

Military Leadership and Gender in Africa: A Qualitative Review of Challenges and Opportunities

Oluwayomi N. Yusuf¹, Omololu M. Fagbadebo² & Olagoke Oluwafemi Awotayo³

¹ Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Osun State University, Ifetedo Campus, Nigeria

oluwayominimat@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7122-7579>

² Department of Public Management, Law and Economics, Durban University of Technology, Riverside Campus, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa

otomololu@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0195-5189>

³ Department of Political Science, University of Ilesha, Ilesha, Nigeria

olagoke_awotayo@unilesa.edu.ng

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9768-8910>

Corresponding author: otomololu@yahoo.com

Abstract

Traditionally, African military command has been the preserve of men, with women facing enormous barriers to entry and advancement. In recent years, however, the need for gender diversity in military command has become increasingly evident, and various African nations have made strides toward greater representation of women within their militaries. This qualitative desk research examines the intricate relationship between gender and military leadership in Africa, focusing on women's opportunities and challenges in military leadership positions. This paper explores the forces shaping women's involvement in military command, including institutional and cultural obstacles, and examines how women's presence in command positions affects military effectiveness and regional security. This research uses the feminist institutionalist theoretical framework, which holds that the ways in which institutions and power are constructed shape gender relations and possibilities. This model will assist in examining how African military institutions sustain or subvert gender inequality and how women's leadership can be encouraged and developed. The results of this research will enhance understanding of the opportunities and challenges facing women in command in Africa and offer policy implications for policymakers, military commanders, and scholars concerned with advancing gender equality and diversity in African militaries.

Keywords: Military Leadership, Gender, Africa, Feminist Institutionalism, military combat

Introduction

African military leadership is a rich and complex tapestry woven from the threads of historical legacies, socio-political imperatives, and shifting global pressures. Comprehending leadership requires a similarly complex understanding of its history, the contemporary issues of the day in the 21st century, and the new yet nascent role of gender in these institutions. This paper examines the history and significance of military leadership on the continent and discusses the emerging role and challenges of women in military organisations. The significance of African military leadership should not be overemphasised. The armies have exercised domination over the politics of most states, intervening either directly through coups d'état or indirectly by exerting pressure on civilian politicians (Akinola, 2024; Fagbadebo, 2024). The colonial past has left a legacy: at independence, the African military inherited institutions and cultures that imposed constraints on the preservation of order and authority rather than serving as tools of democratic statecraft (Ayoko, 2025).

In addition, the diversification of security threats in Africa from internal insurgencies and conflicts to transnational crime and terrorism demands effective and responsive military leadership (Thompson et al, 2026). The ability of armed forces to counter these multifaceted threats, build stable, professional armies, and win the confidence and cooperation of civilian populations is at the heart of successful stability and sustainable development (Ahmed, 2024). Effective military leadership in unstable regions can be a

lifeline to prevent the situation from worsening. But the very nature of African military leadership is being radically altered. The necessities of an accelerated world are occasioning the traditional model of military engagement, characterised by hierarchical structures, centralised command and control, and a hard masculinity culture (Akanji, Mordi, & Ajonbadi, 2024). Asymmetric warfare, the rise of non-state actors, and a greater emphasis on human rights and international humanitarian law mandate a more adaptive, flexible, and value-driven leadership style (Thompson et al., 2026). This change also includes an increasingly recognised need for diversity and inclusion in the military. Women's exclusion from military combat zones has been controversial and has been subject to modification for centuries (Marco-Gracia, Beltrán Tapia, & Liczbiński, 2025). This study examines traditional cultural prejudices and institutional barriers to the inclusion of women in military leadership and operations. This is necessary to ascertain the major barriers against women's leadership in the African military.

Military Leadership and Gender in Africa

Historically, there has been a paradoxical history of war and gender in African societies. Women who fought in pre-colonial African forces served in specialised roles as warriors, spies, and strategists (Muse-Ajumobi & Akinyoade, 2025; Wycliff, 2025). The Dahomey Amazons of the Republic of Benin provide a historical example of women serving in the army, demonstrating that women can serve in disciplined combat units (Akpan, 2025; Pantuchowicz, 2025). Nonetheless, colonial armies predominantly discriminated against women, replicating patriarchal systems that consigned them to auxiliary roles instead of command roles (Wycliff, 2025). Even though African armies have increasingly moved towards gender integration, inequalities persist (Heineken, 2025). Some countries, such as South Africa, have instituted progressive policies, and there is greater female representation in defence leadership roles than in other countries, such as Nigeria or Kenya, where cultural constraints remain deep-seated and limit women's participation (Heineken, 2025).

