



Factors Contributing to Female Teachers Underrepresentation in Schools Leadership: A Case of Sumbawanga, Tanzania

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East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences

Abstract: This study sought to investigate the factors contributing to underrepresentation of female teachers in leadership positions in public secondary schools in Sumbawanga Municipality. The study employed the mixed research approach and convergent parallel research design. The Study sampled a total of 100 respondents out of a population of 687 educational stakeholders. These included 87 teachers, 5 heads of schools, 1 Municipality Executive Officer, 1 Regional Officer, 1 Municipality Education Officer and 5 head prefects. Purposive sampling technique was used to select students, heads of schools as well as all education officers while simple random sampling was used to select teachers. Questionnaire and interview guides were used to collect data. The study concludes that factors that hindered female teachers' participation in school leadership was lack of consideration of gender when appointing school leaders and nothing else since all possible factors that were suggested in the questionnaire were denied by teachers of both genders. Therefore, gender biasness was a major factor that brought about the gender imbalance in school leadership positions in the schools under investigation. The study therefore recommends that the appointing authorities should be guided by the affirmative action policy in the appointment of school heads. This will contribute to appointment of more women to leadership positions such as schools heads.

Keywords: Female teacher; Underrepresentation; Leadership; Secondary Schools; Magufuli; Samia

How to cite: Mbalika, C. and Onyango, D. O. (2022). Factors Contributing to Female Teachers Underrepresentation in Schools Leadership: A Case of Sumbawanga, Tanzania. East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences 3(2), 120-129. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2022v03i02.0166>.

Introduction

Gender is a way in which human beings are differentiated. In education sector many women are employed as teachers in both basic and higher education sectors. According to Goldring, Gray and Bitterman, (2013) and UNESCO (2016) in the last five decades, women representation in leadership positions has been considerably discussed and emphasized. Moreover, the authors

indicate that in United States of America, 29 percent of all senior management posts are held by women in private and public organizations. Although this evidence points to some improvement, the percentage of women in leadership positions remain lower compared to their male counterparts, particularly in secondary schools.

Studies conducted in Europe, America, Asia and Africa point to discrimination of women along the

lines of gender, cultural practices and institutional structures. For instance, in Italy, Basfirinei, Cilingir, Karaoglu & Onbas, (2019), by assuming that many employers underestimate the qualifications of the female job applicants in hiring decisions, acknowledges that individual employers discriminate against female employees which negatively impacts women opportunities. The study further reveals that certain jobs were implicitly perceived to be masculine while others to be feminine. In the same vein, the study sought to find out whether respondents' sex, the place where they grew up and their information level about existing job opportunities impact their participation in leadership and established that job occupations are effective vehicles for communicating gender stereotypes. In addition, culture, social economic factors and ignorance limited women to family affairs in central Europe (Enderstein, 2018; Wicker, 2019).

In the USA, Denmar and Paludi (2018) found out that females were least trusted to lead in dominant industries. Consequently, because they failed to report harassment faced at their work places, most women were discriminated against by their male counterparts, hence leading to underrepresentation in leadership positions (Evans, Sales, Krause & Delrio, 2019). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, O'Conor (2015) reports that the ratio of male to female workforce in schools was 38 and 60 percent respectively. However, while the number of female teachers in schools was more than their male counterparts, only 36 percent of female teachers held leadership positions. These findings point to schema and stereotypes tend to emerge during hiring of women in the industry.

In China, Zhao and Jones (2017) reported that gender is shaped by language and social constructs; thus every man is expected to rule at least in three levels which are; father, husband and Son of Authority to his mother after her husband' death. This gives evidence that a woman can't get real or imagined leadership. Furthermore, Wilson and Clerkin (2017) found that 48% of employed women in India drop their career to engage into family-based activities such as taking care of babies due to cultural pressure and general settings of individual families. This practice is believed to make India the least country in Asia in female leadership index. Similarly, Quadir (2019) reported that when there

is an opening for managerial position in India, men are most preferred to take positions. The author also observed that female employees most of the time lose their jobs in favour of family commitments. Moreover, in India, Mythili (2019) identified educational background of the family, family support and ecological support around a girl as key prerequisites for a woman to aspire and function well at school leadership position.

In South Africa, a number of studies have been conducted on determinants of female underrepresentation in leadership positions. In particular, Dlanjwa (2018) reports that female teachers make up about 68 percent of the country's teaching force but only 36% of principals are female. The study further reveals that progress of women into senior management positions was limited with challenges encountered in the implementation process. Challenges such as organizational constrained efforts of attaining gender equality in appointment of school heads.

