

Assessing the Effectiveness of Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions: A Case of Kafue District

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803033S>

Received: 19 March 2024; Accepted: 30 March 2024; Published: 17 May 2024

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions. The objective was to examine how women in secondary school positions are able to ensure effective leadership. This study was conducted in the selected secondary schools in Kafue district, Lusaka province of Zambia. Participants included the Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers, HoDs as well as teachers. A mixed method design employing both quantitative and qualitative approaches was used. The sample consisted of 595 participants comprising 5 Head teachers, 5 Deputy Head teachers, 20 Heads of Departments and 25 teachers (5 from each selected school). Data was collected through semi-structured questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis guide. The quantitative data was analysed manually using a calculator, while the qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that women supervisors tend to have good relationships with other members of staff in the school. Despite challenges that women encounter in their daily school leadership endeavours, findings on various components, such as personality, experiences and training, emotional intelligence, communication skills and ability, are testimonies that women have the potential to discharge leadership duties efficiently and effectively given the necessary support and resources. Basing on the research findings, the following recommendations are made: (i) the government should promote leadership continuous professional development among the women in secondary schools (ii) the government should re-emphasize on sensitizing the general public and secondary school teachers in particular, on gender stereotype against women in secondary school leadership positions. (iii) There should be gender balance in terms of numbers of teachers in secondary school leadership positions to maximize the benefits and strengths of the leadership styles of each gender.

Key Words: School, Leadership, Effectiveness, Women, Position, Secondary

INTRODUCTION

In most of the literature, it can be observed that the world has been the man's world for a very long time in history. The implication here is that the human activities have been greatly dominated by men. Women had been kept in the background in many spheres. Most cultures were designed to support male domination and suppression of women. This approach implied that women were not allowed to lead or participate in leadership in most of the societies since they were supposed to follow men's leadership. In other words, leadership had carried the notion of masculinity and the belief that men make better leaders than women.

This, unfortunately, has been a phenomenon which cut across all spheres of human life. Even in sectors like

agriculture, women have been found to be the most involved in production, yet do not participate in sharing the benefits arising from their labour as even financing schemes side-line them due to the masculine dominance (Hapompwe, Siwale, & Muleya, 2021).

In terms of leadership particularly, the societal conventions regarding gender and leadership traditionally exclude women, and top leadership is viewed as a masculine domain. Gender inequality has been particularly evident in access to leadership positions. Understanding why women historically and cross-culturally have tended to be under-represented as leaders within human groups and organizations represent a paradox because we lack evidence that women leaders consistently perform worse than men.

A male bias in top positions of leadership is a near cross-culturally universal: in a large sample of historical and contemporary non-industrial societies, formal political leadership positions were exclusive to men. An appreciation of human social and cultural diversity in space and time reveals that many historical forms and functions of human leadership have been male dominated. It is known that women exercise overt influence in collective group-decisions within small-scale human societies. However, even among a few societies in which women did occupy leadership positions they were either less numerous or less powerful than their male counterparts.

With the coming of Human rights in the twentieth century, the gender equality campaign begun to challenge male dominance in all sectors of society, including in the aspect of leadership positions. Significant strides can be said to have been made in advancing gender equality in the occupation of leadership positions. However, preference for men in leadership is still pretty much prevalent. The cultural construction of leadership instigates difference, and this is only now being transformed or contested as women gain access to education and fight for leadership positions. In African societies, it is believed that men lead, and women follow (Ngconggo, 1993, in Grant, 2005). It is not uncommon in rural villages in Africa to find the man literally walking ahead of the woman. Different reasons may be advanced for this but ultimately it illustrates the deeply held notion of leadership as masculine.

Modern societies have come to realise that leadership qualities have nothing to do with one's gender. Previously, that it was believed that leaders were born with certain leadership traits. However, current thinking on leadership assumes that leadership can be taught and learnt hence the many leadership-training programs. Women's academic achievements and roles in society are hardly acknowledged or recognized. This situation has necessitated the call for the empowerment of women by according them their due status, rights and responsibilities and enabling them to participate actively in decision making activities. (De la Rey, 2005).

Though evidence suggests that the proportion of women in leadership is increasing in most parts of the world, doubts about women's leadership skills still exist and some organisations still define and perceive leadership in masculine terms (Belasen & Frank, 2012). It can be observed that in most cases the putting of women in leadership position is still an afterthought for many institutions. However, there has been a demonstration that leadership capabilities have nothing to do with whether a person is a man or woman.

The education sector world over and in Zambia particularly has not been left out in ensuring that women are given chance to occupy leadership positions. Just like many other countries, leadership positions in the Zambian education sector were previously occupied by men. This status quo was necessitated by the fact that the highest appointing authorities have been men and did not fully believe in women leadership. Therefore, gender equality activism and the appending of signatures to international charters on gender equality has yield fruits wherein even if appointment is done on merit, a degree of preference is given to women so that the number of women in leadership position in schools can be improved.

