

Challenges Faced by Female Leaders at two Zimbabwean Teachers Colleges

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Abstract: *The study explored the challenges experienced by female leaders in teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe. The study field was the two teacher training colleges in Harare. The research adopted the mixed method approach whereby both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in compliment. The multiple case study design was the plan used to guide the study execution. The population included all the female leaders holding designated posts and lecturers at the two institutions. Purposive sampling was used to come up with a representative sample of 10 female leaders and 30 lecturers. The semi-structured interview and the questionnaire were the tools used to collect data respectively. The results showed that female leaders in teacher training colleges experience problems like insubordination, alleged incompetence, alleged inability to deal with workload pressure, lack of conflict management skills and stereotyping. The results also indicated that as a result of the challenges especially stereotyping female leaders end up fulfilling the prophesies such as negligence, not doing duty religiously and fixing those who disobey or undermine their authority. As a result such defense mechanisms are perceived as incompetence. Suggested recommendations include need by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education 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.*

Keywords: Gender, gender equity, gender equality, leadership, attitudes, perceptions.

Introduction

The question of female leadership is one of the most important current issues globally. This is because historically, leadership has been concerned with the study of political leadership, of “great men” who defined power, authority, and knowledge, (Klenke, 1996). Leadership has been generally associated with men and with male styles of behavior. Since women have not been in leadership positions in great numbers, “...the mental image of a leader held by most people is male”, (Sandler, 1993:193). The presence of women in leadership position in education provides a gendered perspective on educational change and development. It is a way to ensure social justice through gender equity at leadership and decision making levels. This comes as many governments and nations worked to address the existing gender imbalances that characterized many societies. This emanated mainly from the many initiatives that have been undertaken by governments which are a way to fulfill Millennium Development Goal number 3. The goal aims to eradicate gender imbalances and work towards achieving gender equity and equality.

Many strides have been undertaken by the government in trying to remove gender inequalities that existed in Zimbabwe. The cultural and traditional expectations had placed women in subordinate position in the society. The Zimbabwean society expected women to be led by men and their position to be in the home while productive work was meant for men. This was worsened by colonization which introduced policies that discriminated against the blacks, and women’s position was worsened.

To show its commitment towards the achievement of gender equality and equity, the Government of Zimbabwe has ratified a number of regional and international conventions

whose objectives are to promote and realize the rights of women and to achieve gender equality and equity. Conventions ratified according to UNDP (2011) include:

- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1991
- Convention on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)
- Equal Remuneration Convention (ERC)
- Dakar Platform for Action
- Beijing Declaration of 1995 and
- SADC declaration on Gender and Development with its addendum on Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children (1997) and
- The Millennium Declaration of 2000.

The Government of Zimbabwe drafted and launched the National Gender Policy in 2004 to direct and guide the process of gender equity and equality. The government also enacted progressive legislative laws such as the Domestic Violence Act (2007) and making amendments to family and inheritance laws. Labour laws have also been amended to reflect gender equality priorities. Examples of laws include the Legal Age of Majority Act of 1982, the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1985, the Sexual Discrimination Removal Act of 1986 and the Sexual Offences Act of 2001. These have been put in place to promote gender equality and protect women's rights. The government of Zimbabwe created the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development (MWAGCD) in 1995 to oversee coordination of all gender programmes and to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all sector ministries, (UNFPA, 2011).

The National Gender Policy (2004:3) aims “to eliminate all negative economic, social and political policies, cultural and religious practices that impede equality and equity of sexes”. The National Gender Policy (2004) also provides guidelines and the institutional framework to engender all sectoral

policies, programmes, projects and activities at all levels of the society and economy. Gender focal points have been established in all ministries and parastatals to spearhead gender mainstreaming.

In response to the persistent gender disparity in decision-making positions in Zimbabwe, the Affirmative Action Policy was put in place in 1992 which was meant to raise women to leadership positions by giving them priority as compared to men. The Public Service Commission responded to this policy by coming up with specific policies meant to expedite the promotion of women teachers to headship positions in both primary and secondary schools. For example, Public Service Circular No.11 (1991:2) states that heads should identify women who could be promoted to headship grade without reference to seniority and recommend them to be given schools to head. Public Service Circular No. 22 (1996) and Public Service Circular No.1 (1997) encouraged women teachers to apply for school management posts. All these were measures taken to speed up the promotion of more women teachers to school leadership positions. This led to increased women leaders in higher positions previously held by men such as principal, vice principal, Head of Department, Lecturer in Charge in teacher training colleges.