In Tanzania, initiatives under the umbrella of MKUKUTA, have been undertaken to reduce female underrepresentation in leadership. Furthermore, as indicated in the United Republic of Tanzania constitution, women have an opportunity to participate in politics and executive government leadership positions. In this stance, affirmative actions aimed to bringing women to corridors of power in political and executive government leadership positions. In this line, article 66(i) (b) of Tanzanian Constitution provides right for every political party with 5 percent valid votes in the preceding general election to submit names of women to serve as nominated MP's. This shows that women are provided with opportunity to sit for the leadership position in the parliament (URT, 1977).

Table 1 (p. 122) shows the statistical information provided by ADEM (2013) and Rukwa Regional Educational Office (2021) in their analysis to some of the region in Tanzania. It is shown that Rukwa region where Sumbawanga is found, compared with other regions in Tanzania has only 11.8 % women teachers in leadership positions in secondary schools. Rukwa region is only better than Kagera region which has only 9.4 % of women who head schools. In various studies on school leadership, nothing confines the role of the head of school to a particular gender. Across the

world and particularly in Tanzania, affirmative actions and policies have been put in place to ensure women are propelled to leadership positions. However, available evidence shows that there is gender gap and lack of equity in leadership positions in secondary schools. These trends point to existence of a patriarchal society which excludes women from leadership on the guise that they are weak and they cannot perform leadership roles at school level. In fact, those women who rise to leadership positions run into despair because they are frustrated by men

Wesson and Hauschildt, 1998). This situation is a threat to the growth of schools which could benefit from the experiences of eligible female principals.

Bronars (2015) carried out a study on women perspectives in their under representation in secondary school leadership. The study found that many women were not happy on the way they were being discriminated upon when it came to appointment of individuals to decision making positions.

Table 1: Female Teachers' Underrepresentation in Public Secondary School in Tanzania

Region	% of Female Heads of secondary school	% of Male Heads of secondary school
Arusha	18.3	81.7
Dar Es Salaam	48.7	51.3
Dodoma	17.4	82.6
Kagera	9.4	90.6
Kilimanjaro	21.7	78.3
Lindi	20.7	79.3
Mara	16.1	85.9
Mtwara	15.2	84.8
Morogoro	17.9	82.1
Manayara	12	88
Njombe	20.5	79.5
Pwani	18.8	81.2
Rukwa	11.8	88.2
Singida	18.5	81.5
Tanga	19.7	80.3

Source: ADEM (2013) and Rukwa Regional Educational Office (2021)

In Tanzania, there exists a government affirmative policy which stipulates that there shouldn't be overrepresentation of one gender in employment positions which include the position of heads of schools to which this study is focusing on. Table 1 show that almost 80 percent of positions of heads of schools are held by men which is contrary to active policy which is supposed to be implemented in all districts in Tanzania. This study sought to answer the following research question: What are the reasons that make female teachers to be few in leadership positions in public secondary schools in Sumbawanga Municipality?

Literature Review

This section presents the theoretical and empirical literature that informed the study.

Theoretical Literature

The study employed Harriet Martreau's (1837) feminist theory. This theory was selected as it illuminates the factors which contribute to underrepresentation of women in leadership

positions. The theory has been used by other researchers to carry out similar studies successfully. Since the focus of the study was to determine the factors contributing to female underrepresentation in leadership positions in public secondary schools, this theory is relevant to this study as it emphasizes on the empowerment of women and preservation of their rights in the society (Martin, 2015).

Burns, Spivey, Hagemann & Josephson,(2017) shows that, although there are legal provisions and other initiatives to ensure more women are involved in leadership positions in public secondary schools, still there are challenges such as social-cultural stereotypes, individual challenges and corruption which remain impediments to female teacher representation in leadership positions. It is therefore evident that the availability of laws or policies is not the end in itself but the actual implementation of the policies is more important in ensuring representation of female teachers in leadership

positions in public secondary schools in Sumbawanga District.

Empirical Literature Review

Female teacher underrepresentation in public school leadership positions denies schools opportunity to leverage on the strength of women to make schools achieve academic excellence. Outside Africa, studies have shown that female teachers are underrepresented in leadership positions. For instance, Hideg and Shen (2019) in a study conducted in Canada, found out that technically women become underrepresented in leadership by their own choices. This study reveals that women were nurtured to believe that they are delicate and therefore, they need care from others around them. As a result, women tend to ignore to advance their career. Similarly, Kotsenas (2017) in the USA attribute the reasons why women are so few in leadership positions to women themselves. Therefore, women are rendered unable to compete for leadership positions. Ironically, Rosser (2010) in Missouri-Columbia, using qualitative and quantitative methods, established that women are effective leaders than men. The effectiveness of women was evidenced in effective communication, allocation of resources, fair treatment of subordinates, meeting students' needs promptly and more effectively than men did.