According to Muzumara (2008) the curriculum for science in almost all countries stresses the need to

provide equal opportunities to both boys and girls to be scientifically and technologically literate. In fact, all modern societies require that the ordinary citizens understand scientific principles to function and contribute effectively to their societies that are built on a scientific and technological foundation. This means preparing both boys and girls for their future leadership roles in science and technology and indeed in any field of their study as they become leaders of various institutions where they will be employed.

Chonya-Mfula (2006) conducted a study to find out how many female and male head teachers were in Lusaka province between 2000 and 2005; their professional qualifications; and to compare schools run by female head teachers with those run by male head teachers in terms of effectiveness. The results of the study revealed that some disparities in the number of female and male head teachers still existed, with more male head teachers than their female counterparts. Nonetheless, there was a significant increase in the number of female head teachers. In terms of effectiveness, the study showed that more female head teachers than the male head teachers were said to be more effective in terms of school management (Chonya-Mfula, 2006). However, an observation has been made that an increase of females in secondary school leadership positions, that includes head teachers, deputy head teachers, and Heads of departments, has increased and whether they are effective or not is matter of this study. It is for such reasons that this study is moved to assess the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed methods approach and adopted a narrative design. The study population included teachers who were sampled using maximum variation sampling. Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) state that in this type of sampling, the researcher targets participants who have the same characteristics but have different experiences which are unique to each other. The teachers came from women headed institutions departments and schools. The Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments were also sampled using extreme case purposive sampling. Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024) argue that this calls for the researcher to sample the cases which are successful in that context of the study and those who are the best amongst the whole sample. Data was collected using questionnaire and interview guides while data was analysed using thematic and excel.

Whether ever been supervised by a woman in school leadership position

The respondents were asked to stake whether they had ever been supervised by a woman in secondary school leadership position. The findings were as presented in Figure 1 below.

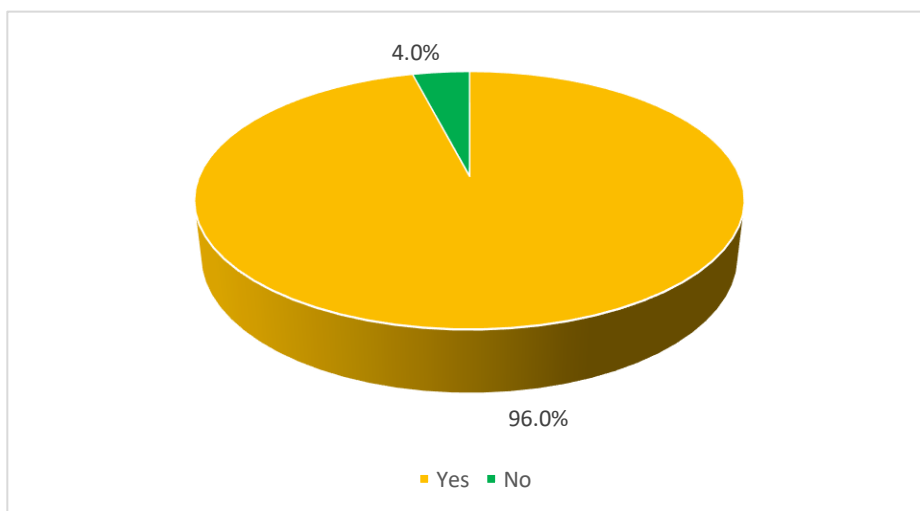


Fig 1: Whether ever been supervised by a woman in school leadership position.

As can be observed from figure 1 above, 24 (96.0%) of the respondents indicated that they had been supervised by women in secondary school leadership positions, whereas one (4.0%) of the respondents indicated that they had never had an opportunity to be supervised by women in secondary school leadership position. The researcher found that these respondents were all in administration and had already served more than 20 years. the reason why they had never been supervised by a woman in school leadership position, was that by the time appointment of women to such positions became common, they were already holding school leadership positions. Further, some of them came to occupy secondary school leadership positions after they had already served as primary school teachers and only upgraded to secondary school degree.

A further question was asked to the respondents to state whether they would recommend for women secondary school leadership. The findings revealed that 80% of the respondents indicated that they would recommend for women secondary school leadership, while 20% said they would not. For the respondents who said they would recommend for women secondary school leadership, they stated that gender did not matter as long as they were qualified and had leadership abilities. Additionally, and in support of the above notion, some respondents interviewed reported the leadership attributes that come with the fact of being a woman in the following manner:

Respondent “A” explained:

“Most women are more in touch with their emotions, making them better leaders than most men”.

