

Women in Manufacturing Sector: Some Gender Dynamics of Employment in Nakuru County

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Abstract

Review Article

This study critically examines gender dynamics within Kenya's manufacturing sector, situating women's inclusion and retention within the broader framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognizing that gender equity is not only a human rights imperative but also a driver of socio-economic transformation, the research explores how government policy implementation, industry requirements, and career progression trajectories shape women's participation in manufacturing industries. Guided by social feminism, resource-based theory, and regulatory compliance frameworks, the study adopts a descriptive research design that integrates purposive and stratified random sampling. Primary data were collected through questionnaires and in-depth interviews to capture both quantitative trends and qualitative insights. Findings reveal that structural determinants—particularly the robustness of policy frameworks, organizational cultures, and workplace expectations—either facilitate or constrain women's sustained engagement in the sector. The study highlights that while progress has been made in creating opportunities, persistent barriers such as limited access to mentorship, inadequate training opportunities, and the absence of gender-sensitive insurance and workplace policies undermine women's advancement. To address these challenges, the study recommends deliberate strategies aimed at cultivating gender-balanced workforces, institutionalizing mentorship programs, strengthening job training initiatives, and embedding gender-responsive policies across the manufacturing value chain. Ultimately, the research underscores that meaningful gender inclusion extends beyond symbolic representation: it requires the creation of equitable pathways that enable women to thrive, lead, and advance in male-dominated industrial spaces.

Keywords: Women Manufacturing Sector, Gender Dynamics, Employment, Nakuru County.

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INTRODUCTION

Full participation of women in the workforce has been globally demonstrated to be a potent driver of economic growth and sustainable development. Despite this reality, gender gaps in the labor market remain glaring across the world, and many nations have yet to fully institute gender-responsive policies, even though such policies are essential to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Historical experience has shown that when women are engaged in development processes, societies undergo significant transformation (UNESCO, 2017). This underscores the need to examine how government policies are domesticated and implemented by manufacturing firms to adequately address the needs of women employees. Within industrial sectors, women often face significant challenges resulting from inadequate adherence to workplace regulations and insufficient implementation

of policies that could support their personal and professional lives, such as flexible work schedules, work-from-home options, and gender-sensitive leave arrangements.

According to Chew (2024), the promotion of women's involvement and gender equality in leadership positions is an urgent policy imperative for every nation. Yet, despite vigorous efforts in some regions, the private sector continues to lag behind the public sector in advancing women's participation. A study by Global Nation (2021) reinforces this observation, highlighting persistent barriers to gender equality. For instance, a global survey revealed that among the 500 U.S. Fortune companies, only 24 had women serving as CEOs or managing directors. In Asia and Australia, one in eight (12%) CEOs were women, compared to just 8% in Europe and the Americas. Moreover, comparative

studies conducted in the United States and Canada indicated that for every 100 men promoted to management positions, only 86 women achieved similar advancement, thereby reducing the pool of women eligible for senior leadership (Catalyst, 2022). Similar trends have been reported in Africa. In South Africa, for example, women accounted for only 17.3% of senior directors and board chairpersons, with most of their positions clustered in lower levels of employment (Manpower Group, 2022).

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2023), women constitute approximately 43% of the global population. Despite the fact that women outnumber men in most nations, there are still about 57 million more men than women worldwide. Yet, women's contribution to wage labor remains markedly lower than that of men. Globally, the average wage labor participation rate for women is only about 30%, compared to over 80% for men (ILO, 2023). Regional variations highlight further disparities: in the United States, about 68% of women participate in wage labor, while in Europe the rate is around 65%. In Africa, the average participation rate is approximately 60%, while Latin America records the lowest at 45%. By contrast, East Asia and the Pacific register the highest female wage labor participation at 72% (ILO, 2023). In Kenya, about 60% of women are engaged in wage labor compared to 85% of men.

The relatively low wage labor participation of women has wide-ranging socio-economic consequences. Chief among these is the overdependence of women on men, which exacerbates both gender inequality and overall poverty levels within societies. As Morrison (2023) argues, women's low levels of social esteem and their diminished standing in many societies can be directly linked to their marginal participation in wage employment. The World Bank (2022) reports that women account for nearly 70% of the world's poor, compared to 40% among men, suggesting that poverty disproportionately affects women. This burden is particularly acute in Africa and Latin America—regions where female labor participation is lowest—whereas women in Europe record relatively fewer incidences of poverty (Brookings Institution, 2020). These patterns confirm that poverty among women is closely tied to their restricted participation in wage labor markets.