On the other hand, in China, Zhao & Jones, (2017) conducted a study on 'gender, language and social constructs'. The study reported that gender in China is shaped by language and social constructs, thus it is only men who are recognized as leaders in the nuclear and extended family. For example, upon the fathers' death men are supposed to assume the position of leadership in the home which includes guiding their mothers. Every man is expected to rule at least three levels which are father, husband, and Son of Authority to his mother after her husband's death. Therefore, females can't get real or imagined leadership. Furthermore, Wilson and Clerkin (2017), using a case approach, found that females in India drop their career to engage into family-based activities such as taking care of babies due to cultural pressure and general settings of individual families. This practice is believed to make India the least country in Asia in female leadership index. Similarly, Qadir (2019) asserts that in most organizations in India, when managerial positions arise, men are the most preferred to take up the

management positions as it is believed that they have the right talents and skills to succeed in the managerial position as opposed to women whom it is believed are suitable for home chores. Moreover, in India, Mythili (2019) identified education background of the family, family support and ecological support around a girl as key prerequisites for a woman to aspire and function well at school leadership position.

Cairncross (2017) in South Africa, applied open ended questionnaires to trace the reasons why women are not adequately represented in leadership positions in academic institutions. The study exposed that institutions were designed by men for men. This means that women didn't take active role in shaping most institutions as their predominant role was taking care of family duties.

Luhai, Xicheng, Chunyan, Jun & Wurong (2017) blames underrepresentation of women to government because women were not given priority since 1961 after independence, though now day women participate in different leadership position but still they participation is low. The author believes that the gap between men and women is not accidental but the imbalances existed since colonial time to date. It is a duty now for the post-colonial government to make sure that women get leadership positions by even giving priority to pursue higher education in universities and colleges.

Meena, Rusimbi and Israel (2018) conducted a study which used a life history approach to identify factors in life cycle that influenced and helped women during their journey to political empowerment in Tanzania and found that parents contributed a lot in empowering women through educating their daughters and inspiring them at an early age. This shows that if a girl child is encouraged at an early age, she is able to desire to become a leader when she comes of age. On their part, Nyoni and Che (2019) are of the view that underrepresentation of women in senior university administrative positions are as a result of lack of empowerment and lack of transparency.

According to Sipemba (2015), in a study carried out in Karatu District, Tanzania, he found that women were underrepresented in secondary school leadership positions due to cultural barriers, family responsibilities and inferiority complex, lack of models and gender stereo types. These shows that major obstacles which

prevented women quest for become leaders in secondary school were within the individual and outside the individual factors.

In 2021 Dr. Joseph Magufuli, who was the 5th president of Tanzania, implemented affirmative action by appointing his Vice president a woman, Samia Suluhu Hassan who later became the first female president of Tanzania. Since she became the President, she has attempted to address issues of gender parity in cabinet by appointing more women into cabinet positions. This shows that it is quite possible for female to occupy top leadership positions.

Methodology

The study employed a mixed research approach. According to Lelissa (2018) mixed research approach is a category of research where a researcher combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. Thus, the use of this approach helped the researcher technically to get quantifiable and non-quantifiable data about underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in public secondary schools of Sumbawanga Municipality. Basically, the use of mixed research approach was more helpful to the researcher as both qualitative and quantitative complement each other during data acquisition and interpretation, thus giving this study a variety of methods and a more balanced findings.

Research Design

The study applied a convergent parallel design which allowed the researcher to collect both qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously. This enabled the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data at the same time (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2012).

Data Collection Methods

The researchers used structured interview guides in order to get in-depth information from the District Education Director, two education officers, five heads of the public secondary school and five head prefects. A questionnaire was used to supplement the information gathered through interview.

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study was 687 individuals which included 650 teachers, one Municipality Executive Director, one Regional Education Officer (REO), one Municipality Educational officer (DEO), 17 Heads of schools and 17 head prefects. Purposive sampling techniques

were used to select 5 head prefects, 5 heads of schools as well as 1 Regional Education Officer (REO) and 1 Municipality Educational officer (DEO), to be interviewed. Simple random sampling was used to select 87 teachers who completed the questionnaire.

