

Educational attainment and women's access to leadership positions in the South Sudan Revenue Authority. A cross-sectional study.

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ABSTRACT

Background

The study aimed to examine the effect of educational attainment on women's access to leadership positions in the South Sudan Revenue Authority.

Methodology

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design using mixed methods. A sample of 186 respondents was selected from 350 SSRA employees through purposive and simple random sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, and documentary review. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26 to generate descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. Validity was confirmed using the Content Validity Index, and reliability through Cronbach's Alpha coefficients above 0.7. Ethical principles, including confidentiality and informed consent, were observed.

Results

An overall response rate of 86% was achieved. Most respondents were male (65.0%), while females constituted 35.0%. The majority were aged 36–45 years (52.5%), followed by 26–35 years (20.0%), 46–55 years (18.8%), 18–25 years (6.3%), and 56 years and above (2.5%). Respondents agreed that lack of advanced qualifications limits women's promotion prospects ($M=3.55$), while higher education increases women's competitiveness for leadership positions ($M=3.35$). Low mean scores on study leave, scholarships, and professional training reflected inadequate institutional support for women's advancement. Leadership positions remained male-dominated, with low agreement on women's representation in senior management ($M=1.89$), transparent recruitment practices ($M=1.80$), and women's participation in strategic decision-making ($M=2.03$). Themes identified included educational barriers, gender inequality in promotion, limited institutional support, and low participation of women in decision-making. Educational attainment positively influenced women's access to leadership positions ($r=0.582$, $p<0.01$).

Conclusion

Educational attainment plays a significant role in enhancing women's access to leadership positions at SSRA.

Recommendation

SSRA should strengthen policies that support women's access to higher education and professional development programs.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, leadership equity, organizational barriers, promotion bias, institutional culture, female empowerment

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Educational attainment refers to the highest level of formal schooling completed, including professional and technical qualifications obtained from accredited institutions (UNESCO, 2020). It is widely recognized as a key socio-economic indicator for assessing human capital development (Sen, 1999). Within the context of women's access to leadership positions, educational attainment plays

a critical role in determining eligibility for professional advancement and serves as an important gateway to positions within organizational hierarchies (Morley, 2013). Empirical evidence consistently shows a strong link between education and leadership opportunities. Johnson and Mathews-Njoku (2021) found that women with higher educational qualifications are significantly more likely to attain supervisory and managerial positions in public sector

organizations across West Africa. Similarly, in fragile and developing contexts, low female educational attainment limits the pool of qualified women available for leadership roles, thereby reinforcing gender disparities in senior positions (World Bank, 2024).

Women's access to leadership positions refers to the extent to which women are able to attain, retain, and effectively exercise authority in managerial and decision-making roles within organizations. UN Women (2020) defines it as women's ability to enter, remain in, and advance through positions of authority in both public and private institutions. Similarly, Catalyst (2022) conceptualizes it as the extent to which organizational structures, policies, and practices either enable or constrain women's progression into senior management positions.

The study aimed to examine the effect of educational attainment on women's access to leadership positions in the South Sudan Revenue Authority.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design, which involved the collection of data from a defined population at a single point in time. This design was appropriate for descriptive and explanatory research that sought to examine

the relationships between variables without manipulating the results. A cross-sectional survey was used for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from a relatively large number of respondents within a limited timeframe, making it well-suited for studies conducted under academic constraints.

Study population

The study population comprised Senior Management (40), Middle-Level Staff (130), and 180 Junior-Level Staff at the South Sudan Revenue Authority headquarters in Juba, giving a total target population of 350 respondents. This population was deemed appropriate for the study because all employees were situated within the institutional context where the variables under investigation, socio-economic factors, and women's access to leadership positions operate and could be observed.

Sample size

The sample size of 186 was determined based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size determination table, as reflected in Table 1. The unit of inquiry was the employees, and equally, the unit of analysis was the employees of SSRA.

Table 1: Sample size distribution

Category	Target population	Sample size	Sampling method
Senior Management	40	21	Purposive sampling
Middle-Level Staff	130	69	Simple Random Sampling
Junior-Level Staff	180	96	Simple Random Sampling
Total	350	186	

Source: SSRA Human Resource Report (2026)

Sampling techniques

The study employed two sampling techniques: simple random sampling and purposive sampling. Simple random sampling was used to select respondents from the middle-level and junior-level staff categories. In this approach, a complete list of employees in each category was obtained from the human resource department, and each employee was assigned a number. A random number generator was then used to select the required number of respondents from each category. This technique ensured that every member of the population had an equal probability of being selected, thereby enhancing the representativeness and generalizability of the findings.