Reconstruction processes in the aftermath of conflicts, particularly in Rwanda, have demonstrated that women can occupy dominant roles in defence institutions, primarily driven by legislative pressures and advocacy campaigns (Björkdahl, Höglund, & Mannergren, 2026). Even with this advancement, there is still a lack of gender balance in African militaries, with women typically found in clerical, medical, and legal units but not in combat units. Perpetual obstacles include poor support systems, cultural attitudes towards women's abilities, and opposition from predominantly male command systems (Yusuf & Fagbadebo, 2026).

Policy contexts have enabled the integration of women into military command. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) remains a foundational document for promoting women's participation in peace and security missions and calls on African nations to implement gender-sensitive defence policies (UN Women, 2020). At the regional and local levels, the African Union (AU) has adopted policies to ensure gender equality within security institutions, with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) promoting women's rights within defence institutional structures (African Union, 2003). Most African nations have ratified the Maputo Protocol, a convention that calls for gender-sensitive reforms across various sectors, including the defence forces (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, ACHPR, 2003). Enforcement is still challenging, however. Whereas South Africa's Defence Force has implemented policies to enhance women's involvement in leadership positions, other countries are held back by long-established socio-cultural inhibitions (Mills, 2019). The achievement of such policies depends on political goodwill, sufficient resources, and sustained mobilisation by civil society organisations.

Women in Military Operations

Military organisations, including Africans, have been institutionally characterised by masculine values and norms for several decades. This has typically resulted in structural exclusion of women's access to career progression, thereby reinforcing gender inequalities. There is, nevertheless, increasing recognition that gender diversity can make the military more effective, improve operations, and help achieve a more just and inclusive society (Waruszynski, 2025; Marco-Gracia, Beltrán Tapia, & Liczbiński, 2025). Beyond equality and justice, women's inclusion in military operations is a strategic necessity. Research has established that heterogeneous groups are more innovative, more flexible, and better able to handle multidimensional problems. In the context of contemporary conflict, where sensitivity to cultures and communication is becoming critical, the involvement of women in the armed forces can prove a strength. Women are more likely than men to build rapport with locals and can be central to intelligence gathering, the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the support of peace and reconciliation. Additionally, the presence of women leaders can help subvert dominant masculinities and foster a more respectful and inclusive military culture. This can translate into less sexual harassment and other gender violence, which can break morale and destroy confidence.

In a few African nations, the gendered division of labour remains a strong determinant of attitudes towards women in the military (Barfucci, 2026). Others have argued that women can be deployed or posted to combat or command roles, and others are concerned about the effect on the woman's reproductive cycle and on family obligations (Hedström, 2022). This calls for a collective effort to change attitudes, policies, and practices. This involves offering gender-sensitivity training to all staff, adopting policies that enhance equal opportunity for women, and establishing support mechanisms to help women cope with the pressures of military life. Strong leadership from the top is also necessary, with senior officers personally advocating for gender equality and initiating action against individuals who discriminate against women.

Gender and Military Leadership in Africa: Historical Perspectives

African political history has been profoundly influenced by military leadership, especially since the post-colonial period. Adebajo (2020) contends that the colonial legacy contributed to post-independent rule by encouraging long-term overdependence on the military to settle political conflicts. It has yielded numerous successive military regimes throughout the continent and has largely destabilised democratic governments and civilian politics. The quest for political stability in sub-Saharan Africa has seen military coups justified as pivotal moves to consolidate order amid political turmoil (Mendy & Mendy, 2024; Elischer, 2026). But their legacy has generally involved perpetual instability, human rights abuses, and drawn-out conflict. Despite these obstacles, there are hopeful signs of change. Increasing awareness of women's roles in security and peacebuilding is building momentum throughout the continent. Efforts to advance women's participation in peace processes and decision-making institutions are becoming more frequent, marking a shift towards greater inclusion.