Respondent “B” narrated the following

“I have always worked with less intimidation under women leadership than under men leadership”.

Commenting on the same subject, respondent “C” had this to say:

“Most women in secondary school leadership positions have proven more considerate to teachers than men in same positions”.

Further interviews with some respondents who were not in favour of having women leadership in secondary schools revealed the unfavourable experiences they had gone through under the leadership of women in secondary school positions as one reason. During the interviews, the researcher paid particular attention to the respondents’ body language. On thorough observation, the researcher discovered that the respondents who did not recommend for women leadership in secondary school positions were young female teachers. The common reason was that their women supervisors mainly expressed mood swings, making it difficult to work under them. For example, some respondents complained:

One of the respondents said: *“My Head of Department (a woman) shouts anyhow even on small matters”.*

Another reported:

“It has always been difficult to reason with my Head teacher (a woman) because sometimes she loses track of what you are discussing”.

Furthermore, another respondent retorted:

“All women in secondary school leadership I have worked under have been showing favouritism more to male than female teachers”.

Findings from the Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments

Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments were asked to indicate their levels of agreement and disagreement to the statements on various components regarding Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions. The findings were as presented in the subsequent section.

PERSONALITY COMPONENT

Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments were asked to indicate their levels of agreement and disagreement to the statements on personality components of the Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions. Their reactions were as presented in the subsequent section.

Because leadership is viewed as a masculine trait

The study findings revealed the following: 22 (63%) of the respondents “disagreed”; eight (22.9%) “strongly disagreed”; four (11.4%) indicated “not sure”; and one (2.9%) of the respondents “agreed” to the statement that because leadership is viewed as a masculine trait, women will not be viewed as leaders respectively. Considering the percentages of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” in relation to those of “agree” and “strongly agree”, there is a clear indication that gender did not matter in as far as school administration is concerned as long as one is qualified for the position.

Women tend to be less charismatic than male leaders

The findings on this variable revealed the following: Further, 10 (28%) and 21 (60%) “strongly disagreed” and “disagreed” to the statement that women tend to be less charismatic than male leaders, respectively, whereas three (8.6%) and one (2.9%) of the respondents “agreed” and “strongly agreed”, respectively. However, one (2.9%) of the respondents was “not sure”. Generally, considering the percentages of “disagree” and “strongly disagree”, compared with those of “agree” and “strongly agree”, it may be deduced that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions did not tend to be less charismatic than male leaders.

Women often seek others’ opinions before making up their own mind

To the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions often seek others’ opinions before making up their own mind’, the findings revealed the following: 24 (68.5%) “agreed” and four (11.4%) “strongly agreed”. However, five (14.3%) “disagreed” and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”. The general finding here is that Women often seek others’ opinions before making up their own mind.

Women have an advantage over men on honesty and ethical behaviour

In terms of the assertion that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions have an advantage over men on honesty and ethical behaviour, the following findings emerged from the research data: 27 (77.1%) “agreed”; six (17.4%) “strongly agreed”; and two (5.7%) “disagreed”. The general impression, from the above data, is that women school administrators have honesty and ethical behaviour than men.

Women are always confident of being right in making decisions

To the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions are always confident of being right in making decisions’, the findings were as follows: 20 (57.1%) of the respondents “agreed” and two (5.7%) “strongly agreed”. On the other hand, nine (25.7%) “disagreed”, whereas two (5/7%) “strongly disagreed”, and two (5.7%) of the respondents were not sure. Generally, the findings here point to the fact that women

are always confident of being right in making decisions.

Women empower workers to carry out their responsibilities

As regards to the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions empower workers to carry out their responsibilities’ the study findings, revealed the following: 23 (65.7%) of the respondents “agreed”, and five (14.3%) “strongly agreed”. However, six (17.4%) “disagreed” and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”. Considering the percent of “agree” and “strongly agreed”, the general reaffirm the statement.

Women go beyond self-interest for the good of the group

The study findings also revealed the following on the statement, ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions go beyond self-interest for the good of the group’. Of the 35 respondents who took part in the study, 26 (74.3%) “agreed”, and four (11%) “strongly agreed”. Further, three (8.6%) “disagreed” and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”. However, one respondent indicated “unsure”. From the findings above, it appears that respondents agreed that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions go beyond self-interest for the good of the group.

Women show no gender bias in their effectiveness of leadership

In terms of whether Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions showed no gender bias in their effectiveness of leadership, the study findings revealed that the majority, 21 (60.0%) of the respondents “disagreed”, and five (14.3%) “strongly disagreed” on this item. However, 4 (11.4%) “agreed” and three (8.6%) of the respondents “strongly agreed” to the notion. The findings furthermore revealed that two (5.7%) of the respondents were not “sure”. The implications of the above findings are that gender does not matter, but that even women leaders also tend to be bias in their leadership.