Purposive sampling was applied to the senior management category. This technique involved the deliberate selection of respondents who possess specific knowledge, experience, or authority relevant to the study objectives. Senior managers were purposively selected because of their direct involvement in recruitment, promotion, and decision-making processes, which were central to the dependent

variable. The combination of both techniques ensured that the samples were both statistically representative and informationally rich.

Source of data

Primary data

Primary data were gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The structured questionnaires consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. Closed-ended questions enabled the collection of quantitative data, offering measurable and statistically analyzable responses. These types of questions were used to assess patterns, frequencies, and relationships between variables, which facilitated the identification of trends or generalizations in the study population. On the other hand, open-ended questions captured qualitative data, providing respondents with the opportunity to express their views, experiences, or perceptions in their own words. This flexibility was valuable in exploring complex issues, uncovering nuanced insights, and generating rich, detailed

information. Semi-structured interviews complemented the questionnaires by allowing deeper exploration of certain topics. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews offered a more flexible format, where the interviewer had a set of guiding questions but was also free to probe further based on the interviewee's responses. This format enabled the researcher to gather in-depth, context-specific information and fostered a more conversational tone that encouraged openness and rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. Through these interviews, additional insights were obtained that might not have been captured through the questionnaires alone, especially when dealing with complex or sensitive topics.

The combination of structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews ensured a comprehensive approach to data collection by leveraging both the advantages of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data derived from closed-ended questions allowed for statistical analysis and generalizations, enhancing the objectivity and reliability of the research. Meanwhile, qualitative data from open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews provided depth, context, and personal perspectives that enhanced understanding and helped interpret the numbers. The triangulation of both data types improved the overall validity of the findings by enabling cross-validation and offering a fuller picture of the research topic.

Secondary data

Secondary data were obtained from Human Resource records and relevant reports from SSRA. Relevant reports encompassed a wide range of documents, including annual reports, labor-market analysis reports, and industry-specific studies. These reports provided valuable background information that enhanced understanding of the public environment in which SSRA operated, offering a broader perspective on how Human resource data might have been influenced by external factors. Meanwhile, reports enriched the research by providing qualitative insights into the external and internal factors affecting women. By using both types of secondary data, the study benefited from a well-rounded understanding, which facilitated a robust analysis of the organizational context and validated the findings from primary data collection (Yin, 2018). Combining secondary data with primary sources also increased the credibility and reliability of the research, as it allowed for cross-referencing and triangulating information from multiple perspectives

Data collection methods

Based on the study objectives, primary and secondary approaches were used. These methods were employed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data to explore the relationships between the study variables.

Questionnaires

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was the primary instrument for collecting quantitative data from middle-level and junior-level staff. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), and was organized into sections corresponding to the study variables: socio-economic factors (educational attainment, income level, and cultural norms) and women's access to leadership positions (representation in senior management, recruitment and promotion practices, and decision-making participation). The instrument was administered during working hours at the South Sudan Revenue Authority headquarters. The questionnaire was appropriate because it allowed for the standardized collection of data from a large number of respondents in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner.

Interview guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data from senior management officials at the South Sudan Revenue Authority. The guide contained open-ended questions organized around the study's independent and dependent variables, allowing respondents to elaborate on their experiences, perspectives, and institutional knowledge regarding women's leadership access. Interviews were conducted face-to-face at a time and location convenient for each respondent, following a prior appointment. The interview guide was appropriate because it provided the flexibility to probe deeper into complex institutional dynamics that structured questionnaires cannot fully capture, while maintaining thematic consistency across interviews.

Documentary review

Documentary review was used as a key tool for collecting secondary data relating to the study problem. This data included human resource management reports, such as those on recruitment, promotion, and career growth over time. These records provided concrete information on employment status at the South Sudan Revenue Authority. The secondary data were used to triangulate the primary data collected through questionnaires and interviews, thereby offering an objective and historical perspective on socio-economic factors affecting women's access to leadership positions in public sector organizations.

Validity and reliability

The research instruments were subjected to scrutiny by the researcher's supervisors for validation purposes. During the interview guide construction, quality control and validity were ensured through face validity. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, a pre-test was conducted, and experts were consulted to check whether it measures what it was intended to measure.

Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which the research instrument measures what it is intended to measure (Hair et al., 2014). In this study, the validity of the questionnaire was established through Content Validity. The Content Validity Index (CVI) was used to assess the relevance of each question in measuring the variables outlined in the study objectives, specifically educational attainment, income level, cultural norms, and women's access to leadership

positions (representation in senior management, recruitment and promotion practices, and decision-making participation) at the South Sudan Revenue Authority. Content validity was calculated using the formula:

$$CVI = \frac{K}{N}$$

Where **K** represents the number of items in the questionnaire that are deemed valid, and

N is the total number of items in the questionnaire.