The government of Zimbabwe did not only subscribe to conventions and enacted laws, but went further to see the implementation process. The government went further to conduct in-servicing teachers and other government workers to make the gender sensitive so that they do not perpetuate male dominance and female subordination in their operations. There is Gender Sensitization in Schools and Tertiary Institutions such that the curriculum in higher education incorporates gender as a course or as a component of various programmes at universities and colleges. Despite these achievements there seem to be cultural and historical barriers which may affect female leadership. Thus the issue of women leaderships has raised some interest because culturally, women occupy the subordinate positions while men are expected to be leaders. With all the efforts that have been put in place by the government of Zimbabwe many women are supposedly now in leadership positions. Very little research has been conducted to establish the challenges being faced by women leaders in teachers colleges. It is against this background that this study explored these challenges.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The issue of gender equity and equality has resulted in many females being elevated to higher positions in all sectors of the Zimbabwean government including tertiary education. However, there are cultural and societal expectations which may have an effect on female leadership considering that the women's place was traditionally supposed to be below the men. The cultural perspective placed females on subordinate positions and elevated males to higher positions. The problem in this study is therefore stated in question form as, "what are the challenges faced by female leaders in teacher training colleges?"

1.3 Research Questions

Two research questions underpinned the study and these were

- What are the challenges faced by female leaders in teacher training colleges?
- What could be done to improve tolerance and acceptance of women leaders in teacher training colleges?

1.4 Study Limitations

The study was a case study with the focused on two colleges which means that the results cannot be generalized to other teacher training colleges. The use of purposive sampling when sampling female leaders to a larger extent allowed the findings to apply to some cases in typical situations. The topic itself was prone to gender bias as it seems to be protecting females. However, the possible effects were minimized by including males as part of the respondents so that it would not appear as a female affair.

1. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual/Theoretical Framework: 2.1.1. Liberal Feminism

Feminism is derived from the Latin word "femina" which means women, (Moyo, 2003). It refers to having characteristics of being female. In gender debate it is used as a perspective on sexual equality. Millet in Harallambos and Holborn (1991:546) states, "Politics is not just an activity confined to political parties and parliaments, but one which exists in any power structured relationships...whereby one group of persons is controlled by another". This struggle is approached differently as different feminists have prioritized different aspects of the struggle, (Moyo, 2003). This shows the different perspectives hold by different feminists. This study was informed by the liberal strand of feminism.

2.2 The Concept "Leadership"

Traditionally scholars have approached leadership from two perspectives, one that focuses on positional leadership within an organization hierarchy and one that views leadership as a social influence process that is naturally occurring in social systems. (Bass 2000). With this tradition, there are leadership theories that define a leader. These help to understand leadership traits and behaviors and how leaders employ their influence and power to their situations.

The importance of leadership has been strongly emphasized in the school effectiveness and educational reforms. Numerous studies of organization and management including Sergiovanni (1984) have also indicated that leadership is a critical factor for organizational performance and effectiveness, which shapes organizational process and structure, patterns of social interactions, members' beliefs, attitudes and job behaviors.

Owens (1995:116) defines leadership as, "a group function where it occurs only in the processes of two or more people interacting". This definition shows that leadership is a collaborative process where more people work together one being the leader and the others being the led. Leadership is

when one influences the behavior of others so as to achieve set goals. Cohen (1990:9) state that, "Leadership is the art of influencing others to their maximum performance to accomplish any task, objective or project." This definition also emphasizes the issue of influencing others for the achievement of objectives. Therefore, leadership is the ability to influence a group toward the achievement of a vision or set of goals. A leader must be able to leverage more than own capabilities and must be capable of inspiring other people to prescribe tasks. A leader usually in educational institutions refers to anyone with administrative duties such a school Head, Principal, Education Officer, etc. and occurs at different levels of the organizational structure. This shows that even the roles and duties of the leader differ according to the level of leadership.

2.3 Leadership and Gender

Most African societies have determined that only males make good leaders; therefore they continue to have various attitudes towards females in leadership roles because they do not fit the norm. The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control (Burns, 1998). Historically, leadership has carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women is still common today. Although the number of female leaders has increased, they are often named as an afterthought. The study carried out by Hojgaard (2002), in Kenya, the societal conventions regarding gender and leadership traditionally exclude women, and top leadership is viewed as a masculine domain. The same author further argues that the cultural construction of leadership in itself instigates difference and this is only now being transformed or contested as women gain access to leadership positions. In African societies, it is believed that men lead and women follow (Ngongo, 1993, in Grant, 2005).

