Research Article

The Impact of Culture on Promotion of Women in Secondary Schools in Chirumanzu District, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: *Educational leadership in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District is dominated by men, women constitutes an insignifant proportion. Men occupy 96, 3% and women occupy 3, 7% of secondary school head posts, 100% of secondary school deputy are men and 0% of deputy heads are women (MINEDU 2019). This mirrors a significant under-representation of women in secondary school leadership in Chirumanzu District of Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. It is against this backdrop, that the study sought to explore the cultural factors that contribute to the untiring invisibility of women in secondary school leadership in Chirumanzu District. The research population was composed of four senior teachers, three female teachers, two secondary school heads and four head of departments sampled from the four secondary schools in Hama Cluster situated in Chirumanzu District... Data collection was necessitated through the use of in depth semi-structured telephone interviews, after which later content analysis was used to analyse data.*

Keywords: Culture, indigenous culture, Education, Zimbabwe.

INTRODUCTION

Patriarchal leadership in secondary schools is a cause for concern and warrant an in depth investigation. Patriarchy refers to a primitive social organisation in which authority is exercised by a male head of the family, extending this power even to distant relatives of the same lineage (Mohammed, 2014).

This outlines that patriarchy is the domination of women by men in all aspects life including leadership at workplaces. It encompasses exclusion, oppression of women by men and imbalanced distribution of powers between men and women in all aspects of societies. Women are placed less value at the workplaces and men play a leading role, this contributed to under representation of women in educational leadership in secondary schools. Gender gap persist in the education sector as men dominate educational leadership in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District. Gender stereotypes, sexist language, sexual harassment among others contribute to making the unfavorable for the female employees especially (Mohammed, 2014).

The under representation of women in educational leadership emanated from the historical influences of the policies made by the colonial government. The policies impacted negatively on women's access to educational leadership.

During the colonial period, legislation and culture explicitly discriminated against women in the field of employment. (Shizha & Kariwo, 2018). This suggests that women were discriminated in the field of employment. This contributed immensely to underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. Women could not access leadership positions in education if their husbands did not grant them permission to do so. Women were considered as minors who were incapacitated to take up employment contracts and they could not access leadership positions at the workplaces in the industrial sector.

During the colonial independence Zimbabwe; Customary law applied only to Africans and was based on colonial customs and traditions" (Batezat & Mwalo, 1989). This suggests that women were left out of educational leadership due to gender discrimination based on cultural and traditional beliefs. In the colonial Zimbabwe, educational leadership in education was perceived as for men and women were not considered. Gender discrimination among educational personnel is evident in the recruitment, appointment, deployment and promotion in secondary schools. It is evident that few females are in administrative posts, despite government's efforts to implement the pronouncement of Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol of the third posts to be held by females (Matope, 2016).

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Cultural beliefs and traditional predispositions contributed to women having less access to leadership posts in secondary schools. This entails that cultural beliefs consider women as most suitable for giving supporting roles to their male colleagues at the workplace. The societal conventions regarding gender and leadership traditionally excluded women, and top leadership is viewed as a masculine domain (Grant, 2017). This contributed to underrepresentation of women in educational leadership as leadership had carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leader than women. The belief was strong on that men lead and women follow.

It is against this background that the researcher found it worth to undertake a research of this nature for filling in the gender disparity that still continue in educational leadership in secondary schools. The government formulated several policies for easing gender disparity in secondary school leadership but women are underrepresented in educational leadership. This study there seeks to unpack the main contributing cultural factors for persistence in women underrepresentation in educational leadership in the contemporary education system in Zimbabwe. The researcher therefore seek to fill in the geographical gap, sample gap, temporal gap and discipline gap left out by previous researchers on women underrepresentation in educational leadership in secondary schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study will adopt a theoretical lens informed by feminist theory (Young, 2005) which views gender as a social, historical and cultural construct (Connell, 1995). Moyo (2003) say feminism is a Latin word which means woman. He further pointed out that the word refers to having the characteristics of being female, but in the gender debate it is used as a perspective on sexual equality. The feminist perspective as identified by Arnot &Weiner (1994); Dekker & Lemmer (1993); & Haralambos & Holborn (1991) namely Marxist and social feminism.

Marxist and Social Feminism

Moyo (2003) says: "…the origin of gender inequality is based on historical events". According to Engel (1982) quoted by Moyo (2003) says gender development emanated to the earliest phases of society which he describes as savagery and barbarism. During this time gender inequality was in favour of women rather than men. Division of labour by sex determined male and female roles. This suggests that women occupied lighter work at homes while men performed challenging work. Women underrepresentation exists because women believe that leadership is masculine role in society.