The study drew a conclusion based on a CVI above $0 \leq 1$, reflecting the validity test results.

Table 2: Content validity index

S/No.	Variables	No. of Items	No. of Items declared valid	CVI
1.	Educational Attainment	10	8	0.80
2.	Income Level	8	7	0.88
3.	Cultural Norms	10	8	0.80
4.	Women's Access to Leadership Positions	14	12	0.86

Source: Primary Data (2026)

In Table 2, the results showed that all the research instruments had a high validity content of above 0.7. This indicates that the research tools created were able to perform their function of measurement and produce reliable findings.

Reliability

Reliability is crucial to ensure that the items consistently measure the intended concepts across different respondents. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.7 or higher was considered

acceptable for the retained items. This threshold ensures that only those items that reliably measure the variables of educational attainment, income level, cultural norms, and women's access to leadership positions (representation in senior management, recruitment and promotion practices, and decision-making participation) are included in the final instrument.

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to measure the internal consistency and thus the reliability of the questionnaire.

Table 3: Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability test

S/N0.	ITEM	Cronbach analysis
1	Educational attainment	0.825
2	Income level	0.954
4	Cultural norms	0.922
4	Women's access to leadership positions	0.948

Source: Primary Data (2025)

From Table 3, the results showed that all items had a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of more than 0.7. This showed that the instruments were reliable.

By assessing both validity and reliability, this study aims to ensure that the research instrument accurately and consistently measures the relationships between educational

attainment, income level, cultural norms, and women's access to leadership positions (representation in senior management, recruitment and promotion practices, and decision-making participation) at SSRA, providing robust and dependable results for analysis.

Measurement of variables

Educational attainment

Educational attainment was measured through items assessing respondents' highest level of formal schooling and professional qualifications. Items were adapted from the measurement framework used in the UNDP Gender Equality in Public Administration. These indicators were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represents strongly disagree, and 5 represents strongly agree.

Women's access to leadership positions

The dependent variable was measured across three dimensions: representation in senior management, recruitment and promotion practices, and decision-making participation. Items were adapted from the UNDP (2022) Gender Equality in Public Administration framework and from Catalyst's (2022) organizational gender assessment tool. This was assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data analysis

Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were coded, entered, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were computed to summarize the demographic characteristics and the distribution of responses on each variable. Inferential statistics, Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of relationships between the independent variables (educational attainment, income level, and cultural norms) and the dependent variable (women's access to leadership positions). Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the combined and individual effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, in line with the study objectives.

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step framework.

Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were read multiple times to ensure familiarity with the content. Initial codes were generated from the data, after which they were organized into themes that corresponded to the study's independent and dependent variables. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represent the patterns in the data. Qualitative findings were presented alongside quantitative results to provide depth, context, and explanatory insight into the statistical relationships observed.

Procedure for data collection

The data collection process followed a systematic, sequential procedure. First, the researcher obtained an introductory letter from the university and sought ethical clearance. Second, formal permission was requested from the management of the South Sudan Revenue Authority to access staff and conduct research on the premises. Third, upon receiving approval, the researcher visited the Authority headquarters to introduce the study, distribute informed consent forms, and schedule interview appointments with senior managers. Fourth, questionnaires were distributed to sampled middle-level and junior-level staff and collected within five working days. Fifth, face-to-face interviews were conducted with senior management respondents at mutually agreed times. Finally, all completed instruments were checked for completeness before data entry commenced.

Ethical considerations

All participants were required to provide informed consent before participating in the study. Each respondent received a written consent form explaining the purpose of the research, the nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. No individual was coerced or pressured into participating, and consent was obtained voluntarily in accordance with established ethical research.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study. Questionnaires did not require respondents to provide their names or any other personally identifiable information. Interview transcripts were coded using pseudonyms, and all data were stored securely on password-protected devices accessible only to the researcher.

The researcher obtained all necessary permissions before commencing data collection. An introductory letter was secured from the university, and formal authorization was sought from the South Sudan Revenue Authority management. Where applicable, ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review board. These steps ensured that the research complies with institutional and national research governance requirements.

Informed consent

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their inclusion in the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

RESULTS

Table 4: Response rate

Respondents	Sample size	Actual response	Response rate (%)
Junior staff	21	16	76.2
Middle-level staff	69	58	84.1
Senior management	96	86	89.6
Total	186	160	86.0

Source: Primary Data (2026).

