Examining Challenges faced by Female Teachers in attaining Leadership Positions in Uganda: A Case Study of Secondary Schools in Gulu City

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Abstract

Gender disparities still exist in administrative roles in favor of male teachers; most female teachers in most of the secondary schools in Gulu City are just classroom teachers. Many women are employed as classroom teachers, but female teachers are not given equal treatment to join the administrative leadership in most secondary schools. The study employed a qualitative research approach, and a case study design was used to establish the results. A sample of 40 participants was involved in the study namely: 5 head teachers, 5 deputy head teachers, 25 teachers, and 5 officers from the Directorate of Education Standards. The random sampling method was to choose the five secondary schools in Gulu City, including private and government schools. Headteachers, deputy headteachers, and teachers were also sampled purposively. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were used to collect the data. The data were then analyzed thematically and coded with the help of NVivo software. Lack of self-esteem, actualization, role modelling, mentoring, and teamwork were the major barriers limiting female teachers from taking leadership roles in schools. The study suggested that policies should be established based on gender ratio for school administrative appointments and develop mentoring and role modelling programs for female teachers. Ensure that school administrative positions are filled based on merit to promote female teachers pursuing administrative roles.

Keywords: Challenges, Female Teachers, Leaderships, Secondary School, Uganda

Introduction

Leadership is conceptualized in terms of vertical and horizontal leadership by Chen and Blaise (2002). Vertical leadership, as defined by Pretorius, Steyn, and Bond-Barnard (2018), is the act of holding a position in an organizational hierarchy that serves as the

primary source of guidance, supervision, and control for one's subordinates, such as the head teacher at a school.

Many theories have been put forward to explain the disparity in leadership between men and women. One such theory is that discrimination against female candidates and gender bias reduce the demand for female leadership. The primary causes of the gender disparity at the highest levels have been highlighted as being stereotyping, gender bias, and discrimination against women.

In the United States, while women now earn over 50 percent of Doctorate of Philosophy (PhDs), achieving gender equality in academia remains a challenge (Gender Equity Indicators report 2006). The report also indicates that significant differences in salary, rank, and tenure persist between male and female faculty, even as the latter's representation in academia grows. Over the past twenty years, Africa's higher education has seen a rise in both student enrollment and academic personnel. Nonetheless, as noted by Kwesiga (2002), gender inequity is evident at all stages; in student enrollment, faculty roles, and decision-making positions. She also observes that, at Makerere University in Uganda, there is a scarcity of women among the upper levels of full and associate professors. The identical scenario occurs in Nigerian universities, where it is reported that women occupy fewer than thirty-five (35) percent of all academic positions, primarily in the lower and middle level ranks (Ogbogu, 2006).

Women should enjoy equal opportunities and involvement in all areas of life, including leadership roles, within a modern civilized democratic society (Gobaw, 2017). This stems from the belief that women are undeniably better managers and the principle of equal rights. Despite women's recognized leadership strengths, a disparity persists in the representation of men and women in leadership positions in today's society (Fritz & van Knippenberg, 2017). While women make up 47% of the American workforce, men hold the majority of leadership positions in both corporate and political arenas (Warner & Corley, 2017).

Although women made up more than one-third of the US workforce in 2012, they only held 14.3% of executive officer positions and 8.1% of top-earning executive officer positions, according to a Fortune 500 companies report (Catalyst, 2013; Sealy & Vinnicombe, 2012). Women held 6.6% fewer executive positions and only 16.6% of Fortune 500 board seats during that time. Approximately 80% of women in Iowa between the ages of 16 and 64 were reported to be employed, but for comparable jobs, they earned only 79% of men's income (median income of $34,534 USD for women versus $43,872 USD for men). Gender disparities still exist, particularly when it comes to participation in top decision-making positions for women who face multiple forms of discrimination when holding high ranking positions, despite global progress over the years in improving the status of women in administrative positions of higher education and the treatment of women in the higher education system by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

(Li, 2014). Data from 2011–12 revealed that, although 89% of primary school teachers in public schools and 86% of teachers in private schools were female (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013), the proportion of female principals was 52% (Hill, Ottem, & De Roche, 2016). In primary schools in the United Kingdom, the proportion of female head teachers remains lower. For example, in all English state primary schools, there are 30,500 male workers and 178,600 female workers, or 15% of the workforce. However, when it comes to head teachers, 4600 of them are men, and 11,700 of them are women. Over 1700 more female heads would exist if these percentages were equal (McKillop & Moorosi, 2017).

