









The researchers were aware of ethical issues involved when one is conducting a research study. These were addressed in the first section of the questionnaire and also before the interview. Informed consent of the respondents and interviewees was sought before the distribution of questionnaire and the interview respectively. This gave the respondents a chance to choose freely whether to proceed or to withdraw from the study. Privacy and confidentiality issues were guaranteed.

### 3. Findings

#### 4.1. Demographic Data

**Table 1: Sex of respondents**  
N=40

Sex	Number	%
Males	20	100
Females	20	100

The table above shows that there were equal numbers of respondents in relation to gender. This was a result of the purposive sampling. This helped to come up with a balanced view from both males and females.

#### 4.2 Age distribution of respondents

**Table 2: Age of respondents**  
N=40

Age	Number	%
25-35	0	0
36-45	18	45
45-55	17	42.5
Above 55	5	12.5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that most of the respondents were in the age ranges of 36 to 45 years constituting 45% of the population. Dierckx (2013) shows that in various scientific disciplines that opinions on a vast number of topics differ between different age groups. Since all of the respondents were above the ages of 36, it shows that the findings of this study came from mature persons and most of them were well experienced in the teaching and lecturing field as illustrated.

#### 4.3 Work Experience

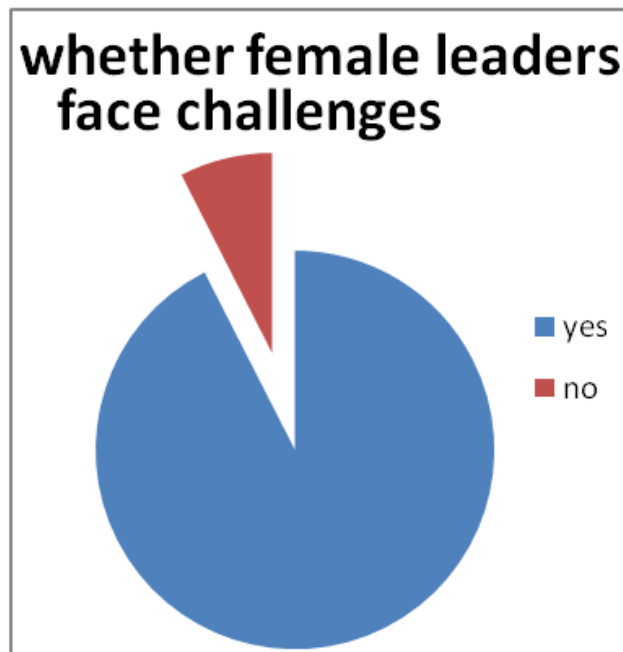
**Table 3 : Work experience of respondents:**  
N=40

Work experience	Number	%
3-5 years	13	32.5
6-10 years	15	37.5
11-15 years	7	17.5
Above 15 years	5	12.5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

37.5% of the respondents showed that they are well experienced as lecturers; hence they had more knowledge basing on their experiences. Thus, it can be assumed that most of the respondents would have experienced the leadership of a female at some point in time during their work experience. This then can be useful as the respondents could have also experienced male leadership which was dominant in years back. This can therefore form the basis of

comparing male and female leaders. The interviewees showed that their experience in leadership positions ranged from 10 years up to 15 years. This therefore, gave more concrete information from more experienced informants who have more information from their experience.

#### 4.4 Challenges faced by female leaders: N= 40



**Figure 1: Responses on whether female leaders face challenges**

The figure above shows that 92.5% of the respondents acknowledged that female lecturers face challenges while 7.5% denied that they face challenges.

**Table 4: Challenges faced by female leaders**

Challenges	No of response	Responses % for	No of responses against	% against	Total
Insubordination	24	60	16	40	100
Incompetence	19	47.5	21	52.5	100
Decision making	20	50	20	50	100
Managing work load	25	62.5	15	37.5	100
Stereotyping	18	45	22	55	100
Conflict management	24	60	16	40	100

The table shows that most respondents subscribed to the fact that female leaders face challenges such as insubordination, incompetence on their part as leaders, managing work load, stereotyping as well as challenges in making decisions and managing conflicts in different levels as shown by the statistics above. One of the female leaders explained that males usually do not want to be supervised by female leaders as they feel being undermined such that they frustrate female leaders. Some respondents highlighted some challenges such as lack of confidence, being looked down upon, inferiority complex and balancing work and family responsibilities. This was confirmed by the responses from interview conducted with female leaders who included being looked down upon by subordinates, and balancing family responsibilities and work. Female leaders complained that they were being looked down upon by some subordinates who fail to report to them when they should but rather to

report to another male leader. The leaders denied that they were incompetent and cannot make decisions and manage conflicts well claiming that it was the attitude of subordinates who saw them as always failing. They accepted that stereotyping was still rife despite lecturers being educated people. Female leaders added that most challenges they face were from male counterparts.