A few African countries have been at the forefront of incorporating women into command roles in the military. Rwanda, for example, has been widely credited for its efforts to achieve gender equality in the military, where women hold top leadership positions (Sheidu, 2026). Rwanda's promotion of gender inclusivity serves as a model for other countries that wish to transform their military institutions. The relationship between military leadership and gender in Africa is complex and multifaceted. While military rule has traditionally excluded women and reinforced patriarchal norms, there are visible signs of progress and potential for real reform. Bringing women into the military systems is essential not merely to improve gender equality but to enable more effective military leadership to address existing security challenges.

As African nations struggle with their histories and shift toward more representative government, gender dynamics in the leadership of the armed forces will become an ever more critical consideration. Attainment of this objective will require sustained efforts to remove system barriers, promote gender inclusivity, and recognise women's essential contributions to shaping Africa's security and governance environments. The African Union (AU) has attempted to undo the problems of military governance by fostering democratic leadership and conflict resolution (Faley, 2026).

The African gender-military leadership complex is intricate (Sundaram, 2026; Atef, 2026). The historically male-dominated military reflects wider social constructions of gender relations. However, gender inclusion has increasingly been attained within such organisational structures. Thompson et al (2026) have considered the steps towards achieving gender integration in African militaries to enhance gender equality. Nevertheless, institutional limitations continue to hinder the full integration of women. Such hurdles include ingrained cultural attitudes, prejudice, and a lack of sustainable policy. Underrepresentation of women in the command of these institutions not only limits their power but also confirms gender stereotypes in society at large. This underscores the need for comprehensive reforms to increase the gender content of military institutions. Heineken (2020) discusses gender integration within the South African military, engaging in debates on theoretical and practical obstacles to inclusivity. Military dictatorship has extensive implications for gender relations in African society. Militarisation of society works to reinforce already established gender inequalities, with women being more susceptible to abuse and violence.

Gender Policies in Select African Militaries

Gender integration in military leadership has accelerated across Africa, with some countries doing extremely well while others continue to grapple with deeply rooted issues. South Africa, Nigeria, and Rwanda, which have three distinct gender policies in the military, are the focus of this section. By comparing their policies and good practices, this analysis highlights successes, challenges, and lessons for broader military reforms. South Africa has one of the most progressive gender policies among African military leadership. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) pursued gender integration proactively, driven by constitutional and policy requirements. South Africa's 1996 Constitution explicitly commits to gender equality in every sphere, including the defence force (Republic of South Africa, 1996). The defence force is specifically committed to this by the Defence Act and the Military Veterans Act, which require gender representation.

The nation commemorated the introduction of the White Paper on Defence (1996), which encouraged gender mainstreaming and equal opportunity for women in the military (Cock, 2001). The government also aligned military gender policies with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 to support women in peace and security (UN Women, 2020). There is much representation of women in South African defence forces, with women officers holding commanding ranks in different units (Mills, 2019). Women actively participate in peacekeeping missions, and there is a policy that encourages women to engage in combat, a traditionally male domain. Policy has improved, yet gender biases remain in the field of operations. Women in the military cite grievances including workplace discrimination, harassment, and career plateau compared to men (Basham, 2013). There has been an improvement in representation, but there is also a lack of specialised training in those areas where women hold positions of authority. Nigeria offers a case of a gender policy with significant implementation impediments.

Traditionally, there have been low numbers of women in the Nigerian Armed Forces and attempts at introducing gender-sensitive policies have not been successful due to resistance. Nigeria is a signatory to international conventions aimed at increasing gender representation, such as the Maputo Protocol and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (African

Union, 2003). Nonetheless, gender policies within the military remain vulnerable, with the Defence Ministry implementing short-term gender mainstreaming strategies. Although female cadets were admitted to the Nigerian Defence Academy in 2011, integration has been gradual, with few women reaching leadership positions (Duruji, 2026). Gender policies remain mainly unofficial and without enforcement authority.

Female Nigerian soldiers have taken pivotal roles in intelligence, medical units, and logistics. Gender stereotypes are deeply rooted in the Nigerian military culture (Olubiyo, 2024). Women face resistance from male colleagues, thereby limiting their ability to advance into leadership positions (Björkdahl, Höglund, & Mannergren, 2026). Sexual harassment and discriminatory attitudes also impede gender integration (Hernandez-Swif, 2026). Furthermore, even combat functions continue to be male-dominated and restrict the direct participation of women in high-security decision-making. Gender mainstreaming in Rwanda's command strategy is the most revolutionary on the continent. Following the genocide, reconstruction placed gender empowerment as a priority in governance and security. Sustainable gender policies that align with UNSCR 1325 and the African Union gender frameworks (African Union, 2003) have been adopted in Rwanda. The Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) actively promotes gender integration, supported by national laws such as the Rwanda Gender Policy 2010 (Björkdahl, Höglund, & Mannergren, 2026). Rwanda leads in the role of women in military command posts, with women officers participating in all security operations and command posts. The women soldiers in Rwanda's army participate in peacekeeping missions, intelligence, and policymaking. The government's commitment to gender equality extends not only to the military but also to governance, solidifying women's leadership across all areas (Mills, 2019).

