetic but have a long-lasting impact on gender dynamics in the sector.

Unpacking Complexity: Setting the Stage for Future Work

In summary, this chapter serves as a foundational exploration of the complex challenges women face in Kenya's transport sector. It advocates for a nuanced approach that tackles issues at both policy and cultural levels. I aim to offer a comprehensive perspective that can guide future research, advocacy, and policymaking initiatives.

As I wrap up this chapter, I feel compelled to broaden my lens further. The individual stories I highlighted, although crucial, are just one piece of a complex puzzle. In the next chapter, my focus will shift to the external stakeholders involved—specifically, donors and the development sector. I aim to explore how socio-political dynamics contribute to both opportunities and barriers for women in Kenya's transport sector. By doing so, I hope to provide a more holistic view of the complexities involved and explore perspectives on both opportunities and barriers to making progress in mitigating gender disparities in Kenya's transport sector.

8 LOOKING FROM THE OUTSIDE IN – EXTERNAL ACTORS AND THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH KENYA’S TRANSPORT SECTOR

8.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss my findings related to external actors influencing Kenya’s transport sector and women’s employment therein. In an earlier chapter (Chapter 3) I mapped out the context of Kenya’s socio-political history and changes to the legal system and gender norms. I have paid particular attention to the time immediately preceding and following the promulgation of the 2010 Kenyan National Constitution and the promise for progress towards gender equality it touted (Chapter 5). I have further already mapped key actors identified by my respondents and key interventions introduced to Kenya’s transport sector landscape by the Sustainable Development Goals and gender mainstreaming programming (see sections 4.6 and 4.7). In this chapter, however, I focus on the development sector as a significant vector for change in women’s career aspirations in the transport sector in Kenya. I further explore the overlap between the development sector and the transport sector, the latter itself an emerging field for women’s employment. In the following subsection, I will outline how this chapter addresses each of the research questions initially presented, providing a roadmap for how I will explore the intricate web of historical, social, political, and economic factors that affect women's roles and aspirations in Kenya's transport sector.

8.1.1 Research Questions Revisited

The scarcity of women in key positions in the transport sector, coupled with the challenges they face in promoting gender mainstreaming despite national guidelines, highlights complex issues of equity and gender dynamics. In this section, I will outline how this chapter tackles each of the four research questions to shed light on these multifaceted problems.

1. **Historical, Social, Political, and Economic Influences:** The opening part of this chapter discusses how external factors like historical legacies and international relations—particularly with countries like China—shape the opportunities and challenges for women's career development in the transport sector. Through the lens of international engagement, I analyse how political and economic agreements spill over into employment landscapes, affecting women in key positions.
2. **Perceptions of Barriers:** This chapter's analysis includes the impact of externally funded projects in increasing competition without enhancing local capacity within Kenya’s transport sector. This adds an additional layer of complexity to the already-existing barriers to skill acquisition and employment in the sector.
3. **Visibility and Gender-sensitive Practices:** This chapter asks whether women’s visibility in externally funded projects leads to more gender-sensitive practices. The discussion also evaluates whether international stakeholders are contributing to or mitigating gender imbalances.
4. **Aspirations and Global Dynamics:** The discussion delves into how international and domestic policies and norms may intersect to influence women’s career aspirations in the sector. Here,

the focus is on exploring how external influences shape women's aspirations and potentially provide opportunities for their professional development.

By navigating through these avenues, this chapter aims to offer an enriched understanding of the external influences that impact women's roles and aspirations in Kenya's transport sector. The goal is not to provide fixed solutions but to paint a detailed portrait of the environment in which these women operate, thereby offering nuanced insights into their experiences and challenges.

After laying out the general landscape of women's employment and career aspirations in Kenya's transport sector, it's crucial to delve deeper into the specifics of how external influences play a pivotal role in shaping this landscape. These influences not only dictate the terms of engagement but also the avenues available for women's participation and advancement in the sector. Understanding the external pressures and opportunities is critical for a comprehensive grasp of the challenges and potentials that women encounter.

In the next section, I begin the discussion by mapping the role of previously identified key development actors in Kenya's transport sector and their approaches to gender mainstreaming.

8.2 KEY EXTERNAL ACTORS IN KENYA'S TRANSPORT SECTOR LANDSCAPE

Infrastructural development has played a prominent role in political agendas across sub-Saharan Africa since the beginning of the 20th century. This has provided a stage for actors with multiple interests to interact with African developmental landscapes (see Chapter 4). Since the start of the 21st century actor interventions have arguably become even more complex as new actors have entered the development scene.

In this section, I reintroduce key external actors in Kenya's transport sector landscape through the eyes of my respondents and highlight evidence of their impact before concluding with an analysis of their broader implications for women's professional careers in this sector.

8.2.1 The United Nations

Among the most significant impetuses for political commitment to gender equality in policy and practice are the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and their successors, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). One cannot discuss the MDGs (2000-2015) and SDGs (2015-present) that have provided some key contextual elements to development interventions in Kenya without referencing the United Nations. Kenya is host to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), one of four major UN office sites globally as well as the UN official headquarters on the African continent. UNON further serves as the global headquarters for the United Nations Environmental Programme, UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat. Kenya has also hosted key global meetings on gender equality and has been lauded for promulgating a constitution in 2010 with landmark legislature on the same influenced by MDG3. In chapter 4, there is a more in-depth discussion of the specific legislature and its effectiveness. Importantly, some of the key multilateral and bilateral donors supporting development programmes in Kenya, such as the World Bank, African Development Bank, UK DFID etc. have put considerable emphasis on promoting gender equality, referencing MDG 3 and SDG 5 over the past 2 decades. Nevertheless, a 2019 report on gender mainstreaming in road infrastructure by the Kenya National Highways Authority (KENHA, 2019) indicated that there are no sector specific indicators for gender mainstreaming in the transport sector.

MDG Progress in Kenya: 2000 – 2015

The MDGs failed to pay any direct attention to transport but rather focused on basic needs, ignoring the potential of transport to alleviate poverty (Bardouille et al. 2009). Thus, progress in Kenya as in many other countries was principally centred around achieving universal primary education for girls (as well as boys) and on health targets. Bryceson (p.3 citing Hook, 2006) argues that promoting gender and empowering women was included as a goal because of Western lobbying whereas transport was excluded because those representing transport concerns were not exerting themselves in the international MDG arena. It was not until the publication in 2005 of the African Union et al.'s '*Transport and the Millennium Development Goals in Africa*' that the key role of transport in achieving the MDGs began to achieve wide recognition.

In Kenya, much of the emphasis under the MDGs, was on Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education, and Goal 6: Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Goals 4 and 5, on child mortality and maternal health respectively, tended to be lumped together with Goal 6 in programs due to the availability of donor funding for maternal-child health initiatives particularly in vaccination and improved nutrition. Improved access to anti-retroviral drugs and palliative support for managing HIV/AIDS had significant resources from international donors.

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women, provided a platform from which there could be increased discourse and awareness on gender-based violence and discrimination. Each MDG had an emphasis on gender and gender mainstreaming. This was of great benefit for civil societies in Kenya in the promotion of gender equality and the highlighting of gender inequalities in each sector. This increased awareness was a key factor in the promulgation of a gender sensitive National Constitution in 2010. This period also saw increased visibility for women in leadership, particularly in politics as well as the highlighting of women in unusual career roles such as female pilots and operating heavy machinery in construction of roads (as well as buildings).

Case Study: Affirmative action in STEM enrolment for female students

The push for increased access to education for girls saw improved access for girls to formal secondary and tertiary education beyond the universal primary education. Research has shown the potential long-term impacts on their employment prospects that can be extrapolated within the transport sector. In their 2012 study, Beffy et al. revealed that choice of field in education tended to be based on expectations of future income. The same study stated that awareness was a major factor in the pursuit of STEM education (Beffy et al, 2012). This referred to awareness of career options, and the impact of gender insensitive presentation and practice.

MDG-aligned focus on girl's education in Kenya was not intended to specifically address inequality within the transport sector. However, it has served to narrow one of the major gaps between men and women in the transport sector in the country, namely entry level qualifications. This affirmative action was explained by KE19, a senior university official at a major technical institution, when he said:

“...there is an upward growth in terms of enrolment of our females in this program and that is also because we admit a lot of students through the pivot wing...whereby the students who are not necessarily coming in through government sponsorship or scholarships where boys are more than girls. Under the private sponsorships, we are having a very uh a very good number of

women coming in that is because proper entry into university or what they call main admission is based on competition and this competition is not handled by us. It is handled by cut off points as set by the admission board, and they allocate to us based on the set cut off points.

...I think the greatest killer is Physics rather than Mathematics. So that's why you find most girls ...didn't take physics at their O levels so they are unlikely to join the technical university because a large number of programs require Physics as a requirement."

A general increase in the number of female students has meant a specific increase in the number of female engineering students as well as female students in urban planning and other transport related fields such as logistics training. It has also meant an increase in the number of female teachers and professors available to teach such classes and serve as a visible role model for women in STEM. The Government of Kenya, through aligned ministries, in this case, the Ministry of Education, reported on progress of the MDGs as a member state of the UN. In the next paragraph, I examine the aforementioned practice of affirmative action in STEM enrolment for female students at tertiary level and the impact for women's career aspirations in the transport sector.

There has been a noted increase in enrolment of female students at Kenyan institutions offering certification in engineering and other transport related STEM courses such as urban planning. According to KE19, a senior male academician in a decision-making position in a Kenyan technical institution, this is due to a national policy for higher education requiring government sponsored institutions to lower the grade requirements for female students (see section 5.8). One of the areas of vulnerability for female students seeking higher education in STEM courses has been poorer grades and foundational learning at the secondary school level. This means grades that either did not meet the cutoff for admissions to STEM courses in tertiary education or complete lack of a key subject such as physics and mathematics. The prevalence of gender segregated secondary schools has not helped as traditionally, girls' schools have not offered strong STEM focus.

According to a 2011 study examining affirmative action in two major universities in Kenya (Onsongo 2011), affirmative action for admissions was not a particularly effective measure due to several factors. This included lack of research-based and contextualized interventions that would address the underlying causes of poor performance of female students at the secondary school level. It also critiqued the lack of financial assistance for female students from poor backgrounds and the overall lack of systematic and deliberate resource allocation to gender centres or interventions by universities outside of donor funding sources.

A final factor to consider is how to teach gender equity in a sector still unfamiliar with the application of the concept. KE19 noted that there are challenges for the education system to catch up to the 'soft skills' now required for professionals in technical courses. There remains a substantial task in integrating equity impacts, gender included, into professional practice and teaching.

SDG Progress in Kenya: 2015 – Present

With the SDGs, transport gained a little more prominence, notably through SDG 11.2: **“all citizens will have access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems by 2030 by expanding public transport. In doing so, special attention must be given to the needs of those in vulnerable**

situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons”. However, as with the MDGs, gender empowerment was far more centre stage in the SDGs than transport.

There is no greater evidence for internationally accountable political commitment to gender equality than a member state’s support for the SDGs, in this case, SDG 5. SDG 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. While the SDGs are inherently optimistic and idealistic, SDG 5 is particularly reliant on a widespread and unprecedented scale of societal and structural change for success.

Despite the considerable political pressure exerted by UN’s high-profile presence in Kenya and associated multilateral and bilateral donor support to actually implement measures towards gender equality, there is a fundamental issue in relying on a legal framework and on political goodwill.

KE26, a legal professional in her early 50s described the situation eloquently as she spoke animatedly with me over a Zoom interview. We talked from our respective home offices, hers in the upscale quiet suburbs of inner Nairobi, sunlight filtering through massive windows onto a large executive desk and her figure sinking into the ubiquitous leather executive chair found in many senior officials’ offices across the country. She was casually dressed in the local *dera* housedress, but a more formal blazer hung from a coat rack just behind and to the side of her seat, a common sight in my COVID-19 lockdown interviews. Due to long familiarity, she spoke with more animation than she would usually display in her many public appearances and with more evidence of the wry humour that punctuates her world view. As she described the situation,

“So, you are then looking at international treaties, international instruments, that recognize and encourage governments to, to ensure gender equality. And then providing this as the standards are saying, we then have to have national laws uh that align with that. Uh but at the same time, you have cultural legal structures uh that enjoys greater legitimacy eh with the communities, because this is what defines their way of life. Uh and within that cultural system, you have very strong patriarchal you know, underpinning so that the man is the head of the family...