While global data indicates that roughly a third of women are engaged in wage labor, their representation in specialized technical fields such as engineering remains strikingly low. For example, though women's overall global labor participation rate is 30%, their participation in engineering stands at only about 15% (ILO, 2023; Manpower Group, 2024). The gap is even wider in certain regions: in Europe, despite a female labor participation rate of nearly 70%, women account for only 7% of those employed in engineering-related

professions (ILO, 2023; Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft Köln [IDDWK], 2022). In Latin America, women's overall labor participation is about 45%, yet their involvement in engineering is less than 5% (ILO, 2023; International Union of Sciences [IUS], 2024a). Africa presents a similar pattern, with women's general labor participation at 60%, but only 8% representation in engineering (ILO, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Kenya mirrors this disparity: while 60% of Kenyan women participate in the labor market, only 4% are employed in engineering fields (ILO, 2023; Engineering Board of Kenya, 2022).

Despite growing campaigns and advocacy for women's empowerment, evidence still demonstrates that women remain underrepresented in science and technology-related fields in Africa. Research indicates that, on average, only between 7% and 12% of young women in Africa enroll in science-based courses, whereas in parts of North Africa and the Middle East their participation is equivalent to, or in some cases exceeds, that of Europe and North America (UNESCO, 2017). Yet even in contexts where women make up over half of engineering students, they continue to be disproportionately absent in professional engineering roles. This reflects a broader pattern of underrepresentation in highly valued technical professions. Mbah and Ebobuikwe (2018) underscore that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs are intended to equip both men and women with marketable skills responsive to the demands of production and service industries, producing middle-level cadres capable of supervisory or specialized functions. However, the effectiveness of such programs depends heavily on gender mainstreaming policies, which have been promoted globally to ensure women's equitable inclusion.

The challenges faced by women in industrial participation are further illuminated through discriminatory practices. Du Toit (2007) highlights the example of South Africa, where dismissal of female employees for pregnancy contravened the Employment Equity Act of 1998. Beyond formal discrimination, women's career progression is often hindered by family obligations, which are perceived as interruptions or liabilities. Such constraints limit women's opportunities for leadership, resulting in slower career advancement and lower income levels. Onah and Anikwe (2016) emphasize the centrality of retention in organizations, arguing that the departure of highly skilled employees undermines productivity and profitability. Similarly, Chalise (2019) stresses that organizations must prioritize employee retention because long-term employees are more likely to be committed to enhancing a company's performance. In this regard, creating supportive workplace conditions for women is not only a matter of fairness but also a strategy for sustaining organizational success.

Women's limited representation in corporate leadership further illustrates systemic gender disparities. Joeke (2015) observed that very few women occupy influential corporate positions, and even at middle management levels, their numbers remain disproportionately low. A survey conducted in the United States revealed that women held only 22% of middle-level positions (United Nations, 2020). In Kenya, Nzomo (2013) noted that women in public service were often poorly paid and placed in structurally disadvantaged positions, with their representation declining as occupational seniority increased. These findings reveal that women's labor participation remains concentrated in lower cadres, making it essential to interrogate the structural and cultural factors that restrict their upward mobility in sectors such as manufacturing.

Although industrialization is often presented as a catalyst for economic growth, women's engagement in manufacturing and related technical fields continues to be constrained by persistent stereotypes and biases. As Schomer and Hammond (2020) argue, limiting attitudes—sometimes reinforced by cultural beliefs and unconscious bias—discourage women from entering or advancing in “gendered” sectors such as engineering and technology. The consequences of this exclusion are global: it is estimated that the available engineering and technology workforce meets only about 55% of global demand (Manpower Group, 2018). While women's increased participation alone may not fully close this gap, their exclusion certainly exacerbates the shortage.

The marginalization of women in engineering and technology also deprives them of access to some of the most financially rewarding and socially transformative professions. As Goldberg (2013) points out, the underrepresentation of women in these high-demand fields limits not only their personal opportunities for economic independence but also society's ability to harness the full potential of its human capital. Enhancing women's participation in these disciplines is therefore not merely a question of equity but also a strategic imperative for global development and competitiveness.

