FACTORS INFLUENCING GENDER DISPARITIES IN THE RECRUITMENT OF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS: A CASE IN KISII COUNTY GOVERNMENT, KENYA

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Full Length Research

ABSTRACT

This study intends to study the factors influencing gender disparity in executive positions in KCG. To achieve this, the study will be guided by two objectives which include; determining social-cultural factors affecting the recruitment of women and its effects to KCG and finding out whether education influences the recruitment process of executive officers in KCG. The theory was hinged on the Feminist Theory and Social Cognitive theory. The case study research design was adopted. The study targeted staff who entailed the 119-top echelon of staff in the County. The sample size to be studied is census of 119 respondents who make up 100% of the target population for efficient questionnaire administration. Primary data was collected using one structured questionnaire. Primary data collected from the field was captured from the filled questionnaires, cleaned, coded with unique numbers, entered into the Microsoft excel worksheets and transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. After data cleaning which entails checking for errors in entry, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, mean score and standard deviation was estimated for all the quantitative variables. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions was analyzed using conceptual content analysis to analyze the secondary data collected from Kisii County annual reports, the Kisii County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017, the Kisii County Website, books, journals, magazines and media reports and presented in prose. Inferential data analysis was done using Pearson moment correlation and multiple regression analysis. The information was presented in tables. The study found that the gender disparity of work is given by chance and men have to give a convincing demonstration of incompetency to be actually judged incompetent. The studies also found that quite a number of women apply for such posts so that selection can be easier. The study concluded that education had the greatest effect on the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government while social-cultural factors had the least effect to the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government. The study recommended that there is need to embrace on the communal beliefs and social constructs that women cannot lead in leadership positions more likely to be hired when they have applied through computerized application process. The study also recommends that more women should be encouraged and supported to go for higher education and training so that they can take equal employment positions as their male counterparts.

Key Words: *gender disparity, education and social-cultural factors*

INTRODUCTION

Recruitment is the process of generating a pool of capable people to apply for employment to an organization (Gamage, 2014). Selection is the process by which managers and others use specific instruments to choose from a pool of applicants a person or persons more likely to succeed in the job(s), given management goals and legal requirements. It has been argued by Bratton and Gold that ensuring that the right people are in the right place at the right time is a critical factor in gaining and maintaining competitive advantage (Berman, Bowman, West & Van Wart, 2019). Recruitment has always been a crucial process for organizations. They are integrated activities.

Other scholars argue that merit-based recruitment and promotion is widely acknowledged as the hallmark of well performing public administration systems (Gatewood, Field & Barrick, 2015). They state that applying merit in the public service underlines the importance of applying a balance between merit and other considerations. These additional considerations may be representativeness like race, ethnicity and gender in order to ensure there are equal employment opportunities for all. Lee argues that merit involves dealing with people based on their knowledge, skills and other capabilities rather than irrelevant characteristics (Peters, Schröter & von Maravić, 2015).

According to ILO 2016 report on women at work, between 1995 and 2015, the global female labour force participation rate decreased from 52.4 to 49.6 per cent. The corresponding figures for men are 79.9 and 76.1 per cent, respectively. According to the data published by the Catalyst organization, women CEOs of Fortune 500 companies make up only 5.2 per cent of the total CEOs in 2015. The percentage share of women CEOs remains almost the same when CEOs of Fortune 1000 companies are considered (Parker et al., 2015). In Southern Asia and Eastern Asia, the gap has grown even wider. Women's lower participation rates translate into fewer employment opportunities, with little variation over time, which negatively affects women's earning capacity and economic security. In 2015, the gender gap in the employment rate amounted to 25.5 percentage points in women's disfavor, only 0.6 percentage points less than in 1995. It is only in Northern, Southern and Western Europe that employment gaps have closed marginally as women continue to enter the labour market in higher numbers in that region – but also as a result of the reduction of men's employment rates due to the economic downturn (Deka, 2017).

The report further indicates that for Africa as a whole, the male employment-to-population ratio was estimated at about 69.2 per cent compared to the female employment-to-population ratio of only 39.2 per cent. While estimates for Sub-Saharan Africa stood at 70.4% to 58.8%, the data was much worse for North Africa. Women in North Africa faced an employment rate of only 19.6% (compared to the global average of 47.9%), the second lowest of all regions and sub-regions in the world – and against a figure of 68% for the men in the sub-region during the same year. The social exclusion of women in employment in Africa (especially in North Africa) is

acute, given that unemployment issue was a key catalyst that triggered the Arab Spring ("revolution") in North Africa from January 2011, which had led to the fall of the governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. It had also triggered a spate of socio-economic cum political reforms in the other countries in the sub region (Anyanwu & Augustine, 2013).