...So, what then would happen is to try and deal with then the attendant tension that necessarily must arise uh when, you know, as government’s are obligated to do there’s an attempt to impose and you know, our constitution actually says this constitution overrides customary law, uh especially when it comes to issues of non- discrimination and so gender equality, so then they should be [asking] how do you address the tensions that must necessarily arise?”

Excerpt from Interview with KE26

My conversation with another respondent, in my view, aptly demonstrated the reason for the reluctance so often found to implement and enforce well written and well-intended anti-discrimination policies. UK02, a senior female transport professional and researcher based in Europe spoke with me over a Zoom interview from her living room. She had just narrated several instances of harassment in fieldwork contexts and how inadequately they had been handled. In light of this, I had asked how much she thought gender mainstreaming had affected changing attitudes towards gender

discrimination and harassment. She sat back in her sofa to contemplate the question for a moment before leaning forward again into the camera to respond.

“My observation of this kind of project, and just from twenty years of experience, I think the policies have sort of changed for the better. There is definitely an appetite for change everywhere, but I think the impetus for that change is questionable. What I mean about that is, I think that perhaps this is because of, well, sort of a measure by which the countries receive loans – development loans and aid, that they are having this. Multilateral and bilateral donors are requiring these countries to put policies in place to prevent discrimination against women, vulnerable groups and so on. So, I think that’s the reason it’s happening.

But the genuine sort of appetite to bring about change as a result of those policies is still lacking. You know, because of order, I mean there will be some countries which are [more] progressive than others but I think that it’s sort of like, ‘right we’ve this policy, we got gender ministry, we’ve got gender vocal... in other departments you know that’s fine, we can check that box and we can tell the World Bank we’ve done that. They can give us our money’...”

Excerpt from UK02

This is echoed by UK06, a retired male transport professional who had a critical view on the approach taken by gender mainstreaming and the development rhetoric around gender equality. In his perspective,

“As I said... there’s a lot of rhetoric about gender sensitivity. A lot of talk about gender equality um. I found myself initially being attracted to the idea of, let’s make it a level playing field for men and women. But then really, moving to the idea, you’ve got to be proactive, and you could actually bias in favour of women to get any movement at all. Because of these ingrained things I’m telling you about, even though you think you have level playing field, unless you have some positive discrimination, especially in the early stages, there’s a chance that nothing moves. So positive discrimination. I started off being very sceptical about it but came to the view that without that, you can’t sometimes get change to happen. Once you get women in in positions of seniority, it improves to a certain extent. But still, I get disappointed with sometimes women in in the senior positions often doesn’t help the gender balance, particularly.

Either because they’re defending their backs or justifying their position against the men who surround them. So, they don’t seem to, well, I’m generalizing here, but you don’t see a massive move in favour of gender equality just because you have a woman Deputy Director of Roads or whatever it is. Because they tend to be trying to, this is my own opinion, by the way. Often, they’re trying to sort of um justify themselves, whether it’s consciously or subconsciously, in the role they’re doing. So, if they were there, maybe they feel if they started favouring women, they’d be, they’d be accused of, oh, you’re a woman so, you’re biasing everything in favour of women?”

Based on these responses, it becomes necessary to re-examine some of the interventions and structures touted to help women possibly achieve their career aspirations within the transport sector in Kenya. In the next sub-section, I examine microfinancing as a vehicle to support women's entrepreneurship in the transport sector.

Case Study: Microfinancing for female-owned businesses in response to SDG 5

Microfinance has often been seen by donors as a key tool for promoting SDG 5, including in Kenya. In the transport sector, it has potential to support women entrepreneurs for instance as drivers and contractors with supplementary financial assistance such as SACCOs. However, it has been a critique of interventions promoting microfinance that this fails to address development challenges beyond subsistence level income generation particularly for women.

I take the example of Kenya Women Finance Trust (KWFT), one of the largest and best-known microfinancing options for women in Kenya. The Kenya Women Finance Trust is considered a model lender by the likes of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. Founded in 1981 by a group of Kenyan professional women, the bank was having challenges with non-performing loans and under suspicion of widespread insider lending among the Board of Directors by 1989. In 1991, the original donors, the Ford Foundation and UNDP as well as other donors such as IFAD and the Belgian Survival Fund stepped in to rehabilitate the trust. By 1999, it was the largest microfinance institution in Kenya, and a clear example of external stakeholders having a positive impact on an intervention. In choosing to expand aggressively into rural Kenya, KWFT now boasts 75 percent Kenyan ownership with 25 percent under strategic social investors and benefits over 100,000 low-income Kenyan women running small businesses based on loans. The challenge comes in having the time and support to grow through loan cycles to create bigger businesses as initial loans start at USD 200 at the maximum. This is an issue for aspiring transport professionals as this gives little to no support for the scale of funding required to engage in government tenders for example road maintenance at the county level. The saying goes that you need money to make money. It sadly therefore remains the domain of women with greater sources of income or collateral to break into the transport sector.

Although microfinancing offers some promise, it's evident that this method alone cannot solve the deeply rooted issues that women face in breaking into the transport sector. The scale of investment required, for instance, is often beyond what microfinance institutions can provide. As we've seen, the limitations of such interventions often translate into limitations for women's career progress. Now, let's examine the role of multilateral and bilateral donors, another key external influence, to understand their impact on gender mainstreaming.

8.2.2 Multilateral And Bilateral Donors

World Bank and African Development Bank

The World Bank first explicitly incorporated a gender mainstreaming strategy into their country diagnostic work in 2001. In 2007, The World Bank adopted the Gender Action Plan to integrate gender concerns into operations spread across regions, and specifically within infrastructure projects. In their current gender strategy for the 2016-2023 period, the World Bank Gender Strategy aims to address issues relating to gender equality and empowerment.

The World Bank's presence in Kenya was first felt strongly in the 1980s with the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programs intended to align Kenya's trade and governance practices with their requirements for taking loans. While the World Bank has noted the difficulty in exercising external influence without undermining local accountability relationships (World Bank, 2003), policy-driven financing (ie. the requirement for borrowing governments to show evidence of certain compliance to international standards), renders this concern moot. This can be seen from the Bank's interventions in the early 1990s. SAPs necessitated the rise of women's organizations to take the place of the government in the provision of support services and the development of privatized markets.

This also applied to infrastructure projects where multiple donors more recently have often required gendered tendering or hiring processes in addition to gendered elements in impact assessments (as explained by KE07, an Engineer in a major multilateral). While the impressively professional female engineer was comfortable discussing the example of key projects she had worked on with a gender element, her explanation of how gender was included in the planning process within the agency she worked for had the feel of check-listing to my ear though the engineer concerned was clearly committed to improving conditions for women and girls in her own projects and advocacy. Her frustration with how nebulous the protocols for gender mainstreaming were was also clear.

"So, for us management says, if you're bringing any project for us to approve, make sure that it has at least a component or measures that are going to address gender concerns. So, it gives you the flexibility to explore. It could be directly or indirectly related to the project...

...Everything that we that we do has to respond to that. There are certain thematic areas that we that we choose now and again, and gender has been gender mainstreaming has been one whole area that has to reflect in everything that we do. The Bank takes that very seriously."

Excerpt from KE07 interview transcript

Throughout this chapter, I am examining the intersection of gender, transport and the impact on both of external donor agencies. Given the scope and limitations of this research, it will be difficult to demonstrate a distinction between the influence of the policy conditions attached to financing and the influence of the programme finance itself.

World Bank funded projects in Kenya are traditionally affected by a number of factors including adequacy and timing of funds disbursement, adequacy of human resource capacity, lack of accountability, lack of transparency in procurement procedures and bureaucracy, disagreements among beneficiaries, and socio-cultural obstacles to implementation (Ouma, 2012). All of these factors have potential to disrupt gender mainstreaming initiatives.

An article was published in 2022 detailing an incident involving two senior officials of the AfDB (Newswire, 2022). The bank's communications and external relations director, a man, responded with asperity to a comment on the lack of female representation in leadership and need for further efforts made earlier by the female director for gender, women and civil society. In dressing her down for misrepresenting the AfDB and their progress in gender equality, he missed the irony of his actions, underscoring her point.

Western Governments as bilateral donors:

In the post-Independence era, the Kenyan government elected to work with the British and other European governments on infrastructure projects. Following renegotiation of earlier colonial administrative arrangements, the Kenyan government under President Jomo Kenyatta was focused on leveraging the post-Independence attitude of colonial powers towards the former colonies in order to achieve national priorities of structuring a functional economic infrastructure in the form of industry, roads and schools. President Jomo Kenyatta elected to work with Western over Eastern governments due to his closest political rival's closer ties to Communist China among other things as discussed in sections 4.7 and 4.8.

Towards the late 1990s, however, given increased alignment to United Nations Development Goals, this support came with significant conditions that forced a certain level of adherence to gender mainstreaming initiatives among other donor priorities.

Several respondents such as UK06, a now retired civil engineer, stated that in the bilateral aid projects that they oversaw, they had to insist on compliance with the hiring of women for road projects because of local project managers and engineers' reluctance to hire women.

The conditionality of Western multilateral and bilateral donor funding has long been a problematic element in the interaction between the Kenyan government and various donor agencies, their staff, and consultants.

The actions and policies of multilateral and bilateral donors such as the World Bank and Western governments have far-reaching consequences. While they may have the best of intentions, their influence can sometimes perpetuate gender inequality, often in subtle and unintended ways. Having looked at how these donor agencies impact gender mainstreaming efforts, I now move the discussion to explore the context through the experiences of expatriate transport professionals in the next section.

8.3 REFLECTIONS OF EXPATRIATE TRANSPORT PROFESSIONALS FROM THE GLOBAL NORTH

In this section, I firstly describe the ways in which non-national actors in Kenya's transport sector view their work and roles in transport projects. I then compare these perspectives with the literature on external influences on national interest projects broadly, then more specifically as regards gender equality and gender mainstreaming initiatives.

During my research, I interviewed several respondents who were specifically non-Kenyan nationals working with European development agencies operating within Kenya's transport sector under a bilateral or multilateral donor. This included engineers designing both infrastructure projects, development specialists designing social interventions and researchers examining the impacts of both.

I spoke with several senior transport professionals, some retired and some still working in the sector. I was talking about their working experiences and how they came into their work in sub-Saharan Africa.

Several older UK based respondents stated that they entered the international, and African, transport sector through their first jobs out of college and for two of my female respondents, their earliest fieldwork experiences abroad made them fall in love with transport and the development sector with a particular emphasis on hands-on, grassroots level experiences. However, while I interviewed three female expatriate transport professionals those interviews were largely focused on their working and

social experiences so as to better compare them with their local counterparts' experiences. In this section I thus focus on the narratives of three male respondents whom I interviewed.

I asked each of them to describe the work they had done in Kenya, or within the region, and what their experiences are in transport and specifically regarding gender and gender mainstreaming. All had established careers in transport and development and all were quite forthcoming about their engagement with gender mainstreaming in the programs they had worked with.

One of those I spoke with (UK06) was a retired Engineer who had been working with the Kenyan government before I was even born and was particularly forthcoming. I interviewed UK06 virtually, via Zoom. Though there were some initial challenges with conflicting schedules and technical errors: we were finally able to speak from his daughter's laptop at his home office in the UK. He had specifically worked in Kenya as a resident engineer from the late 80s through to 1992 and subsequently worked as an independent consultant on rural road construction projects across Africa and Asia from a European base. I reflect that he epitomized the dichotomy of thought separating colonialism and international development as shown in Uma Kothari's 2007 interviews with retired colonial district officers (Kothari, 2007).