The State Department for Gender at the Ministry of Public, Youth, and Gender is in charge of advancing equity and women's empowerment in Kenya in order to reinforce the affirmative action policy. To mainstream gender activities at work, the ministry has additionally assigned gender officers to every ministry (GoK, 2021). While Kenya has adopted industrial policies that target productivity and the overall performance of the sector, there is inadequate evidence on how these policies and legislative frameworks contribute to creating a favorable environment for women in manufacturing firms (Chew, 2024). With these policies in place, this study sought to explore the extent to which manufacturing firms have adopted and implemented them.

In Kenya, the percentage of women in middle management remains low. Only 18 of the 52 companies listed in the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) had at least one-third of their senior management composed of women. Among these 18 companies, only three were in the manufacturing and allied sectors. Moreover, only four out of sixty-two (6%) chief executive officers or managing directors of NSE-listed companies were women, and just 5% of these firms had female board chairs. These figures reveal a significant disparity in women's representation in STEM-related careers, particularly in manufacturing, pointing to the existence of policy, institutional, or societal barriers limiting their career advancement. In most Kenyan corporate organizations, promoting women into leadership roles is not a strategic priority. Numerous studies confirm that women remain underrepresented in decision-making positions. This reality is often described using the metaphor of the “sticky floor,” which captures organizational discrimination against women's upward mobility (Babic & Hansez, 2021). Gender stereotypes also persist in workplaces, where women are frequently perceived as less competent in technical roles or viewed as unreliable due to family commitments (Ellemers, 2018).

Muchangi (2015) argues that policies are implemented in workplaces through structures, procedures, and laws. However, in Kenya, there are significant gaps in implementing gender-responsive policies that would facilitate women's entry, retention, and progression in line with the two-thirds gender rule. The lack of proper absorption and retention measures undermines women's career advancement, particularly in engineering-related fields. This study, therefore, assessed inclusion and retention of women in manufacturing industries, with findings expected to inform the design, initiation, and improvement of gender-responsive employment policies. Such policies could strengthen recruitment, retention, and career progression pathways for women in the sector.

It is evident that inclusion of women in manufacturing, a sector traditionally dominated by men, would substantially improve their socio-economic status and that of society at large. This creates a compelling need to identify and address barriers hindering women's effective participation. While their representation in manufacturing remains low, further examination of gender-responsive policies, industry requirements, and career progression challenges is needed to uncover the opportunities and constraints shaping women's experiences in Nakuru County, Kenya.

The Problem

In recent years, awareness of gender inequities at the workplace has grown, alongside advocacy efforts to increase women's meaningful participation in employment. Despite these efforts, women still face

obstacles in accessing decent work opportunities, and those who are employed often find their rights inadequately upheld. The challenge is particularly stark in the manufacturing sector, where women remain disproportionately underrepresented. Moreover, while gender-responsive policies aimed at equitable participation of both men and women exist, their implementation appears disconnected from their stated objectives. Compounding this is the lack of comprehensive data on women's entry, retention, and career progression in manufacturing. The current study sought to provide clarity on women's participation and the complex factors shaping their experiences in this sector.

Some Conceptual Issues and Dynamics

Nyanjom (2013) examined the dynamics influencing employee retention in Kenya's state corporations, finding that favorable government policies and conducive work environments promote retention, especially for women. Similarly, McDonnaugh (2022) emphasized that persistent inequalities stem from weak adherence to affirmative action policies. Aligning with these insights, the present study explored how manufacturing industries have implemented gender-responsive policies as a way of fostering inclusion. Unlike prior research that focused broadly on state corporations, this study concentrated on women in manufacturing industries, particularly their representation in work placements and retention patterns.

Kitonga *et al.*, (2021) also assessed the impact of Kenya's legal framework on employee recruitment and retention in state corporations, reporting a strong link between legal provisions and employee satisfaction. Mane and Shinde (2021) further argued that policies that encourage talent development and recognize leadership potential play a crucial role in retention and productivity. In parallel, this study considered the regulatory frameworks governing manufacturing employment and their alignment with Kenya's affirmative action provisions. Notably, these frameworks are often overlooked, which justifies this study's focus on examining their implementation and effectiveness in supporting women's participation.