Despite Rwanda's progress, there exist challenges like the images of women in security areas and operational setbacks owing to the military culture. Women officers continue to face discrimination at work, and combat jobs for women are minimal in number compared to administration and support staff. This search for African command, with a focus on the changing roles of gender, has uncovered a multifaceted terrain of advancement and persistent obstacles. Progress in integrating women in the African military has been made, but obstacles remain to the realisation of gender equality, especially in command positions. This conclusion will briefly summarise the findings of this analysis and offer practical advice to promote a more equal and inclusive climate within African military institutions.

Findings and Discussion

Challenges in Gender Representation in Military Leadership

Hiring patterns in most African armies have traditionally privileged male applicants, largely due to conventional understandings of combatant roles (Sheidu, 2026). Female applicants will typically encounter institutional barriers, such as restrictive eligibility standards and gender bias in selection procedures. Military recruitment systems will often privilege physical endurance tests aligned with male physiology, unintentionally disadvantaging female applicants. Also, implicit biases tend to influence the impressions that recruitment officers form of female applicants. Myers (2026) contends that military schools tend to associate leadership potential with masculine traits such as aggression and domination, which close doors for women to enter and rise in leadership positions.

Despite women serving in the army, career advancement remains a major concern within military hierarchies. Although policies are pro-gender integration, women are instead confined to administrative, medical, or logistics sections rather than holding direct combat leadership roles (Cock, 1991). Structural discrimination stifles women's promotion opportunities within ranks. The South African defence force has shown evidence of comparative success in advancing female leadership, but the stagnation of

women's promotion persists in the Nigerian and Kenyan military forces (Mills, 2019). Gradual mobility into military command suggests an underlying structural imbalance that persists despite policy adjustment efforts. Social attitudes contribute immensely to military gender balance.

Most African societies regard combat as a man's world, which generates narratives that question women's competence in command positions (Björkdahl, Höglund, & Mannergren, 2026). Stereotypes exist in the military, where women officers often must work harder than their male counterparts to prove their capabilities, whereas historical evidence shows that women perform well on the battlefield, as exemplified by the heroic performance of the Dahomey Amazons (Akpan, 2025). However, modern African societies have been struggling with gender stereotypes that have led to resistance to women's leadership in the armies. Career choice and leadership anticipation are generally grounded in gender roles deeply entrenched in African cultures. Enloe (2000) argues that militarisation itself is a gendered process where social constructs determine the place of women in security institutions. Women commanders are subject to dual expectations regarding occupational and family responsibilities, which are likely to limit workplace commitment and mobility. Although legislation such as the Maputo Protocol aims to establish gender parity in government and security agencies, cultural perceptions remain the main barrier, and it takes decades for significant change in African military command to emerge (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, ACHPR, 2003).

Work culture is one of the most urgent problems facing women in command in the military, and it is usually marked by discrimination and harassment. Female military officers continually endure opposition from male colleagues, ranging from exclusion from decision-making to outright harassment (Rossi, 2026; Shamiev, 2026). The military culture has long promoted hyper-masculinity, and thus, it is not easy for women to fight institutionalised prejudice. Legal and advocacy initiatives, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, help create more secure working environments but face inconsistent enforcement within African militaries (UN Women, 2020). Restrictions on access to specialist training are also an obstacle for women officers seeking higher-ranking assignments. Most African militaries offer fewer opportunities for women to pursue advanced combat training or command courses, thereby reducing their chances of qualifying for highly ranked positions (Wycliff, 2025). The problems of gender representation in the highest military leadership are institutionally, socio-culturally, and operationally deeply rooted. Although policy frameworks and advocacy processes show movement towards change, structural and attitudinal changes are required for meaningful inclusion. Future studies should assess the effectiveness of gender integration policies and measures in removing systemic obstacles within African armies.