He spoke at length on his experiences with women in rural road construction and maintenance projects in both Kenya and the wider sub-Saharan African region, including quite scathing comments about his government counterparts and his lack of comprehension at the prevailing attitude of his male counterparts towards women as workers in these projects. According to him,

“...you have people who are entrenched [in their] ideas that women could not do certain tasks. And it's so hard wired into people, um even when you put the facts in front of them, they're reluctant to believe it...the people can't translate the hard work that women do on the farm or in the house, or carrying the water, to the fact they can do the same hard work as men working on a road project, digging the soil when you are digging a road or digging a field? There's not an awful lot different. But in men's heads, it was.”

He expressed his opinion that he would have actually preferred to hire women more for his labour-based programs due to their availability and flexibility. For context, in the rural areas he was often working in, men would largely seek employment in towns and women would be left to tend farms and households in the villages. Unfortunately, he often got significant resistance from African engineering counterparts who stubbornly claimed that women would lower their productivity even when faced with evidence to prove otherwise.

“I was working with African engineers, mainly, but not entirely. [They] said, Well, you know, we can have women, but that's going to lower our productivity. So I forced the issue. And I said, Look, we were split into work teams. And I said, Okay, we'll have I want to have one work team, at least with uh women in up to 50 percent of women. Reluctantly it was agreed, because it's predominantly a male employment program. We were measuring the productivity very closely, for various reasons. And um on that particular road project, when we got the results, the productivity of the mixed men and women team was as high or higher than the men only team.

So, I said to the African engineers [I was] working with, 'So, there we are, it doesn't ... depress productivity, it even increases it. Why is that?' and one engineer said, 'Well, when the women are in the team, the men will work harder to impress the woman!' [and the rest agreed]"

He saw it as particularly important for women to be involved in rural road maintenance work particularly as it was often unpaid!

"Maintenance is absolutely ideal for women. Why do I say that? Because it is fairly straightforward work. And its work which can be done sporadically. It doesn't have to be done five days a week or six days a week. um so it can be it can be... for a woman who's tied to a household has other commitments and can work plus, the women are less likely to migrate away and so they are based locally and um for maintenance work. You know, the only way to do it efficiently if you're doing it labour intensively is have people who are almost within walking distance of where the road is.

That has multiple benefits - ...everybody knows who's in charge the maintenance and if the road is not looking good, they go and tell the person get on with the work, you know, or equally, the person who's maintaining the road knows immediately when things are going wrong. So you need somebody.... with the ability to work very flexibly, and that's a woman."

Where work had no monetary payment, men were less involved, in his experience with food for work programs as opposed to pay for work programs where he found more women engaged in the former and more men in the latter.

While I found his statements to be unfairly essentialist—generalizing about assumed strengths and characteristics of most, if not all, women—UK06 emphasized these sentiments during our conversation. It was somewhat surreal to encounter a positive spin on a generalization that has contributed to the ongoing marginalization of women within the transport sector in Kenya, regardless of their individual skills and strengths. This surrealism stemmed from my surprise on behalf of women whose context I could only claim a passing familiarity with, finding myself unable to articulate precisely what I found offensive in what I understood was intended as a positive portrayal of this man's opinion of women in the transport sector. Only later did I realize how patronizing this perspective could be and the potential damage of such assumptions, especially when encountering women who do not fit this mold yet are still interested in entrepreneurship or employment within Kenya's transport sector and beyond the scope described in this particular example above.

UK06 went on to speak of a situation where positive discrimination worked against the instatement of a female role model, in what could be taken as an ironic manifestation of the very phenomenon described in the preceding paragraph.

"One woman was the first regional engineer [in another African country], first female regional engineer. She was hopeless, she was really bad (chuckles) she was very weak managerially. ...[for] various reasons, they had to sort of trim down staff, but the very senior person in government says, I can't remove her, because she's the only woman regional Engineer I've got. Um and so the

problem was, you had somebody who was a bad example um and all, you know, her male counterparts knew she was weak um you know, just emphasizing their prejudice, that women can't handle the job, because she was being treated differently than if she'd been a man. So that, you know, that sort of was a turn thing on its head of it was a bit of a negative experience in some respects.”

I noticed in the interview that UK06 spoke frequently of the challenges he had in getting local counterparts to recruit women to work in their program and importantly, how often he spoke of having to use his authority to push the measure through. This speaks to the overarching theme emerging in this chapter of external actors using their position to influence key decisions within the frame of ongoing programs or interventions and leveraging on their support to push decisions through. In one case, he spoke of a gender quota for training road contractors where he leveraged his position to push for three female applicants. While they turned out to be among the cream of the crop. It was his opinion that:

“If I left it to the local council, District Council, who we were trying to work with, no woman would have got any chance. So it's, again, a positive discrimination uh which, because they put this educational qualification on, which women didn't meet, not because they weren't intellectually confident, it's because they didn't get the opportunity.”

His last point is highlighted by some literature speaking to the rarity of women contractors and their lack of opportunities (Mulongo et al, 2020).

While UK06 came to this realisation and used his role to aggressively push for women's inclusion in his projects, it was unclear to what extent his action had changed the opinions or actions of his local counterparts. I refer again to Kothari's argument that simply being from, or of, the West whether as the representative of a colonial or donor power ascribes status (Kothari, 2007). This was demonstrated with UK06 leveraging his position and status to push for a change in what Kothari terms a 'performance of expertise and authority' (ibid.).

It was also impossible to determine whether there was any significant change to similar projects after his departure since I was unable to interview any of his counterparts in the course my data collection. He also points out that there are three levels; the policy and decisionmakers, the technocrats and the people on the ground, and unless all three levels are in agreement on what needs to happen, it will not occur.

He emphasised how this had negatively affected another project in southern Africa:

“At the high level, there was a positive and genuine commitment to greater gender equality and opportunity. In the rural areas, [some people also saw] there was no opportunities for women who were particularly marginalized women, whether they're widows or single parents, whatever. This was a great opportunity for them. But in the middle level, it was entrenched in [the] view this wasn't the right thing to be doing to employing lots of women. It had to be men. And so however, the good words at the top [as to] how strong they [i.e. women] were, and however easy the door was open for this at the local level,

it's the technocrats in the middle [who] haven't believed it themselves [so nothing has happened].”

For women in leadership at technocratic level, he points out that, much like earlier stated about women in leadership in general,

“That is the issue. Again, you see, it’s attitudes. And only you can say the words, you can write a book, or you can write the policies. But if the minds don't change, the actions don't follow. And it is, and as we said, that the few women that get into this technocratic level, probably are so busy trying to defend their position or not defend or justify their position, they haven't got enough headspace to really be the agents of change, you might expect them to be, other than being a demonstration, that book if you are open, doesn't mean you can't be a road engineer or whatever it is.

Yes, well, you see you know, they've got to justify their position. I mean, they've got to try and conform to what to how things have been done in the past. Continue that if they come in and start to try and change things then...it can happen but you would be quite strong to do that.”

He pointed out that women are good at steady repetitive work and making things neat, that they were more skilled but not recognized as such. Men were more motivated for larger projects and immediate work. Once more, I was taken aback by the somewhat patronizing tone of his perspective and as I later reviewed my transcripts, it became a familiar thread of seemingly positive perspectives, particularly from older male respondents, revealing the underlying paternalistic thought patterns still influencing concepts of what was, at the core, appropriate or not so for women in the transport sector.

I interviewed a second European man [UK 03] who had worked with many multilateral and bilateral donors as a transport consultant. This included work in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya. In the interview, he described himself as a consultant who would influence policy indirectly as opposed to perhaps direct lobbying and activism.

At a fairly early point in the interview, he emphasised how incredibly chauvinistic and male dominated the transport sector still is. “”

“It (the transport sector) has got a wide male privilege and in Africa, it is a black male privilege. They (African governments) will always accept money from the World Bank to do a gender mainstreaming proposal and they’ll get someone to do it, probably get the local university or somebody else to do it, and they may or may not read the reports but they will have a gender policy that they will say that yes, it refers to our own gender policy and when you go to meetings you’ll have all male panels which I think is an affront in this day and age um. But I’m sure you’ve seen it in the transport conferences; they have all male panels um and yeah so yeah, it is a huge problem.”

He recalled attending a major conference in Kenya where:

“One of the old Kenyan engineers got up and said um, ... this is all Western propaganda, Neo-colonialism, the idea that women are equal and trying to bring that in and then half the audience would absolutely applaud which would include the Westerners um and the other half of the audience started clapping um the Kenyan audience because you know that’s what they were thinking.”

UK03 pointed out that if women don’t have an alternative then it is discriminatory under international gender law. He is outspoken and rather bitter about ‘white people with black skin’, his counterparts in bilateral and multilateral agencies. He was referring to technocratic elite who were either implicitly or explicitly dismissive of local knowledge and agency, preferring to benchmark (set goals and examples/modelling) from Western knowledge and priorities.

A third male respondent from Europe, UK07, has worked in Africa on several multi-laterally funded projects including major regional infrastructure projects across sub-Saharan Africa. He has been in partnership with Kenyan organizations and individual transport researchers over the years and remains quite familiar with the Kenyan context.

I spoke with him from his home office in the UK and he talked about the need for incentives and enforcement in transport interventions with particular reference to road construction, noting the benefits of employment quotas in the road construction contracting process. Much like UK06, he emphasized that he had found female laborers to be more reliable and consistent than their male counterparts. As he observed, the ILO in the 1990s has a big push towards involving women in road construction and this included women as contractors and not just laborers. But he further pointed out that donors in today’s context do not support labor-based contracts, looking more towards technologically driven work. He noted that women would be more likely to lose out on such contracts though he expanded on that statement to explain that women were coming in as technical experts in the sector though the numbers were still low.

“With the focus on (technology in) road construction, you tend to get a limited gender focus.”

He also made the point that infrastructure specialists remained relatively unaware and uninvolved in gender equity and equally, gender specialists were similarly uninformed about the transport sector. UK07 saw this as remaining one of the challenging areas going forward saying,

“These specialists speak different languages – they have different technical knowledges. We need to find ways of doing that translation and find ways of making the fit.”

He went on to say,

“There aren’t many multi-specialist people around that can do both. The development of guidelines is not enough. There need to be incentives in place within organizations so that they need to pay attention to gender mainstreaming.”

Based on another interview with an engineer based at a development agency, I postulate that guidelines and incentives do exist but that they are still being viewed as unnecessary components in the development of interventions and projects by the technical practitioners in the transport sector.

UK07 proposes a different approach:

“You needed a sort of a carrot and stick approach in the project designs, whereby projects that didn’t, you know, think creatively about the integration of gender equity into transport design weren’t going to get approved.... And it was that that threat of failure to be approved and implemented, that that acted as a as a catalyst or certainly as a focusing of minds to get serious about integrating gender issues into the, into the design. And I think that’s, that that probably is one of the key steps of making them more useful.”

He noted that the AfDB had made use of this approach to integrate gender into their design, as highlighted by KE07, and made an interesting comparison between the AfDB and the World Bank. In his view, the AfDB considered that national priorities take precedence in implementation whereas with the World Bank,

“They (World Bank) tend to have their own view of what needs to be implemented and how.”

But as he put it,

“Underpinning all of that is a view, I think ... still quite prevalent within the certainly within the road transport sector specialists, is that infrastructure per se distributes benefits to everyone, equitably. So, infrastructure is a good thing. Everybody benefits from infrastructure and, you know, so so fundamentally, then trying to highlight the, the inequities of that, but everybody benefits in, you know, is part of the of the challenge. So, so yeah, the first hurdle really is, the providing (of) the knowledge and the awareness and the evidence that actually, not everybody does benefit from infrastructure, or at least not in the same ways. Equally, not all infrastructure is the same and I think this is the other bit that I’ve been involved in discussions on worked on foot for many, many years. Is that the, who benefits from it... yeah, so not all infrastructures, in the same sense of a major intra urban highway doesn’t distribute the same benefits as a as a basic access with a rural road or those 2000 roads. And, and that, in and of itself is still a challenge.”