Validity and Reliability

Validity refers to the judgment whether an instruments is measuring what it supposed to measure. In this study, face and content validity were used. In face validity, three experts were in agreement that the items in the questionnaire were linked to the objectives and they covered full range of issues which were being investigated.

Reliability refers to the ability of instruments to produce similar results after repeating in different trials. In this study, internal consistency of the instrument was checked by dividing the items in a questionnaire into odd number and even numbers. Then the results were correlated. Cronbach alpha was used with the help of SPSS version 20 to calculate the reliability. The reliability coefficient of 0.7 was obtained, which is acceptable.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Qualitative data was analyzed using a thematic approach. On the other hand, quantitative data obtained from close ended part of the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help of the SPSS.

Ethical considerations

Before data collection, the researcher sought for permission letter from the Vice Chancellor of Saint Augustine University of Tanzania, which introduced the researcher to regional government authorities. Furthermore, the researchers sought permission from regional leaders such as Regional administrative Secretary and District Administrative Secretary who authorized the researchers to conduct the study in the selected public secondary schools in Sumbawanga Municipality. To avoid unnecessary fear and harm, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. They were also assured that the study was for academic purpose.

Results and Discussions

This section presents results and discusses findings of the study which sought to find out reasons for female under presentations in the position of secondary school heads in Sumbawanga District.

Research Question 1: What are the reasons that make female teachers to be few in leadership positions in public secondary schools in Sumbawanga District?

The findings of the first research question are presented in Table 2.

From table two, 87.2% of the male teachers and 100% of female teachers mentioned that female teachers did not lack academic qualifications to be appointed into leadership positions. This implies that women teachers had relevant qualifications required for promotion like their male

counterparts. These findings point out that although female teachers have the requisite academic qualifications, there could be other factors that limit their promotion such as being perceived to be a weaker sex by the society (Sipemba, 2015). Also, the findings concurred with Nwajiuaba's (2011) which exposed that irrespective of the academic potential of the girls, low income families preferred to send boys to school rather than girls. This implies that despite their academic potential, females are considered by the society as generally inadequate to take leadership positions.

Table 2: Lack Academic Qualifications

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Male	Strongly disagree	24	51.1
	Disagree	17	36.1
	Agree	3	6.4
	Strongly agree	3	6.4
	Total	47	100.0
Female	Strongly disagree	40	100.0

Table 3: Gender balance in leadership positions is highly considered in public secondary schools

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Male	Strongly disagree	20	42.6
	Disagree	14	29.8
	Agree	9	19.1
	Strongly agree	4	8.5
	Total	47	100.0
Female	Strongly disagree	28	70.0
	Disagree	8	20.0
	Agree	4	10.0
	Total	40	100.0

From table 3, the findings indicate that 70% of the female teachers strongly disagreed with the statement that gender balance in leadership positions is highly considered in public secondary schools and 20% disagreed with the statement. Furthermore, 46% of male respondents strongly disagreed and 29.8 % disagreed. This suggests that regardless of gender, majority of respondents disagreed that gender balance in leadership positions is highly considered in public secondary schools. This further implies that the education officers tasked with the responsibility of interviewing teachers for purposes of promotion to leadership positions were not keen on ensuring gender balance. Thus, without deliberate initiatives to ensure gender balance, female teachers will continue to be underrepresented in

leadership positions. As pointed out in the feminist theory Martreau, (1837) and Martin, (2015), this experience may result to schools missing out from the best leadership competencies of the female teachers. Moreover the findings are supported by Chugh and Sahgal (2007) and Smirles, et al., (2020) that women were underrepresented in leadership positions as a because of their perceived historical sex roles.

In table 4, a question was asked whether female teachers are shy to take up demanding responsibilities such as leadership positions. The table indicates that 36.2% of males strongly disagreed and 38.3 disagreed with such a statement. Furthermore, 70% of female teachers strongly disagreed and 20% of them disagreed with such a statement. It is therefore implied that

majority of respondents, regardless of their genders disagreed that female teachers are shy to take up demanding responsibilities such as leadership positions.

This finding concur with Shinbrot, Wilkins, Gretzel and Bowse (2019) findings which exposed that internal processes such as lack of self-confidence

led to female underrepresentation in leadership positions in public secondary schools. This finding contradicts Hideg and Shen (2019) who argued that internal processes such as lack of self-confidence led to female underrepresentation in leadership positions in public secondary schools.