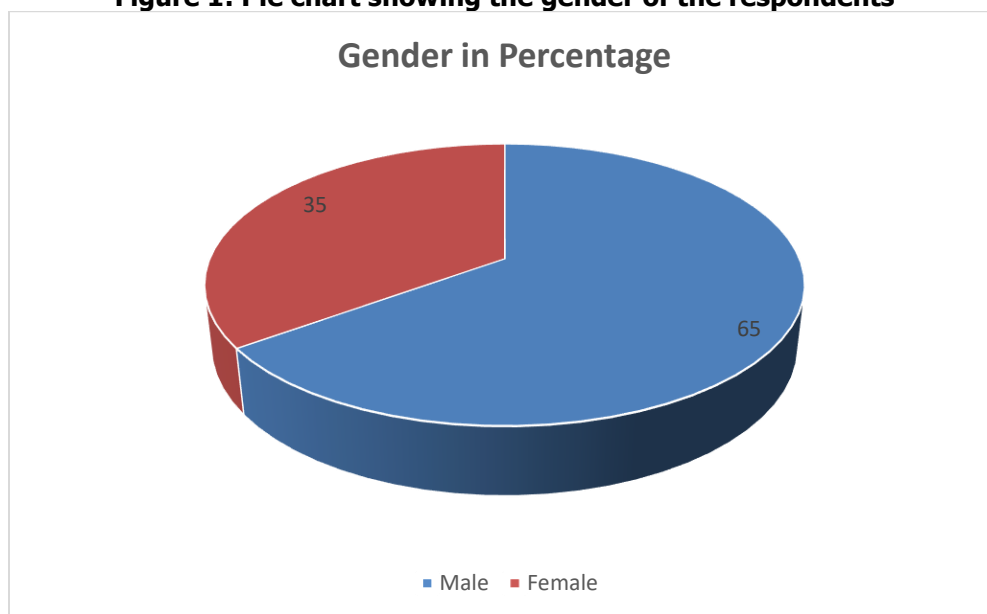
The study obtained an overall response rate of 86%, which is considered excellent for survey research. Response rates of 70% and above are generally deemed adequate for analysis in social science studies. This ensured the reliability of the study findings.

Background information

This section presents the background information about the respondents and covers their current category, age, sex, level of education, tenure, and department.

Gender

Figure 1: Pie chart showing the gender of the respondents

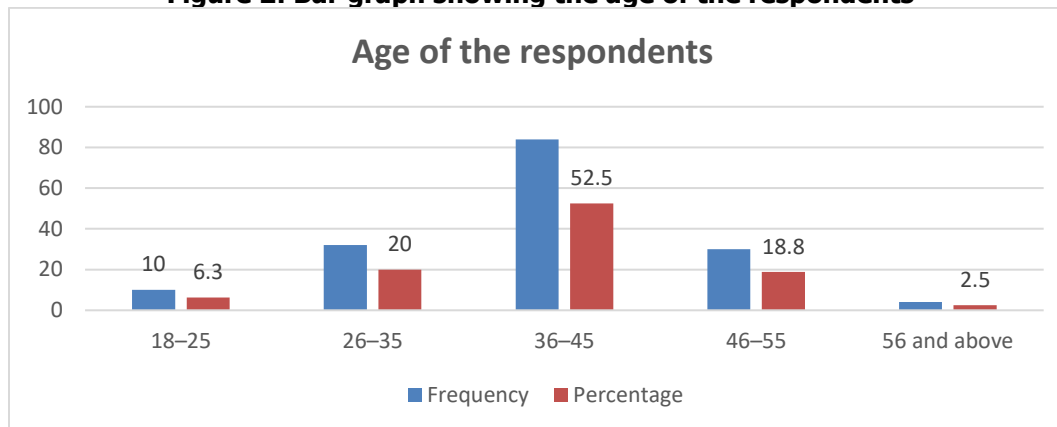


Source: field (2026).

The results in Figure 1 indicate that the majority of the respondents were male, representing 104 (65.0%), while 56 (35.0%) were female. This suggests that male employees constitute a larger proportion of staff within the organization. However, the presence of a considerable number of female respondents indicates that both genders are represented in the workforce, allowing the study to capture perspectives from both groups.