He then specifically referenced another African country:

“On the one hand, [they] had a transport strategy that clearly said, you know, as it says in the sustainable development goals that transport policy in [this country] should deliver equity for everyone. But there wasn’t any awareness or appreciation of how on a day-to-day basis, that translates into doing anything necessarily different than that they were going to do anyway”.

I link this to my experience where I was handed a planning document that had no mention of gender even as the respondent, KE31, a county engineer, was trying to prove that sufficiently well-planned transport infrastructure did not need gender mainstreaming in order to provide the necessary

services. The irony seemed entirely lost on KE31 that his planning included no reference to a needs assessment of the population targeted by the project.

UK07 cautioned of something he had noticed in his work: that there is a trend in some of the development banks particularly, that may be translated into national government practice too, where you deal with social risks, also social issues, as part of the safeguarding and risks approach at the end of the design. He pointed out the danger of managing the negative impacts of the project rather than upstream integration into the design which would ideally maximize the positive impact of the project. Gender is thus being sidelined as a risk and dealt with at the end of the project rather than being factored into the preliminary design.

Finally, UK07 reflected on the ephemeral nature of development interventions, in terms of schemes and projects that seem to be highly successful but when you go back to them you find they have just vanished. He critiqued these projects as

“One of those nice stories that is good for a time”

but little else. He also pointed out one form of corruption using a loophole in well intentioned policy (see 5.1.0 for more context):

“You know the way the men have got round this in Kenya its very clever. You combine women, people with disabilities and youth. And youth in Kenya is defined as somebody under 30 so, men between age 25 and 30 are perfectly able-bodied men but they are youth and so you can reach your quota you’d have to have whatever percent of vulnerable people represented. (Where it was intended for) people with disability or women or something like this, you can reach that very easily by just going for able bodied men under thirty.”

To sum up this section, the discussion delves into the complex terrain of gender mainstreaming in infrastructure projects, specifically in the transport sector. Experts like UK07 highlight the scepticism among practitioners about the necessity of incorporating gender perspectives into their work. Contrasting approaches between the African Development Bank and the World Bank elucidate differing ideologies in the interpretation and implementation of national priorities. A crucial issue raised is the prevalent misconception that infrastructure inherently benefits everyone equally, thereby undermining efforts to highlight its unequal impacts. Additionally, there is a tendency to treat gender considerations as an afterthought, managed as a 'risk' towards the end of a project, rather than being integrated from the outset. These nuances are further complicated by the manipulative exploitation of well-intentioned policies, as evidenced in Kenya, where loopholes allow for the subversion of gender and vulnerability quotas. This multidimensional challenge casts a shadow over the effectiveness and longevity of such projects, raising questions that are particularly pertinent as I transition into examining the impact of Sino-African infrastructure projects on gender equity and women's career aspirations in Kenya.

In the next section, I examine perspectives on Sino-African infrastructure projects in Kenya and their possible impact on women's career aspirations in the transport sector.

8.4 PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPACT OF CHINESE SUPER-INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS

In this section, I draw from my respondents perspectives on the impact of Asian, and specifically Chinese funded super-infrastructure projects in Kenya, supplemented by the recent published literature relating to this topic. I was unable to undertake any interviews with Chinese staff employed in the transport sector in Kenya as this phase of my research was planned for post March 2020. I thus faced COVID-19 restrictions that severely limited my opportunities to build the relationships needed to develop access to new informants.

I have previously documented a broad history of Chinese influence in Kenyan politics and economy in in section 4.8 and outlined a case study of a specific road project as an example. In this section, I will not be focusing on a specific project but directly quoting my Kenyan respondents as to their opinions and perspectives on Chinese projects.

The focus on infrastructural development across Africa has coincided with a push towards internationalization by the Chinese government in their attempts to address a national overcapacity crisis (Gambino, 2022). The increased Sino-African infrastructural engagement has been to the benefit of Kenyan political and business elites in addition to the market expansion that benefits Chinese state-owned companies (Gambino, 2022). The optics of Chinese-built and funded mega-infrastructure projects in Kenya have been the subject of political debate in both the 2017 and 2022 Kenyan elections, and the rhetoric around them is clear evidence of divergent Kenyan political agendas depending on the different politicians' audiences.

In her 2019 article on Sino-African relations, Lucy Corkin points out that African rhetoric largely encourages China's role in African infrastructure. She further states that this encouragement is specifically meant to exploit tensions between China and the West (Corkin, 2019). I refer back to chapter 4 and my discussion of development within the early post-colonial period where the Kenyan government capitalized on tensions between the West and prospective Communist donors to gain support for major infrastructure projects. The similarities in approach are striking and play out on both the international and domestic stage.

One of my Kenyan respondents, KE05, a retired civil engineer shared that his primary concern with Chinese infrastructure projects in Kenya was the lack of opportunities for Kenyan contractors and engineering professionals or even students (whatever their gender). The man, in his 70s, spoke at length on the topic, waxing near poetic in mourning lost opportunities to build Kenyan capacity for infrastructural engineering. In his words concerning political agendas,

“At the end of the day, as a country, we have actually lost. Our politicians are looking short-term: What can I show my constituency that I have done? What can I show my people that I have accomplished? You see Uhuru's trying to show us ... to brag about the Standard Gauge Railway ... but building that project is not really half as important as if you had used [it] to train your manpower who will be around for many years and who because of that expertise will now be able to do other things that you don't have. So, it's really sad that we think that is the most important thing in what to do, it is very, very myopic. It could have better to even take longer and make sure you incorporate that manpower development project.”

KE05 was clear that the issue was not exclusive to Chinese contractors but extended to projects contracted to European companies. Nonetheless, the comparative lack of conditionality of Chinese-funded projects regarding human rights, gender and environmental sustainability is highly attractive to African governments in general and the Kenyan government in this case.

According to KE19, however,

“We had had many challenges in terms of implementation of XXX [multilateral] funded projects in the transport sector. They were four projects which were not finished because there were either people going to court because of the corruption activities going to stop the project - especially European contractors who do not win tenders because the Chinese had won all the tenders, or a company wins a tender then itrecruits a subcontractor, usually from China, to implement.”

In 2022, the Kenyan Parliament launched an inquiry into all contracts that the previous Jubilee administration awarded to Chinese State-owned companies since 2013. This was in response to speculation that rich and powerful Kenyans hold minority ownership in local operating firms created by the China-based firms for their projects. Among the key infrastructural projects in questions are the KES 427 billion Standard Gauge Railway, the KES 67 billion Nairobi Expressway, and the multi-billion-shilling Port of Lamu. In total, deals worth over KES 1 trillion have been closed under the Jubilee administration¹⁴. While the inquiry is undoubtedly fueled by political backlash in the change of administration in the most recent 2021 elections, the fact remains that there has been a concerning secrecy surrounding the terms of these mega-infrastructure contracts (Corkin, 2014) and a distinct lack of transparency in determining the effects on the wider Kenyan population.

While the Beijing administration has pumped billions into Kenyan infrastructure projects, there is criticism that use of Chinese firms and labour undermines this value. The US remains one of the loudest critics, citing a lack of significant local job creation. Note that the US is a leading aid donor in Africa, however China surpassed it as a trade partner in 2009. In her 2014 article on the role of rhetoric in Sino-African relations, Lucy Corkin points out that African stakeholders tend to use the rivalry between Chinese and Western governments to maximise political and financial support for themselves (Corkin, 2014). This was clearly seen in the battle of opinions during the campaign season of Kenya’s 2021 elections where the role of external donors and stakeholders was a key part of the debates with popular discourse wary of the scale of Kenya’s debts to the Beijing administration, currently at over KES 750 billion ¹⁵.

In light of the facts of financial profit, it is undeniable that local companies have been relegated to the periphery of infrastructure contracts. With women already on the back foot in leadership within the

¹⁴ Tycoons tied to Chinese Contractors face probe. By Edwin Mutai, Business Daily, Monday February 2022. <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/tycoons-tied-to-chinese-contractors-face-probe-3707302>

¹⁵ Jewel in the crown of corruption: the troubles of Kenya’s China-Funded Train. 9 August 2022. <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/kenya-china-funded-railway-embroiled-in-lawsuits-and-corruption-investigations-becomes-hot-button-election-issue/>

transport sector, further research would be needed to determine the impact of such a competitive environment on women's prospects and career aspirations within the field.

In summary, the discussion in this section focuses on the perspectives of Kenyan respondents concerning the complex socio-economic and political ramifications of Chinese-funded mega-projects in Kenya. The increased engagement between China and Africa is presented as beneficial to political and business elites but questions are raised about the long-term impact on local capacity, particularly in engineering and construction sectors (Tarrosy & Vörös, 2019). Respondents like KE05 mourn the lost opportunity to build local expertise, asserting that the political short-sightedness of these projects could have detrimental effects on sustainable development. Criticisms also arise around the lack of transparency in the contracts and the side-lining of local companies, including issues related to corruption and a lack of conditionality concerning human rights and environmental standards.

The section draws attention to the complexities of international influence, suggesting that the projects are not unequivocally beneficial or detrimental but exist within a complicated socio-economic matrix. This multifaceted landscape sets the stage for examining how these super-infrastructure projects impact gender equity and women's career prospects in Kenya's transport sector.

8.5 REFLECTIONS ON THE DISCUSSION

Before concluding this chapter, I present my reflections on my research findings on external influences in Kenya's transport sector as pertains to gender and women's career aspirations. It is my opinion that there exists a significant clash between Western feminism and still developing African feminist ideals. The challenge, according to the discourse, seems to lie in the uneasy marriage of career aspirations, self-actualization as a life goal and the fulfilment of the traditional role of women within the African context.

To frame the discussion, it is important to recall a point emphasized in Chapter 4. The Constitution of Kenya outlines expectations on equal opportunity, freedom from discrimination and representation of men and women in leadership. It further mandates deliberate action in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups in society, explicitly including women. As shared by KE26, in her time working with FIDA (Federation of Women Lawyers), one of the primary reasons for women's non-use of legal process to address issues of gender-based discrimination and violence is ignorance of their constitutional rights. There have been several instruments in Kenya's political history established for the express purpose of women's legal empowerment such as the Women's Rights Awareness Programme, the Public Law Institute and the Women's Bureau. The typical response to recommendations for changes to laws concerning women's rights in marriage, divorce, child support/custody and property laws around succession and inheritance are met with counteraccusations by politicians that these are against customary law (Nyanchama-Okemwa, 2000). In Kenya, men typically reinterpret customary law so as to justify their usurpation of their female kin's earnings and rights to property and inheritance (Omosa, 1995).

Gender is the battlefield on which traditions often clash with modern sensibilities. Touted as a false doctrine of the West and a neo-colonization of the minds of Africans, gender equality is a fraught topic in Kenya. The backlash within the social discourse takes the shape of ultra-traditionalism, linking to patriarchal norms. While this has been discussed in more detail in earlier chapters (see sections 4.9, 4.10 and chapter 6), it bears repeating.

8.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has delved deeply into the influence of external stakeholders on Kenya's transport sector, spotlighting gender disparities and women's career aspirations. Key players, including development banks, international policy frameworks, and large-scale Chinese infrastructure projects, stand out as significant forces shaping this sector.

Key Findings:

- **Development Banks and Policy Frameworks:** Institutions like the World Bank hold a formidable position, particularly regarding resource allocation and policy influence. However, their efforts often find a disparity between the desired outcomes and on-the-ground realities, especially for women. Instead of a holistic approach, gender considerations tend to be relegated to the risk and safeguarding sections, which impedes the development of truly inclusive transport infrastructures.
- **Chinese Super-Infrastructure Projects:** Chinese-backed infrastructure ventures undeniably propel Kenya's economic progress. Yet, they bring along concerns about transparency, local employment, and the inclusion of Kenyan companies, with pronounced repercussions on women's employment opportunities in the sector.
- **Policy-Practice Gap:** There's a concerted effort to align with global directives, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, a tangible disconnect exists between policy intentions and their real-world impact. This gap often stems from a lack of awareness, deep-rooted traditional norms, or systemic barriers that obstruct genuine progress.
- **Ephemeral Nature of Development Interventions:** The momentary successes of some development projects raise essential questions about their longevity and enduring impact, notably in terms of gender mainstreaming in the sector.