In patrilocal families, wives went to live their husbands and lost control of the products of their labour. Men took control of production of goods for the family (Benson, 2016). This suggests that women became underrepresented in educational leadership due to this division of roles between men and women. Women's roles were defined to be based in the home; bearing and caring children. Women were therefore socialised as property of men who bear and care for the children at homes.

The fact that girls are accorded lower status as compared to their male counterparts led to women underrepresentation in educational leadership. This implies that boys were placed more value and opportunities in accessing education at school than the girl child. The girl child therefore lag behind in attaining educational qualifications that pave way to qualifying for occupying leadership posts in secondary schools.

Concerning educational research, Weiner (1994) says Marxist and socialist feminists are, concerned with examining the degree to which education and schooling have been effective in producing sexual inequality, so compared to the reproduction of class inequality. This implies that they focused on gender and power relationships in educational institutions. The feminist researcher therefore look at the process by which working-class men and women become working class women and men. Schools therefore play a critical role in exacerbating gender and class inequalities by sending strong messages, encoded in practice, concerning women inferiority at work.

Problem Statement

The problem under investigation is the persistence underrepresentation of women in secondary school leadership in Chirumanzu District. The government of Zimbabwe has put in place a litany of gender policies to redress the imbalances suffered by women. The problem rests on secondary school teachers in Chirumanzu District of Midlands Province in Zimbabwe where secondary school leadership is male dominated. Regardless of the policies and studies that were done and recommendations proffered, women under-representation still persists in Chirumanzu district. This study therefore seeks to fill the void and interpolate and extrapolate the underlying cultural causes.

Aims of the Study
- To determine the impact of gender on women's interest in taking leadership positions in secondary schools.
- To establish the extent to which culture affect promotion of women in secondary schools.

Research Guiding Question

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- What cultural factors impact on promotion of women in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District of Midlands Province in Zimbabwe?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was qualitative in nature seeking to understand human perceptions and experiences on challenges in promotion of women in secondary school leadership. An exploratory design, the case study was used. It helped to discover and understand the cultural factors that impact on promotion of women in secondary school leadership. The research population was composed of two secondary school heads, four senior teachers, three female teachers and four head of departments sampled from Hama Cluster situated in Chirumanzu District. Convenient sampling was applied in the identification of participants to ensure that strategic members of the community were selected for interview. It also purposively selected secondary school educators from secondary schools located in Hama Cluster in Chirumanzu District. Data was necessitated through the use of in-depth interviews. Telephone interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview questions. In-depth interviews were conducted with secondary school educators. Latent content analysis was used to analyse data.

All the ethical research procedures were strictly followed to ensure that participants engaged voluntarily and aware of the implications thereto. University of Zimbabwe (2014) notice which reads: "…plagiarism is illegal. Always acknowledge other people's work through proper referencing techniques. Moral ethics should always be upheld throughout the data collection procedures"!

For ensuring integrity, the researcher shall keep promises and agreements, act with sincerity and strive for consistency of thought and action, as pointed out by Mhute (2013). The researcher shall also stick to the time which he promises that he interview would take to complete.

Non-maleficence, which is defined by Fraenkel & Wallen (2003) as the principle of no-evil or no harm, implies the researcher must not have evil intentions to hurt or harm the research participants in any way during/or after the research process.

The researcher shall ensure beneficence. This is ensured through promising participants that this research study shall be of educational value to the nation upon which its publication (Cohen *et al.,* 2007). Creswell (2012) who says that, "before starting the interview, convey to the participants the purpose of the study." in this research study, the researcher shall give an impression that the research shall be of much benefit to the participants.

The researcher shall ensure informed consent through making research participants free to choose to take part or not, after they have been supplied with relevant facts that affect their decisions. Participants should be made aware of their right such as the freedom to withdraw from the data collection process (Best & Kahn, 1993). The researcher shall conscientise participants of such freedom as well. The researcher shall also obtain consent by having interviewees complete an informed consent form when they will be first contacted (Creswell, 2012; & Leedy & Ormrod 2013).

Lastly, the researcher shall ensure confidentiality. Data collected shall be accessed only by the researcher and supervisor. To safeguard the identity of participants, the researcher shall remove their names from all the data collection notepads and pseudonyms shall be used.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data was presented responding to specific research question as outlined above. Participants were coded as follows: heads [H], senior teachers [ST], head of departments [HOD] and female teachers [FT] for easy categorization. The discussion is also concurrently done with the presentation of data for easy of analysis. The presentation of results is done following particular themes;

In which ways do cultural values, beliefs and norms of people affect promotion of women in secondary schools?