Age

Figure 2: Bar graph showing the age of the respondents



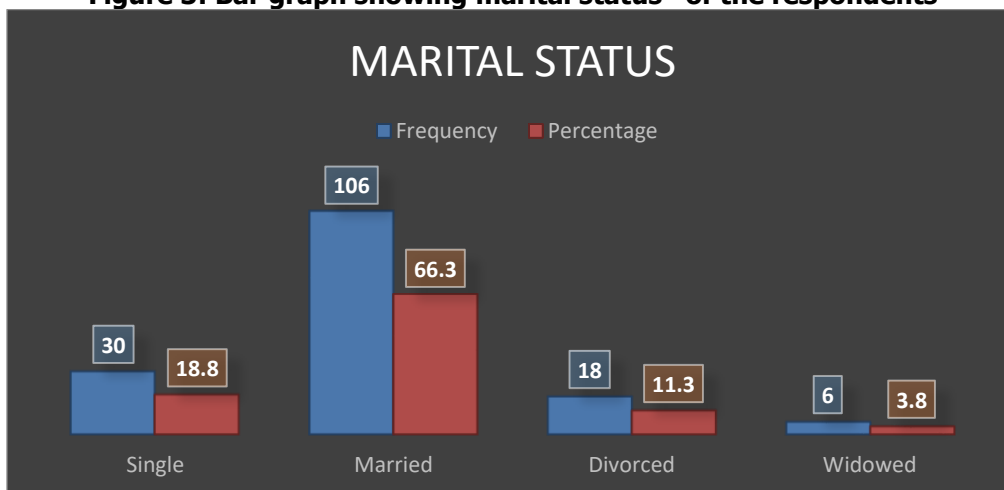
Source: Field (2026)

From Figure 2, the findings show that most respondents were aged 36–45 years, accounting for 84 (52.5%) of the sample. This was followed by those aged 26–35 years with 32 (20.0%), and 46–55 years with 30 (18.8%). Respondents aged 18–25 years constituted 10 (6.3%), while only 4 (2.5%) were 56 years and above. These results indicate that the organization is largely composed of mid-career

professionals, suggesting that most employees have gained substantial experience and are likely to provide informed responses regarding organizational practices.

Marital status

Figure 3: Bar graph showing marital status of the respondents



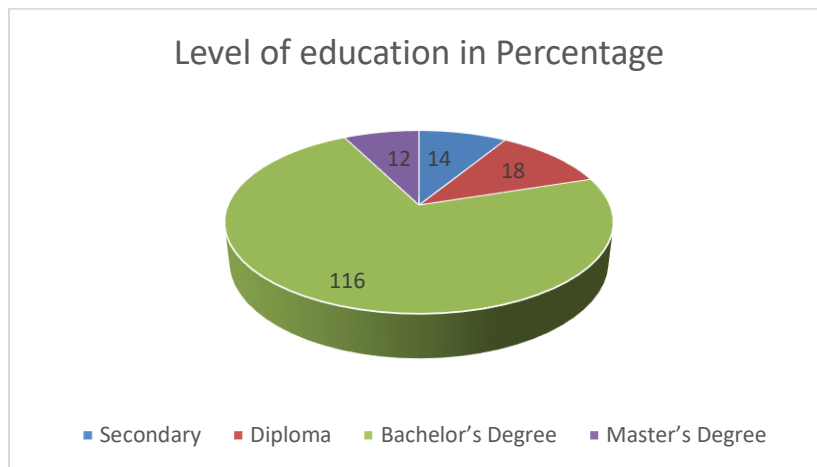
Source: Field (2026)

The majority of respondents were married, representing 106 (66.3%) of the sample. This was followed by single respondents at 30 (18.8%), divorced respondents at 18 (11.3%), and widowed respondents at 6 (3.8%). This distribution suggests that most participants have family

responsibilities, which may influence their perspectives on work-life balance, leadership, and organizational policies.

Level of education

Figure 4: Percentage pie showing the level of education



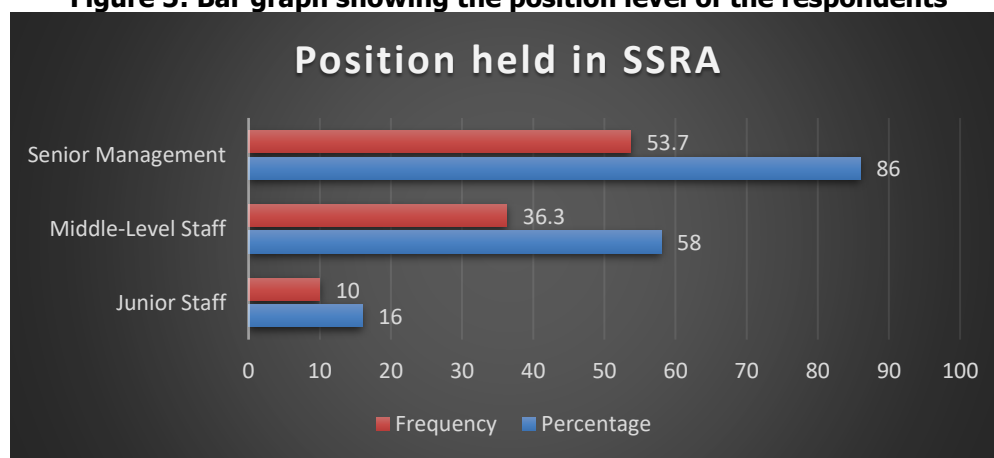
Source: Field (2026)

