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Gender Mainstreaming and Africanizing Social Science Research with Specific Reference to Economics Research

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Abstract

Most studies in social sciences have been gender blind, and this blindness hinders attempts to understand the causal mechanisms that create and maintain social patterning in outcomes. It is important to examine the differences and similarities between men and women and focus attention on both potential explanations for socio-economic gradients in various social, political and economic outcomes as well as on potential explanations for gender differences in these outcomes. Also, most of these studies and more so African economics research use examples and mathematical models developed in different environments that are not easily understood by non economists. The outcomes of the research may not necessarily fit into the African environment and may also impact differently on men and women. This paper uses desktop research and proposes gender mainstreaming and Africanise economics research.

Key Words: *Gender mainstreaming; Africanizing research, social sciences, economics research*

1.0 Introduction

Incorporating sex and gender into social science research varies from discipline to discipline. Most people are not aware that sex is different from gender.

1.1 Sex

Sex is the biological differences between women and men. It is a multidimensional biological construct that encompasses anatomy, physiology, genes, and hormones that together create a human package that affects how we are labelled. Sex plays an important role, for example, in health because individuals may experience various processes differently based on their biology (McLeod, 2014). For example, male and female bodies respond differently to alcohol, drugs, and therapeutics due to differences in body composition and metabolism, as well as differences in hormones. It is, therefore, important to collect gender segregated data in social science research because the results for one group may not necessarily apply to the other group.

1.2 Gender

Gender means the socially constructed differences between women and men. These differ from one culture and society to another; they change over time and they define

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who has power and influence over what. Since gender is a social construct that is culturally based and historically specific, it is constantly changing.

Gender also refers to the socially prescribed and experienced dimensions of femaleness or maleness in a society, and is manifested on many levels. Gender is also connected to social and economic status where maleness is almost universally preferred over femaleness. The valuation of males over females is one way that defines gender as a part of all human interactions and is a stable form of structured inequality (Boundless, 2016).

1.2.1 Gender Roles

Johnson, Greaves, and Repta (2007) define gender roles as the means by which we express or enact our gender identity. According to the authors, gender identity is the behavioural norms generally applied to males and females in societies that influence the individual's everyday actions, expectations and experiences. Gender roles are expressed and enacted in a range of ways, from how we dress or talk, to what we may aspire to do, to what we feel are valuable contributions to make as a woman or a man.

In some cultures, these roles are sharply defined and differentiated, allowing and disallowing women (and men) from certain tasks, jobs, opportunities, or spaces. In other cultures, there is more gender equity and the lines between gender roles are more blurred. Either way, gender roles often categorize and control individuals within institutions such as the family, the labour force, or the educational system. For example, in some cultures men are ascribed the breadwinner role in the family while women are expected to fulfil more nurturing and caretaking roles that include domestic chores, child care, and the emotional work of relationships.

We still talk about women in non-traditional jobs and professions, thereby giving recognition to the fact that there is a pattern in which certain forms of paid employment are seen as men's jobs and others as women's. These differences in gender roles are associated with social status: in almost every society, higher power and prestige is conferred on individuals occupying masculine gender roles such as engineers, doctors, pilots and so on while women are expected to be nurses, secretaries, flight attendants, telephone operators and so on.

1.2.2 Gender Identity

Johnson, Greaves, and Repta (2007) and Teich (2012) define gender identity as how people define themselves on the gender continuum, that is, as man, woman or another identity in a spectrum of gender identities. People's feelings and behaviours are affected by this identity which encompasses one's sense of being a woman or a man. People learn to think of themselves as female or male. They also learn what behaviours, emotions, relationships, opportunities and work are considered appropriate for females and which ones for males.

Our gender identity describes how we see ourselves as female or male or as a third gender and affects our feelings and behaviours. Both women and men develop their gender identity in the face of strong societal messages about the correct gendered role for their presenting sex. Gender identities are shaped and actively constructed over time and culture, underpinning an ongoing process of becoming. Gender identity is linked to our social roles in that our aspirations, social interactions, behaviours, traits, characteristics, and body image are influenced by prescribed gender roles and the extent to which we accept or resist them.