Women have high integrity and can be trusted

Pertaining to whether Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions have high integrity and can be trusted, most of the respondents, 25 (71.4%) “agreed”, and six (17.4%) “strongly agreed” to the statement. Nonetheless, three (8.6%) and one (2.9%) of the respondents, “disagreed” and “strongly disagreed”, in that order. From these findings, it can be said that women have high integrity and can be trusted.

Women know well how to use creativity and ingenuity to solve organizational problems than their male counterparts

In terms of the statement asserting that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions know well how to use creativity and ingenuity to solve organizational problems than men leaders, the findings revealed that 22 (62.9%) of the respondents “disagreed”, and two (5.7%) “strongly disagreed to the notion. On the other hand, 10 (28.6%) and one respondent representing (2.9%) “agreed” and “strongly” agreed to the statement. The general finding on this variable is that women did not have an upper hand on this component.

Generally, considering the high positive percentage response from Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments on the various statements on this component, it may be said that most of women leaders do have stable personality components that make them well poised to be effective leaders.

EMOTIONAL COMPONENT

Another area that the study sought to investigate was on emotional component of Women in Secondary

School Leadership Positions. The study findings were as presented in the ensuing section.

Women tend to be confused easily about how they feel

The study findings revealed that the majority, 23 (65.7%) of the respondents “disagreed”, and three (8.6%) “strongly disagreed” to the statement. On the other hand, seven (20.0%) “agreed”, and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly agreed”. Further, one (2.9%) of the total the respondents indicted “not sure”. Considering the percentages of “disagree” and “strongly disagree”, in relation to those of “agree” and “strongly agree”, there is a clear indication that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions tend to be stable about how they feel.

Women always take an action based on their feeling

The findings on this variable have shown that, 16 (45.7%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”, and 15 (42.9%) “strongly disagreed” to the concept. On the other hand, three (8.6%) and two (5.7%) “agreed” and “strongly agreed” respectively.

Generally, the findings on this variable points to the fact that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions always take an action based on their feeling.

Women always make themselves think positively about others

To the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions always make themselves think positively about others’, the findings of this study revealed the following: 22 (62.9%) “agreed” and four (11.4%) “strongly agreed”. On the other hand, five (14.3%) “disagreed” and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”. However, three (8.6%) indicated “not sure”. The general finding here simply positively confirms the above assertion.

Women always think professionally without distracted by their desires

In terms of the assertion that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions always think professionally without distracted by their desires, the following findings emerged from the research data: 17 (48.6%) “agreed”; 15 (42.9%) “disagreed”, and two (5.7%) “strongly disagreed” to the statement. Further, one (2.9%) of the respondents indicated “not sure”. The general impression, from the above data, suggest that women school administrators always think professionally without distracted by their desires.

Women are very affectionate with others

To the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions are very affectionate with others’, the study findings were as follows: 16 (45.7%) of the respondents “strongly agreed”, and 14 (40.0%) “agreed” to the statement. However, four (11.4%) “disagreed”, and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”. The statistics above, bear witness to the fact that women are very friendly with others.

Generally, considering the high positive percentage response from Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments on the various statements on this component, it may be said that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions usually control their emotions in as far as administration of schools is concerned.

Experiences and Training Component

The Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher and Heads of Departments were required to express their views on experience and training component of the Women in secondary school leadership positions. Their responses

were as presented below.

Women are capable of performing effectively in any leadership position

To the statement 'Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions capable of performing effectively in any leadership position', the findings of this variable revealed the following: 24 (68.6%) "agreed" and six (17.4%) "strongly agreed". On the other six (17.4%) "disagreed" and two (5.7%) of the respondents "strongly disagreed". However, three (8.6%) indicated "not sure". Generally, the findings on this variable witness to the fact that women in administration can perform effectively in any leadership position.

Mentoring and training programs can be highly effective when women lead it

In terms of the assertion that mentoring and training programs can be highly effective when women lead it, the following findings emerged from the research data: 20 (74.3%) "agreed" and 12 (34.3%) "strongly agreed" to the statement. However, three (8.6%) of the respondents "disagreed". The high numbers of respondents agreeing to the statement suggests that Mentoring and training programs can be highly effective when women lead it.

Experience makes the women to be more confident as a leader

As regards the statement 'experience makes the women to be more confident as a leader', the findings of this variable revealed the following: 26 (74.3%) "strongly agreed" and six (17.4%) "agreed" to the statement. On the other hand, three (8.6%) of the respondents "disagreed". The general finding on this variable affirms the above assertion that experience makes the women to be more confident as a leader.