Results regarding educational attainment in Figure 4.4 show that the majority of respondents held a Bachelor's degree, accounting for 116 (72.5%). Those with a Diploma constituted 18 (11.3%), while 12 (7.5%) had a Master's degree, and 14 (8.8%) had secondary education. This indicates that the workforce is highly educated, with most employees possessing university-level qualifications. Such

a level of education suggests that respondents are capable of understanding complex organizational issues and providing reliable information for the study.

Position level

Figure 5: Bar graph showing the position level of the respondents



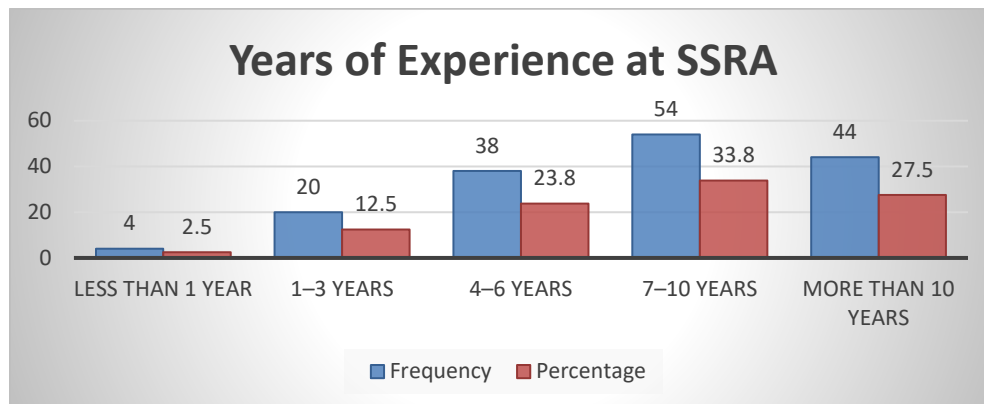
Source: Field (2026)

The results from Figure 5 show that Senior Management formed the largest group of respondents with 86 (53.7%), followed by Middle-Level Staff with 58 (36.3%), and Junior Staff with 16 (10.0%). This implies that the study obtained substantial input from individuals in decision-making and supervisory positions, which is important because they are

likely to have deeper insights into organizational strategies, leadership practices, and operational performance.

Years of experience at SSRA

Figure 6: Bar graph showing years of experience at SSRA



Source: Field (2026)

The findings in Figure 6 indicate that the largest proportion of respondents had 7–10 years of experience, accounting for 54 (33.8%), followed by those with more than 10 years of experience at 44 (27.5%). Respondents with 4–6 years of experience constituted 38 (23.8%), while those with 1–3 years were 20 (12.5%), and those with less than 1 year were 4 (2.5%). These results suggest that most respondents have

considerable experience within the organization, which enhances the credibility of their responses since they are familiar with the institution’s operations and policies.

Education attainment

Table 5: Responses on educational attainment

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Lack of advanced qualifications limits women’s promotion prospects at SSRA.	160	3.55	1.655
Higher education increases women’s leadership competitiveness at SSRA.	160	3.35	1.649
Limited access to higher education affects women’s promotion chances at SSRA.	160	3.26	1.684
Women at SSRA possess the necessary academic qualifications for leadership roles.	160	3.13	1.474
SSRA provides adequate study leave opportunities for female staff.	160	2.59	1.576
Educational qualifications influence promotion to leadership positions in SSRA.	160	2.46	1.625
Access to scholarships and sponsorships is equitable for men and women at SSRA.	160	2.31	1.245
Educational background significantly determines appointment to senior management positions at SSRA.	160	2.31	1.459
Women are encouraged to attend leadership development programs at SSRA.	160	2.16	1.405
Professional training opportunities are equally accessible to men and women at SSRA.	160	2.10	1.314

Source: Primary Data (2026)