Gender identity is not always stable. For example, an infant presenting with ambiguous genitalia is often assigned a sex and gender by medical personnel, and then socialized accordingly. Some individuals may experience disjunctions between their apparent sex and their identification with the other gender, leading to transgenderism, and sometimes desires for reassignment surgery.

Socially, a woman working in a typically masculine environment might see herself, act, and dress in a different way than she does at home.

1.2.3 Institutionalization of Gender Roles and Gender Identity

Gender, gender roles and gender identities have been institutionalized. Institutionalized gender reflects the distribution of power between the genders in the political, educational, religious, media, medical, and social institutions in any society. These powerful institutions shape the social norms that define, reproduce, and often justify different expectations and opportunities for women and men and girls and boys, such as social and family roles, job segregation, job limitations, dress codes, health practices, and differential access to resources such as money, food, or political power. These institutions often impose social controls through the ways that they organize, regulate, and uphold differential values for sexes and genders and women and men. These restrictions reinforce each other, creating cultural practices and traditions that are difficult to change and often come to be taken for granted. There are numerous examples of unequal and differential access for women and girls to resources that directly affect health and well-being. For example, girls are less likely than boys to be provided with health care, food, or education in many parts of the world. Women are often malnourished due to the priority of feeding other family members first. Even in developed countries, women are less likely than men to have an adequate income, which directly affects their opportunity to achieve good welfare.

Sex and gender are fluid concepts, reflecting culturally specific and temporally influenced factors. In the last century in most parts of the world, Kenya included, gender roles have changed considerably, with more women increasing their participation in the paid labour force, sometimes in traditionally male-dominated careers and professions such as economists, doctors and engineers, and some men becoming involved with childcare responsibilities, performing household chores or working as nurses, flight attendants and so on.

However, these shifts in gender roles often vary according to the place. For example, in Kenya, gender roles differ between pastoral and agricultural areas. People in pastoral areas in Kenya tend to hold more traditional and rigid expectations of women than agriculturalists. Similarly, our ideas about sex change over time.

As mentioned earlier, an individual's sex is determined at birth, according to their visible genitalia. But different cultures identify who is male, female, or intersexed based on their own definitions, traditions, and cultural assumptions. Today, with the advent of new technologies and improved scientific understandings of genes and chromosomes, additional information assists in determining an individual's sex, especially when an individual's presenting genitalia are ambiguous.

The idea of sex has more permutations today than ever before, now that people can change sex characteristics and sex assignment hormonally and surgically. Development of more sophisticated understanding and measures of both sex and gender has set the stage for developing more knowledge about the interactions between them. This knowledge will improve our ability to design policies and interventions that address and correct the factors that affect women and men in health, education, poverty, politics or opportunities. Hence it is important to integrate sex and gender in the planning of research and especially social science research of which economics is one of them. Most of the research done in the social sciences is usually either gender blind or gender neutral.

1.3 Social Science Research

Research can be gender blind, neutral or gender aware. A Gender blind research ignores different gender roles, responsibilities and capabilities. It is based on information derived from men's activities and/or assumes those affected by the policy recommendation have the same needs and interests. A gender neutral research is not specifically aimed at either men or women and its results are assumed to affect both sexes equally. However, it may actually be gender blind.

Most studies in the social sciences have been gender blind, and this blindness may hinder attempts to understand the causal mechanisms that create and maintain social patterning in outcomes. Examining the differences and similarities between men and women could focus attention to both potential explanations for socio-economic gradients in various social, political and economic outcomes as well as to potential explanations for gender differences in these outcomes.

Gender aware research is not research on women or on gender relationships. It is research that takes into account gender as a significant variable in development studies economics included.

Men and women have different roles, which impact differently on the environment and development. Moreover, the power relations between men and women can greatly influence the perspective of men and women on environmental, health and development problems. Gender aware research pays attention to both the similarities and differences of men and women's experiences and viewpoints, and gives equal

value to each hence the significance of gender mainstreaming of research both in the process and the outcome.

1.4 Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the public policy concept of assessing the different implications for women and men of any planned policy action, including legislation and programs, in all areas and levels. It is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a strategy, an approach, a means to achieve the goal of gender equality. Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programs and projects (UNWOMEN, 2002).