Women have power to understand the importance of balance between home and work

In terms of the claim that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions have power to understand the importance of balance between home and work, the following findings emerged from the research data: 28 (80.0%) of the respondents "agreed", and seven (20.0%) further "strongly agreed" to the claim. The general notion from the above data, clearly imply that women school administrators have power to understand the importance of balance between home and work.

Experience makes the women to be more effective in their decision-making process

To the statement 'experience makes the women to be more effective in their decision-making process', the study findings were as follows: 17 (48.6%) of the respondents "agreed", and four (11.1%) "strongly agreed" to the notion. However, the study also revealed that 14 (40.0%) "disagreed" to the statement. Considering the number and percent of those who "agreed" and "strongly agreed", 21 (60.0%) compared with those who "disagreed", 14 (40.0%), the findings on this variable suggests that, truly experience makes the women to be more effective in their decision-making process',

COMMUNICATION COMPONENT

Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments were asked to indicate their levels of agreement and disagreement to the statements on communication components of the Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions. Their reactions were as presented in the subsequent section.

Women have a good command of the language

To the statement 'Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions have a good command of the

language', the findings were as follows: 23 (65.7%) of the respondents "agreed", while 11 (31.4%) "agreed" to the notion. From the findings above, it appears that women do have a good command of the language used in administration.

Women pay attention well to other people's opinion

In terms of the assertion that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions pay attention well to other people's opinion, the following findings emerged from the research data: 20 (57.1%) "agreed" and two (5.7%) of the respondents "strongly agreed". However, 13 (37.1%) "disagreed to the assertion. The general finding from the above data, has an implication that women school administrators do pay attention well to other people's opinion.

Women are good listeners

As regards to the statement 'Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions are good listeners' the following findings emerged: 24 (68.6%) of the respondents "agreed" to the statement. However, nine (25.7%) and two (5.7%) of the respondents "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed", respectively. Considering the percent of the respondents who "agreed", 24 (68.6%), compared with those who "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed", 11 (31.4%) it can be said that women administrators are good listeners.

Women express ideas clearly

As regards the statement 'Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions express ideas clearly', the findings on this variable disclosed the following: 22 (62.9%) "agreed" and two (5.7%) "strongly agreed" to the statement. On the other hand, eight (22.9%) of the respondents "disagreed". Further, 2 (5.7%) indicated "not sure". The general finding on this variable, considering the percent of the respondents who indicated "agree" and "strongly agree", 24 (68.6%) compared with those who indicated "disagree" and "not sure", 12 (28.6%) evidently shows that women in administration do express their ideas clearly. clearly.

Women understand that conflict is handled appropriately through proper communication

Pertaining to the statement 'Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions understand that conflict is handled appropriately through proper communication', it was found that 19 (54.3%) "agreed", whereas 12 (34.3%) "disagreed" to the statement. The findings further showed that two (5.7%) "strongly agreed", while two (5.7%) "strongly disagreed". However, considering the number and percent of those who "agreed" and "strongly agreed", 21 (60.0%) in relation to those who "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed", (40.0%) it is undisputable that women perform well in this area.

Generally, considering the high positive percentage response from Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments on the various statements on this component, is a clear indication that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions do understand that conflict is handled appropriately through proper communication.

Skills and Ability Component

The Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher and Heads of Departments who took part in this study were asked to state their views on **Skills and ability component** of the Women in secondary school leadership positions. Their reactions were as presented in the subsequent section.

Make leadership decision appropriately and properly

As regards the statement 'Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions make leadership decision

appropriately and properly’, the findings on this variable revealed the following: 30 (85.7%) “agreed” to the statement, whereas one (2.9%) of the respondents “disagreed”. The findings further showed one (2.9%) of the respondents “disagreed”. In general, the findings on this item suggest that women do make leadership decision appropriately and properly in their day-to-day school administration.

Demonstrate honesty and ethical behaviour

In terms of the assertion that ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions demonstrate honesty and ethical behaviour’, the study findings revealed the following: 34 (97.1%) “agreed” and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly agreed”. From the above data, there is a clear indication that women demonstrate honesty and ethical behaviour in their school administration.

Women foster good relationship with work associates

To the statement that ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions foster good relationship with work associates the findings of this study were that; 24 (68.6%) “agreed” to the statement, while six (17.1%) “disagreed”. The findings also revealed that and one (2.9%) of the respondents was not “sure”. Indisputably, the above findings affirm the statement that women administrators do foster good relationship with work associates.