Table 5 presents respondents’ perceptions regarding the influence of educational attainment on women’s access to leadership positions at SSRA. The results are interpreted based on the mean scores and standard deviations obtained from the responses of 160 participants. The statement “Lack of advanced qualifications limits women’s promotion prospects at SSRA” recorded the highest mean score (M = 3.55, SD = 1.655). This indicates that respondents generally

agree that insufficient advanced academic qualifications can hinder women’s opportunities for promotion into leadership roles. The relatively high standard deviation suggests that although many respondents agree, opinions vary among participants. Similarly, the statement “Higher education increases women’s leadership competitiveness at SSRA” obtained a mean score of 3.35 (SD = 1.649), implying that respondents generally believe that higher levels of education

enhance women's ability to compete for leadership positions. This finding highlights the importance of advanced academic credentials in strengthening women's prospects for leadership. The item "Limited access to higher education affects women's promotion chances at SSRA" recorded a mean of 3.26 (SD = 1.684), indicating moderate agreement among respondents. This suggests that barriers to accessing higher education may reduce women's chances of advancing to leadership positions.

The statement "Women at SSRA possess necessary academic qualifications for leadership roles" had a mean score of 3.13 (SD = 1.474), which indicates that respondents slightly agree that women in the organization generally possess the required educational qualifications for leadership. However, the moderate mean also suggests that respondents are not strongly convinced that all women have adequate qualifications for leadership roles. The item "SSRA provides adequate study leave opportunities for female staff" recorded a mean score of 2.59 (SD = 1.576). This indicates that respondents generally disagree or remain neutral regarding whether the organization provides sufficient study leave opportunities for women. This may suggest that institutional support for further education may not be fully adequate. Similarly, "Educational qualifications influence promotion to leadership positions in SSRA" had a mean score of 2.46 (SD = 1.625), suggesting that respondents perceive educational qualifications as having a relatively limited influence on promotion compared to other factors. The statements "Access to scholarships and sponsorships is equitable for men and women at SSRA" and "Educational background significantly determines appointment to senior management positions at SSRA" both recorded mean scores of 2.31, with standard deviations of

1.245 and 1.459, respectively. These relatively low mean values suggest that respondents generally disagree that scholarship opportunities are equally distributed or that educational background alone determines appointments to senior management positions. Furthermore, the statements "Women are encouraged to attend leadership development programs at SSRA" (M = 2.16, SD = 1.405) and "Professional training opportunities are equally accessible to men and women at SSRA" (M = 2.10, SD = 1.314) recorded the lowest mean scores. This indicates that respondents largely disagree with these statements, implying that women may not receive sufficient encouragement or equal access to professional training and leadership development opportunities. Generally, the findings suggest that education plays an important role in influencing women's access to leadership positions, particularly in terms of advanced qualifications and higher education. However, the results also reveal concerns regarding limited institutional support, unequal access to scholarships, and insufficient encouragement for women to participate in leadership development and professional training programs. These factors may collectively contribute to the challenges women face in accessing leadership positions at SSRA.

Women's access to leadership positions

Women's Access to Leadership Positions as the dependent variable has been measured using dimensions of Representation in Senior Management, Recruitment and Promotion Practices, and Decision-Making Participation. The analysis results are hereby presented in Table 4.7.

Table 6: Responses on women's access to leadership positions

Representation in senior management	Mean	Std. Deviation
Top management positions are dominated by men.	3.13	1.845
The proportion of women in top management reflects gender equity policies at SSRA.	2.81	1.731
Women hold key executive roles (e.g., Director, Head of Department) at SSRA.	2.50	1.618
Women are adequately represented in senior management at SSRA.	1.89	1.374
Recruitment and promotion practices	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women are encouraged to apply for leadership positions.	2.18	1.486
Organizational policies actively support women's career advancement.	2.00	1.336
Shortlisting panels consider gender balance during recruitment.	1.99	1.396
Promotion decisions are based on merit rather than gender.	1.96	1.369
Recruitment processes are transparent and gender-neutral.	1.80	1.222
Decision-making participation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Women leaders are involved in setting long-term organizational goals.	2.14	1.296
Women's opinions are valued in high-level meetings.	2.10	1.294
Women actively participate in strategic decision-making.	2.03	1.418
Women in leadership hold substantive authority.	1.95	1.120
Women influence budget allocation and policy formulation.	1.91	1.220

Source: Research Data (2026)

The results indicate that women are underrepresented in senior leadership at SSRA. Respondents moderately agreed that top management is dominated by men ($M = 3.13$), but largely disagreed that gender equity policies are reflected in top management ($M = 2.81$), that women hold key executive roles ($M = 2.50$), or that women are adequately represented in senior management ($M = 1.89$). Overall, leadership positions at SSRA remain largely male-dominated.