In addition, it creates an unnaturally high employment dependency ratio. Our analysis of the Swaziland Labor Force Surveys reveals that while women predominate among entrepreneurs and self-employed, they run mostly small informal firms. They also face challenges obtaining credit in the formal sector and growing their businesses beyond the 'nascent' stage. In light of very high youth unemployment (53 % of the labor force), we pay special attention to young women (ages 15 – 29). Specifically, a fixed-effects probit model is used to identify the links between youth as well as gender and access to finance, distinguishing periods 'before' and 'after' the-crisis. The main findings support the limited access to formal finance as a constraint to entrepreneurship for young women in Swaziland, with the global financial crisis exacerbating it. Fewer women are employed in high growth areas such as science, technology and engineering. Fewer women than men work in the information and communications technologies (ICT) sector, and in some countries the gaps are especially wide ─ in Jordan women make up less than one-third, and in South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom women comprise only around one-fifth of the ICT workforce (Ajwang, 2017).

According to Osongo (2010), women in the Kenyan society are recognized as procreators of coming generation as well as producers of goods and services. Despite that fact, in many Kenyan communities, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men continue to prevail as many people invoke the preservation of African culture to justify the subordination of women. Hence, men usually dominate women in the political, religious, economic, academic and domestic spheres. The situation has necessitated the call for empowerment of women by according rights and responsibilities to them and empowering them to participate in decision making (Osongo, 2010). Kenya has made developments in women leadership through the Kenya Constitution 2010. This saw every devolved unit elect a women representative to the national assembly. The Kenya constitution 2010 also requires that appointments to public offices should not have more than a third of one gender. This accords further opportunities for women leadership in the Kenyan society.

Under Article 6 (1) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the Legislative and Executive power of the Government of Kenya was constitutionally devolved and decentralized into 47 units of inter-dependent local level County governments. The objective was to devolve power, resources and political representation from the national level down to the local level. Annex I is the map showing the geographical structure of the devolved system of government of Kenya with the 47 Counties. Kisii County is one of the devolved units (Ajwang, 2017).

This study examines the determent of gender disparities in recruitment of executive officers of

the Kisii County Government. According to the National Gender and Equality Commission of Kenya (KNGC) (2013), the term gender is used when referring to social construction of sex, that is, that which our society and culture consider to be female or male. It also concerns ideas about what men and women are capable of doing and what they are culturally allowed to do, and all the characteristics and tasks that society considers being female or male (Osongo, 2010).

Gender has further been defined as the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures. The NGEC states that gender determines the roles, power and resources for females and males in any culture. In different societies, women and men have different resources and opportunities which affect the way they act and reason (Ajwang, 2017).

Kisii County government constitutes an office of the Governor, the Senator, the County Women Representative to Parliament, the County Constituencies Parliamentary representatives, the County Assembly representatives, the Executive County Committees, the County Public Service Board (CPSB) and the County Assembly Service Board (CASB). Below, is a figurative representation of the new two-tier system of the government of Kenya: - National and County.

Figure 1: The System of Kenya's Devolved Government
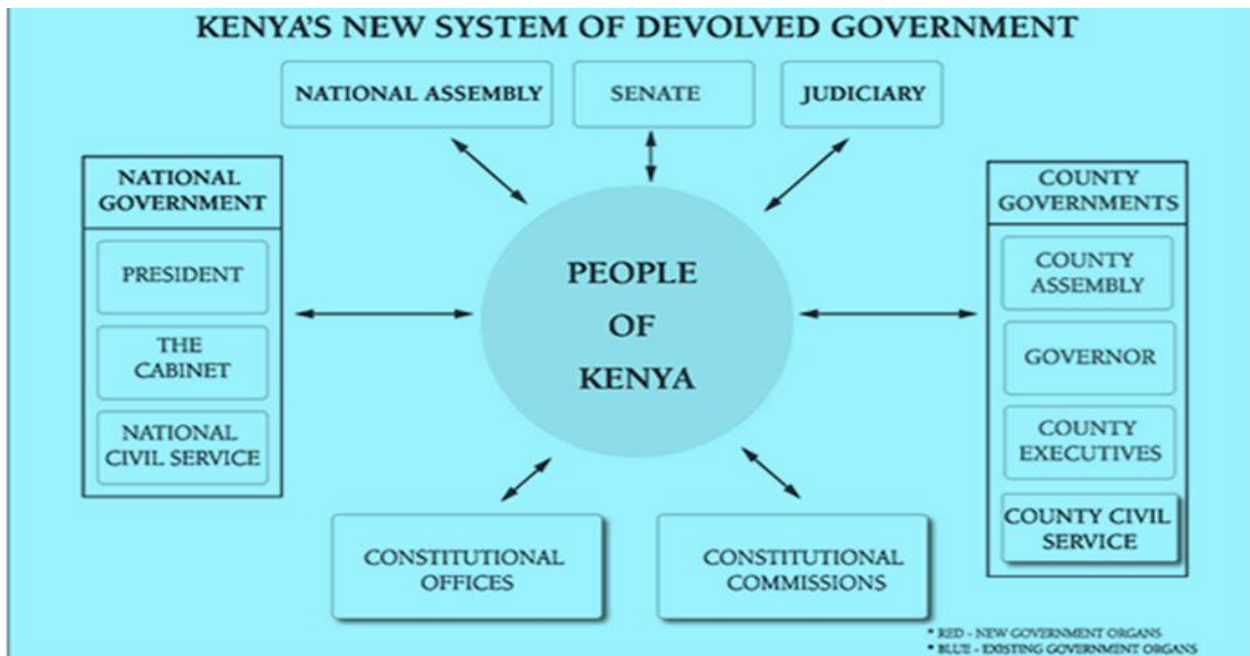
Source: (Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission of Kenya, 2012)