Still, the proportion of women in teaching positions is disproportionate in the other European nations. In Lithuania and Slovenia, the percentage of female teachers stood at 97.1%, with 96.8% in the Czech Republic, 95.9% in Italy, and 95.6% in Hungary. Greece had a higher percentage of women (69.9%), followed by Spain (75.9%), Luxembourg (76.0%), and Sweden (77.0%). In 2013, women constituted 85.2% of primary school educators in the European Union (Bourgeais & Grandovska, 2015). The information obtained showed a different scenario concerning female head teachers, even though women are overrepresented in the teaching field. The Trade Union Committee for Education (2012) reported that the statistics featured Slovenia (58.0%), Sweden (62.0%), Finland (31.0%), and Norway (50.0%) along with several other countries.

The gender gap is prevalent in many areas of life in Sub-Saharan Africa and nearly always detrimental to women's rights and status, relegating them to a marginalized and subordinate role in society in relation to men. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the percentage of managerial roles held by women is lower than that of men (Shoola, 2014). The leadership of primary schools also demonstrates this. For instance, while women constituted 71% of the workforce in Gauteng, South Africa, just 37% of head teachers were women (Lumby & Azaola, 2011). Although there are few statistics available across different African countries, studies indicate that women find it challenging to attain head teachers' roles on the continent. Uganda is striving to mitigate the considerable gender disparity present in the country. To effectively and fully eliminate gender oppression, a thorough and transformative approach that addresses systemic power disparities is required.

Statement of the Problem

The United Nations 1995 Declaration on Gender Equality and Development (Beijing Declaration, 1995) ensures that men and women have equal access to managerial posts. In addition, governments everywhere were urged to develop a gender-sensitive education system by the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing Declaration, 1995) to guarantee women's full and equal participation in educational administration, policy, and decision-making. With the exception of South Africa and Mozambique, this declaration's 2005 deadline has not been met (Kiamba, 2008). Therefore, it was imperative to look at

the barriers that prevent women from obtaining management roles in Ugandan secondary schools that receive government grant assistance. The Global Education Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2021) has highlighted the persistent gender disparities in educational leadership roles in Uganda. In line with these findings, UNICEF's research on gender disparities in education in Uganda, conducted in 2019, emphasizes the significance of investing in girls' education to achieve gender equality. Women continue to be overrepresented in low-status, low-paying jobs like classroom teachers even in the face of these progressive laws on gender equality. Women continue to be underrepresented in managerial positions in both private and government-aided secondary schools, even though the Ugandan constitution (1995) guarantees equality for all people. In about 25 secondary schools in Gulu, Uganda that receive government and private assistance, just about 5 have female head teachers. Therefore, it was essential to look into the barriers that prevent women from obtaining management roles in Ugandan secondary schools that receive and private assistance grant assistance. Compared to the proportion of men, women hold comparatively few management roles in Ugandan secondary schools. For instance, just 277 (12%), of the 1,536 head teachers of secondary schools in Uganda that get government grant assistance, are female. There are only 238 (10%) female head teachers in privately held secondary schools compared to 1,780 male head teachers, indicating the similar trend. Just 15 (10%). Males make up the majority of school administrators, both in primary and secondary education.

Research Questions

i.   What are the barriers limiting female teachers from attaining leadership position in secondary schools in Gulu city?
ii. What can be done to promote female teachers into leadership position in secondary schools in Gulu city?

Literature Review
Review of Related Theories

The study examined the variables female teachers' career advancement in administration in a subset of Gulu city, secondary schools. These theories consist of equity theory and social justice theory.

The Social Justice Theory

The social justice perspective served as the foundation for this study social justice is a concept that is constantly being redefined. Griffin (2006) defines social justice in the

context of education as both a process and an aim. Full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs is the aim of social justice education. A society characterized by social justice is one in which everyone has equal access to resources and feels safe and secure both physically and psychologically. The pursuit of social justice is a democratic, inclusive, and affirming process that recognizes human agency and the capacity for cooperative change-making.

Social justice is an ethical framework that prioritizes equity and the accomplishment of a main social goal. According to Rawls (as cited in Griffin, 2006), there are two principles that define social justice. The first is predicated on people's equal entitlement to the fundamental liberties of the entire system. In the second, the most disadvantaged people are given (a) the largest social and economic benefits, and (b) those benefits are fairly and equally attached to the offices and positions.

