

Influence of Gender Stereotyping Dynamics on Appointment of Female Teachers as Secondary School Principals in Makueni Sub-county, Makueni County, Kenya

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Abstract

Female teachers play an important role in school management. However, their number in positions of school headship is low. The purpose of this study was to assess the influence of gender dynamics on the appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals in Makueni Sub-county, Makueni County, Kenya. The objectives were: to assess the influence of female teachers' gender roles, self-perception, stereotyping and management training on appointment as secondary school Principals. The study was guided by The Pearson's Theory of Gender Relations and Feminism Theory. Mixed methodology was applied and thus concurrent triangulation design was adopted. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using linear regression analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables. The study established that gender stereotyping is a major hindrance to female teachers' desire to seek to positions of headship. The study recommends that educational policy-makers to come up with policies that create positions for women to eliminate gender imbalance in education administration. Policy makers to come up with a curriculum that include gender issues for purpose of sensitizing the community on the social/cultural barriers which cause gender imbalance in education administration. The Ministry of Education should come up with a policy where attendance of workshops and seminars is a compulsory requirement for all teachers in order to build skills and knowledge on their careers and give women chances to compete favorably with men.

Keywords: Gender stereotyping, appointment of female teachers as principals

Introduction

Female teachers play an important role in school management. Cognizant of this assertion, Fidler and Atton (2012) posit that, in England and Wales, gender representation of the secondary school heads in the country reflects, to a degree, this crucial difference in the composition and ensuing degree of autonomy of the

governing bodies. Fidler and Atton (2012) further assert that, in these countries where the local education authority monitors and moderates the decision, the representation of both men and female teachers is more proportional. In New Zealand, boards have total control over their choice of school Principals, male teachers are disproportionately represented. In secondary schools, female teachers represent 82% of the workforce, but are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership, occupying only 40% of managerial positions.

Seen from another perspective, 60% of school principals are appointed from the 18% male pool of the workforce (Court, 2012). Men are six times more likely to win a school manager's position disregarding experience or qualifications, than female teachers. In addition, 80% of senior management positions in secondary schools (assistant and deputy principals) are held by female teachers (Court, 2012), indicating that there is a very large pool of well-qualified and experienced female teachers who may be hitting a glass ceiling (Livingstone, 2014). The reforms gave new roles, powers and functions to New Zealand boards of trustees, which in the case of recruitment of the school principals were more unregulated than in any other country with similar policies (Wylie, 2012). The high degree of autonomy that boards have in the school manager's appointment means that this function is localized and not subject to any form of central control. In addition to appointing whoever they like, there is no accountability required at any level by central government in the appointment process.

Explanations have been given for gender imbalance in education administration based on the socialization and sex-role stereotypes. Organizational socialization is the process by which new leaders become integrated in formal and informal norms as well as unspoken assumptions of a school. Cognizant of these views, Johnson (2003), in a longitudinal study conducted in Columbia, noted that since traditional stereotypes label women as socially incongruent as leaders, they face greater challenges to be integrated into an organization. Johnson (2003) noted that socialization and sex-role stereotypes act as obstacles to gender balance attainment of management positions in schools. Women have failed to advance to high level leadership positions in schools because they are oversaturated with a cultural message of female inferiority complex (Johnson, 2003). This results to women being judged on how "womanly" they are when they behave inferior and shy away from top positions. Such views lend credence to the findings of a study conducted in Venezuela in which Eagley and Johnson (2008) asserted that negative stereotypes of women by superintendents and school board members have negatively affected gender balance in education administration. Eagley and Johnson (2008) indicated that there is perceived women inability to discipline students, supervise other adults, criticize constructively, and manage finances. The school board members lack confidence in female superintendents' ability to oversee the construction of a new building and when she completes the task the board is surprised (Eagley & Johnson, 2008). These findings corroborate the fact that school principals and board members believe that women are easy to direct simply because they are female. If they turn out not to be malleable the reaction is negative because they seem to be violating the expected norms when they act like men. These expectations of feminine behavior result in negative perception of assertive actions of women.