Women take responsibility for decision and actions effectively

In terms of the statement that ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions take responsibility for decision and actions effectively, the following findings emerged from the research data: 30 (85.7%) and one (2.9%) of the respondents “strongly agreed”, and “agreed”, respectively. Only one (2.9%) of the respondents “disagreed” to the assertion. considering the weight of “strongly agreed” and “agreed”, compared with “disagree”, it may be safely said that women in school administration do possess this attribute.

Women are more likely to ignore rules and take risks

As regards the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions are more likely to ignore rules and take risks’, the findings on this item revealed the following: 28 (80.0%) “disagreed” and six (17.1%) “strongly disagreed”. However, the findings further showed that one (2.9%) of the respondents “agreed” to the assertion. In general, considering the number and percent of those who indicated “disagree” and “strongly disagree” in comparison with the those who indicated “agree”, the findings on this item simply suggest that women are not likely to ignore rules and take risks in their day-to-day school administration.

Women usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal

To the statement ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal’, it was found that 20 (57.1%) “agreed” and 10 (28.6%) “strongly agreed” to the notion. However, five (14.3%) disagreed to the statement. The general finding on this item, considering the number and percentage of the respondents who indicated “agreed” and “strongly agreed”, 30 (85.7%), compared with those who “disagreed”, five (14.3%), there is a clear indication that women in administration can know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal.

Women are more persuasive than their male counterparts

In terms of the assertion that ‘Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions are more persuasive than their male counterparts’, the study findings revealed that 17 (48.6%) of the respondents “disagreed”, whereas nine (25.7%) “agreed” to the assertion. On the other hand, and six (17.1%) of the respondents “strongly disagreed”, while two (5.7%) “strongly agreed”. From the data above, it can be deduced that

women are more persuasive than their male counterparts in school administration.

Impact of Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions management practices in school on pupils’ academic performance

The Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments were asked to indicate how Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions management practices impacted on the pupils’ academic outcomes. The findings on this variable were as illustrated in Figure 4.2 below shows the findings.

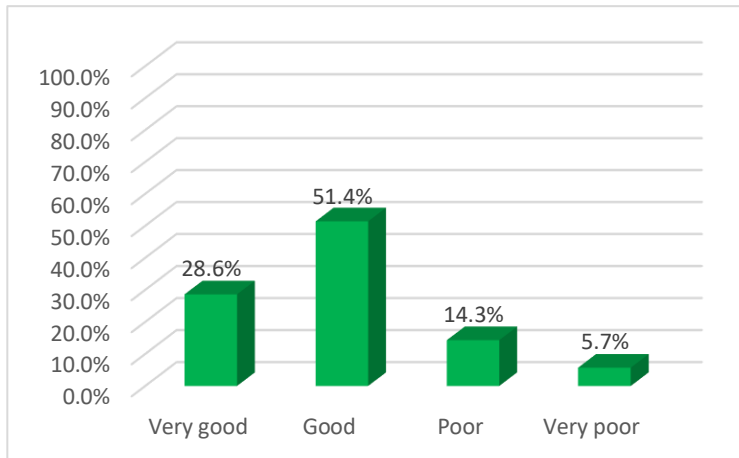


Fig II: Impact of women management practices on pupils’ academic performance

Figure 4.2 above shows that 10 (28.6%) of the respondents indicated that the impact of women management practices on pupils’ academic performance was “very good”, whereas 18 (51.4%) said it was “good”. However, five (14.3%) said it was “poor” and two (5.7%) indicated that it was “very poor”. Common among the reasons given was that women school leadership styles motivated many teachers and pupils to work hard.

To supplement the findings presented in Figure 4.2, interviews were held with various respondents on the matter. The following narratives emerged from the respondents.

Head teacher **X** had this to say on the matter:

“Department where we have women Head of Departments have always been exceptionally influencing good pupils’ academic performance”

Commenting on the same matter, Head of Department **Y** said the following:

“From the time we had a woman Head teacher, pupils’ academic performance has always been improving”.

Similarly, Head of Department **Z** contributed to the deliberation in this way:

“Our Deputy Head (woman) has always been available to ensure effective teaching and learning that has led to good pupils’ academic performance”.

For the respondents who said that the impact of women management practices on pupils’ academic performance was very good, they attributed the success to the fact that women school leadership styles motivated many teachers and pupils to work hard.

As for the respondents who said it was “poor”, they attributed this to the fact that most women in secondary

school leadership positions were never around to monitor teachers due to domestic engagements such as maternity, Mother’s Day, attending to sick children, and the like

Frequency of monitoring Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions

Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency at which Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions monitor teachers and Pupils. The following emerged as presented in Figure 2.