According to the concept of social justice, treating everyone equally might be fundamentally unfair. Griffin accepts this viewpoint and makes a strong case for organizations' duties to actively address opportunity inequality in addition to protecting individual rights. In accordance with Rawls's (as cited in Griffin, 2006) social justice theory, boards of regents in higher education ought to strive toward equitable opportunity so that everyone can enjoy the rights to fundamental freedoms. They should also guarantee that everyone has equal access to opportunities. All positions and offices ought to be open to everyone subject to the principles of fair opportunity and equality. Individuals with comparable aptitudes and competencies ought to enjoy equal access to leadership roles in the field of higher education administration, as well as equitable access to social and financial capital. The growing social justice movement urges leaders in higher education to critically examine the presumptions guiding institutional policies and procedures that could present insurmountable obstacles and unseen ceilings for female leaders hoping to become college and university presidents.

Equity Theory

According to the theory, people are motivated by justice and by discrepancies between their own and their reference group's input-to-output ratios. To achieve their deemed equity, they will try to modify their input. Adam therefore proposed that motivation will increase with an individual's perception of equity and vice versa. The equity theory in the field of education looks at whether or not there is a genuine and equitable distribution of school administrative positions, independent of gender. Fewer women hold administrative and management roles in schools, even though they make up the majority of teachers in Gulu city secondary schools. This will ensure equitable employment distribution in the education sector. Teachers who are female contend that there is an imbalance in the appointments made to administrative positions in secondary

schools.

Review Of Empirical Studies
Hinderance for Female Teachers to Attain Leadership Positions

Learning about the obstacles that keep women from pursuing administrative roles in schools. The advancements achieved worldwide over the years in elevating the status of female teachers in leadership roles in education (World Bank, 2012). The United Nations and its specialized agencies' education system has also treated women differently. However, there are still gaps between the sexes, particularly when it comes to representation in senior decision-making roles. When it comes to holding high-level positions, women face a variety of forms of discrimination (Li, 2014).

This study demonstrated the need for an analysis of the tactics employed by MOES to address the advancement of female teachers into administrative roles in schools. The current study aims to evaluate how these female educators can advance into school management roles, as the previous study did not specify. Furthermore, shake shaft (as referenced in Uwizeyimana & Mathevula, 2014) points out that this model makes the assumption that the most capable individuals are promoted purely on the basis of their competence. The model therefore assumes that women's underrepresentation in positions of leadership is caused by the fact that they are not the most qualified and capable individuals for such positions. Van der Westhuizen (quoted in Uwizeyimana & Mathevula, 2014) asserts that when person-centred causation is the focus, people in this case, women blamed for their own issues or failures. Sadly, when people believe they are to blame for their own issues, rather than focusing on systemic causes, solutions are often presented as ways to improve the person or change the flaw. Statements like "they lack self-confidence, they do not want the power, they are just not assertive enough, and they do not aspire to line positions" (Pirouznia & Sims, 2006, p.10) are examples of how this arguably distorted belief about women is expressed.

According to this viewpoint, women's relative underrepresentation in administrative positions is caused by a lack of knowledge, expertise, and drive (Welbourne, 2005). Therefore, women themselves must change in order for equality to occur they must become more knowledgeable, driven, and skilled. Women must therefore address their own self-perceptions and the limitations they have internalized as members of a marginalized and oppressed group before pursuing management positions. The majority of writers highlight problems like women's educators' limited mobility, their lack of confidence, and their lack of aspiration based on the individual perspective model (Pirouznia & Sims, 2006; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Study conducted in Lagos, Nigeria by Okafor, Fagbemi, and Hassan (2011) on the obstacles facing women who aspire to be managers and leaders: An empirical analysis also revealed that there was a strong correlation between the gender

stereotype of a woman manager and her desire to advance in her career. In a similar vein, Chabaya, Rembe, and Wadesango (2009) studied the factors that prevent women from advancing into leadership roles in primary schools and the persistence of gender inequality in Zimbabwe. Nine seasoned female school heads were interviewed as part of a purposive sample, and three focus groups with four female deputy heads and nine senior teachers nine of whom were male were attended. Four deputy heads participated in one focus group; four senior teachers participated in the other two focus groups.