2.4 Challenges faced by female leaders.

It is believed that women in leadership face challenges more than men leaders. Many of these probably emanate from the society and from the leadership traits women leaders portray, (Outland, 2010). Society's attitude toward appropriate male and female roles is another obstacle that identifies women as not task-oriented enough, too dependent on feedback and evaluations of others, and lacking independence, (Cullen and Lane, 1993). There are some myths which suggest women cannot discipline older students, particularly males; females are too emotional; too weak physically; and males resent working with females (Whitaker and Lane, 1990). These present a challenge in how female leaders perform their duties.

Kiamba (2006) states that women face many challenges in taking up leadership positions. These include 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. Panigrahi (2013) adds that in many families, women are expected to maintain traditional family roles independent of existing or new job responsibilities and when females obtain or seek positions as educational leaders, it is not easy to balance their work and family obligation. As a result, women give priority to their family and might be less

committed to jobs that require more time investments because of their combined work and family roles.

The working environment being a male-dominated one, women have to prove themselves over and over again so that they are recognized and so great psychological strength, confidence and commitment is required to cope with that pressure, (Mitroussi and Mitroussi, 2009). Therefore, these obligations often lead others to question whether women are capable of being effective educational leaders. Administration involves hard work, long hours, and lots of in-house politics which provoke stress, when child care and home responsibilities are added. A woman can work more hours per week that may conflict with family responsibilities. Thus, this has an effect on how women lead basing on the double roles they have to play at home and at work which may affect their performance at work. Zulu (2007) in her thesis adds that women leaders and managers are likely to experience adjustment problems as well as the challenges of surviving and excelling in a more demanding work environment. They will need to adopt new leadership styles better suited to the changing culture.

Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) distinguish three pitfalls which female leaders can encounter which are visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping which can lead to increasing levels of performance pressure and stress, which in their turn lead to decreased motivation for women to participate in the workplace. High visibility can lead to increasing performance pressure as women may experience stress from constantly having the feeling that they should perform better than their male colleagues. This may be because they feel that they being constantly observed. As a result women may change their style accordingly, adopting a more 'masculine' style, (Eagly and Johnson, 1990). The exaggeration of differences can lead to isolation of female leaders and lack of support (Gardiner and Tiggemann, 1999). The stereotyping leads to the double bind and increase the level of performance pressure and stress. These possible challenges which females may encounter in leadership may hinder them in being effective in their leadership position.

2.5 Possible ways to improve tolerance and acceptance of female leaders

The Conference Board of Canada of May (2013) suggested that given the importance of leadership attitudes and priorities in setting the strategic philosophy and tone for organizations, one should believe that a shift in attitudes at the very top level is the most crucial enabler of women's advancement. A concerted effort beginning with senior leaders in government is necessary to make significant and lasting change in the way women enter, develop, and advance in organizations. Their involvement is crucial as they are the ones who champion, monitor, and measure organizational progress. Though this study was conducted in Canada, it is applicable in Zimbabwe where the government has put measures to improve on female leadership starting with the female vice president, but on the part of the monitoring and evaluation, attention is needed. Kiamba

(2006) highlights that women felt they succeeded when they had the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, received meaningful professional development, or overcame challenges that gave them the experience they needed to advance. This brings the issue of support from their colleagues, both male and female, in order to realize full potential in leadership.

Panigrahi (2013) suggests that there is need to sensitize society to accept women leadership and to encourage women to be assertive (confidential). This comes when people feel that some women leaders are not confidential in dealing with especially social issues of the team members.

Another suggestion is that training can help female leaders in their positions, (Eagly, 2005). This can help towards understanding and solving why subordinates are resistant toward the female leader. Eagly (2005) adds that leadership training should focus on exploring the legitimacy deficit which female leaders experience and can help women achieve identification and trust from their subordinates. This is an important aspect, since people often dislike women leaders who adapt to masculine leadership styles. This way, female leaders can achieve relation identification, by knowing themselves and acting upon their beliefs. There is need to change gender based cultural norms, improving screening policies in favor of women, and improving their working environment, (Eshete, 2003). This could help to address the root cause of stereotyping which influence the attitudes and perceptions of the society towards female leadership.