Gender mainstreaming, as defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women and men an integral part of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequalities are not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality (WHO, 2009).

Research output should also be based on local settings such that before they are generalized for all, people in the local setting should have been part of the research process. However, most social science studies use theories and models that are developed and tested in developed countries or by former colonial masters without much consideration or participation of African countries where the research output is used.

Marginalizing African experiences in social science research not only means a reproduction of colonial orders, but also that these orders continuously influence social science so that reductive and superficial accounts of the phenomena are generated. Social science knowledge production needs to be firmly based in the local settings. This means that African governments as well as foreign research actors need to recognize the value of nationally based scientific education and programs, so that African researchers and policy makers can take an active part in all phases of research (Ntoumi and Priebe, 2010).

So how do we incorporate sex and gender and Africanize social science research? In other words, how do we gender mainstream and Africanize social science research? It is important to remember that most outputs and policies that social science research comes up with, is not gender neutral, gender blind and does not discriminate between Africans and the rest of the world. It is important therefore to do a gender-based analysis and include Africans in developing and analysing policy, programs, legislation, and research.

2.0 Conceptual Framework and Methodology

Feminists have identified the sciences as a source as well as a locus of gender inequalities. The institutions of science have a long tradition of excluding women as practitioners. Feminist critics of science contend that women and gender (or, more broadly, issues of concern to women and sex/gender minorities) are routinely marginalized as subjects of scientific inquiry, or are treated in ways that reproduce gender normative stereotypes. Scientific authority has frequently served to rationalize the kinds of social roles and institutions that feminists call into question. Feminists argue that sciences are male-centred and sexist in the questions they ask, in their claims and practice, their institutions and authority, their implications for the lives of women and for those marginalized within normative sex/gender systems. They argue that sciences harbour such deep and systematic gender biases that women themselves, their interests, perspectives and their insights are ignored and marginalized (Crasnow, et.al, 2015). Hence gender mainstreaming and Africanise social science research would be emancipatory for both women and Africans in general.

This paper uses the Standpoint Theory to argue for women and Africans in general to be included in social science research. The Standpoint Theory is a feminist theoretical perspective that argues that knowledge stems from social position. The perspective argues that traditional science is biased and suggests that research and theory based on traditional science ignores and marginalizes women and feminist ways of thinking. The theory emerged from the Marxist argument that people from an oppressed class have special access to knowledge that is not available to those of the privileged class. In the 1970s feminist writers, inspired by that Marxist insight, began to examine how inequalities between men and women influence knowledge production (Borland 2015).

The Standpoint Theory is a postmodern method for analysing inter-subjective discourses. This body of work concerns the ways that authority is rooted in the individual's knowledge (their perspectives), and the power that such authority exerts. Standpoint feminism is a theory that feminist social science should be practised from the standpoint of women or particular groups of women since they are better equipped to understand some aspects of the world. Most social science research uses models developed and tested in developed countries and the results are generalized for all including African countries. Just like in the case where women's perspectives are not taken into consideration, the same thing happens to Africans. A case in point is the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programs in African countries by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s which resulted in increased poverty, inequality and disease since it meant reducing government expenditure in the health, education, and other primary sectors. The Standpoint Theory, therefore, can be used to argue for both the African and the women's inclusion in social science research.

This paper uses desktop research to argue the case for gender mainstreaming and Africanizing social science research using economics research as a case study.

3.0 Case Study of Economics Research

Most economics research on African issues is usually full of mathematical models, figures and language that often make readers who are not comfortable with mathematics and are not economists unable to understand the line of argument. Moreover, most of the research is not gender mainstreamed and usually assumes that the experiences of men and women in Africa are the same and the policy recommendations arising from the research also assume that the impact will be gender neutral. This paper gives a step by step method of conducting a gender sensitive African economics research.

3.1 What is Gender-sensitive African Economics Research?

Gender sensitive economics research is not research on African women or on gender relationships. Rather, it is a research that takes into account gender as a significant variable.