Table 4: Female teachers are shy to take up demanding responsibilities such as leadership positions

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Male	Strongly disagree	17	36.2
	Disagree	18	38.3
	Agree	9	19.1
	Strongly agree	3	6.4
	Total	47	100.0
Female	Strongly disagree	28	70.0
	Disagree	8	20.0
	Agree	4	10.0
	Total	40	100.0

Table 5: Female teachers' lack leadership skills for holding leadership positions

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Male	Strongly disagree	21	44.7
	Disagree	20	42.6
	Agree	3	6.4
	Strongly agree	3	6.4
	Total	47	100.0
Female	Strongly disagree	28	70.0
	Disagree	4	10.0
	Agree	4	10.0
	Strongly agree	4	10.0
	Total	40	100.0

In table 5, regarding Female teachers' lacking leadership skills for holding leadership positions, 44.7% of males strongly disagreed and 42.6% disagreed. Furthermore, 70% of female teachers strongly disagreed and 10% disagreed. Therefore, respondents, regardless of their genders believed that female teachers were capable of taking leadership responsibilities. In other words, women are able to manage leadership responsibilities, if granted to them. These findings are in agreement with those of Blaker *et al.*, (2013) and Zhao and Jones (2017)) who found out that women have innate abilities for leadership.

A question was asked whether female teachers were prevented by social economic factors to engage in leadership positions. The table indicates

that 29.8% of male teachers and 60 percent of female teachers strongly disagreed, respectively.

Furthermore, 34% of male teachers and 10 percent of female teachers disagreed, respectively. This means that majority of respondents, regardless of their genders were not in favor with of the fact that social economic factors prevented female teachers to engage in leadership positions. This finding implies that socio-economic status had no effect on female representation in leadership positions. The finding was contrary to those of Smirles *et al.* (2020) who pointed out that poor families preferred to educate the boy child rather than the girl child because they believed that girls could easily be married and they forget their home while the boy

child would always be home to support their families.

A question was asked whether traditional and cultural practices prevented women from taking

up leadership positions. Results in table 6 shows that 36.2% of male teachers strongly disagreed and 31.9 disagreed. Likewise, 60% of female teachers strongly disagreed and 20 disagreed.

Table 6: Traditional and Cultural Practices Prevented Women from taking up Leadership positions

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Male	Strongly disagree	17	36.2
	Disagree	15	31.9
	Agree	8	17.0
	Strongly agree	7	14.9
	Total	47	100.0
Female	Strongly disagree	24	60.0
	Disagree	8	20.0
	Agree	4	10.0
	Strongly agree	4	10.0
	Total	40	100.0

Table 7: Women are incapable of balancing work and family

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Male	I don't know	3	6.4
	Strongly disagree	17	36.2
	Disagree	23	48.9
	Agree	4	8.5
	Total	47	100.0
Female	Strongly disagree	20	50.0
	Disagree	4	10.0
	Agree	16	40.0
	Total	40	100.0

This implies that despite the existence of cultural beliefs which particularly undermine women, most of respondents did not consider traditional and cultural practices as a factor that hindered female teachers to participate in leadership positions in schools under investigated.

Finally, imbalance of work and family issues was considered by the researchers as a possible factor that hindered female teachers from occupying leadership positions. When respondents were exposed to such a question in table seven, 36.2% of male teachers strongly disagreed while 48.9% disagreed. On the other hand, 50% of female teachers strongly disagreed and 10% disagreed.

This means that imbalance between family issues and office responsibilities were denied by teachers of both genders as a factor that limited female teachers to participate in leadership. From these findings, it is evident that female teachers are able to multi-task and achieve the leadership goals without compromising their family obligations. Therefore, family responsibilities could not have hindered female teachers from

participating in leadership positions in schools under investigations. The findings correspond with Weidekam and Willer (2012) which shows women are rarely given priority in leadership positions because of work- family syndrome. Furthermore, the findings concur with Wilson and Clerkin (2017) and Enderstein (2018) findings which exposed that failure to plan and manage time also hinder women to acquire high ranks of leadership because anything to do with career advancement requires personal effort.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that factors that hindered female teachers' participation in school leadership was lack of consideration of gender when appointing school leaders and nothing else since all possible factors that were suggested in the questionnaire were denied by teachers of both genders. Therefore, gender biasness was a major factor that that brought about the gender imbalance in school leadership positions in the schools under investigation. The study therefore recommends that the appointing authorities should be guided by the affirmative action policy

in the appointment of school heads. This will contribute to appointment of more women to leadership positions such as schools heads.

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