It was discovered that the main deterrent for female teachers applying for headship positions in schools was family attachment. It was discovered that women were ill-prepared to assume roles that would keep them apart from their spouses and kids. In fact, most women seemed to prefer staying with their families over pursuing career advancement in locations remote from them.

According to the study, even though they are qualified, the majority of female teachers believe that having a family prevents them from applying for a headship position.

This is a result of the way women and girls have been raised, instilling in them the value of being a wife and mother above all else. Despite the use of purposive sampling, the sample size and study context were different in this investigation. Furthermore, because this study was based in public secondary schools, its focus was on primary schools, which may have contributed to different findings from the current study.

Comparably, Uwizeyimana and Mathevula (2014) studied the gendered perspective of the advancement of female teachers into management roles in schools. The study was carried out in the South African province of Limpopo in the BA-Phalaborwa Municipality of Mopani District. The Lulekani Circuit's primary school teachers make up the study's population, there were 435 educators in the study population, 343 of whom were female and 92 of whom were male. Purposive and stratified sampling techniques were employed in the study. The results demonstrated that the systemic gender bias conceptual model tended to attribute the differences between men's and women's career aspirations to the restricted opportunities afforded to women (Pirouznia & Sims, 2006). According to the systemic gender bias model, there are a number of factors that prevent women from being promoted to administrative positions, including a lack of networking opportunities, a lack of female role models, discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, a lack of mentoring programs in the teaching profession, a lack of support from colleagues and family, and a lack of support from administrators and colleagues (Marcus, 2013).

Jeruto and Kiprop (2014) likewise explored obstacles that women encounter in attaining primary school leadership roles in Rongai District, Rift Valley Province, Kenya. The research employed qualitative research methods. A sample of 10 female educators was selected from a total of 102 in the population. It was found that the primary barrier hindering women from attaining leadership positions in primary schools was cultural. In the realm of attitudes and views regarding educational management, there exists a belief

that men are more suited to perform tasks associated with organization. Consequently, women are restricted to roles shaped by culture because of familial responsibilities and societal stereotypes. Internal challenges such as low self-worth hinder women from taking on leadership roles. Consequently, it is recommended that women engage actively in their career development by networking, seeking leadership positions within their schools, and aiding other women as they progress up the career ladder.

Strategies for Mitigating the Challenges Faced by Women in Schools

The United Nations (UN) Millennium Project Report on Education and Gender Equality was compiled by Caren, Gupta, and Kes (2006) as a report on actions taken to empower women. The task force states that achieving women's empowerment and gender equality is essential to achieving all of the MDGs. Development initiatives and policies that disregard gender inequality or do not provide women with the opportunity to participate in them can be ineffective and have detrimental effects on society. It is also true that the accomplishment of Goal 3 is contingent upon the degree to which each of the other goals tackles issues and limitations related to gender.

According to this task force, the ultimate achievement of Goal three hinges on how much the priorities outlined above are addressed as well as how much the steps taken to accomplish the other Goals are intended to advance gender equality for boys and girls as well as men and women. The task force wants to emphasize that although there is interdependence among the Goals, Goal 3 is valuable on its own. For this reason, the report concentrates on the steps and priorities needed to accomplish Goal 3.

It outlines and distinguishes between the obligations, rights, and roles that men and women have the fundamental biological distinctions between men and women serve as the foundation for social norms that establish acceptable gender roles and the relative social, economic, and political power that each possesses. Though it is not the same as gender equality, the idea of empowerment is connected to it. The capacity of a woman to direct her own course is fundamental to empowerment. Seven strategic priorities were determined by the task force in order to guarantee that Goal 3 is achieved by 2015. The minimal requirements to empower women and change the historical legacy of female disadvantage that persists in the majority of global societies are these seven interdependent priorities: enhance opportunities for girls to pursue post-primary education while fulfilling the commitments made to universal primary education; ensure women's and girls' rights to sexual and reproductive health and rights; invest in infrastructure to lessen the time burden on women and girls; ensure women and girls' rights to property and inheritance; end gender inequality in the workplace by reducing the proportion of women in informal employment, closing the gender pay gap, and reducing occupational segregation; increase the representation of women in national parliaments and local governmental bodies; and

combat violence against women and girls.

Research Methodology
Research Design

The researcher employed qualitative research approach, the researcher used it to gather the data and information required for the study. This study evaluated the variables limiting women to join the leadership role in secondary schools in Uganda. The study employed a qualitative study where case design was used to conduct the study.