African men and women have different roles, which impact differently on trade, poverty, environment, development, health, education and so on and depend on the power relations between them which can greatly influence their perspectives on the areas mentioned above. Thus, gender sensitive or gender mainstreamed economics research on African women pays attention to the similarities and the differences between African men and women and takes cognizance of women's experiences and viewpoints, giving equal value to each.

3.2 Problems with Traditional African Economics Research

Remembering that African women constitute half of the population is very important. Failing to take into consideration African women's experiences and points of view leads to the wrong conclusions, or at least an incomplete picture of the problem. Most economics research on trade, poverty, environment and development seldom considers gender as a significant variable. For example, the impact of trade liberalization is examined in relation to population activities, but it rarely takes into account the gender dimension and an African perspective. The population is treated as a homogenous group. African poverty assessment also bases its analysis on household incomes and expenditures. The different experiences of poverty among household members are rarely analysed. Moreover, only productive paid work is taken into account and valued in economic analysis, while household and unpaid work, mainly performed by African women is overlooked, even if it makes up a large part of food security.

Therefore, in traditional economics research, African women's experiences and contributions remain invisible, and consequently, important aspects of an issue remain undocumented and underestimated and, therefore, may be misunderstood.

Gender has only recently been considered a significant variable in research. However, although it is starting to be recognized in social sciences, it is seldom acknowledged and applied in economics. The choice of research topic, conceptual framework and methodology, analysis framework, and language used in economics articles tend to reflect male biases and patriarchal values. Scientists often argue that they do distinguish between men and women and, thus, do not discriminate and are objective. African women researching on African women's issues are still often accused of subjectivity, while men who overlook African women's perspectives and generalize their findings to the overall population related to their issue are considered objective.

4.0 Benefits of Gender Mainstreaming African Economics Research

Some of the benefits of engendering African Economics research are:

- ✓ A better understanding of the problem;
- ✓ Methodologies that empower;
- ✓ Sustainable policies; and
- ✓ Sustainable development.

Engendering economics research does not change the scope of the research. Rather it provides new perspectives, raises new questions, and uses new analysis tools to create a more complete picture of the problem.

As African men and women have different roles and different power, their perspectives on a problem can be quite different. By combining their different experiences and viewpoints, researchers can enhance the comprehension of a problem. Therefore, integrating a gender perspective into research can improve its relevance, coverage, and quality. For example, research to identify the economic impacts of trade liberalization in Kenya would be more precise if it integrates in its analysis framework the impacts on human activities, livelihoods, and gender inequality. As African men and women have different roles, and as their respective social status and the power relations could impact on their capacity to adapt to trade liberalization, the gender dimension is quite relevant and will enhance the results of the research and increase its usefulness to policymakers.

A study on global value chains in Kenya or Africa in general that includes a gender perspective would contribute not only to identifying who is doing what and what needs to be done to increase the producers' benefits, it could also contribute to identifying measures to ensure equitable benefits for producers and processors for both African men and women, increasing its impact to reduce poverty. A gender sensitive economic research methodology is usually more participatory and can contribute greatly to empowering people, notably African women. It helps both African men and women concerned by a problem to analyse an issue, understand its causes, and find solutions. Gender-sensitive economics research that highlights African men's and women's perspectives, contributions, and needs can influence

policymakers and contribute to gender sensitive policies that address both men's and women's needs and, thus, leads to more efficient and effective policies.

It is, therefore, important that economics research focusing on say trade, integrates social aspects. Even when economics research seems more technical, integrating a gender dimension can be very useful, because it brings a social dimension to the problem. Also, to protect biodiversity, for example in the Mau Escarpment in Kenya it requires not only technical and legal examination, but also a look at the social aspects, notably, the gender dimension: how are men and women impacted by the measures used in the protection.

If this dimension is ignored, the solutions identified may be negative for both men and women. They could deprive men of income opportunities or increase Kenyan women's workload, and, consequently, the men and women will work against the solutions recommended by the research in order to exploit the limited resources.

However, if the social dimensions of the problem and the gender perspective are properly taken into account, the solutions identified could make the men and women more responsible and they may even play an active role in ensuring the protection and regeneration of natural resources.