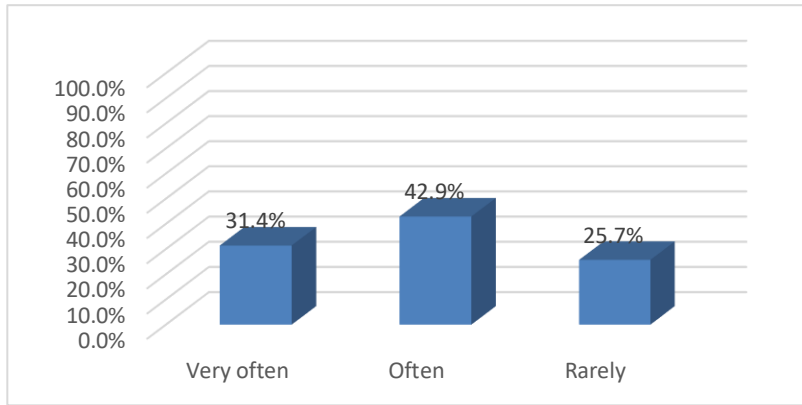


Fig III: Frequency at which Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions monitor teachers and Pupil

As can be seen in Figure 2, most of the respondents indicated that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions monitored teachers and pupils “often”, while 11 (31.4%) said “very often”, and nine (25.7%) said “rarely”.

To Support the information above, two of the respondents who said “often”, narrated the following as presented in the subsequent section. Deputy Head teacher **V** explained in this manner:

“Women supervisors in secondary schools tend to follow laid down rules that includes very frequent monitoring of teachers and pupils”.

Reacting to the same issue, Head of Department **B** reported:

“Many women Head of Departments feel it’s a rare opportunity to be in leadership, therefore they tend to execute their roles well to keep the position”.

However, nine (25.7%) of the respondents indicated that the women in secondary school leadership positions rarely supervised. They argued that the women in leadership experience several challenges such as frequent permissions due to home responsibilities.

FINDINGS FROM THE TEACHER RESPONDENTS

Length in service

As regards to the period the teachers have been in the teaching profession, these are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Teacher respondents’ length in service

Response	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	4	16.0%
6-10	9	36.0%

11-15	6	24.0%
16-20	2	8.0%
21-25	3	12.0%
26 and above	1	4.0%
Total	25	100.0%

Experience with Women Supervisors

During the interviews, the teacher respondents were asked to share their experience of being supervised by a woman Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher or Head of Department. It was found that all the 25 (100%) teacher respondents had an experience of being supervised by a woman in secondary school leadership position. Teacher respondents shared varied experiences of women supervisors. The question regarding the experience with female supervisors was answered together with whether teacher respondents had noticed any difference in relation to leadership effectiveness when it's a man or woman supervisor.

"I literary have not experienced a difference in the way things have been running from the time this school got a woman Head teacher after only men have been heading it since inception," explained teacher F.

"From the time we got a female Head of Department, our department has been characterised with motivation and improved results," said teacher X. "I always wished to be supervised by a man because I thought women could not be effective leaders in secondary school. However, I have been proven wrong after having been under the woman Head teacher for three years now. She is very effective", explained one experienced teacher respondent.

Emotional component

Every effective leader exhibits a great deal of emotional intelligence. Teacher respondents were asked about what they thought regarding the emotional intelligence of women in secondary school leadership positions. It was found that 76% of the teacher respondents explained that they had not experience an emotional challenge from their female supervisors. However, they referred to some instances of some emotional outburst but also commented on their understanding that although women could be emotional it does not hinder them from discharging their leadership effectively.

"The Deputy Head teacher once talked to me like her little daughter and I expressed my displeasure for such a treatment. Ever since, our professional relation improved and we work very well", recounted Female teacher R.

"My Head of Department quickly notices when I am happy or not. She will always get concerned especially when things are not alright. Sometimes, she even visits homes of teachers in problems", said teacher M.

Intellectual and creativity component

The intellectual and creative abilities enable leaders to make logical decisions that base on the demands of the context. From the interviews conducted on teacher respondents, the researcher discovered that 89% of the respondents had confidence in the logical decisions their female supervisors made. Further explanations revealed that ability to make logical decisions predisposed women in secondary school leadership positions to be effective.

The data collected also revealed that 72% of the teacher respondents thought women were too reserved to take risks that required a lot of creativity in leadership. Some teacher respondent recounted incidents where their female supervisors referred them to what the guidelines say about how certain things were supposed to

be done.

“We sometime do engage in a highly intellectual discourse with my Head of Department and getting from her arguments just makes me more convinced that she is an intellectual,” recounted male teacher **H**.

“Our head teacher’s common song is ‘let’s do the right thing’ and what she refers to as a right thing is what the rules say. This has been closing many opportunities to explore creativity in our school,” recounted male teacher **P**.