Case study is a detailed study of a specific subject, such as a person, group, place, event, organisations, or phenomenon. According to Yin (2014) Case studies are a type of inquiry that is used in many fields, particularly evaluation, where researchers analyse a case in depth. A case is typically a program, event, activity, process, or one or more people. Cases are limited by time and activity, and researchers gather comprehensive data over an extended period of time using a range of data collection techniques. The researcher used case study design this design is in line with my research questions and approach (Yousif, 2023).

Target Population

Along with all secondary school teachers in Gulu city, it also included education officers, and Head teachers. This particular group of participants were chosen because they are key stakeholders and knowledgeable about the topic under investigation and in secondary education, making them fully engaged involved in the administration of secondary schools especially the headteachers and education officers.

Description of the Sample and Sampling Procedures

Non-probability sampling techniques guided the selection of the sample size. Non-probability sampling, according to Gandeebo (2015), is a sampling technique in which samples are collected in a way that does not provide every member of the population an equal chance of being chosen. Purposive sampling was used in the study to choose the headteachers and Education officers and Random sampling used was to select the teachers from both private and public secondary schools.

Sample Size

The number of observations or components that make up the sample is referred to as its size. A sample, as defined by Oso and Onen (2009), is a portion of the target (or

accessible) population that has undergone a selection process in order to serve as a representative sample. Because it facilitates drawing conclusions about the entire population, a sample is crucial to research. Typically, a researcher cannot collect data from every member of a population, particularly if the population is large. As a result, the study sampled 40 participants, which included two education officers, five deputy principals, five female Head teachers at secondary schools, and 25 teachers.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Both primary and secondary data were collected, the government circular, textbooks, reports, newspapers, journals, and the internet were the sources of secondary data. Primary data is obtained through observation, interview techniques, and document analysis from the sample population.

The Interview Method

This approach to data collection involves the researcher speaking with participants face-to-face to obtain information. The discipline provides the necessary verbally sharing information in a face-to-face interaction rather than through written responses. Using interview guides, semi-structured interviews were used to collect qualitative data. The researcher employed interview guides to conduct systematic interviews with various stakeholders, including education officers in the city, head teachers, teachers. The researcher was able to obtain timely feedback and sufficient information about the leadership role in secondary school.

Document Analysis

By employing a qualitative methodology, the researcher can acquire primary data via semi-structured interviews and obtain secondary data via document mining and analysis. This tool offered details on the history of leadership in Uganda, policies, and the way it is being applied in secondary schools. The research site documentation provided necessary information regarding staff performance data, school vision and mission, and achievement data. Secondary data has a great purpose than study because gathering and analysing these documents was more reliable and efficient information to supplement interviewees' responses. Data management is simple and easy when it comes to contextualization of primary data. Document analysis supported or negate interview comments and observations, upgrading and giving the weight to the primary data. They offered a helpful check on the data obtained during interviews. In order to determine how many teachers in some selected secondary schools.

According to Abdiaziz (2019), data collection refers to gathering specific information aimed at proofing or refuting some facts. The study employed qualitative approach which were supported by simple statistical expression. Data were analysed properly basing on the findings from my respondents and from my own experience as a secondary teacher in one of the secondary schools. The data was discussed fully to draw a constructive and an interactive framework for leadership policy formulation and practice, and further research in field of educational leadership and management in secondary schools Uganda and other countries.

As soon as data collection got underway, the researcher began listening to the recordings of the interviews repeatedly to begin acquainting oneself with the information. The researcher also made sure that data transcription began as soon as data collection was completed in order to familiarize oneself with the collected data and to enable potential follow-ups in case the collected data lacked clarity. To make retrieving the data easier, data organization and familiarization are carried out. The researcher read and reread the data multiple times in order to fully understand it. After fully understanding the data, the researcher arranged it into themes. For every data set or transcript, the coding, categorization, and developing of themes procedures.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical research practice is a dynamic process that needs to be observed at every stage of data collection, analysis, and reporting. Above all, the researcher has a duty to honours the participants' rights, needs, values, and preferences.