Economics research should also identify the impacts of proposed solutions on men and women on their workload; on their capacities to access resources; on their social status; and on social and power relations. This analysis would be very helpful when it is time to choose the solutions that will be the most efficient, socially accepted, and, thus, viable.

5.0 Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming African Economics Research

Having discussed how social sciences and more so economics research is not gender mainstreamed and not Africanized in the sense that it continues using models and examples that are alien to the local environment, this section provides guidelines on how economics research can be gender mainstreamed and Africanized. Gender mainstreaming African economics research means that the gender dimension is mainstreamed into every component of the research, starting from identifying the problem, defining the conceptual and analytical framework; choosing the methodology; analysing the findings; and disseminating the results.

5.1 Acknowledge our own African bias

The position of the African economics researchers, their interests, and values affect how and what research topics are chosen, who they work with, and the perspective and method of research. Even the African researcher's position in society in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, and age may influence the way in which the research is conducted, how the information is analysed, and how the results are interpreted. Deciding what information is relevant is not always an objective process. This is because local knowledge and information provided by women is often given less

value than information provided by male decision makers, other scientists, or like-minded people. In order to achieve objectivity, it is important to acknowledge our own bias, preferences, values, and socio-cultural background, and to be constantly aware that these factors could influence the process of the research and its findings.

5.2 Define the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework should be constructed in a way that reflects African men's and women's experiences. There are many aspects to take into consideration in the conceptual framework to avoid a male bias and to ensure an inclusive and gender sensitive approach.

5.3 Formulate gender sensitive research questions

The formulation of the research questions should integrate a gender perspective. For example, how are African men and women currently affected by the issue and how are they involved in the issue?

5.4 Define concepts that are inclusive

Avoid male bias, prejudices and generalizations when defining concepts. If African men and women have different experiences related to the field of economics research, it is likely that they have different definitions of concepts. Gender sensitive economics research should pay attention to and integrate different perspectives when defining concepts.

Another problem often faced in economics research is the use of general concepts that hide gender specific realities. For example, when talking about African farmers we often assume that the farmers are men. However, African women play an important role in farm production, but their work is different. In some contexts African women spend more hours than men in production work, but more importance is given to men's role as owners and income generators

Hypotheses, analytical frameworks, and models must be based on reality, not on assumptions about gender roles, capacities, and cultural values.

Double standards, and overrating or underrating activities related to African men or women must be avoided including:

- ✓ Prejudices about the capacities of African men or women, or about which activities are better suited to one or another;
- ✓ Placing more value on African men's contribution compared to African women's in the same field; and
- ✓ Placing more value on African women's work outside the household, while neglecting the value of African women's work inside the household.

5.5 Include both male and female authors in the Literature Review

It is useful to try to identify if African male and female economists give the same definition and use the same conceptual framework. Including publications by both African male and female economists in the review of literature could be useful for this purpose.

It is important not to generalize the concepts to the overall population if the issue concerns only African men or if only African men's perspectives have been documented. For example, African men's experience of migration may be very different from African women's. However, this does not mean that one is more important than the other.

If one of the issues is on rural urban migration, differences in African women's migration experiences should be considered important and meaningful and women migrants should not be considered only as spouses.

5.6 Develop a gender sensitive methodology

Questioning the conventional approach to economics research is important. The usual distant and hierarchical position of economics researchers has been criticized in recent years, (quantitative methods) because it often eliminates a wide range of knowledge and raises ethical issues about who is benefiting from the results of the research, and how and for what purpose the results are used.

A gender sensitive methodology takes into account gender differences in the conceptual and analytical framework, and uses methods and tools that are participatory, respectful, and accountable.

Use qualitative tools to capture African men and women's perspectives and diversity of viewpoints. While quantitative tools are useful for identifying 'what' and 'how many', qualitative tools are interesting because they help us to understand 'how' and 'why'. They give a voice to people, even for issues that seem very technical, recognizing that both African men and women from any socioeconomic background have valuable experiences and knowledge.

5.7 Ensure equitable representation and participation of African men and women

How information is collected and analysed and who is collecting it is important because it influences the quality, authenticity, and value of the information itself. Unless the research is specifically focused on men's experience (e.g., African men's migration; men's vulnerability to economic shocks; men's role in trade), making sure that African women are equitably represented in the sample population is essential.