Some authors suggest that improvements should be made on the individual, institutional and societal level. At the individual level, Jayne (1989) in Bush and West- Burnham (1994) suggest that socialization of women through training to cope with the world of leadership. She further suggests increasing the number of women in educational leadership positions. At institutional level, Schmuck (1986) in Bush and West- Burnham (1994) suggest that the solution lies in the inclusion of women in selection committees which are dominated by males. This improves on the selection and promotion procedures. At the societal level, Bush and West-Burnham (1994) suggests that the government would help make a difference. They explain that neither employers and unions nor women themselves with their determination can improve the attitudes but the actions of the government can make a difference. This can be done through legislations such as the Affirmative Action and campaigns for female leaders.

2. Methodology

3.1 The Research approach

This study adopted the use of mixed methodology. The research questions were designed in the way that they require qualitative responses. However, some questions which were derived from the research questions demanded quantitative presentation and analysis. These were based on the responses gathered from the respondents. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) define mixed methods research as the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines

quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study or set of related studies. Rossman and Wilson (1985) cited by Johnson et al. (2007) identified three reasons for combining quantitative and qualitative research that is to enable confirmation or collaboration of each other through triangulation, to develop analysis in order to provide richer data and to initiate new modes of thinking by attending to paradoxes that emerge from the two data sources. In this study both qualitative and quantitative data were collected concurrently and then analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methods.

3.2 The Research design

The research design adopted for this study was the multiple case study. Yin (1993) defines a case study is a detailed investigation of a single individual or group. Case studies can be qualitative or quantitative in nature, and often combine elements of both as was in the current study. The defining feature of a case study is its holistic approach; it aims to capture all of the details of a particular individual or group, which were relevant to the purpose of the current study, within a real life context, (Yin, 1993). The case study allowed the researcher to explore all three domains of the respondents, which are cognitive, behavioral and affective, (Leedy, 1980). This helped in bringing out the inner feelings of the respondents. The design was also used because of the characteristics as noted by Borg and Gall (2007). They noted that the case study is a design which serves three purposes. First to produce detailed descriptions of the issue under study. Secondly, to develop possible explanations and thirdly to produce possible evaluations.

3.3 Population, sampling and the representative sample

The population of the study included all the female leaders at two teacher training colleges in Harare. The leadership positions included designation posts like sports directors, lecturers in charge, heads of department, vice principals, principals. The population also included all the lecturers at the two institutions. Purposive sampling was used to come up with a representative sample of 10 female leaders, 15 male lecturers and 15 female lecturers who were not leaders.. Purposeful sampling allowed for the selection of those participants who provided the richest information, those who were most interesting and those who manifest the characteristics of most interest to the researchers, (Best and Kahn, 2006).

3.4 The data collection tool

Yin (1993) explain that case studies rely on multiple sources of data; including interviews, direct and participant observation, questionnaires, video and audio tapes, internal documents, and artifacts. The qualitative semi structured interview was used to collect data from the female leaders while the questionnaire was used to collect data from male lecturers.

3.5 Ethical considerations

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
Totals	40	100

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
Totals	40	100

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

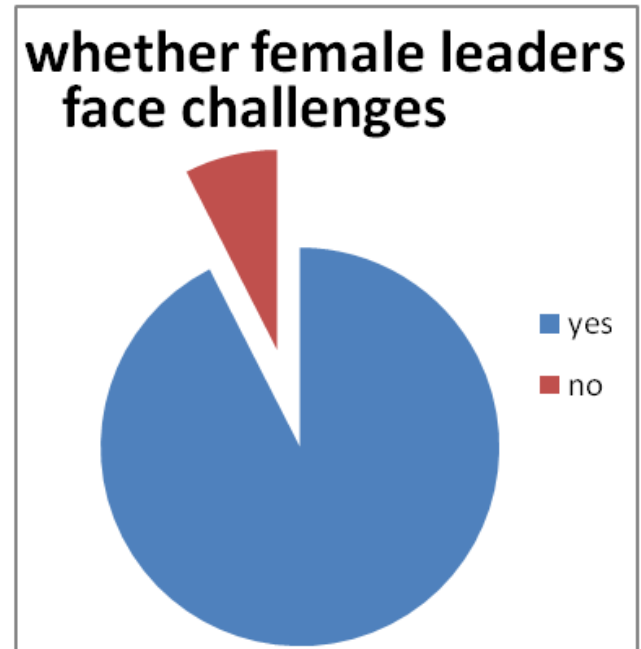


Figure 1: Responses on whether female leaders face challenges

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

N=40					
Suggestions	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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