In France, a female style of leadership like assertiveness and being direct is unacceptable and colleagues will view the man as firm but a female as stubborn (Bynum, 2008). Bynum (2008) noted that another form of sex stereotype is related to societal perceptions that women are emotional and work at emotional level.

In the same vein, Cubillo and Brown (2003), in a study conducted in Lesotho, indicated that, due to such perception, it is assumed that women cannot be natural and logical decision makers. Aemero (2005) also supported these findings and pointed out that women are too emotional and cannot see things rationally and this affects their decision making. Aemero (2005) indicated that few women plan to enter administrative positions upon college completion. This is in consistent with the findings of a study carried out in KwaZulu Natal Province in South Africa in which Chisolm (2013) observed that not a single female teacher had planned to enter school management when they joined teaching as a career. These findings lend credence to the fact that women have their career aspirations limited due to gender socialization. The belief that the image of leadership is associated with masculine traits has caused gender imbalance in education administration (Chisolm, 2013). The popular traits are masculine by nature and are male and female accepted.

In Kenya, gender is constructed within institutions and cultural contexts that produce multiple forms of masculinity (Chelimo & Wasyanju, 2007). Schools play a major role in formation and maintenance of masculine traits, that is, program division, sports and discipline systems. Chelimo and Wasyanju (2007) asserted that the popular masculine traits accepted by all are decisiveness, appearing tough, less talking and putting a social distance between themselves and staff. In other words, female leaders without these traits are viewed negatively. In Kenya, the turn of the new millennium has witnessed invigorated female teachers' participation in secondary school educational leadership (Republic of Kenya, 2015). Their pronounced representation and participation have brought with it challenges they have to grapple with in positions of authority like secondary school leadership. In Makueni Sub-county, appointment of male and female teachers in school management positions is pegged on a variety of factors which include; leadership skills, training and competency, service delivery and experience of service though the number of female principals is still below expectations (Republic of Kenya, 2015). In Makueni Sub-county, the female teachers are at lower levels of appointment despite the constitutional threshold of 2/3.

A report by Muchungu (2013) shows that out of the 47 public secondary schools in Makueni Sub-county, female Principals constitute a paltry 8.5% (4 out of 47) In Makueni Sub-county, the shift of masculine model has not changed (Muchungu, 2013). Socialized roles have become so familiar and become unquestioned norms. Since socialization tends to be invisible, it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that women choose these roles. Despite this woman have made it to the top. Having a vision and well-planned career path with a goal to move up is crucial. In an assessment study conducted in Lower Yatta District and Makueni County, David (2013) asserted that the factor that explains the most about the resistance to women in positions of power in schools is the devaluation of women. While equity gains have been made, different expectations of and attitudes to women and men still exist (David, 2013). However, David (2013) have not indicated how different aspects of stereotypes against female teachers by those who hire constitute the major barrier to female teachers' advancement in school management.

Statement of the problem

Appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals has not been fully achieved as per the expectations of the education stakeholders. As stated in the background, the future of gender parity in the

appointment of school principals is not optimistic where school boards have total control over their choice of managers and female are disproportionately represented.

In public secondary schools in Kenya, female teachers represent 82% of the workforce, but are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership, occupying only 40% of top managerial positions. As noted in the background, in Makueni Sub-county, the scenario is the same with most female teachers being at lower levels of appointment despite the constitutional threshold of 2/3.

Muchungu (2013) indicates that out of the 47 public secondary schools in Makueni Sub-county, female Principals constitute a paltry 8.5% (4 out of 47). This is contrary to the fact that there is recognition in education of both the importance of equal opportunity and the strengths that women bring to management. Despite these observations, little has been done to interrogate how gender stereotyping influences appointment of female teachers as secondary schools.

Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Management Practices Theory which as postulated by Kuo (2009). This theory addresses how managers and supervisors relate to their organizations in the knowledge of its goals, the implementation of effective means to get the goals accomplished and how to motivate employees to perform to the highest standard. The central focus of this study is that although school managers in different parts of the world could have achieved managerial success without having basic theoretical knowledge in management, it has to be unequivocally emphasized that those managers who have mixed management theory in their day-to-day practice, have had better chances of managing their organizations more efficiently and effectively to realize appointment of female teachers in positions of school management. Thus, the rationale of using this theory in this study is that to enhance appointment of female teachers as school principals, education managers ought to appreciate the important role they play in their respective organizations. Education managers need to adopt practices geared towards increasing the number of female teachers in positions of school management.

This study also adopted Ruth Pearson's Framework on gender relations. According to Pearson's (2005) theory, society views all activities that are carried out to be based on social roles and interactions of men and women. In this context, the framework views the notion of gender roles and activities as having a strong ideological content. Because of these biases, the performance of women and men is affected on nearly all spheres of life such as education, leadership and general development. The rationale of using this theory in this study is that it recognizes the fact that career mobility to positions of school management involves female teachers who happen to be actively involved in education administration aspiring to be administrators and play their practical gender roles as well. That is, women have been socialized over time to be submissive and therefore when one becomes a leader and portrays traits of assertiveness, decisiveness and directness, it becomes socially unacceptable and one is viewed as stubborn. This study also adopted a theoretical lens informed by feminist theory which was postulated by Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (2002) which views gender as a social, historical, and cultural construct.

Janet and Margrit (2002) hold the view that femininities, like masculinities, are not a product of biology or some manifestation of inner essence; rather they are socially constructed configurations of gender practice

created through historical and social processes, situated in patriarchal relations of power, and interact with other social justice factors such as race, social class, bodily ability, and sexuality. Feminist theorists argue that the most valued jobs are reserved for the men of the dominant racial ethnic group. Feminist histories, as feminist theories and politics, focus on domination, marginalization, appropriation, and the ‘othering’ of any social group. In so doing, feminism imparts numerous deconstructive possibilities of dominant storylines by challenging dominant categories and unpacking concepts such as leadership. Additionally, research drawing upon feminist theory can also be reconstructive, as it provides space for voices of the less advantaged and offers alternative representations of leadership through the narratives of marginalized leaders.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was carried out in public secondary schools in Makueni Sub-county. The study focused on the influence of gender stereotyping dynamics on appointment of female teachers as principals in public secondary schools. Mixed methodology was used and thus, concurrent triangulation research design was applied. In this study, questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from teachers whereas interview guides were used to collect qualitative data from principals, staffing officer and sub-county director of education.

Research Methodology

Mixed methodology was applied and thus concurrent triangulation design was adopted. Target population comprised 44 principals, 836 teachers, the staffing officer and the sub-county director of education totaling to 838 respondents from which a sample of 272 respondents was determined using Yamane’s Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create five strata based on the number of zones in Makueni Sub-county. From each zone, three principals and 51 teachers were selected using purposive sampling. The staffing officer and sub-county director of education were also selected for the study. This procedure enabled the researcher to sample 15 principals, 255 teachers, the staffing officer and the sub-county director of education. Data analysis began by identifying common themes. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically along the objectives and presented narrative forms. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages and inferentially using linear regression analysis with the help of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 23) and presented using tables.

Results and Discussions

The study sought to:

- i. To establish the influence of gender stereotyping dynamics on appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals in Makueni Sub-county.

Response Rate

In this study, 255 questionnaires were administered to teachers out of which 249 questionnaires were filled and returned. At the same time, the researcher also interviewed principals, Staffing Officer and Sub-county Director of Education. This yielded response rates shown in Table 1;

Table 1: Response Rates

Respondents	Sampled Respondents	Those Who Participated	Achieved Return Rate (%)
Principals	15	13	86.7
Teachers	255	249	97.6
Staffing Officer	1	1	100.0
Sub-county Director of Education	1	1	100.0
Total	272	264	97.1

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 1 shows that principals and teachers registered a response rate of 97.1%. This confirmed the findings of Creswell (2014) that a response rate above 75.0% is adequate and of suitable levels to allow for generalization of the outcomes to the target population.