Further, the results in Table 4.7 indicate that recruitment and promotion practices at SSRA offer limited support for women's leadership advancement. Respondents largely disagreed that women are encouraged to apply for leadership positions ($M = 2.18$) and that organizational policies support women's career advancement ($M = 2.00$). Similarly, respondents disagreed that shortlisting panels consider gender balance ($M = 1.99$), that promotion decisions are merit-based rather than gender-biased ($M = 1.96$), and that recruitment processes are transparent and gender-neutral ($M = 1.80$). Thus, the findings suggest that recruitment and promotion practices at SSRA are not sufficiently supportive of gender equity, limiting women's opportunities for leadership roles.

Lastly, from Table 6, the results indicate that women's participation in strategic decision-making at SSRA is

limited. Respondents generally disagreed that women leaders are involved in setting long-term goals ($M = 2.14$), that their opinions are valued in high-level meetings ($M = 2.10$), or that they actively participate in strategic decision-making ($M = 2.03$). Further, respondents disagreed that women in leadership hold substantive authority ($M = 1.95$) or influence budget allocation and policy formulation ($M = 1.91$). Hence, the findings suggest that women have minimal influence in key decision-making processes at SSRA.

Correlation analysis

This part presents the findings that address the study's objectives and provide the answers to the research questions that were posed using Pearson's Correlation Test. The method of correlation is used to look into the relationship between two or more continuous, quantitative variables. Based on the study objectives, the study variables were analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) to determine their relationship. The degree of the linear link between the variables was determined by the Pearson correlation coefficient, as in Table 7

Table 7: Results of the correlation analysis

		Educational attainment	Women's access to leadership positions
Educational attainment	Pearson Correlation	1	.582**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	160	160
Women's Access to Leadership Positions	Pearson Correlation	.582**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	160	160

The correlation analysis shows a positive and significant relationship between educational attainment and women's access to leadership positions ($r = 0.582$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that higher educational qualifications are associated with greater opportunities for women to access leadership roles at SSRA. In other words, women with advanced academic credentials are more likely to be considered for leadership positions. On the other hand, the negative correlation with cultural norms ($r = -0.513$, $p < 0.01$) also suggests that cultural barriers weaken the positive effect of education, highlighting the importance of addressing societal and organizational norms alongside promoting education.

Discussion

The study findings revealed that educational attainment has a positive and statistically significant relationship with women's access to leadership positions at SSRA. The correlation results showed a strong positive relationship between educational attainment and women's leadership access ($r = 0.582$, $p < 0.01$), while regression results further confirmed that education is a significant predictor of women's leadership participation. This finding implies that women with higher levels of education are more likely to access leadership positions within public sector organizations. Education equips individuals with critical leadership competencies such as strategic thinking, communication skills, and managerial expertise necessary for senior management positions. These findings are consistent with Kabeer (2005), who argues that education is

a key dimension of women's empowerment because it enhances their capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership roles.

Similarly, Duflo (2012) emphasizes that education increases women's economic and social empowerment by improving their access to opportunities that were previously dominated by men. In organizational contexts, higher education also improves women's credibility and competitiveness for leadership roles. The findings are also consistent with Morley (2013), who notes that access to higher education significantly improves women's representation in leadership positions, particularly in professional and public sector institutions. However, the study also revealed that women's access to scholarships, professional training, and leadership development programs remains limited. This observation aligns with Njoku (2021), who found that institutional barriers such as limited training opportunities often hinder women's advancement into leadership positions even when they possess the necessary qualifications. Therefore, although education enhances women's competitiveness for leadership positions, organizations must also create supportive institutional frameworks that promote women's professional development.

Conclusion

The study concludes that educational attainment plays a significant role in enhancing women's access to leadership positions at SSRA. The findings showed a positive and statistically significant relationship between educational attainment and women's leadership access ($r = 0.582$, $p < 0.01$). Women with higher levels of education are more likely to acquire the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for leadership roles. This supports the argument by Kabeer (2005) that education is a key dimension of women's empowerment because it increases their ability to participate in decision-making and leadership processes.

Recommendation

SSRA should strengthen policies that support women's access to higher education and professional development programs. This may include providing scholarships, study leave opportunities, and leadership training programs specifically targeted at female employees. According to Morley (2013), expanding educational opportunities for women significantly improves their representation in leadership positions.

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List of abbreviations

SSRA – South Sudan Revenue Authority
SPSS – Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
CVI – Content Validity Index
SD – Standard Deviation
M – Mean
r – Pearson Correlation Coefficient

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Author contributions

KNMA: collected the data.
EHK: supervised the study.

Data availability

Data is available upon request from the author.

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