As I close this chapter, I prepare to delve into the concluding remarks of my thesis. In what follows, I will revisit the research questions I initially posed, synthesizing the insights from various chapters to offer a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities for women in Kenya's transport sector. I aim to go beyond simply identifying the issues to propose actionable recommendations and future directions for both research and policy. So, as I transition from examining the influence of external stakeholders on gender disparities in this sector, I now turn my focus towards drawing meaningful conclusions that could lead to sustainable change for women in Kenya's transport industry.

9 CONCLUSION

9.1 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I reflect on the process and findings of this research study, highlighting key points in response to my original research questions and reflecting on the theoretical framework that I adopted. I conclude with my perspective on the research gaps revealed through this study and on policy directions that could be influenced by these findings.

I began my research study with the understanding that women were significantly underrepresented in the transport sector, both globally and in Kenya. This prompted me to develop a series of research questions to interrogate the issue.

- 1. How have historical, social, political, and economic legacies of planning and policy processes impacted on opportunities for women's employment and career development?**
- 2. What do women perceive as the main barriers to skills acquisition and employment prospects in the transport sector?**
- 3. Would stronger visibility of women in professional transport-related roles lead to more gender sensitive practice?**
- 4. If so, how can women's aspirations to work in the sector be expanded and enhanced?**

In this section, I summarise my key findings from the preceding chapters in relation to these research questions.

In the transport sector, acceptance of women within the workspace has been relatively low in comparison to other sectors worldwide. Women still largely take up peripheral or support roles in areas such as logistics and even on project sites (Porter & Omwega, 2022), for instance as desk-based managers, cooks and tickets sellers. Nonetheless, there is a real appetite for positive change in Kenya and across the region, with the rising cost of living and demand for skilled labor incentivizing previously male-dominated working spaces to be opened to women.

A Kenyan news article¹⁶ issued on June 23rd 2023, International Women in Engineering Day, revealed that low enrolment of women in engineering and other STEM courses was a matter of primary concern for the Women Engineers Committee in Kenya. This network for women is collaborating with the Kenyan government and UNESCO to encourage girls to pursue STEM courses at the secondary school level. This article highlighted that women account for only 13 percent of the more than 11,000

¹⁶ Concern over low enrolment as Women in Engineering Day Marked by Leonard Onyango, Nation Media Group. Accessed at: <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/gender/concern-over-low-enrolment-as-women-in-engineering-day-marked-4280260>

members of the Institution of Engineers of Kenya (IEK). An earlier article¹⁷ from the same newspaper in 2019 had the membership at 7 percent.

My findings showed that while the existing policy framework supported women's empowerment for engagement in the transport sector on paper, effective and sustainable change has been hindered by the aggressive proliferation of inflexible gender norms and expectations. It is important to remember that the patriarchal systems in discussion are reinforced and maintained by both men and women in Kenya's society. As detailed in section 3.6, expectations for women in leadership would see women penalized and under scrutiny for actions and behaviors that would be considered admirable in male counterparts. It was further highlighted that the global trend towards civil unrest around race, gender and sexual orientation indicate an increased resistance to ideals that neglect multiculturalism (Heussen-Montgomery & Jordans, 2020) as exemplified in the current developed-developing world paradigm of development (Jackson, 2004).

It was reflected in both the literature and my respondent perspectives that the biased allocation of reproductive labour to women significantly slows, if not halts, their career progression (Nyamongo, 2007). Women suffer from time poverty due to the gendered expectation regarding domestic responsibilities in their roles as wife, mother and carer (Beoku-Betts, 2004). They are moreover expected to prioritize marriage and childbearing, with career progression likely to lead to less socially acceptable outcomes including divorce, separation or remaining unmarried (ibid.).

My respondents were clear that engineering and transport related jobs were considered socially high risk, resulting in reduced eligibility for marriage as seen in section 6.4. It should be noted that for the youngest respondents who were still students, it was their opinion that capability should determine their education course choices, while the largely mid-career professionals of the preceding generation spoke more of their struggles in reconciling their chosen careers with the expectations on them. For the generation before this, the late-stage career professionals, they spoke from their social role as elders and guides, concerned more with the long-term impacts of the younger generations' actions on not just themselves but the wider fabric of society (See section 6.5).

Overall, I would borrow from one of my respondents, KE26 who bluntly stated that:

“The issue women face is the pressures of socialization, to prioritize marriage and not self-actualization.”

9.2 REFLECTIONS ON THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Here, I revisit the theories I chose as appropriate lenses through which to explore my research questions, building into my theoretical framework. These are namely, Bourdieu's habitus (1986), Bourdieu's social capital (1986), Butler's performativity (2006), Obioma-Nnaemeka's nego-feminism (2004), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) and broad radical feminism. While these theories are detailed in Chapter 3, in this section I reflect on how each theory served to explain observed phenomena within the Kenyan context for women in the transport sector.

¹⁷Concerns over low numbers of Kenyan women engineers by Ndung'u Gachane, Nation Media Group <https://nation.africa/kenya/counties/concerns-over-low-numbers-of-kenyan-women-engineers-201656>

I referred to **Bourdieu's habitus** to explain how women became systematically blocked off from the spaces in which decision-making around opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship in transport occurred. I extrapolate that if a woman cannot gain access to the men's table, the sitting room, the bar, the country club and the unspoken men-only spaces in which social networks are formed and information on opportunities exchanged then she operates at a disadvantage within the sector. With (male) networks forming from sex-segregated exclusive high schools into cliques at university and alumni groups thereafter, a silo of the right way – often the only 'proper' way - to design and enact transport related development and policy emerges. This mentality continues to dominate, dismissing even the necessity of integrating women's experiences and perspectives (among other vulnerable groups) in the planning process. My interviews, such as with KE01 in section 7.7 and KE33 in Section 7.5 revealed the deeply ingrained societal norms and expectations that form the habitus of women in the transport sector, impacting their professional lives and furthermore shaping a lived reality, influencing how women navigate the male-dominated spaces of the transport sector.

Bourdieu's theory of social capital (1986; Sissaiainen, 2003) was an interesting lens through which to explore some of the dynamics of women's gendered networking for opportunities in employment and entrepreneurship. Given that their aspirations were directed towards a gendered work environment, this theory served to highlight the ways in which social network assets were affected, conditional as they were on socioeconomic and gender circumstances (Warr, 2016). Narratives such as that of KE32 in Section 7.4 vividly illustrate the challenges in building social capital, underscoring tangible manifestations of Bourdieu's theory. Women's efforts to forge professional networks often clash with the sector's entrenched gender biases, such as with KE illustrating the struggle to accumulate social capital in a space that does not readily recognize their contributions.

Butler's performativity (2004) proved a valuable way to explain how women pursuing modern forms of feminism, particularly in male dominated spheres that require male coded behaviors and measures of success, find themselves often cut off from both the modern and the traditional avenues to power/leadership for women. Traditional avenues for women would be female oriented and require more extensively negotiated and mutually agreed upon privileges and conditions in society, for instance roles as female deaconesses in church, traditional healers, midwives. Modern avenues are still undergoing the negotiation process and we see some evidence of where it is failing to achieve its intended purpose, such as in the research on roles decreasing in value as more women become involved and eventually changing to be associated with a female role and therefore somehow less valuable (West & Zimmerman, 1987) i.e. secretary, air hostess, nurse. The performative aspects of gender became strikingly evident through my interviews, with women sharing stories of how they navigate gender expectations in their daily work. These narratives bring to life Butler's concept of performativity, as women consciously and unconsciously enact gendered performances that align with or challenge the sector's norms. Interviews such as the one with KE13 and KE14 in Section 7.8 highlighted the complexity of these performances, revealing the fine balance women strike between asserting their professional identity and conforming to societal expectations of femininity.

Ingold's theory of enskilment (2002) helped me interrogate how women acquire skills and work experience in gendered spaces. I used this theory to explore that spaces in which women's behavior would be considered acceptable or otherwise while actively listening, looking and interacting with their environment and the people in it (here referring to male counterparts) (Lawy, 2017). I further extrapolated the difficulty that could arise in active learning in spaces biased against women and the socialized methods for women to learn particularly in hands-on contexts. This gendered passing down of information, skills and power weights the balance against women in spaces where limitations to

interactions are not only expected but encouraged and enforced (Wright, 2015). Enskilment in this context is twofold: it encompasses both the technical skills necessary for the job and the socio-cultural skills required to navigate a gender-biased work environment. Women's enskilment thus involves learning to maneuver within spaces that are not traditionally designed for them, adopting strategies that enable them to assert their competence and authority in settings where their presence might be contested or undervalued. Mentorship emerged in my research as a key mechanism of enskilment, providing women with role models and guides who can offer advice, support, and practical knowledge about surviving and thriving in the sector. These relationships are crucial for breaking down the barriers to women's full participation and advancement in the transport sector as seen with KE20 in Section 7.6.2 . They also highlight the importance of creating spaces where women can share their experiences, challenges, and strategies for overcoming them. This is particularly important in light of the fact that despite the opportunities for learning and development, the enskilment process for women in the transport sector is fraught with challenges. The persistence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices can hinder women's ability to fully apply their skills and knowledge. Moreover, the lack of visibility and recognition of women's contributions in the sector can stymie their professional growth and development.

Obioma-Nnaemeka's nego-feminism served to critique a unidirectional approach to feminist intervention. I further use her theory to explain the generational gap evinced in my findings, contrasting nego-feminism and broader Western radical feminism across three generations of women in the transport sector. While I see elements of value in both Western and African theoretical approaches, I also see the need to draw from both in the realization of gender equality through development in the post-colonial world. It remains fact that Western perspectives have formed many of the systems through which development related interventions are designed and implemented. I wish to emphasize, however, that contextualization is key in ensuring that any development intervention can be truly effective in facilitating sustainable change within the intended environment. As Chinua Achebe writes in his 1964 book, *Arrow of God*, "The world is like a mask dancing. If you want to see it well, you do not stand in one place." (Pg 49). The application of nego-feminism was particularly poignant in the context of my interviews with KE(insert ref) and KE(insert ref), where women's strategies of negotiation and adaptation emerged as central themes. The stories shared by the respondents reflect the lived application of nego-feminism, revealing how negotiation is not merely a strategic choice but a necessary means of survival and progress in the transport sector. These narratives underscore the relevance of nego-feminism in the Kenyan context, highlighting both its strengths and its limitations in confronting deeply rooted gender inequalities.

Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality also serves well alongside nego-feminism to critique current contextualization, which fails to account for multiple factors, i.e., the role of colonialism in establishing a status quo for gender equality, the role of male-oriented patronage networks on promotion decisions. The ethnographic interviews have been instrumental in uncovering the intersectional nature of women's experiences in the transport sector. The stories of women who navigate multiple identities and face layered forms of discrimination bring to light the critical importance of an intersectional lens. These narratives reveal how gender interacts with other social categories, such as class, ethnicity, and family status, to shape women's experiences in unique and complex ways, thus reinforcing the indispensability of intersectionality in understanding the nuances of gender dynamics within the sector.

Radical feminism presents an appealing rhetoric for many of the millennial and gen z generations; a more aggressive stance that demands an acknowledgement of women's rights in the face of traditional societal expectations that often run counter to them. This rhetoric runs counter to nego-

feminism and contrary to the communal culture and mentality that the latter draws from. Radical feminism calls for a Western-idealized form of self-actualization in careers and sexual freedoms that often flies in the face of the compromises made by older generations of women. It was my finding that this shift in approach is causing friction not only for the younger women who still operate within patriarchal society and systems but also between younger and older women, affecting opportunities for mentorship and patronage. The voices of women captured through my interviews reflect a spectrum of engagement with radical feminist ideas. Younger participants, in particular, articulated a clear alignment with radical feminist principles, advocating for systemic change within the sector. However, the resistance faced from established norms and the broader societal context highlighted the challenges of translating radical feminist ideals into practice. These narratives illustrate the tension between the aspiration for gender equality and the realities of operating within a system resistant to change.