Verani *et al.*, (2016) evaluated the legal and regulatory framework in Mozambique for the retention of health workers. Monitoring and validation of documents obtained from the Mozambican government web was carried out by the study, which further revealed a gap. The study evaluated the degree to which the organization responsible for health worker retention aligned with the legislative and regulatory framework governing health workers in the civic sector. The study found that implementation of health worker allowances was slow, leading to high turnover rates among public sector health workers (Bhardwaj & Singh, 2017). While the above study pointed to workers' allowances as the

cause of high attrition rates, this study focused specifically on work environment and workplace intervention measures that increase women employees' retention and what perpetuates their attrition rate in manufacturing industries.

Fahim (2018) evaluated Egypt's approaches for public employee retention and human resource management. According to the reviewed study, the labor market, organizational climate, regulatory and legal environment, and institutional culture each had an impact on employee retention. Nyanjom (2013) undertook another study that examined the determinants impacting employee retention in Kenyan private companies. The reviewed study found that favorable policies in place ensure that the working environment is conducive in the private sector, which promotes employee retention. This study similarly sought to examine the organizational policies in place, assess their relatedness to government policy, and ascertain their implementation.

An assessment of the medical staff in Uganda's government regional referral hospitals who possessed multiple skills was conducted by Mutegi (2022). Structured questionnaires, report reviews, in-depth interviews, and observations were used in a field assessment of four government regional referral hospitals. According to the study, health professionals with less training were often able to provide unregulated tasks. The absence of a regulatory and legal framework to track their competencies, training requirements, and turnover rate exacerbated this service transfer. In contrast to the current study, which aimed to evaluate manufacturing industries with distinct operational activities, the reviewed study concentrated on healthcare facilities. Further, this study transcends beyond to explore measures put by manufacturing industries in aligning occupational safety parameters to ensure proper consideration for women.

Kakumba and Fennell (2014) investigated the retention of human resources in Ugandan local government offices, where performance was measured using institutional and policy processes. The study discovered numerous reasons that increased staff turnover rates and local governments' incapacity to recruit and retain top talent. The issues included challenges experienced by those serving in inaccessible and difficult-to-reach areas, together with inadequate reward and compensation policy procedures that limited local government employees to the central government's one-spine salary structure with virtually no allowance or benefits. The reviewed study focused on compensation aspects, overlooking other factors such as national government industry regulatory policy. Further, the reviewed study had a broad focus, while this study primarily focused on women. The deficiency in knowledge that this study sought to fill using a mixed-method approach is the intent of this research.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency claims that only 19.4% of Australian CEOs are female, with the current gender pay disparity at 22.8% (Kulik, 2022). The same agency shows that when there is workplace gender equality, there is improved national productivity and economic development, greater organizational performance, and better prospects for enterprises to recruit talent and retain personnel, which ultimately yields improved organizational reputation (Salve, 2018). This study focused on women working in manufacturing industries in Kenya and specifically examined women in different workplace positions. In addition, the reviewed study was carried out in Australia, which has a different work environment setting.

In Spain, Pérez (2022) blended relational justice and feminism to emphasize justice inequities in women's access to work, which hinders true equality. Gender discrimination persists in Spain despite the legal system's emphasis on equality. While regulations and mechanisms exist to address prejudice, there is no formalized framework for situations where multiple conditions lead to discrimination. To achieve equality, it is important to recognize and address these problems by legal means. While the reviewed study took cognizance of Spain's existing legal frameworks, these frameworks do not fully address issues of women's discrimination, therefore leaving an unexplained gap, which this study intended to fill.

A study by Uris (2022) affirmed that notwithstanding the large rise in female contribution in productive centers, work organizations are primarily constructed with a male-centered focus, which greatly restricts the professional advancement of female employees. An essential transformation in organizational structures is needed to acknowledge that both genders are equally crucial for social advancement and to recognize their importance in workplace participation. This inclusion helps harmonize productivity and procreation in organizations. Moreover, engaging in paid employment offers significant advantages in terms of individual growth and economic self-sufficiency. Consequently, the ongoing prejudice against women in professional settings must be eradicated.

It is imperative that women be given equal access to high-quality job opportunities under the same terms and conditions as men. This should be done in a diverse work environment that takes into account the unique situations of both genders, rather than favoring males as is now the norm. While Uris (2022) highlighted the male-centered focus in work organizations and the resulting barriers to women's professional advancement, the study lacked a specific focus on the manufacturing industries in Kenya, where unique economic and sociocultural factors may impact the implementation and effectiveness of the third-gender employment rule. The research did not address how local factors, including

traditional gender roles, labor market conditions, and Kenya's legal frameworks, specifically affect the professional experiences of women in manufacturing firms.