Stereotyping Dynamics and Appointment of Female Teachers as School Principals

The study sought to find out how stereotyping influences appointment of female teachers as school principals. Data were collected from teachers and results are shown in Table 2;

Table 2: Teachers' Views of Influence of Stereotyping on Appointment of Female Teachers as Principals

Summary of Test Items	SA %	A %	U %	D %	SD %
Societal norms about women influence appoint of female teachers as secondary school principals	58.8	21.6	4.1	10.4	5.1
Societal norms about women influence promotion of female teachers	61.6	17.7	3.9	10.5	6.3
Societal beliefs about women influence appoint of female teachers as secondary school principals	59.9	19.8	2.5	12.2	5.6
Societal beliefs about women influence promotion of female teachers	65.9	13.4	3.7	10.3	6.7

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 2 reveals that slightly more than half 146(58.8%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that societal norms about women influence appoint of female teachers as secondary school principals.

54(21.6%) agreed. 10(4.1%) were undecided, 26(10.4%) disagreed whereas 13(5.1%) strongly disagreed. The study also revealed that a fair majority 153(61.6%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that societal norms about women influence promotion of female teachers as did 44(17.7%) who agreed. 10(3.9%) were undecided, 26(10.5%) disagreed whereas 16(6.3%) strongly disagreed. These findings corroborate the findings of a study conducted in Colombia in which Johnson (2003) noted that since traditional stereotypes label women as socially incongruent as leaders, they face greater challenges to be integrated into an organization. Johnson (2003) noted that socialization and sex-role stereotypes act as obstacles to gender balance attainment of management positions in schools.

In other words, Johnson (2003) further posits that women have failed to advance to high level leadership positions in schools because they are oversaturated with a cultural message of female inferiority complex. These findings attest to the fact that formal and informal norms as well as unspoken assumptions of a school hinder female teachers from seeking positions of school leadership and thus impede their career mobility. Similarly, slightly more than half 148(59.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed that societal beliefs about women influence appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals as did 49(19.8%) who agreed. 6(2.5%) were undecided, 30(12.2%) disagreed whereas 14(5.6%) strongly disagreed. 164(65.9%) of the teachers strongly agreed with the view that societal beliefs about women influence promotion of female teachers as did 33(13.4%) who agreed. 9(3.7%) were undecided, 10.3% disagreed whereas 17(6.7%) strongly disagreed.

These findings are consistent with the assertions of Chisolm (2013) that the belief that the image of leadership is associated with masculine traits has caused gender imbalance in education administration. In the same vein, these findings lend credence to the assertions of Eagley and Johnson (2008) who indicated that there is perceived women inability to discipline students, supervise other adults, criticize constructively, and manage finances. These findings point to the fact that socialized roles have become so familiar and become unquestioned norms and hinder female teachers from seeking positions of headship in most schools.

Inferential Findings on the Influence of Stereotyping on Appointment of Female Teachers as Secondary School Principals

To verify the relationship between stereotyping and appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals, data were further collected on the extent to which societal norms influence appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals (great extent = 3, low extent = 2 and not sure = 1) and the number of female teachers in leadership positions in secondary schools. The results are shown in Table 3:

Table 3: Results of the Extent to which Societal Norms Influence Appointment of Female Teachers as Principals and the Number of Female Teachers in Leadership Positions in Secondary Schools

Extent of the Influence of Societal Norms	Number of Female Teachers in Leadership Positions in Public Secondary Schools
3	5
3	4

3	4
3	4
2	3
2	3
2	3
2	3
1	2
1	2
1	1
1	1
1	1

Source: Field Data (2020)

Table 3 shows that stereotypes which are held either by society or schools influence the appointment or promotion of more female teachers to positions of secondary school headships. These findings further lend credence to the assertions of Chisolm (2013) that the belief that the image of leadership is associated with masculine traits has caused gender imbalance in education administration. In the same vein, these findings lend credence to the assertions of Eagley and Johnson (2008) who indicated that there is perceived women inability to discipline students, supervise other adults, criticize constructively and manage finances. These findings further affirm the fact that socialized roles have become so familiar and become unquestioned norms and hinder female teachers from seeking positions of headship in most schools. These results were subjected to linear regression analysis and the results are shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Linear Regression Analysis Showing Relationship Between the Extent of the Influence of Societal Norms on Appointment of Female Teachers as Principals and the Number of Female Teachers in Secondary School Management