Theoretical Divergences and Empirical Realities

While the feminist theories provided a robust framework for analyzing gender dynamics, the empirical material also highlighted divergences and areas where theoretical models may not fully capture the complexities of women's experiences in the transport sector. For instance, the persistence of gendered networking and mentorship challenges, despite theoretical advancements in understanding gender inequality, points to the resilience of structural barriers and the need for more nuanced theoretical models that can accommodate the specificity of the Kenyan context.

9.3 REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY

In my research study, I explored my research questions largely through semi-structured interviews and associated participant observation, with significant impact to my data collection due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation in 2020-2022. In this section, I reflect on how my methodology had to be adapted for the field situation and how I leveraged my unique positionality for access to some key respondents.

The details of my adaptation from planned in-person interviews and associated participant observation to largely virtual data collection are detailed in section 2.2. In brief, I set up a website to increase ease of access for respondents to confirm scheduled interviews and access information about the study. It can be found at <https://omwegaphd.wordpress.com>. This streamlined the process of communicating with respondents, sharing key information for consent and compliance with the ethical requirements of my data collection. In this section, however, I want to reflect on my experience with participant observation in virtual space.

I was largely unable to conduct in-person participant observation due to COVID-19 restrictions on interaction and movement. While I had initially planned to observe my respondents within their working and home environments, I was nonetheless able to conduct my observations in a different sphere. Video interviews on platforms like MS Teams and Zoom became a norm during the pandemic lockdowns. The increased or novel use of these platforms by many of my respondents afforded me a first-hand experience of witnessing the impact of the changing dynamic and reality of working in spaces usually reserved for other performances of my respondents' gender. I particularly noted that my male respondents experienced few to no interruptions of their interview times with me while female respondents, particularly those living with their families, suffered multiple demands for their time and attention even in spaces newly designated for work. I specify families, as opposed to small

children, because these interruptions occurred regardless of the age of children, with one respondent interrupted by adult children and another interrupted by a spouse in the same workspace. I was also able to see how my respondents dressed and acted within more casual spaces and, for many, without the armor of professional attire, makeup and the trappings of their positions in a formal office.

Fieldwork in my home country and in my community presented an interesting exercise in the anthropological tenet of rendering the familiar strange and the strange familiar. While I explore my positionality in detail in section 2.6, here I wish to revisit how my status as daughter influenced my access to respondents. My parents maintain an active social network and draw their capital mainly from having mentored multiple people both in their careers in academia and the development sector as well as in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church they have attended all their lives. Here, I referred to Bourdieu's theory of social capital (1989) (see section 2.3.6) to explain how I was able to draw on the goodwill from my parents' social connections to access fairly senior individuals who were otherwise not obliged to entertain the kind of conversations I was requesting. My positionality as someone who had studied abroad for all of my tertiary education opened up certain allowances regarding clarification on unspoken norms and rules. My data collection required me to ask questions that would otherwise be considered somewhat rude, such as age and about workplace and marital family experiences as I was interrogating how gender roles and marriage have impacted experiences and aspirations of adults who are peers of my parents (Munthali, 2001). My positionality as a daughter of my family afforded me a measure of insulation against the social repercussions of some of these interviews, such as with male professionals with whom it would otherwise have been considered a bit odd for me to converse with beyond shallow, casual conversation. Access to my respondents was a double-edged blade, however, as my positionality may have influenced the slant of the perspectives shared due to respondent awareness of the values and viewpoints espoused by my parents or the friends who introduced me to them.

Overall, I considered my positionality to have been a benefit in terms of access to my respondents and to have given me some valuable insights into the influence of socioeconomic status on social capital and the subjective access to information and opportunities available to women in Kenya's transport sector.

9.4 STUDY LIMITATIONS

The present study, despite its contributions to the field, is not without limitations, and it's crucial to address these for both the academic community and practical applications.

Research Bias Due to Social Connections

One of the significant limitations is the inherent bias that may arise due to my reliance on personal and family networks to identify potential respondents. While this strategy allowed for easier access to a broader participant pool, it may also have impacted the quality and candour of the information gathered. Respondents may have been influenced by their relationships with my family, leading them to be cautious or even unwilling to discuss sensitive topics such as corruption, gender roles, and discrimination openly.

I attribute the difficulty in gaining repeat interviews with some respondents to COVID-19, the high movement in the development sector regarding job positions and the lack of social capital that hampered some of my efforts at repeat access to elite respondents.

Ethical Concerns and Coercion

The use of social capital in identifying respondents raised ethical concerns. There were instances where social pressure was inadvertently applied to potential participants, leading them to agree to interviews even when it might not have been in their best interest. This potentially coerces people into participating, thereby undermining the integrity of the research process.

Cultural Sensitivity and Unspoken Taboos

Cultural norms limited the scope of questioning, as certain subjects are taboo to discuss openly, particularly concerning age and marital status of older individuals, especially men. This limited the depth of qualitative data that could be collected on these topics.

Technical Challenges

The technical difficulties encountered during this study cannot be ignored. The original reliance on specialized qualitative software that proved to be insufficiently adaptable necessitated a switch to manual coding, which was labour-intensive and time-consuming. This limitation impacted the timely analysis of data, although it eventually allowed for a more nuanced understanding.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges, including the necessity of transitioning to virtual ethnography. While it allowed the study to continue, the virtual format might have compromised the quality of interpersonal interactions so vital for ethnographic research.

Methodological Rigidity

The study employed thematic analysis, which, while effective, has its limitations. Thematic analysis prioritizes frequency over nuanced meaning and can sometimes miss out on capturing the complexity of social realities.

Geographical Constraints

The research focused on Nairobi's suburban area, which limits its generalizability. Different regions and settings in Kenya or East Africa at large might yield different results.

Limitations of Anonymization

Efforts were made to anonymize the data to encourage candid responses, especially concerning corruption and unethical practices. However, there's always a risk that participants may not feel entirely secure, which could compromise the validity of the data collected.

Time Constraints

The study had to operate within a restricted timeline, which limited the number of interviews and the depth of analysis that could be achieved. Moreover, the time-sensitive nature of the research could have implications for its longitudinal validity.

Data Saturation

Although a considerable number of interviews were conducted, the study might not have reached the point of data saturation, where no new information or themes are observed in the data. This is particularly concerning in ethnographic studies that aim for a deep understanding of social and cultural contexts.

Reflection on study limitations

In summary, while this study has endeavoured to provide a comprehensive understanding of its focus area, the limitations cannot be ignored. These limitations should be considered in the interpretation of the study's findings and in future research that builds upon this work.

9.5 HOW HAVE HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LEGACIES OF PLANNING AND POLICY PROCESSES IMPACTED ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN KENYA?

In this section, I revisit my findings on the systemic factors influencing women's career prospects in the Kenyan transport sector. These are largely detailed in Chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis. In Chapter 4, I explained how the colonial system and the legacy of the Kenyan educational system left a generational gap for women in decision-making positions, with implications for the current generation due in part to gendered education systems and prioritization for post-secondary choices and post-tertiary career selection. This has had a cascading effect on the perception of appropriate educational choices for girls and the technical skills of the women they grow into. While the modern context allows for significant flexibility and transferable skills between different career paths, engineering remains one of the fields requiring a specific set of academic qualifications to be certified and competitive. The gendered expectations for women in STEM courses are therefore detrimental to decreasing the gender representational discrepancy for female engineers.

In Chapter 3, I examine some of the social factors that have shaped Kenyan discourse around gender equality and women's role in the workplace in general and the transport sector in particular. Through the lens of western and African feminist theories/approaches, it is evident that there remains a significant gap between modern and traditional models for women's success. In the Kenyan context where social networks play such a large part in access to information and opportunities, the penalties for not playing by the social rules can result in stagnated career progression as well as social ostracization.

In Chapter 5, I analyse Kenyan gender policy as it relates to the transport sector and opportunities therein. One of the key points I drew from this analysis was that political commitments to gender interventions were not properly translating into the implementation of gender mainstreaming and supportive gender policies. In my discussion, I drew from my respondents' perspectives to attribute this to poor uptake and acceptance of gender equality as a concept. In the deeply patriarchal systems on which Kenya operates, there is a great deal of confusion and fear over what gender equality actually means and its implications for existing power structures. This trepidation is revealed in how money and other resources are not adequately assigned to gender mainstreaming activities.

It is further evident in the inadequate/insufficient monitoring and accountability for implementation of gender policy. This has resulted in overloaded and isolated reporting systems with different standards making for poor data collection for analysis of the effectiveness of gender policy etc. (See section 5.11). This is not to dismiss the progress made, with the 2010 National Constitution as a critical juncture in realising gender equality in Kenya. This policy shift has been marked by a policy framework for gender mainstreaming and institutionalised monitoring and evaluation with gender targets. The policy analysis in Chapter 5 sets the basis to present donor relations as a vehicle for change towards realising gender equality in Kenya and for positively influencing women's perceptions of and access to opportunities for careers in Kenya's transport sector.

9.6 WHAT DO WOMEN PERCEIVE AS THE MAIN BARRIERS TO SKILLS ACQUISITION AND EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS IN THE KENYAN TRANSPORT SECTOR?

In interrogating this question, this study drew a spotlight on the challenges that many women faced in accessing information. The digital age has heralded new avenues through which to acquire skills and prepare for many kinds of jobs including in the transportation sector. However, given the way that information on opportunities is still passed through social networks, access to this information remains a challenge for women in particular. Enskilment, as mentioned in section **Error! Reference source not found.** above and detailed in 3.2.2, is gendered. I further posit that even the leveraging of social capital and social networks is gendered. If one way that opportunities are shared is through word of mouth, associations need to be made within that social network to link the person requesting such information to the person holding such information. Explicit requests may help but without the subconscious linking of women to transport related roles, women will not come to mind when the gatekeeper/s of this information are thinking of who to share it with.

There is a further challenge for women in finding out about opportunities for skills acquisition and employment prospects and that is gaining access to the spaces where they are discussed. One respondent, KE07, a fairly senior civil engineer in a major multilateral organization had shared her experience of not even being called into a meeting for a project while she was working in the private sector. The assumption was that she would not be interested in the project despite technical qualifications being equal to any of her male counterparts in the room because she was a woman and therefore assumed to avoid extended travel and 'roughing it'. According to this respondent and others, their usually male supervisors were cautious about assigning them to hardship areas and tasks requiring long travel, considering liabilities in the event of any incidents involving female staff. This directly affected their prospects for career advancement and even skill building.

In section **Error! Reference source not found.**, I discussed how a lack of normalized female modelling in the sector is affecting the expectations and aspirations of women for this sector. I also wish to highlight the danger of playing to expected stereotypes that fulfil the (sometimes negative) perception of the woman in the workplace. Serving coffee, taking meeting notes, and volunteering to pray – these were explicitly decried by some of my respondents as relegation to the back of the room.

In many ways, the COVID-19 global pandemic proved these findings, with women among the first whose jobs were negatively affected by the increased pressures in caregiving, child and household management and in carving out uninterrupted time to work at home. While the pandemic conversely afforded opportunities to build technical skills with increased reliance on information technology, it also restricted some of women's access with the decrease in privacy from the entire family or household members in closer quarters for longer than normal.

Overall, my research findings indicate that women found access to information to be one of their main barriers to career aspirations within the transport sector. Whether information on funding, training, procurement or employment, respondents cited how impossible it was to capitalize on opportunities if you did not know they existed.

This lack of information shows that STEM education awareness and opportunities are still currently inadequate to the challenge of increasing the absolute number of women engineers and women in transport.

9.7 WOULD STRONGER VISIBILITY OF WOMEN IN PROFESSIONAL TRANSPORT-RELATED ROLES LEAD TO MORE GENDER SENSITIVE PRACTICE WITHIN KENYA?

There was significant overlap between the previous research question above and this one, however, there are some key findings to spotlight in relation to this identified issue.