According to studies done by Kabir *et al*, (2018), a company's performance may be significantly impacted by unfavorable workplace safety incidents. Uncomfortable working conditions lead to subpar performance from personnel, hindering the organization's ability to operate efficiently and consequently causing workers to desire to quit. Job instability is one of the most cited reasons for employees wanting to change jobs. As a result, workers become insecure and less committed to the workplace, the firm, and the environment (Saputro, 2016). While this research highlighted the link between unsafe working conditions, job instability, and employee turnover, it did not evaluate how government policies on workplace safety influence women's retention and job security in the manufacturing sector.

SOCIAL FEMINIST THEORY

Mackinnon's (1983) work serves as the foundation for the hypothesis. The theory is utilized to comprehend the social structures and marginalization that women must deal with in order to participate meaningfully in social and economic activities. According to McPhail (1988), who expanded on the Social Feminist Theory, society as a whole is oriented mostly toward men's interests, and social actions tend to reinforce gender inequality, even when a few women hold prominent and prestigious positions. Proponents explain that all major institutions—including the home, the economy, and the state—are structures that uphold men's dominance, reinforcing patriarchal systems that cause women's perpetual economic dependence on men and grant men advantages in the workplace and other institutions. According to Blankenship (1993), the presence of a small number of women in important roles has little impact because men continue to dominate most facets of growth.

This theory is relevant to the study because it discusses the structural problems that women encounter in manufacturing settings and how, in spite of their expertise and skill sets, they must negotiate an unfavorable work environment; low wages, unsafe working conditions, and limited rights in order to be accepted and retained. It further affirms that women face dual oppression that encompasses economic exploitation and gender-based power structures. The theory acknowledges that patriarchy is the main cause of women's oppression, it also acknowledges that patriarchy is not solely to blame for the various types of oppression that women have endured throughout history (Eisenstein 1995).

The idea also notes that women's societal responsibilities as parents, which demand that they be nurturers, and at the same time do subtle and invisible role of unpaid domestic labour plays a significant influence in their incapacity to achieve self-determination. All these is often done by women to sustain the workforce. Despite the existence of policies that encourage their engagement, this has prevented them from having the ability to influence change (Kennedy, 2008).

This study found that although industrial and labor laws intended to reduce overt discrimination against women in the workplace have not yet been implemented, patriarchal systems nevertheless exist in the workplace. In most organization, women are often assigned tasks considered feminine, this reinforces stereotypes and limits upward mobility for women. Further, women in manufacturing industries are often given lower paying, repetitive and less secure jobs. According to this idea, industries that take constructive measures to address the obstacles that women face while trying to enter, progress, and remain in the workforce would be able to address the numerous gender disparities that are implicit in society. Thus, in the current study, this postulate is connected to variables related to industry requirements, retention, and career advancement.

Resource Based View Theory

The RBV model states that resources are crucial to an organization's ability to perform better. Tangible and intangible assets are the two categories of resources. Physical items like as land, buildings, machinery, equipment, and capital are examples of tangible assets. Physical resources are readily available for purchase by organizations, which may not provide them with many long-term advantages. This is due to the fact that competitors can purchase equivalent assets, resulting in competitive parity. Even when they don't have a physical location, a firm might nevertheless own intangible assets. Intellectual property, trademarks, and brand reputation are a few examples of intangible assets. Companies take longer to develop intangible assets than tangible ones, therefore rivals find it difficult to purchase these assets from the market. A company's competitiveness is greatly influenced by its intangible assets, which are frequently the primary source of its long-term competitive advantage and this further elucidate the important connections between resources, capabilities, and competitive advantage. (Peteraf and Helfat, 2003).

The supposition served as a guide for my work since it clarified how manufacturing industries takes women as strategic human resources that can be strategically be allocated appropriately to develop distinctive capabilities for better performance. In addition, this theory postulates that skilled and diverse female workers bring unique perspectives, problem-solving abilities, innovation and market insights, making

women a valuable and unique resource that enhances product innovation and ensures efficient quality of products. The work also reaffirms how firms known for gender equality and women friendly policies attract more talent and goodwill which brings in intangible but powerful resource.