Exclusion of Women in Combat

The ban on women in direct combat has been a controversial issue, shaped by traditional norms, institutional policies, and social attitudes. While most contemporary militaries have made significant progress toward inclusion, women remain behind the barrier of full integration into direct combat positions. The article examines the key reasons women are excluded from combat, considering how historical legacies, societal prejudices, institutional policies, and psychological assumptions converge. Traditionally, war has been a man's world. In most cultures, soldiering, especially combat duty, has been positively associated with masculinity, toughness, and strength. Traditional gender roles have long mandated that men are guardians and women are nurturers, reinforcing exclusionary values (DeCew, 1995).

Combat has been the ultimate experience of military life for centuries and has represented virtues such as courage, endurance, and leadership, which are stereotypically attributed to men (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). Even in cultures in which women did participate in armed combat, like those of the Dahomey

Amazons in West Africa, they usually did so exceptionally and not as a rule. The increasing militarisation of fighting soldiers in the contemporary period only helped reinforce gender-defined differences further, reducing women to auxiliaries as compared to being members of combat fronts (Reis & Menezes, 2020). The structure of military institutions and organisational policies has traditionally been the cause of women's exclusion from combat. Different armed forces adopted policies that explicitly barred women from serving in direct combat units, citing unit cohesion, physical abilities, and the psychological effects of sending women into combat operations (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021).

Military doctrine has historically stressed physical combativeness in battle, in terms of stamina, brute strength, and ferocity traits that have been employed to support single-sex combat units on many occasions (Reis & Menezes, 2020). Technology and evolving warfighting strategies have minimised the premium on brute physicality, but institutionalised obstacles remain, frequently cloaked behind operational readiness concerns. Even though most of these bans were de jure removed, systemic barriers still exist. Female soldiers are often faced with resistance from command groups opposed to putting in place policies of gender-integrated combat. Career advancement and promotion opportunities are usually restricted for women officers with no combat experience, perpetuating discriminatory treatment (DeCew, 1995).

One of the most common reasons women are excluded from combat missions is bodily differences between women and men. This includes variations in muscular strength, endurance, and injury recovery at various speeds (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). As much as science has proven that women can meet the physical requirements of combatant roles, the assumption of male superiority regarding physical capacity remains a barrier. Psychological resilience is also a worldwide factor in measuring combat readiness. Some believe that women are more psychologically susceptible to combat stress, but evidence indicates that individuals respond differently to combat situations, both male and female (DeCew, 1995). Survival of such stereotypes distorts selection processes by restricting women's entry based on proven talent.

The unit cohesion concept has been applied extensively to explain why women should be excluded from combat. The commanders in the military believe that having women included in combat units has the possibility of weakening cohesion due to concerns about female and male troops' relations, differential treatment, and opposition to gender integration (Reis & Menezes, 2020). Social attitudes also influence military policies. Combat soldiers in the military have been stereotyped by history and media long enough to be portrayed as predominantly male, which serves to present warfare as male-dominated (MacKenzie & Gunaydin, 2021). Social gender role expectations typically push women into what are perceived as conventional military roles, such as support roles, rather than frontline combat. Military women are likely to face extreme gender discrimination and sexual harassment. The threat of additional harassment in combat zones has been used as an argument to restrict women's involvement in frontline operations (Reis & Menezes, 2020). Rather than addressing these problems through cultural and institutional change, exclusion is often used to avoid potential conflict.

Growing calls for gender equality in defence forces, along with the new paradigm of warfare in which strategic ability and technological prowess are more important than mere physical strength, imply that withholding combat entitlements from women might, sooner or later, yield. But full integration is only possible by eliminating institutional biases, promoting integrated training programs, and combating deeply rooted social attitudes (DeCew, 1995). The disenfranchisement of women from combat positions is not simply a military policy issue but a reflection of wider social attitudes, historical prejudice, and institutionalised exclusion. While physical differences and operational factors are usually adduced as reasons, deeper issues around gender norms, discrimination, and opposition to cultural change lie behind

enduring exclusions. With increasingly diverse armies in modern times, women's fighting potential and contribution will play a crucial role in shaping gender roles for military operations and command.

Comparative Analysis of Best Practices

The experiences of South Africa, Nigeria, and Rwanda offer critical insights into best practices for gender inclusion in military leadership.