Findings and Discussions
Barriers Limited Female Teachers to Attain Leadership Positions in Secondary School
Family Responsibility

Although women are driven to pursue administrative roles, they frequently encounter obstacles that hinder their ability to take on such leadership position. The research pointed out several of these significant challenges, such as family duties and roles, an unsafe school atmosphere, and inadequate guidance from the top management. In this research, an interview focused on the obstacles hindering women from taking on administrative roles in schools revealed that family commitments and obligations in relation to school duties and responsibilities were the primary challenge. Many participants indicated the challenges female principals face in juggling their school duties and family obligations.

A deputy head teacher mentioned:

"Roles and responsibilities in secondary schools can be extremely daunting, necessitating continuous leadership involvement, which often causes female teachers to hesitate out of concern for neglecting their family duties. Managing school responsibilities alongside family time is quite difficult, particularly when their partners do not back their professional commitments". (School A, 2024)

This assertion reflects the findings of Hoff and Mitchell (2008) in their research regarding the causes, effects, and solutions to cyberbullying. The research showed that women in leadership encounter the challenge of reconciling societal expectations about their family duties with the demands of workplace leadership. This was likewise substantiated by the research carried out by Wakshum (2014) regarding women's involvement in educational leadership within secondary schools of the Ilu Aba Bora Zone in Ethiopia. The results indicated that family and household duties, along with the misalignment of personal and organizational objectives, were early factors contributing to women's administrative challenges. Women candidates are frequently limited by family obligations or are thought to be held back by familial responsibilities.

Gender Stereotypes

This study supports the results of other studies. For example, Uwizeyimana and Mathevula's (2014) study on the advancement of female educators into school management roles: a gender-focused viewpoint, revealed that female educators in management roles can occasionally face disadvantages. Certain female managers in their schools are occasionally compelled to give up their roles to accompany their husbands when their spouses are elevated to management roles in different provinces. Likewise, in Kenya, Kiruriti (2015) conducted research on the challenges encountered by female educational leaders in the field of education administration in Mombasa County, Kenya. The results showed that a significant number of participants (58.7%) considered it a major barrier for many women seeking to work nearer to their families. The literature review of this study clearly demonstrated that family obligations present a significant obstacle to women's progress into administrative roles in public secondary schools. Taking on these leadership roles often necessitates leaving behind one's home, relatives, and family (Uwizeyimana & Mathevula, 2014; Pirouznia & Sims, 2006; Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango, 2009). Additionally, insecurity has been mentioned as an obstacle, particularly in areas where they face rejection.

For example, one teacher's remark illustrates this well:

"No female educator would desire to teach in a secondary school located in an unsafe environment, even if they were appointed as the headteacher teacher, senior staff member, deputy head, or head teacher. These unstable environments may manifest as a community rejecting the teacher, political turmoil, and personal apathy". (School C,

2024).

Female teachers will not be prepared to instruct, let alone assume leadership roles in these domains. In regions that are unsafe, the number of female teachers is quite low. In Kenya, Kamau (as referenced in Nzeli, 2013) indicated that sex role stereotypes, school insecurities, conflicts between traditional and administrative duties, along with personal obstacles are the primary challenges confronted by female head teachers in managing secondary schools.

Cultural and Religious Factors

Cultural and religious influences challenge female teacher educators in their pursuit of administrative roles. For instance, in certain communities, educated women are not acknowledged and are often excluded from fulfilling religious and cultural obligations, which prevents female teachers from holding administrative roles.

A female teacher with more experience in the teaching field referenced this point when she remarked: Numerous qualified women are among us; several are enrolled in degree programs at different universities, and a few have finished their studies, yet none have been given leadership roles.

"*Cultural and religious influences create obstacles for female teacher educators in obtaining administrative roles. Society tends to be quite dismissive of women, believing that men can perform the tasks more effectively*". (School B, 2024)

This claim is supported by Ballenger's (2010) research on women's access to leadership in higher education: cultural and structural obstacles. The research revealed that female leaders frequently face cultural norms and patriarchal beliefs about femininity that associate being a woman with marriage, unpaid labour, and family roles, which rationalize women's presence in lower management roles with limited opportunities for power. Furthermore, this aligns with Wakshum's (2014) research on cultures, indicating that Ethiopian society is patriarchal. The Wakshum study found that women who do not engage in domestic duties were seen as outcasts, complicating their ability to pursue roles beyond the household. Furthermore, women perform nearly all the productive tasks within the households. The typical Ethiopian woman works 15-18 hours daily, a contribution that has never been recognized economically.