#### 4.4 Impact of the challenges faced by female leaders

85% of the respondents agreed that the challenges noted above had an impact on the performance of female leaders while 15% disagreed that the challenges affect female leaders. The respondents showed that these challenges influence decision making power of females, which results in poor performance, thereby fulfilling the incompetence allegation. This results in the subordinates thinking that females are weak leaders. Usually these challenges make female leaders to shun leadership positions and others to surrender the positions. The interviewees agreed with the view that female lecturers shun leadership positions when they showed that at times they wished if they were not in leadership position.

In the words of one interviewee who was an HOD, "I am used to the challenges such that I no longer care about it, just do my duties religiously. What they say and do is no longer important to me".

This showed an attitude of someone who is determined despite being persecuted because of her gender. It should be noted that these challenges are also associated with the nature of the leadership position held which then could be worsened by the gender of the leader. The respondents showed that these challenges can cause divisions among staff who support female leaders and those who always find fault in female leaders. They noted that because of these challenges females became emotional and make decisions based on their emotions which will cost them as well.

15% of the respondents who showed that the challenges do not affect female leaders stated that any leader can be affected by these challenges despite gender and that these are situational challenges which any leader with relevant leadership skills can manage. In their own words, the respondents said;

*Even when they face challenges females are good problem solvers. Females tend to manage these problems*

This explains that if challenges are not properly handled, they can cause many problems despite the gender of the leader. Findings from the interviews with the female leaders complement the view that female leaders face challenges which affect their performance. The female leaders remarked that:

- Some subordinates fail to comply with the female leaders, for example meeting important deadlines set by the departments and this hinders the progress of the department.
- Too much criticism from the counterparts makes us lose focus and confidence in our career and this has resulted in

most of our fellow women becoming uninterested in applying for leadership positions.

#### 4.5 Ways to improve acceptance and tolerance of female leaders in teacher training colleges.

The table below indicates the responses given by the lecturers when they were asked on the suggestions to enhance acceptance and tolerance of female leaders in teachers' training colleges.

**Table 5:** Suggestions on ways to improve acceptance of female leadership

Suggestions	N=40				
	No	Percentage (%)	No	Not indicated	Total
a) Leadership position to be based on merit	35	87.5	5	12.5%	100
b) Training of female leaders to be competent	21	52.5	19	47.5%	100
c) Sensitization of lecturers	19	47.5	21	52.5%	100
d) Professional development to both lecturers and female leaders	29	72.5	11	27.5%	100
e) Support female leaders from the top level official	19	47.5	21	52.5%	100
f) Helping female leaders to overcome their challenges	22	55	18	45	100

The data in table above shows that 87.5% of respondents suggested that leadership should be awarded based on merit and not gender. The responses also indicated that there is need for professional development for both lecturers and female leaders as indicated by 72.5% of the responses. The other 55%, 52% and 47.5% indicated that there is need to help female leaders overcome their challenges, training female leaders to be competent, sensitization as well as support from the top level offices respectively. The lecturers gave more suggestions which include the need for awarding female opportunity to lead and continuous in-service training on management courses for those in leadership positions. They add more suggestions which are;

- Females must not be obscured by culture and break away from cultural practices which tend to oppress them;
- Have clear policies to follow when dealing with humanitarian and social issues;
- Females should learn to separate social issues from work;
- Female lecturers should support female leaders;
- Attitudes should be positive to accept leaders not the gender of the leader;
- Rewarding highly performing females to encourage others to accept leadership positions; and
- Female leaders should not treat themselves as second class citizens but should walk with heads high where they have the skills, ability and potential.

The female leaders agreed with other suggestions made by lecturers and further suggested that female leaders should be awarded permanent leadership positions and not as acting personnel. They said that this would boost their confidence and self esteem.

#### 4. Discussion

The respondents showed that female leaders faced many challenges which have an impact on the performance of female leaders. This was noted by 92.5% of the respondents. 7.5% of the respondents denied that female leaders face challenges. The major challenges noted are managing work load with family work, insubordination by members, and decision making. These were noted alongside other challenges as stereotyping, conflict management and incompetence. The challenges were affecting female leaders because of their sex and gender and not merely as leaders. This tends to concur with Kiamba (2006) who found out that that many challenges women still face in taking leadership positions, including the barriers related to culture and cultural expectations; the choice and balance between work and family; and the stress that accompanies positions of leadership as experienced. Many female leaders find their priorities divided between family responsibilities and professional responsibilities. This may deter some females to take up leadership positions especially when they cannot balance work and family requirements. To some extent female may shun leadership posts when they separate them from their families and husbands. The female leaders confirmed that they face problems with both male and female lecturers. Possibly, this could be a result of culture and the way they were socialized that men should lead while females remain subordinates. This appears to confirm suggestions by Cullen and Lane (1993) that society's attitude towards appropriate male and female roles is another obstacle that identifies women as not task-oriented enough. Love (2013) agrees that the gender stereotypes create unique dilemmas for women within their roles as leaders. Could it be the influence of these challenges that females display some behavioral aspects and leadership style to compensate their frustrations? One may wonder. These challenges impacts negatively on the performance of female leaders as they lack motivation, confidence, and competence and are stressed by the responsibilities.