Furthermore, it is important to include African female economists in the research team as it facilitates the participation of women, especially in a conservative context. It is also useful to have the perspective of African female economists in the analysis process.

It could be very challenging to involve African women if the research involves interviews and consultations with government representatives, senior managers, technicians, engineers, or natural scientists, as there are still very few African women working in these areas. An additional effort must be made to identify African women working in the field of economics research.

If there are none, it would be useful to expand the sample to include some African women's organizations or institutions dedicated to African women in order to capture African women's perspectives and experiences. The very limited number of African women in the economics research field should be considered if significant information is to be studied and reported.

5.8 Use gender sensitive research tools

It is important to use research tools that are not seen as threatening or embarrassing by African women or men. It can be very challenging for some African women to talk about some issues in front of men from their family or community, or even men from outside. Some places or times may be convenient for men, but not for African women and this will contribute to the exclusion of women.

In some contexts African women have very few opportunities to express their ideas. Consequently their knowledge and opinions are often neglected, even by themselves. They are not used to talking in public or to being consulted. Thus, it is important to show interest in their roles and views, to value their experiences, and to have patience. Even if African women and men have different roles and experiences, it is important to give them the opportunity to present their points of view on the same subject and pay attention to the similarities and the differences.

Often researchers ask different questions to men and women, assuming that they have different levels of interest in the topic. For example, African women and men have different roles in the utilization and management of water. Hence, it is often assumed that African women are only interested in water for household needs, while men are mainly interested in the use of water for productivity. However, African women could also have a strong interest in the utilization of water for agricultural production, notably for family gardens, as they also participate in farm production and in raising livestock.

5.9 Use and produce gender disaggregated data and conduct a gender analysis

Gender sensitive economics research uses and produces gender disaggregated data and gender analysis. Documenting differences based on gender does not provide comprehension of gender issues, or why there are differences, inequities, or inequalities.

A gender analysis should explain the differences in experiences, viewpoints, and impacts related to gender roles and power relationships. It is particularly important

not to assume the universality of gender roles and to avoid transforming statistical differences into innate differences.

Gender roles and power relations between African men and women are not natural or due to the intrinsic nature of African men or women. They are constructed in a particular socioeconomic and cultural context. This is why the contextualization of the economics research is important. It should indicate where the research was conducted; who was involved; who is concerned with the topic; what are the beliefs and practices related to it, and so forth.

A gender analysis should provide information about how African men and women are related to, or affected by, the subject of the research.

It should take into account the following factors:

- ✓ The division of labour, roles, and responsibilities between African men and women: who is doing what and what is the link with the research's topic;
- ✓ African women and men's access to and control over resources: natural resources, financial resources, information and decision making processes;
- ✓ The power relations in the household, community, society, workplace, and so forth;
- ✓ The legal and social status of African men and women.

The above factors are likely to influence how African men and women relate to the problem.

5.10 Anticipate impacts of new policies or practices on African men and women

Gender sensitive economics research should also identify the impacts of new practices or policies on African men and women; who will benefit from these; who will be disadvantaged; and the impacts on African men and women's activities and relationships.

5.11 Reporting the findings

When reporting the findings, the researcher should highlight the gender dimension of the research topic. It should make visible gender differences in different roles, different involvements, different experiences, different opinions, and different needs. The report should also provide as much visibility to African women's contributions and experiences as men's. It is important to use gender sensitive language in the research report especially in highlighting the gender dimension of the research report.

It is also important to remember that language itself is not neutral and, in most cultures, has largely been forged by African men and, therefore, reflects the values of the patriarchal society.

Generic terms should be used to translate generic situations and gender specific terms to make visible African men's or women's roles and perspectives. For example, if we are talking about African men's role in pastoralism, it is better to specify that we are talking about male herders.

If you use the term herders to talk about African men's work only, you contribute to hiding African women's role as herders-a role that might be quite different from that of men.

The research report should be seen to be advocating for gender sensitive practices. This is because the findings could have a great impact on policies and, therefore, should propose equity measures, and promote equality and social inclusion.

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