The current structure of government allows power to be held on two levels: the national level and the county level. This allows the Counties of Kenya a form of autonomy. Before the 2013 elections, Kenya was under a central government with 8 provinces but after the elections, there

were 47 county governments. The country is a representative democracy legislatively, and a direct democracy in the election of its president, who is leader of the Executive branch of government. Kenya's constitution states that it is a multi-party democratic state founded on the national values and principles of governance referred to in Article 10 of the Kenyan Constitution. In the County Government, we have the Governor as the head of the county, County Assembly and County Executives. This is actually a replica of the National Government.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Gender disparities in employment have lived at the center of the policy discussions about ensuring gender equity in recruitment. These disparities which are most often biased towards one gender have had adverse effects on growth of the economy since they not only directly affect economic growth but also indirectly through their impact on investment, savings, labor force growth, fertility rates and population growth among others. Most cross country literature has shown that gender disparities indeed have a negative impact on economic growth of a country. In the words of Jacobsen (2011), gender inequalities pervade the world. In the background of this study inequalities in education enrolment and completion rates at various levels and employment in labor force participation is eminent in Kenya (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013). Despite sustained efforts and some notable gains in achieving gender equality in Kenya, women representation in wage employment is still proportionately very low forming less than 30 per cent of wage employment in Kenya. Further, despite the constitutional requirement that no more than two thirds of the same gender shall occupy a constitutional office, gender disparities continue to exist even in principal occupations. The same inequality is evident at operational, management and trade union levels of the service and manufacturing sector organizations which are the backbone of the economy and which hire the largest proportion of wage earners in Kenya (COTU, 2009). The labour force participation rate for women in Kenya has increased from 30% in the early eighties to 56% in 1995. Despite their growing participation in the workforce, there are still very few women in the top echelons of public decision and policy making positions in Kenya. Over time, gender representation in the Kenyan civil service has shown gross under-representation of women in top management and policy-making positions. Despite the fact that the Kenyan Constitution, 2010 has clearly outlined that in all organizations, gender balance during the recruitment exercise must be followed. Many organizations have failed to achieve this mainly because of different reasons or some prevailing circumstances. In Kisii County, despite the county government making significant progress in advancing gender equality in all its departments during recruitment, the underrepresentation of the female gender in the job market is very high. Women trail men by 65.6 percentage points in formal employment. Trade unions are expected to play a critical role in advocating for workers' rights including gender equality, yet disparities are highest within their structures. The KCPSB and the KCASB have not embraced the 30% threshold which is the required by the law. They have only been able to attain 25.65. This has left the County to have gender imbalance of having one sex having more representation than the other (Bandiera & Natraj, 2013). Few researchers in recent years have documented

women's participation in management in the public and private sector in Kenya. Muchangi (2014) did a study on determinants of gender disparities in industrial occupations in Kenya, Indangasi (2015) also studied economic growth and gender inequalities in labor force participation and education in Kenya and Suda (2012) also studied Gender disparities in the Kenyan labour market: Implications for poverty reduction. However, none of these studies focused on determinants of gender disparity during recruitment of the County executive officers. Therefore this study seeks to bridge this gap by establishing the factors influencing gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government, Kenya.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective was to establish the factors influencing gender disparity during recruitment of the County executive officers in Kisii County.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To determine the social-cultural factors affecting the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government, Kenya
2. To find out whether education affect gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government, Kenya