The lecturers who noted that female leaders are not affected by challenges explained that any leaders can face challenges which he or she should demonstrate his or her ability to manage despite their gender. Any leader, despite gender, can face challenges which should be handled properly, failure of which may have a negative impact on the performance of the leader.

Despite these arguments, the researcher observes that female leaders may face challenges due to sexism and biological make up. These challenges have a negative impact on their performance. Still the question comes on whether challenges are only faced by female leaders or any leader despite gender. One can also observe that it all depends on the effectiveness of the leader to manage challenges than on the gender of the leader.

The respondents made a number of suggestions on the various ways that could be adopted to improve on tolerance and acceptance of female leadership in teacher training colleges. Among the suggestions was the need for professional development of both male and female leaders and awarding leadership positions basing on merit. This was indicated by 72.5% and 87.5% of the respondents respectively. The suggestions also include helping female

leaders to overcome challenges, support from top level officials, sensitization and training of both male and female lecturers. These were indicated by 55%, 47.5%, 47.5% and 52.5% of the responses respectively. Other independent suggestions were that there is need to have clear policies that address humanitarian issues and a breakaway from cultural bondage and stereotype by females and males. They also suggested rewarding female leaders to encourage other females to accept leadership posts. This appears to concur with the findings by Eshete (2003) that there is need to change gender based cultural norms, improving screening policies in favor of women, and improving their working environment. The environment can be improved by rewarding women in the capacities they excel in and provide support in the areas where they are weak. This explains that judging female leaders as incompetent may not help but worsen the environment, but to assist them in their weaknesses would be helpful.

Eshete (2003) suggest that there is need to address the personal, institutional and socio-cultural problems that constrain women from attending, performing well in higher education. There is need therefore to understand the factors that militate against effective performance of female leaders in order to address the challenges faced by female leaders accordingly and help female leaders perform to their highest level. Additionally, there is need to understand that the performance of female leaders is qualitatively and quantitatively different from male leaders in certain aspects. This allows for lecturers to handle them differently.

## 5. Conclusion

The study noted that female leaders face many challenges by virtue of being females. These result from cultural, social and professional factors which influence the way people view female in leadership positions. Thus, these gender role stereotypes and discrimination also affects female leaders in their career development. As a result, female leaders are undermined and misjudged, regardless of their talents and competences just because they are females. This could be explained by the expectations of the society and culture. This is because, culturally, women took the subordinate place while men took the leading role. This study does acknowledge the state's effort to create equal opportunities in employment, through 'harmonious' labor practices and through all the gender mainstreaming policies like affirmative action. However, the objectives of these policies may not be realized in the absence of institutional mechanisms, which ensure that it is operationalized or implemented to the minutest detail. The study further concludes that the females in leadership require some support and a change of attitudes from males, because doing so, will definitely boost the self-image and self esteem of females and this will help them perform their duties well and advance in their careers. The study further concludes that the females in leadership require some support and a change of attitudes from males and females because doing so, will definitely boost the self-image and self esteem of females and this will help them perform their duties well and advance in their careers. The study concludes that both male and female lecturers accept female leadership to a certain extent but they still have a negative attitude towards female

leaders. This was noted when some lecturers highlighted that they preferred male leaders to female leaders. This could be explained by the stereotype and cultural expectations of the society.

## 6. Future Scope

This research was confined to only two urban teachers colleges. Future research must focus on a number of colleges in both rural and urban areas to improve the generalizability of results

## 7. Recommendations

- The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education needs to take active steps in combating stereotypes by instituting more rigorous and transparent evaluation processes, as well as educating lecturers and all people in the education sector about stereotyping.
- The achievement of female leaders should be showcased particularly those in traditionally male dominated fields. This can be done by establishing competitions such as female HOD or female vice principal of the year. In this way where females are encouraged, motivated, and supported, rather than held back.
- Some findings are inconclusive such that the study further recommends that there is need for further research in this area so as to generate a sound body of knowledge thus building an understanding of the perceptions and attitudes towards females in leadership. The further study can include the attitude of students as well as the ancillary staff. Also the study may also cover all teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe so as to have a deeper understanding. There is also the need to adopt a different research design and methodology from the case study and mixed methodology used for this study. This might allow for the results to be generalized to a wider population.

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