All the themes that came out under this question are listed below and each theme was then discussed with reference to the data obtained from different sources. The following themes emerged from the above research question:
- Gender stereotyping
- Socialization of women
- Religious factors

Gender stereotyping

Participants raised the issue of gender stereotyping as contributing to women underrepresentation in secondary school leadership. Their responses were:

ST1: Women are not highly appreciated in most societies to be leaders.
H2: The woman who got promoted is perceived to have used her bottom power for getting promoted.
HOD3: The cultural values and beliefs of people in Zimbabwe center more on men as leaders as compared to women.

The label placed on women in society were women are not highly appreciated to be leaders. Such a viewpoint confirms that women are stereotyped to be

unsuitable for occupying leadership positions in all aspects of life and development including secondary school leadership. This emerged in the literature where Mwale & Dodo (2017) say, "…women's position is in the kitchen and bedroom while men occupy leadership positions. This conception which label women to be on an inferior position as compared to men widens the gender disparity gap in secondary school leadership where men dominate in leadership.

Gender stereotyping place different labels on women and men, women are labeled to be men's property who bear children for the men while men are entrusted for taking leading roles in society. This left in indelible mark in women's mind so that women perceive they cannot lead as they are labelled to be unsuitable for leadership, women therefore think leadership is for men. Such a standpoint confirms that lack of interest in taking leadership positions in secondary schools is embraced in the gender stereotyping as defined by the culture. Women who possess relevant qualifications, experience and attributes for leadership may not aspire to become a secondary school head because of the gender stereotype on women which undermines women leadership in all aspects of life and development including educational leadership. This view is supported by Wood (2019) who suggests that stereotyping women results in them being marginalized and discriminated against which brings about unfair and unequitable conduct against them – whilst their human rights are being constrained.

Apparently, other participants assert that women who got promotion to leadership are said to have used the bottom power and favoritism. They compared women with men, where men are said to get promoted through merit and proper channels. On another note women who get promoted are viewed to access leadership posts in secondary schools through government's gender responsive policies which seek to alleviate gender disparity in leadership by favoring women. Such a perception justifies that women are not appreciated for taking leadership position. This supported by Coleman (2017) who points out that, "…a woman who got promoted to leadership was probably viewed as having used the 'bottom power' to achieve the status. Such a label placed on women who got promoted may cause other women lose interest in taking leadership position in secondary schools.

In their responses, participants voiced with unanimity that culture accords women downgraded roles in society. Deriving from the traditional perspective of leadership, women have never accepted for leadership. Cultural believes, values and norms place women to be subordinate to men. H2 supported this view by pointing out that women in society are not seen as kraal heads, chiefs and political leaders, women representation is insignificant. This discrimination as defined by culture therefore make women feel inferior

to men and think they cannot be leaders. Shakeshaft (1987) asserts that the major barrier to women has been a culture characterised by male dominance. Women's roles were described by participants to be in the kitchen and bedroom. Engel (1982) confirms the view that women are given lighter work in the homes while men performed challenging work.

Socialization of Women

Responses from participants supported that women underrepresentation in secondary school leadership is caused by the way women were socialised. Socialization is therefore embedded in the beliefs, values, perceptions and norms of people in society.

Women were socialised to be subservient to men and to be on the background of men. Participants had to say:

> *ST1: Our culture do not much appreciate women leadership, they value men on the expense of women. People in society believe women cannot lead.*
> *ST2: People in most Zimbabwean society believe women were socialised to be subservient to men, so women feel insecure to lead men.*
> *FT1: Culture plays a very important role because women are socialised to be servant and, they are socialised to be led not to be leaders and to obey.*
> *FT3: Culture in Zimbabwe do not prefer women for occupying leadership positions. When women get promoted people view that as government's effort to attain gender equality through its government gender responsive policies.*
> *HOD4: Generally people do not accept local women leadership.*

Leadership is therefore perceived to be for men. Such a perception emanate from the cultural beliefs, norms and values of people which define how socialization is done in the society. This suggests that women view themselves as not suitable for taking leadership positions in society. More value is placed by women on performing family roles where they play motherly roles of bearing children, caring, supporting their husbands. This emerged in the literature where Benson (2016) say,"…patriarchy, entails male position, as compared to male domination over women in a hierarchical social system, in which women are subjected, in a subordinate position, as compared to men's super-ordinate position.

Such a standpoint suggests that women in the contemporary education are not too keen to advance in educational leadership in secondary schools as women were socialised to be subordinate to men. This portrays that men were socialised to dominate over women so men underrate and resist women leadership resulting in persistence of invisibility of women leadership in

secondary schools. This appears in the literature where Moyo (2003) say, "Radical feminist use the concept of patriarchy that is the rule of the father, to analyse the exploitation of women by men".