The transport sector faces significant constraints to or an outright lack in mentorship. In section **Error! Reference source not found.**, I highlighted the impact of gendered deskilling. This can be extrapolated further to incorporate gendered mentorship and the challenges therein. The pace and pressure for task deliverables in many workplaces sets constraints on opportunities to grow both skills and personal relationships/social networks. As it stands, the Kenyan workplace culture is not conducive to building interpersonal relationships which would lead to mentorship and professional growth.

Women face the further challenge of resources available to dedicate to family related issues and activities with an already demanding career in the transport sector. The expectations for married women's role in society, regardless of career, place unrealistic demands on women who are expected to sacrifice their time and energy to demonstrate dedication both at home and in the workplace. As many respondents attested, however, this was simply unsustainable. There is an interesting benefit to the African career woman with the financial or social resources to enlist aid in household maintenance and child rearing. Here, a dichotomy arises where the woman faces censure for seeking assistance but equally for needing time and space to prioritize her own goals and well-being. Two older respondents in particular, KE28 and KE26, mentioned the need for women to let go of trying to fulfil all roles at the same time and to embrace the need for assistance and the ability to ask for it.

It has been women speaking frankly of their experiences in careers and in leadership that has led to this revolutionary change in dynamic within recent social discourse (discussed in sections 6.4 and 6.5). While it has been censured in some media, reception has been keen among the younger generation who are using social media as a support network for proscribing femininity and the cross-pollination of experiences and ideas.

Social media has therefore proven an effective tool for change in discourse, and in shifting the dynamic of viewing women in leadership, and particularly women in transport, as examples rather than spectacles as it has often been framed in mainstream media.

9.8 IF SO, HOW CAN WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS TO WORK IN THE KENYAN TRANSPORT SECTOR BE EXPANDED AND ENHANCED?

I have earlier discussed the influence of social networks as avenues of access to information and opportunities within Kenya's transport sector (see section **Error! Reference source not found.**). Here I redirect the discussion to possible solutions based on how my female respondents shared their own experiences. The conscious use of interpersonal networks to spread information has been made easier with the advent of social media as a professional as well as personal platform for communication. Women should be encouraged to take greater advantage of their specific spaces within their contexts such as women's groups, church groups and virtual communities to share important information concerning opportunities for skill building, employment and entrepreneurship. These spaces can further serve as platforms for mentorship and woman-to-woman encouragement regarding possible

careers and further education. The aforementioned spaces already serve this purpose in respect to social education and networking but can be harnessed further to enhance women's aspirations within Kenya's transport sector.

In Chapter 4, I discussed the impact of colonialism on Kenya's education system and the subsequent generation gap for women in decision-making roles as engineers and other transport professionals. This chapter also laid the foundation to discuss the early gendering of academic skills and capabilities. In section 6.3, several respondents discussed the impact that early examples and encouragement had on their academic choices and career aspirations. The need to expand existing affirmative action interventions for women at the tertiary education level to even earlier is therefore evident. There needs to be not only systemic encouragement for children but community encouragement and awareness to avoid the early gendering of academic skills, forming a barrier to later enskilment and limiting access to opportunities.

There is also a need for greater support for the youth to gain the requisite skills for their careers with internships and entry level positions. Mentorship experiences have played a valuable role in determining women's experiences in the transport sector. Many have cited foundational experiences that pushed them outside of a comfort zone formed by the standard hierarchical systems that exist in the Kenyan workplace. With these experiences and clear support by their supervisors, managers or more senior colleagues, many female transport professionals were able to refine and showcase the skills that allowed them to expand their aspirations for their careers. Beyond fostering active and dedicated mentorship systems, further fostering the supportive approach and mentality that creates mentorship experiences will inspire women to support each other as they realise their career aspirations.

9.9 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this section, I discuss the policy recommendations and implications from my research findings and observations. This seeks to identify both gaps and opportunities for further exploration.

This thesis has illuminated the complex interplay between gender policies and the lived experiences of women in Kenya's transport sector. Despite the existence of supportive legislation aimed at promoting gender equality, significant gaps in implementation and enforcement persist. These gaps not only undermine the potential impact of these policies but also perpetuate gender disparities in the sector. Based on the findings, several key policy implications and recommendations emerge:

1. **Strengthening Policy Implementation:** There is a clear need for enhanced mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of gender-equitable policies. This includes establishing clear guidelines for enforcement and allocating resources to monitor compliance rigorously. Government agencies and industry stakeholders must prioritize the operationalization of these policies to transform the legal frameworks into tangible outcomes for women in the sector.
2. **Enhancing Monitoring and Reporting Mechanisms:** The absence of gender-disaggregated data significantly hampers the assessment of policy effectiveness and the identification of areas requiring intervention. This can be attributed to the largely informal nature of employment within the sector, particularly as regards public service transport vehicles. However, this data gap also includes information on hiring, promotion, and salary scales as well as tendering and procurement processes. Access to such information would be significant

in the implementation of gender quota policies as well as the development of gender sensitive interventions and programmes to enhance women's aspirations within Kenya's transport sector. There is a further challenge in that reporting systems are not sufficiently harmonized across all sector stakeholders with private sector and NGO developed systems as well as national level systems and sub-national level systems operating in silos. This was discussed in depth in section 5.11. Implementing regular audits, transparent reporting processes, and establishing accessible platforms for reporting grievances are crucial steps towards accountability. Furthermore, investing in capacity building for officials responsible for gender compliance can improve the efficacy of these mechanisms.

3. **Addressing Cultural and Social Norms:** While policy interventions are vital, they must be complemented by efforts to challenge and change the underlying cultural and social norms that contribute to gender inequality. Educational campaigns, community engagement, and media initiatives that promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes can play a pivotal role in shifting public perceptions and creating an enabling environment for women in the transport sector.
4. **Promoting Access to Resources:** The challenges related to access to capital, land, and technology significantly hinder women's participation and advancement in the transport sector. Policies should not only facilitate women's access to these critical resources but also ensure that existing legal frameworks, such as those related to property rights and inheritance, are implemented in a manner that supports women's economic empowerment.
5. **Fostering Female Entrepreneurship:** Given the significance of entrepreneurship in driving gender equality in the transport sector, policies should be designed to specifically support female entrepreneurs. This includes ensuring fair access to government procurement opportunities, providing targeted financial and technical support, and creating platforms for mentorship and networking.
6. **Mainstreaming Gender Sensitivity:** To address the systemic barriers women face, it is imperative to integrate gender sensitivity across all policies, programs, and initiatives related to the transport sector. This includes gender mainstreaming in education, particularly in STEM fields, to increase women's participation in higher-value professions within the sector.
7. **Donor/Partner engagement:** In chapter 8, I discuss the role of Chinese mega-infrastructure projects on the transport development landscape in Kenya. While I explored the implications of gender-blind or insensitive policy as regards such, I argue that it should not be China's role to explicitly advocate for greater representation of Kenyan women in the transport sector. It could be interesting to see implicit advocacy in the form of greater representation in internal project hiring and management. Nonetheless, conditional donor engagement with transport development has been a factor to contribute to both great progress and perhaps equal backlash against gender equality (see section 8.3). Here, I therefore reiterate that with no country having achieved the utopia of gender equality to model success for the rest of the world, it is hypocritical to demand that the Chinese BRI follow the same policies as traditional donors to the Global South (see section 8.4). Given that part of BRI effectiveness has been in the uptake by governments relieved to accept aid and support without demands on their systems of governance and policy (see section 4.8), my evidence suggests that this should remain the domain of traditional donors whose aid is still being courted.

In conclusion, this thesis underscores the critical need for a holistic approach to addressing gender inequality in Kenya's transport sector. I wish to emphasise my conviction that an effective and sustainable development intervention or programme should have elements of both the legal and social aspects to effect change. While legal frameworks provide a foundation for change, their potential can only be realized through diligent implementation, robust monitoring, and a concerted effort to transform societal norms. Without policy frameworks and political commitment, a development intervention would have no teeth with which to drag progress forward in the intended direction. Without social awareness and a measure of acceptance, any change effected would be fleeting and erased as soon as a change in leadership and priorities occurred. It cannot be mistaken that gender mainstreaming has had a significant impact on the lives of girls and women across Kenya. The impact of the increase in female enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education is still in effect. However, it can also not be denied that patriarchal attitudes and characteristics are so ingrained in both the Kenyan culture and worldwide that the true tenets of feminism and gender equality have been drowned in a flood of fear, anger and misconceptions. The recommendations presented herein aim to guide policymakers, industry stakeholders, and civil society in their efforts to create a more inclusive and equitable sector for women.

9.10 RESEARCH GAPS AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

Despite increased mechanization and use of technology to fulfill roles and tasks, physical aptitude is still a measure by which discourse gauges women's suitability for the transport sector workspace. The experience of women expected to remain in the office and at home, even in work that requires field supervision and oversight, remains consistent, if not unique to women in Kenya. The interest in the cost and energy saving aspects of increased mechanization of transport service provision are an opportunity for women to directly interrogate this persistent bias. An avenue for future exploration could therefore ask, what are the gendered expectations and norms for an emerging demand for virtual enskilment and operations?

The research study encouraged me to reflect on the extent to which the Kenyan experience of women in the transport sector was unique to the country and the extent to which it might be reflected in other parts of the world. One example could be in transport service provision, particularly the matatu industry where there is a marked intersection between politics and the bodies/organizations running the matatus.

Another avenue for research inspired by this study is in examining the role that women play in the Chinese mega-infrastructure projects, whether as beneficiaries, decision-makers or service providers. One could ask what the impact of the BRI has been on Chinese women in the Chinese transport sector and on African women affiliated with Chinese projects.

9.11 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I propose that my contributions to the wider body of knowledge, while rooted in specific academic traditions, aspire to add to the dialogue around gender, work, and learning in environments shaped by deep-seated norms and practices. This research was intended to broaden the conversation around gender-based discrimination by applying a feminist lens, particularly within the realms of Kenya's transport sector. It engages with feminist theory not only to dissect the complexities of

discrimination but also to envision interventions that resonate with the lived experiences of women. This approach is grounded in a desire to interlace theoretical perspectives with practical realities, acknowledging the limitations and potentials of feminist theories when applied in diverse cultural and professional settings. In critically examining these theories in the Kenyan context, I intend to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of applying global feminist perspectives to local socio-cultural realities. This study highlights the need for contextually grounded feminist approaches that are sensitive to the nuances of culture, tradition, and socio-economic conditions.

My findings on the barriers to skills acquisition, mentorship, and professional growth for women in the transport sector aim to contribute to the broader discourse on gender and work. This includes the impact of gendered expectations, workplace cultures, and the lack of visibility of women in professional transport-related roles.

The study introduces Ingold's enskilmment into the discussion on professional development in the transport sector, with an emphasis on the experiences of women. This engagement is presented with humility, recognizing the pioneering work of Ingold and others in this area. It suggests that learning through participation and immersion in work environments is crucial for understanding how women carve out spaces for themselves in traditionally male-dominated fields. This perspective is offered as a contribution towards understanding the nuanced processes of skill acquisition and identity formation in challenging work contexts.

The methodology employed in this study—leveraging social circles, family connections, and navigating the insider-outsider status of the researcher—is shared as a reflective contribution to anthropological research practices. This approach is grounded in the principle of building trust and mutual respect with participants, which has been instrumental in facilitating meaningful conversations. The acknowledgment of this methodological stance is offered in the spirit of sharing lessons learned and encouraging ongoing dialogue about ethical and effective fieldwork strategies. In reflecting on the benefits and challenges of leveraging personal networks, I hope to contribute to ongoing discussions on the role of researcher's identity and social connections in the field of anthropology. In reflecting on my careful navigation of cultural norms and taboos in the research process, I wished to contribute to the body of knowledge on conducting sensitive and ethical research in diverse cultural settings. By reflecting on the limitations imposed by cultural sensitivities on data collection, particularly around topics such as age and marital status, this study was to add to a better understanding of the challenges and ethical considerations involved in anthropological research.

My exploration of how digital platforms and social media serve as tools for information dissemination, mentorship, and support among women in the transport sector adds to the understanding of technology as an enabler of gender equality. This aspect of my research offers practical implications for harnessing technology to improve women's access to opportunities and support networks.