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feminist Theory

This theory was advanced by Gilman (1896). The feminist theory focuses on gender inequality. It examines women's and men's social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, such as anthropology and sociology, communication, media studies, psychoanalysis, home economics, literature, education, and philosophy. Gender is understood to be a social status, a personal identity, and a set of relationships between women and men, and among women and men (Lorber, 2018). Feminist theory can be applied to the field of Public Relations. The feminist scholar Linda Hon examined the major obstacles that women in the field experienced. Some common barriers included male dominance and gender stereotypes. Hon shifted the feminist theory of PR from women's assimilation into patriarchal systems to genuine commitment to social restructuring. Similarly, to the studies Hon conducted, Elizabeth Lance Toth studied Feminist Values in Public Relations. Toth concluded that there is a clear link between feminist gender and feminist value. These values include honesty, sensitivity, perceptiveness, fairness, and commitment. Feminists stress that gender inequality is not an individual matter, but is deeply ingrained in the structure of societies (Maryanski & Turner, 2015). Gender inequality is built into the organization of marriage and families, work and the economy, politics, religions, the arts and other cultural productions, and the very language we speak.

According to the feminists, sexism is perpetuated by systems of patriarchy, male-dominated social structures leading to the oppression of women. Patriarchy, by definition, exhibits androcentric—male-centered norms operating throughout all social institutions that become the standard to which all persons adhere (Lorber, 2018). This theory is relevant to the study as it helps in understanding the effect of social-cultural factors affecting the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government, Kenya.

Social Cognitive Theory

The study is further supported by the social cognitive career theory by Brown and Hackett (1987) theory identifies the interaction of personal attributes, external environmental factors and behavior in career advancement. The theory focuses on the influence of self-efficacy beliefs and outcomes expectation on goals and behaviors. While self-efficacy refers to the self belief that one can perform a specific task or set of tasks, outcome expectations are believed to influence the likelihood of engaging in behavior and the length of persistency to that behavior. Self-efficacy can serve as a barrier to the extent that it reduces the likelihood that a female worker will behave in a manner that increases her success, development and satisfaction at work (Mcwhite, Torres & Rasheed, 2017).

The SCT is a more comprehensive attempt to explain human character. It explains behavior in terms of mutual determinism in which behavior, interpersonal, cognition, and environmental factors operate as interacting causes of each other. SCT plainly recognizes that an individual is a product of their environment and so human behavior is not caused by intrinsic factors alone. It holds that people have control over what they do, how they react to their environment their personal characteristics. Changes in one or more of the three factors can cause changes in the others. SCT gives social marketers a well-built theoretical foundation from which to build environmental programs (Lefebvre, 2011).

SCT explains how people obtain and maintain certain behavioral tendencies and also provides the basis for program strategies. It stresses the relations between a person's cognitions and his/her behavior. This model is of the view that it is important to appreciate the stage an individual is in before a winning change strategy can be planned (Stead, Gordon, Angus & McDermott, 2013). This theory therefore forms a foundation on the effect of education on gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government, Kenya.

RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The case study research design was adopted where detailed investigation was done on the factors that influence the recruitment process of Kisii County Executives. The researcher sought to investigate how social cultural factors and education influence the recruitment of persons of various genders into the Kisii County executive. The study targeted staff that were involved in the decision making, implementation of the policies as well as oversee execution of the policies.

They entail the top echelon of staff in the County. In Kisii County, this population is 119 as at March 2018 and distributed in work stations. Stratified random sampling technique was employed on the target population so that respondents are well represented as per the working stations that are in the most appropriate position to supply the information required to achieve the objectives of the study. The sample size to be studied is census of 119 respondents who make up 100% of the target population for efficient questionnaire administration. Primary data was collected using one structured questionnaire developed by the researcher on the basis of the research objectives and questions for the respondents. The questionnaire will constitute three parts. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to each respondent in their respective offices and the responses were written down for the purposes of analysis. Secondary data was also be collected from Kisii County annual reports, the Kisii County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017, the Kisii County Website, books, journals, magazines and media reports. Primary data collected from the field was captured from the filled questionnaires, cleaned, coded with unique numbers, entered into the Microsoft excel worksheets and transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The qualitative data from the open-ended questions was analyzed using conceptual content analysis to analyze the secondary data collected from Kisii County annual reports, the Kisii County Integrated Development Plan 2013-2017, the Kisii County Website, books, journals, magazines and media reports and presented in prose. Inferential data analysis was done using Pearson moment correlation and multiple regression analysis. Correlation analysis was used to establish the strength of association between the variables. Multiple regression analysis was used to establish the relations between the independent and dependent variables. Since there are four independent variables in this study the multiple regression model generally assumes the following equation;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y= Gender disparities; β_0=constant; β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4 and β_5 = Regression coefficients; X_1= Social-cultural factors; X_2= Education; ε=Error Term

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researcher conducted both the Pearson correlation analysis and the multiple regression analysis. The regression analysis was used to establish the relations between the independent and dependent variables while correlation was conducted to assess the degrees of association between the variables.