In the same breath, the current study's application of RBV theory, upholds that female employees are not just part of the workforce but a valuable and strategic asset in manufacturing companies since they contribute to the creation of competitive advantage. Manufacturing companies must be ready to retain competent, experienced, and skilled female personnel if they want to maintain their leadership position in terms of competitive advantage. As a result, companies that actively include and empower women can outperform competitors by fostering inclusive environments leading to better collaboration and performance, further, such industries can obtain and maintain a competitive edge by utilizing its unique and rare resources in ways that go beyond the company's borders. This inclusivity will support organizational learning and adaptability an essential resource in a rapidly evolving manufacturing landscape.

Additionally, manufacturing industries that ensures that the valuable resource (women) are retained and developed through training, mentorship and leadership opportunities have high tendencies to supporting long term growth. Equally, by women committing themselves to a long-term career with companies that have established policies for skill advancement and career growth, will yield intangible yet powerful resource to the manufacturing industries. Thus, in the current study, this theory is connected to variables related to career advancement and retention.

Theory of Regulatory Compliance

This model was first put forth in the 1980s and explains the relationship between rule compliance and best practice standards. This supposition highlights that facilities' overall best practice scores and its positive outcomes starts to decline when there is an achievement of 100% compliance with all regulations. The significance and necessity of following rules or regulations are addressed by the Theory of Regulatory Compliance (TRC). Despite being derived from the human services professions, TRC has implications for all rules, regulatory, and standards formulation throughout economics and human services domains. The model was put together based on implementation and compliance practices on the ground, in part as a reaction to the economic model of regulation and the traditional rights of deterrence (Bardach 1982; Hawkins 1984; Hutter 1989).

This theory is relevant to the study because with a gender lens, it addresses accountability and

responsibilities regarding workplace engagements, the human resource and compliance officers must ensure that gender policies are followed and complaints arising specifically from women employees are taken seriously. Policies and procedures that ensures provisions such as maternity leaves and flexible schedules, gender inclusive hiring practices, insurance coverage for injuries and compensation, corrective action and promotion policies are adhered to and provided for are some of the key issues that management in manufacturing industries should strive to achieve. The theory served as the study's guide by offering enforcement strategies on how manufacturing industries can ensure there is a regular workplace audits that adhere to inclusive conditions for women and gender pay gap assessments. Along similar lines, this theory underscores compliance to laws that protect women from discrimination and harassment such as equal pay act and maternity laws. Further, workplace safety laws tailored to women needs such as safe restroom access, appropriate safety gear are some of the issues that call for compliance.

Manufacturing industries as gatekeepers needs to be transparent in providing clear reporting channels for grievances and ensure that there is continuous ongoing review of policies to remove gender bias. Additionally, companies are expected to support women in leadership and in technical roles as well as the skill-building for women in manufacturing roles. When hiring female workers, this model accentuates that manufacturing companies must adhere to the legal requirements established by the Kenyan government for employment. Further, the manufacturing firm also have to ensure that they take into consideration the industry criteria established by Kenya Association of Manufacturers in employing and keeping female personnel who in many cases are underrepresented. The theory was relevant since it aids in examining the conformity by the manufacturing enterprises to the set regulatory norms and requirements. Thus, this theory is connected to the variables of industrial requirements and the implementation of government policy.

CONCLUSION

The study underscores that women's inclusion in manufacturing is not merely a matter of equity but a catalyst for socio-economic growth and a fundamental requirement for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. While government policies and institutional frameworks have laid a foundation for gender mainstreaming, their uneven implementation continues to hinder progress. The findings make it clear that structural determinants—ranging from workplace culture and career progression pathways to the adequacy of gender-sensitive policies—play a decisive role in shaping women's participation and retention in the sector.

Although strides have been made in expanding opportunities for women, persistent barriers such as limited mentorship, inadequate training, weak enforcement of labor protections, and lack of gender-sensitive insurance schemes continue to undermine women's advancement. Addressing these gaps demands deliberate interventions, including strengthening regulatory compliance, institutionalizing mentorship and training programs, and cultivating organizational cultures that value women as strategic assets rather than symbolic representatives.

In essence, the study concludes that gender inclusion in Kenya's manufacturing industries must move beyond tokenism toward the creation of equitable, sustainable pathways that allow women not only to enter the sector but also to thrive, lead, and transform industrial spaces. Genuine progress will be realized when policies, practices, and workplace cultures converge to dismantle systemic barriers and empower women to contribute fully to Kenya's industrial growth and national development.

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