Lack of Mentorships

Additionally, this research aligns with the findings of Jeruto and Kiprop (2014), who examined the obstacles women encounter in obtaining primary school leadership roles: The Case of Rongai District, Rift Valley Province, Kenya. The research indicated that every participant interviewed believed that the strong opinions within their community

regarding leadership being a male domain have significantly impacted their opportunities for advancement into leadership roles in their society. A participant remarked:

"Society holds myths suggesting that women can't offer effective leadership." (School C, 2024)

The teachers' FGD also supports this statement. For example, a teacher mentioned: There were no significant efforts from the broader society to inform both men and women about the abilities of women within the community. Society continues to view women as inferior beings. Inadequate guidance from the current female principals poses a significant obstacle in leadership transitions to other female educators. There was no indication of mentorship programs available for female teachers to reach leadership roles apart from their own personal efforts. If mentorship programs were established, this study would have identified individual female teachers participating. (School A, 2024).

Lack of Networking

Previous research that aligns with this finding, as noted in the literature review, includes the systemic gender bias model that suggests barriers to women's advancement in administrative roles arise from limited networking opportunities, absence of female role models (Marcus, 2013), insufficient support from peers and administrators (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango, 2009); biased hiring and promotion practices (Baldoni, 2013), absence of mentoring systems in education, and a deficiency of support structures (from both family and colleagues).

Additionally, male leaders typically provided mentorship to one another, whereas female leaders were frequently guided by men. Brunner and Grogan (2007) identified variations in the networking and mentoring experiences of women leaders seeking administrative roles compared to those who did not wish to pursue administration. Women aiming for administrative roles showed greater interest in networking and finding mentors compared to those who did not aspire to such positions. Both groups of women leaders mentioned that administration demanded extensive hours; however, the non-aspiring administrators reported that the work was difficult more often. Peters (2010) discovered that female school leaders frequently had informal mentors who focused on friendship without established preliminary guidelines for the mentorship.

Strategies to Mitigate Challenges Facing Women in Leadership at School Gender Equality Policy

To thoroughly tackle the aims of this question, participants were requested to pinpoint vital competitive strategies that could alleviate the obstacles preventing women from assuming administrative roles in secondary schools. The main themes that arose from

this research question included the following: The implementation of gender equality policy embedded in the Ugandan constitution, which champions the acknowledgment of the female gender during appointments, has significantly increased the number of women at the top of management in secondary schools compared to several years ago. Training through management courses, seminars, and workshops taken early on and before rising to leadership roles has shaped and impacted female educators into leadership positions. To provide examples from performance benchmarking against other educators who have thrived in leadership roles. Female Head teachers are also responsible for mentoring and serving as role models for young female educators in the teaching profession. A participant from the female DES group stated:

Training and seminars for school management courses have undergone a significant change in how educators view administrative roles in public schools. These courses have established a shared platform for both male and female educators. Furthermore, the gender equality policy established in the Kenyan constitution promotes the acknowledgment of women during appointments, which has significantly increased the number of females in top management positions in secondary schools compared to a few years ago (School C, 2024).

Anti- discrimination and Equal Pay Legislation

Additionally, the results challenge the liberal feminism, which serves as the theory for this research. Liberal feminists contend that revisions in equal opportunity and educational policies will eliminate patriarchy (Wallin, 1999). Liberal feminists promote and advocate for initiatives like anti-discrimination and equal pay laws, believing they will assist in eliminating discrimination. Liberal feminists aim for reforms instead of revolutionary transformations within the current social and political frameworks (Eisenstein, 2004). The Teachers Service Commission adheres to a constitutional policy on gender and equality when appointing secondary school principals; however, it appears to prefer male teachers in the county based on demographic factors. In a study comparing gender differences in education administration and management in Kenya (Ongaki, Omwoyo & Musa, 2015), it was suggested that the Ministry of Education should tackle the evident gender imbalance from the headquarters down to the zonal levels. They additionally suggested that ESC should amend the promotion guidelines to enhance gender sensitivity, facilitating a greater number of women to rise in the managerial hierarchy. At the school level, female educators could connect and support each other in combating under-representation.

Furthermore, Sang, Masila, and Sang (2012) carried out research on gender disparity in the administration of secondary schools in Kenya. They disclosed that studies on secondary school management in Uganda provide only a fragile foundation for directing

policy and program creation. Additional efforts are required to achieve gender equity in the management of secondary schools in Uganda. For example, implementing a quota system that specifically assigns slots for female administrators might be essential. It is recommended that female teachers participate in management training courses, seminars, and workshops to enhance their chances of securing administrative roles.