Cultural implications on women leadership suggest there were exclusionary practices in ancient societies where women were not allowed to occupy any leadership position in society. Such discriminatory practices caused irreversible patriarchal ideology which maintains recurring of gender disparity in secondary school leadership. Overt and covert discrimination refer to open or hidden discriminatory practices in educational management as shown by recruitment or promotion procedures and general attitudes towards women managers (Davidson & Coopers, 1992).

Participants confirmed that culture define the way people socialise in society. Male roles and females roles are specified by culture. Women are entrusted with child bearing, caring the family and supportive to men. Such socialization places women on a subordinate position to men and women perceive leadership as for men. Women therefore prefer performing their roles as defined by culture. Benson (2016) confirms women's roles were defined to be based in the home; bearing and caring children. It is against such a background, women's number in secondary school headship is immaterial.

Religious Constraints

Participants assert that religion to some extent constraint women from taking up leadership positions in secondary schools. In their attempt to justify their views, they say:

HOD4: Some churches do not accept women leadership and this discourage women from taking leadership positions in secondary schools.

H1: Religion also play a role in women underrepresentation as women are discriminated, women are not allowed to preach such that women do not have time for witnessing God's interventions in their life.

H1: At churches like Johane Masowe, female prophets are not allowed to prophecy while standing in front of men. They are required to kneel on the ground and announce their prophecies to the male brethren at the church.

ST4: Churches do their things in different ways some support women while other do not support women to leadership positions. The Anglicans are actually empowering women but Catholics are conservative they are not liberal they do not support women for taking up leadership positions.

Participants unanimously confirm that churches principles and teachings instil the ideology that women were created from man's ribs so they must

be dominated by men. Some churches teach followers that women must be quiet in church and cannot occupy any leadership position in the church. Those teachings therefore result in women refusing to take up leadership positions as they view leading as a sin and contravening the teachings of their churches. The church upheld these stereotypical beliefs, and regulated and assigned a subordinate status to women. Wood (2019) confirm that, "women's bodies and the oppression, marginalisation, vilification and the othering thereof in early Christianity is one of the most dishonourable teachings of traditional Christianity. Such a standpoint prove that women in some churches cannot be leaders and this extend to the working environment where women refuse to take leadership positions.

Conversely, participants say some churches support women leadership. This is evidenced by women who take priesthood and bishop positions and minister in their churches. Dominations mentioned were Anglican, Methodist Church and Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa. Such a contribution by the religious church divide cause women to have conflicting perceptions on taking leadership positions, other women vie for liberal feminism and other valuing patriarchal leadership.

Summary

The research study established the cultural factors that impact on promotion of women in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District. Advancement of women in secondary schools is negatively impacted by gender stereotyping, socialisation of women, cultural dynamism, religious factors and family roles. The study found out that secondary school leadership is male dominated due to cultural factors that impede women from applying and assuming leadership positions in secondary schools in Chirumanzu District.

Recommendations

In view of the preceding, recommendations are offered that could help improve women promotion in secondary schools for addressing the persistence gender disparity in secondary school leadership.

- The government should inspire female teachers and affords all the needed backing women need to facilitate the creation of encouraging environment for their progression to headship positions in secondary schools. Government and other patrons should enthusiastically incorporate patriarchal concerns in all its gender parity intrusion programmes.
- Sensitize women in secondary schools through workshops, seminars and print media about equal rights at workplaces for confidence building so that they cultivate interest in captivating headship posts in secondary schools
- Government to continue politicking for gender equality and equity in work places and

communities so that women and men are conferred equal rating or value for occupying leadership positions in both private and public sectors.

- The government to regenerate reviewing the gender policies so that women involvement in educational leadership surges up to where gender equivalence is realized in secondary schools.

Abbreviations

SADCP - Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol

MINEDU – Ministry of Education

KEY TERMS
Culture

Ngan (2011) define culture as: "…the enduring set of beliefs, values, and ideologies underpinning structures, processes, and practices that distinguishes one group of people from another". Culture, the shared "symbols, beliefs and patterns of behavior". (Rutherford, 2001). The shared beliefs, values and ideologies in the society affect women's access to leadership positions. Women's representation in educational leadership is influenced by culture and sociological factors.

Indigenous culture

Mwale & Dodo (2017) view indigenous culture as the set of beliefs and values of the local people. The researcher therefore view indigenous culture as the beliefs and values of the people in Zimbabwe.

Acknowledgements

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