This was conducted to assess the degrees of association between the variables. A Pearson moment correlation is a number between -1 and +1 that measures the degree of association between two variables. A positive value for the correlation implies a positive association while a negative value for the correlation implies a negative or inverse association. Table 1 shows the results for the Pearson moment correlation.

Table 1: Pearson Moment Correlation Coefficients

		Gender Disparity	Social-cultural factors	Education
Gender Disparity	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (1-tailed)			
Social-cultural factors	Pearson Correlation	-.004	1	
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.486		
Education	Pearson Correlation	.890[**]	.072	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.255	

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The results show that there is a negative association between social-cultural factors and gender disparity where the correlation coefficient is 0.004, with a p-value of 0.486. Also, there was a positive association between education and gender disparity where the correlation coefficient is 0.890, with a p-value of 0.000. Nevertheless, the positive relationship indicates that when the practice of the afore-mentioned factors is in place, the levels of gender disparity increases.

Regression analysis was carried out to determine the effect of social-cultural factors and education on gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government. The findings were presented in Table 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.914[a]	.836	.828	.41186

The findings of Table 3 found that adjusted R-Square value (coefficient of determination) is 0.828, which indicates that the independent variables (social-cultural factors, education) explain 82.8% of the variation in the dependent variable (gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government). This implies that there are other factors that affect the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government attributed to 17.2% unexplained.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	70.711	2	35.356	213.521	.000
Residual	13.909	84	0.166		
Total	84.621	86			

The results shown in Table 4 revealed that p-value was 0.000 and F calculated was 213.521. Since the p-value was less than 0.05 and F-calculated was greater than F-critical (3.105), then the overall model was statistically significant.

Model coefficients provide unstandardized and standardized coefficients to explain the direction of the regression model and to establish the level of significance of the study variables. The results are captured in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.711	.228		3.125	.002
Social-cultural factors	-.129	.061	-.096	-2.106	.038
Education	.369	.184	.295	2.002	.049

As per the SPSS generated table above, the equation ($Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$) becomes:

$$Y = 0.711 - 0.129 X_1 + 0.369 X_2$$

The findings showed that if all factors (socio-cultural factors, education) were held constant at zero, gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government will be 0.711. The findings presented also show that taking all other independent variables at zero, a unit increase in social-cultural factors would lead to a 0.129 significant decrease of gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government since p-value (0.038) was less than 0.05. The study also found that a unit increase of education would significantly lead to a 0.369 increase of gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government since p-value (0.049) was less than 0.05. This is in line with Ravi (2010) who argued that gender aspect of education inequality most times accentuated as negating economic growth. There is however a strong discontent between the theoretical and micro-empirical studies on the other hand. The author thus argued that the narrow economic evidence can be interpreted to mean gender inequalities are not much, and as such do not essentially deter economic growth and that tackling gender disparities of power should be viewed as not of more priority than conservative economic interventions.

Overall, it was established that education had the greatest effect on the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government while social-cultural factors had the least effect to the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that there is a negative influence of social cultural factors on the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government. The study concluded that the socio-cultural factors which influence gender disparities include family responsibilities and spouse support for additional job responsibility, spouse income's ability to meet the family needs, presence of dependents, presence of house helper, poor working conditions and social stereotype towards certain jobs. Personal attributes such as the age and academic achievement of the employee also influence gender disparities. On education disparity, the study concluded that there is a positive and significant influence on the gender disparities in the recruitment of executive officers in Kisii County government. The study deduces that education is part of the solution towards increasing work opportunities and placement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found that social cultural factors influence recruitment in county executive officers. Thus, there is need to embrace on the communal beliefs and social constructs that women cannot lead in leadership positions more likely to be hired when they have applied through computerized application process.

The study recommends that more women should be encouraged and supported to go for higher education and training so that they can take equal employment positions as their male counterparts. Also, communities should be educated to appreciate and see women role in leadership as good as that of males.

The study recommends that any job requirement which due to the nature of the tasks potentially cause indirect gender discrimination should be reported to and approved by relevant county committees and the ministry in charge of labour before any such requirement is published in the job description or other employment documents or before any such requirement is implemented.

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