A teacher participant stated that

"Early training in management courses, seminars, and workshops before taking on leadership roles has shaped and influenced female educators to concentrate on the epic." (School A, 2024)

Training is described as a structured process designed to provide knowledge or guidance to enhance the performance of the individual or to assist them in achieving a necessary level of expertise or ability (Saeed & Asghar, 2012). One more academic defines training as the structured and formal alteration of behavior through learning that results from education, growth, and deliberate experience. This research aligns with Armstrong (2009), who asserts that development activities enable individuals to contribute positively to organizations. Training facilitates the effective use of resources, which in turn assists employees in reaching both organizational and personal objectives.

Motivation

Training and development enhance teachers' motivation and satisfaction, elevate their skills and knowledge, and broaden their intellectual capacity, thereby improving their overall personality and reinforcing their commitment to teaching (Saeed and Asghar, 2012). Their research suggests that training serves as a motivating element that improves the teacher's understanding of their role. Through training, teachers gain proficiency in their roles and become capable of delivering improved outcomes. It also promotes the cultivation of essential leadership skills needed in the modern education field. The findings of the research further affirm previous conclusions that training initiatives aimed at female educators are vital for achieving effective leadership administration. Such initiatives may inspire aspiring female principals to take on the challenge of purposeful leadership.

Delegation of Female Teachers

An additional approach is the mentorship of female educators, which begins with assigning certain roles and duties as they progressively advance in their careers, consistently shaping female teachers to develop confidence and stability in leadership. A deputy head teacher hinted at this by stating,

"We take inspiration from performance standards set by other teachers who have succeeded in administrative role." (School B, 2024)

Headteachers are also responsible for mentoring and serving as role models for young female teachers in education.

Establish Trainings, Mentorship, and Workshops

By providing training, mentorship, workshop programs for teachers, it would motivate them to advance their careers and attain leadership roles in their fields (Kiruriti ,2015). It also determined that women ought to be motivated to pursue advanced education as it would enable them to attain leadership roles alongside their male peers. The research additionally showed that role models were crucial for young girls to aid them in aspiring to become leaders in their respective areas. The researcher noted that appointments ought to hinge on an individual's qualifications and performance merit, rather than being influenced by their job group. This would motivate female educators entering the field to actively utilize their leadership potential without worrying about external limitations.

Conclusion

To enhance women's experiences in administrative roles within secondary schools, it is essential to gain a deeper insight into how their experiences are shaped by and interact with the challenges they encounter in school administration. This can be achieved through expanding research efforts that results in policy changes and cultural transformations aimed at attracting and retaining more women in administrative roles at all levels of educational institutions.

This study aids in understanding how to create capacity building programs that support female teachers rise into leadership roles in secondary within Gulu city, Uganda, and nationwide. Additionally, government representatives, particularly from MOES and ESC, will find the research valuable in developing policies that will assist Ugandans in achieving their objectives, which will bring about vision 2030, through efficient distribution of well-rounded school administration personnel. It has also been confirmed that although the government of Uganda (Republic of Uganda, 2008) has passed relevant laws to help women progress in public sector careers, particularly in education, there remain factors that hinder women from taking on school administrative roles.

Recommendations

i. Encourage more female teachers to pursue leadership courses for instance educational leadership management. Self-esteem and self-actualisation as the key motivators leadership or administrative roles as identified by this study. The study suggests that government through the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES)

should improve mentoring programs for teachers especially women. By conducting seminars, workshops and administrative courses in management to train and motivate teachers alongside the obligation of every participant in school to enhance morale and alter their perceptions of leadership in secondary schools.

ii. The advises the government to appoint secondary school leaders based on individual merit, irrespective of gender, religion, and cultural backgrounds. The female educators ought to be esteemed in relation to leadership, ensuring that those demonstrating skill and capability are acknowledged as well.

Suggested Areas for Further Research

The current study employed qualitative study to examined what limits female teachers from attaining leadership roles in secondary school. Therefore, future studies on leadership could employed mixed study approach to have a better understanding of barriers limiting women from attaining leadership positions. To have a better analysis of this problem, it is better to include the leaders from the ministry of Gender and social development in the participants list.

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