Table 1 Comparative Gender Inclusion Measures

Country	Strengths	Challenges
South Africa	Strong legal frameworks, women in leadership roles, aligned with international policies	Cultural biases, workplace discrimination, slow career progression
Nigeria	Policy ratification and increased female participation in peacekeeping	Weak implementation, entrenched gender norms, exclusion from command positions
Rwanda	High female representation, robust policies, and strong governance support	Military culture barriers, limited direct combat roles

Source: Configured by the authors

Leveraging global best practices and aligning with frameworks such as UNSCR 1325 can enhance gender-inclusion strategies. South Africa, Nigeria, and Rwanda illustrate different approaches to military gender integration. While South Africa and Rwanda show promising advancements, Nigeria struggles with implementation despite policy commitments. The comparative analysis underscores the need for institutional reforms, cultural shifts, and targeted training programs to enhance gender equity in African military leadership.

Conclusion

The study revealed enduring obstacles to gender equality. These are deep-seated cultural mindsets, opposition from some of their male colleagues, inadequate support systems, and widespread sexual harassment and other gender violence. These obstacles hinder women from working in a hostile environment, limiting their career advancement and demoralising them. The research showed that effective integration programs require a comprehensive response that includes policy reforms, training, cultural change, and leadership commitment. The African tradition of military leadership, conceived in colonial times and too often typified by authoritarian rule, has built up a change-resistant male culture. It is this legacy that has persisted to support gender stereotyping that denies women opportunities for career progression through the ranks. Secondly, the review underlined the tactical need for gender diversity. Having women in the workforce is not merely an equity matter; it enhances performance by bringing diverse perspectives, strengthening relationships with local communities, and stimulating innovation within groups. In an era of advanced security threats, it is essential to leverage the experience of all personnel irrespective of gender. Nations that have become comparatively successful in advancing gender equality have pursued comprehensive policies that foster equality of opportunity, conducted gender-sensitivity training for all workers, and established efficient systems for reporting and addressing harassment and discrimination.

Recommendations

There is a need to adopt and enforce stringent anti-discrimination policies. The policies must categorically ban gender-based discrimination across all spheres of military life, including recruitment, training, promotion, and deployment. Adopting gender-responsive budgeting is an avenue for investing in gender equality initiatives, such as day-care centres, flexible working arrangements, and mentorship schemes. A review and repeal of military regulations to make them stereotype-free and gender-neutral, and not obstacles to women's promotion. There should be increased training and education. This will incorporate gender sensitivity training at all levels of military education. The training must cover unconscious prejudice, encourage learning of gender equality principles, and familiarise personnel with the skills needed to build an inclusive climate.

Women should be provided with targeted leadership development programs to empower them with the skills and confidence to perform in leadership roles. There should be sexual harassment and gender violence awareness through frequent awareness sessions to sensitise employees on the same, provide reporting channels, and act against perpetrators. Gender stereotypes should be counteracted to encourage positive, active depictions of women in the military and counteract traditional masculinity expectations. Mentorship programmes should be established by pairing women with senior leaders who can offer mentoring, support, and advocacy.

Support groups for women should be established by forming women's networks within the military to foster peer support and a sense of belonging. This will also include promoting work-life balance by implementing policies that prioritise it, such as flexible working hours and childcare facilities, to help women balance work and family responsibilities. Establish independent oversight agencies to monitor and investigate complaints of discrimination and harassment. There should be a transparent and impartial investigation into all complaints of discrimination and harassment, and offenders should be prosecuted accordingly. Severe sanctions should be imposed against any form of discriminatory practices

Top military commanders should themselves be vocal champions of gender equality and demonstrate clear, inclusive leadership. Women should be appointed to top operational roles in the military. Diversity in top leadership roles in the military will increase women's representation, demonstrate a commitment to gender equality, and serve as role models for other women. To accomplish this, implementation progress should be monitored regularly toward gender equality objectives, and data should be utilised to guide policy and practice.

Implementation of these recommendations will require concerted and sustained efforts by governments, military establishments, and civil society organisations. It will also demand a change in attitudes and beliefs regarding gender roles and women's capabilities. But the dividends of attaining gender equality in military leadership are well worth the effort. By creating more effective and representative military institutions, African countries can improve security, enhance stability, and maintain a more equitable society. The path to gender equality is not simply a matter of conforming to international norms but a strategy for building bigger, safer, and richer nations on the African continent.

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