Reflecting on my experience in conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic and the insights gained from this experience could serve to advise on conducting fieldwork in crisis situations. This contributes to the methodological literature on conducting ethnographic research under challenging conditions and the specific impacts of such crises on women's professional lives.

By revealing the gaps between policy commitments and their implementation in gender mainstreaming within the transport sector, this work provides a critical assessment of the effectiveness of current gender policies. This is in hope of guiding future policy development and implementation efforts aimed at reducing gender disparities. Furthermore, I wished to highlight the largely transient success and impact of projects designed without a thorough integration of gender

considerations from the outset, and through this, draw attention to the importance of designing development interventions that are not only inclusive but also sustainable in the long term. In offering these reflections, the thesis acknowledges the collective efforts of scholars, participants, and communities that have shaped its trajectory. In articulating these contributions, it is essential to highlight the interconnectedness of these findings with the broader goals of advancing gender equality, enhancing methodological approaches in anthropology, and informing policy and practice in the transport sector and beyond. It is with a sense of gratitude and responsibility that these contributions are shared, hoping they might serve as steppingstones for further inquiry and action towards more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Exploring the experiences of women engaged in the transport sector in Sub-Saharan Africa

I am a doctoral student studying at Durham University in the UK for a PhD in Anthropology. This is an invitation to participate in my PhD research project entitled 'Transport as gendered employment practice in sub-Saharan Africa'. This research is funded by the Global Challenges Research Fund and reviewed by the Ethics Committee at Durham University.

Before you make a decision about your participation, it is important that you understand why this research is being done and what it will involve for you as a participant. Kindly take the time to read the following information carefully and feel free to ask if there is anything that needs clarification.

This research is intended to explore the experiences of women who are engaged in the transport sector of Sub-Saharan Africa. This research is inspired by development projects across the continent and the impact they have had on women as transport users. This project intends to approach the topic by looking at women engaged in transport service and infrastructure policy, planning and service provision.

You have been chosen as a participant because you have important and direct knowledge of what it means to be a professional in the transport sector. This knowledge is valuable in developing an understanding on women's context within this sector in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Your participation, though appreciated, is entirely at your own discretion and you are free to withdraw. Should you decide to participate, a physical and electronic copy of this information sheet will be provided for your personal records and you will be asked to indicate your agreement on an online consent form.

Please note that you may withdraw at any time and with no need to give a reason.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in one or more interviews where you will be asked about your experience in the transport sector. An hour of interview time is the requested minimum. Aside from this request, these interviews will be at your time and convenience. A copy of your transcribed interview/s will be provided upon request before publication or paper drafts as well as my thesis.

There will be no other commitments or restrictions associated with your participation. There are no anticipated disadvantages or discomfort associated with participating in this research.

Please note that it is my responsibility as a researcher to ensure that your information is kept anonymous. This will be done through anonymization of your interview data and storage of the electronic records on a password protected and encrypted laptop.

Thank you for your time.

ANNEX 2: RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet		<i>Please tick the appropriate box</i>	
		YES	NO
Have you understood the information on the Research Participant Information Sheet?			
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?			
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?			
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study unless you have given your consent to be a contributor?			
Do you understand that your data will be kept on encrypted or password protected computers?			
Do you understand who will see the information and the results of the research?			
Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:			
• At any time?			
• Without having to give a reason for withdrawing?			
• Without any negative repercussions?			
Do you agree to take part in this study?			
Name in capitals:	Signature:		
Date:	Email address:		

I consent to participate in this study on the understanding that I am free to stop at any point and that any information I have given will securely destroyed if I request this. I have been assured that my personal data will be fully anonymised and held securely on an encrypted and password-protected laptop.

ANNEX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

* Note: This was adapted depending on the type of respondent i.e., female professionals, male professionals, and students.

Interview Guide: Transport Professional

Previous Experiences

- Can you please tell me about your educational background?
- How did you decide on your degree course?
- What were your best and most challenging moments about this?
- What were your biggest concerns about this course of study?

Social Perceptions

- Do you talk to your family and friends about your work and aspirations?
- If yes, can you tell me more about some of the reactions you've gotten or the talks you've had about it?
- What do people who don't know you say when you tell them what you do? How do they react?
- Who has been your biggest support in your career decisions?
- Do you have a role model/mentor who inspired you to work towards this? Can you tell me about them? How do they support or encourage you?
 - o (Probe for detailed example)

Current Experiences

- Can you describe your current position and responsibilities to me?
- Can you tell me about how you got the job and the recruitment process?
- Can you describe how you felt during the interview process?
- Can you please describe your office space to me?
- Can you tell me more about your interactions with female colleagues in the workplace?
 - o Probe for ratio of men to women.
 - o Probe for gender related treatment by management.
- Can you give me an example of how male colleagues have shown respect for female colleagues in a work setting?
- Is there anything you more you think is important about your workplace that I haven't covered?

Gender Mainstreaming

- Can you tell me what gender equality means to you?
- Can you tell me how you see gender mainstreaming?
- How do you think it works for this country?
- How do you think it works in different environments?
 - o Probe for home, church, work and community situations.
- How much of an impact do you think that gender equality has on your life and your aspirations for the future?

Other

- Can you walk me through a typical workday, perhaps this day last week?
 - o Probe for details of time and daily interactions with peers, supervisors and others.
- Is there anything you think we haven't covered?
- Is there anything that you want to ask me?

ANNEX 4: COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT

This section of the thesis details the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on my fieldwork. It includes a timeline showing when the pandemic first affected my fieldwork, an introduction to the challenges that this brought to my data collection, and an overview of the measures I took to mitigate and work around the introduced limitations. Note that this was all done in discussion with my supervision team and the Department of Anthropology administrative and ethics teams.

I commenced fieldwork in Kenya in January 2020. The announcement of the earliest COVID-19 pandemic related travel bans, and attendant policies came into effect in Kenya in early March 2020 when I was only six weeks into my Kenya field data collection. I had completed my preliminary literature reviews and 15 interviews. When the pandemic was first officially announced in Kenya, I halted my face-to-face interviews temporarily to focus on literature review, transcription and preliminary analysis of my transcripts. While I was able to resume my data collection through virtual interviews by May 2020, the ensuing months proved to be filled with constant tension and uncertainty with multiple challenges for myself and my respondents, as detailed below.

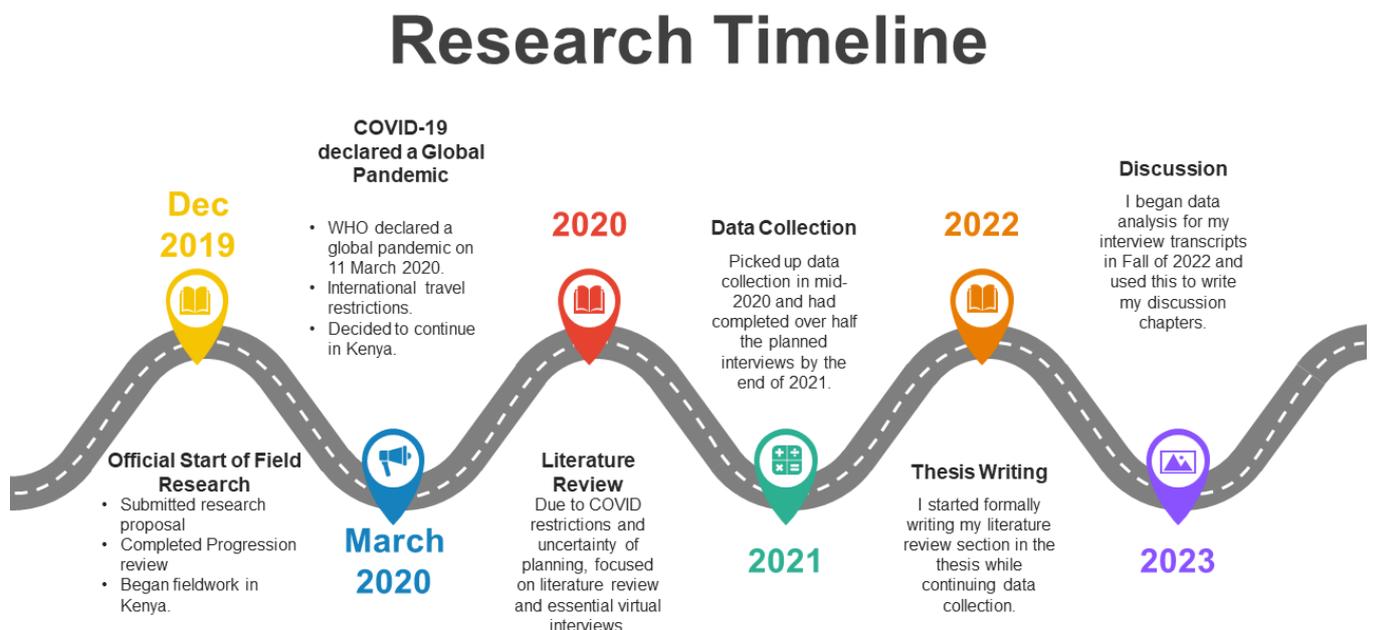


Figure 4: Research Timeline

Impact Of COVID-19 On Access To Potential Research Participants

Fieldwork in Kenya raised specific challenges as access restrictions to workplaces were imposed. Lockdown measures were rigorously enforced in the capital city of Nairobi where I was based when I had been in the field for only six weeks. In the context of government-mandated restrictions on social gatherings, my personal network connections suffered as they were highly dependent on physical interaction with relatives, family friends and church members – both my own and my parents’. Later in the pandemic, despite advice to restrict physical interactions, there remained key respondents, notably government officials who were still reporting to their offices, and who preferred face-to-face meetings over virtual. In-country guidelines had yet to completely restrict physical interaction, and

the university guidance at the time did not contradict this, emphasising following of the regulations in the individual's area of current residence.

While I sought to mitigate restrictions on face-to-face interactions by conducting most interviews via virtual platforms, there remained fundamental challenges of inconsistent internet and power access which are characteristic of Nairobi. Seasonal damage to infrastructure was also an issue with multiple power and internet outages because of heavy rainstorms.

Impact Of COVID-19 On Myself As A Researcher And On My Respondents

The pandemic drove the cost of living higher with service delivery charges increasing to meet conflicting demands for decreased working hours and capacity versus increased customer demand. Price fluctuations on fuel greatly affected this. Increased government taxes after a brief period of tax relief towards the end of 2020 also adversely affected the cost of most goods and services. The lockdown measures in Kenya included bans on gatherings, later relaxed to minimize numbers at gatherings rather than banning religious and cultural gatherings (weddings and funerals) outright. It further included closure of schools and universities, which imposed increased demand on expenses in childcare and management of younger family members.

This meant that my research participants were displaying more stress reactions than would be expected such as uncharacteristic curttness and frequent distractions from the interview. Many were under some financial distress with Nairobi experiencing a rental income crisis: multiple respondents were in a socio-economic stratum where earning a secondary income from rental property under normal circumstances was sufficient to double and even triple their household income. Respondents expressed the strain from multiple demands on finances including increased household expenditure (including for food), and increased medical expenditure associated with hygienic advisories from local and international agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the WHO i.e., mask and antiseptic purchases. Several were unemployed or between work contracts at the time of the interview and expressed uncertainty over their immediate career prospects. It was understandably somewhat more difficult to build a rapport within the brief duration of the interview under the circumstances.

Stresses were exacerbated by calls for financial aid from members of the respondents' extended families and the wider communities. It should be mentioned that medical costs due to COVID-19 and complications were high due to the cost of testing outside of government directed response and the decision by insurance companies to not cover costs related to COVID-19.

Female respondents further expressed increased stress due to increased expectations of household management and childcare responsibilities in particular. Pressure to find secondary and even tertiary sources of income mounted as employers slashed salaries in response to the pandemic. I was unable to directly mitigate the stress of the situation but endeavoured to give some time before the interview and after it, where possible for casual conversation and an opportunity to share issues arising from the pandemic.

In summary, while I was able to adapt most of my data collection for the changes wrought by the pandemic,

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