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
	Coefficients				
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.017	.301		.057	.955
Extent of the Influence of Societal Norms on Appointment of Female Teachers as Principals	1.431	.144	.949	9.940	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Number of Female Teachers in Leadership Positions in Secondary Schools

Source: SPSS Generated (2020)

Table 4 shows linear regression analysis which generated a linear model of the form; Number of Female Teachers in Leadership Positions = 0.017 + 1.431Extent of the Influence of Societal Norms on Appointment of Female Teachers as Principals. These results from the linear regression equation indicates

that the coefficient for the extent of influence of societal norms on appointment of female teachers as principals is 1.431. This indicates that, the greater the extent of influence of societal norms, the higher the number of female teachers appointed into leadership positions in secondary schools and is expected to increase by a factor of 1.431. This implies that stereotyping has a significant influence on appointment of female teachers into leadership positions in public secondary schools. In the same token, the value 0.017 indicates that the number of female teachers appointed as school leaders is not only dependent on stereotyping, but also on a set of other factors like their level of training on management skills.

Table 4 also shows that the p-value, 0.000 is less than 0.05, that is, a low p-value ($0.000 < 0.05$). This indicates that there is significant relationship between stereotyping and number of female principals appointed as secondary school principals and those promoted to other positions of school leadership. These results are consistent with the findings of a study conducted in Lower Yatta District and Tharaka Nithi County by David (2013) which generated a p-value of $0.046 < 0.05$. It is thus evident that formal and informal norms as well as unspoken assumptions of a school hinder female teachers from seeking positions of school leadership and thus impede their career mobility. Besides, the belief that the image of leadership is associated with masculine traits has caused gender imbalance in education administration. That is, the perceived women inability to discipline students, supervise other adults, criticize constructively, and manage finances have become so familiar and unquestioned norms which hinder female teachers from seeking positions of headship in most schools.

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Findings on the Influence of Stereotyping on Appointment of Female Teachers as Secondary School Principals

The principals, Staffing Officer of Education and Sub-County Director of Education were also interviewed. They also indicated that societal norms about women influence appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals and their promotion to other leadership positions. These views lend credence affirms that traditional stereotypes label women as socially incongruent as leaders and thus face greater challenges to be integrated into an organization. That is, socialization and sex-role stereotypes act as obstacles to gender balance attainment of management positions in schools. In other words, the interviewees also observed that women have failed to advance to high level leadership positions in schools because they are oversaturated with a cultural message of female inferiority complex.

These views further attest to the fact that formal and informal norms as well as unspoken assumptions of a school hinder female teachers from seeking positions of school leadership and thus impede their career mobility. The belief that the image of leadership is associated with masculine traits has caused gender imbalance in education administration. This points to the fact that there is perceived women inability to discipline students, supervise other adults, criticize constructively, and manage finances. These views indicate that socialized roles have become so familiar and become unquestioned norms and hinder female teachers from seeking positions of headship in most schools

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The study established that gender stereotyping dynamics influence appointment of female teachers as secondary school principals. Societal norms about women and beliefs influence appoint of female teachers as secondary school principals and promotion. Besides, women face numerous challenges since traditional stereotypes label women as socially incongruent as leaders and thus find it difficult to be integrated into an organization. Therefore, women have failed to advance to high level leadership positions in schools because they are oversaturated with a cultural message of female inferiority complex. Formal and informal norms as well as unspoken assumptions of a school hinder female teachers from seeking positions of school leadership and thus impede their career mobility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that there is a lot of negative beliefs and norms which hinder women from seeking management positions in schools. The study thus, recommends that policy makers to come up with a curriculum that include gender issues for purpose of sensitizing the community on the social/cultural barriers which cause gender imbalance in education administration. This may enable women change their self-perception and view themselves as managers just like their male counter-parts.

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