Social and Moral Component

The social and moral element of a leader refers to how well a leader relates to the people under his/her leadership as well as the nature of reputation built. From the data collected, it was discovered that 94% of the teacher respondents were for the view that women in secondary school leadership positions had exhibited good social skills that kept people they lead to relate well. Further, 100% of the teacher respondents indicated that women in leadership positions had exhibited moral standings that made them less liable to leadership scandals.

“The social and distress funds have been booming with the coming of the female Head teacher at our school. Much better social events have been organized lately as well as much better help has been rendered to distressed teachers”, explained teacher **J**.

The interaction of our Head of Department with teachers in the department is more profession after she took over from a male Head of Department who was reportedly sleeping with student teachers”, said teacher **Y**.

“I have never heard of a scandal from any of my female supervisors. This makes me tend to trust that female supervisors would be less likely to be corrupt” recounted teacher **P**.

Training and Experience

The researcher found that all the 89% of the teacher respondents thought appointments of women into secondary school leadership positions were done on merit. This implied that such women leaders had both required training and experience. The researcher conducted a document analysis and confirmed that all the women in leadership positions in all the selected schools had at least minimum qualifications for the positions. The 11% of the teacher respondents who thought some appointments of women to secondary school leadership positions were not done on merit referred to lack of experience of some of those leaders.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This chapter presented the findings with regards to the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions. It examined the emotional, intellectual and creativity, social and moral, as well as training and experience of women who occupied leadership positions in secondary schools. The Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers, Heads of Departments and teachers were the sources of data.

The findings on the emotional component were that women were considered very emotional in general. However, the same being emotional is used to the positive aspect such as being sympathetic or concerned about teachers and pupils. This played a role in the motivation of teachers and pupils to work hard as they felt recognized and important, thereby translating to achievement of educational objectives.

With regards to the intellectual and creative abilities, it was found that women in secondary school

leadership positions were no more or less intellectual than men. Respondents expressed to have experienced no significant difference in the way logical decisions were made by women supervisors. The only difference was on the creative aspect where it was found that women did not take risks to be creative at the expense of the rules. On the positive side, this makes women in leadership position to be more law abiding; on the negative it limits opportunities to be creative in particular contexts.

The findings on the social and moral aspects of women in secondary school leadership positions suggested that women leaders were prone to creating a motherly environment at workplaces. It was also found that most women leaders exhibited high moral standards which contributed to gaining respect as leaders. In a school arrangement, this positively influenced relationship between leaders and teachers and pupils.

On the training and experience, it was found that women in secondary school leadership positions had at least the minimum qualifications and experience. This predisposed them to execute their leadership roles effectively.

Generally, considering the large number and percentage of positive responses from Deputy Head teachers and Heads of Departments on the various statements on this component, there is a clear indication that Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions do understand that conflict is handled appropriately through proper communication.

The Effectiveness of Women in Secondary School Leadership Positions

The presence of women in secondary school leadership positions was very visible. In all the schools that were studied in this research, there were women occupying various school leadership positions. This phenomenon had never been the case in the past because then it was only common to find women in primary school leadership positions. Such a discovery is in line with Chonya-Mfula (2006) who discovered that an increase of females in secondary school leadership positions, that includes head teachers, deputy head teachers, and Heads of department, has increased. The effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions was assessed in their emotional, intellectual and creativity, and social and moral components. Each of these components affect the way the school is run and eventually impact on the school output.

Emotional components

The control of emotions is essential for leadership effectiveness. The findings on the emotional component regarding the women in secondary school leadership positions were that women were considered very emotional in general. This is in line with the findings from Shimalungwe's (2016) study that the challenges the female Head Teachers faced included: negative attitudes from stakeholders; lack of confidence; uncontrolled emotions and dealing with role conflict.

This study found that all participants in the study were for the view that it is not uncommon for women to have intense emotions that can be negative or positive. However, the data collected revealed that by the time women are getting to secondary school leadership positions, they tend to have learnt how to manage their emotions. For example, it was found that they would channel their emotions into positive outputs such being sympathetic or concerned about teachers and pupils. This played a role in the motivation of teachers and pupils to work hard as they felt recognized and important, thereby translating to achievement of educational objectives.

Data collected in the study revealed that certain emotional elements in women in secondary school leadership positions predisposed them to being effective leaders. For example, they tend to be very considering and often seek other teachers' opinions before making up their own mind, or tend to be less

charismatic than male leaders. These emotional attributes have potential for women to build teamwork among the teachers since they would create room for others to participate in the decision making.

Additionally, it was found that because women were aware about their being naturally emotional, they eventually became aware of their emotions. This aspect of women in secondary school leadership positions also predisposes them to be able to pay attention well to other people's opinion. With that emotional attribute, women in secondary school leadership positions were reported to have been able to win the hearts of many teachers and pupils for the betterment of the school performance.

Intellectual and creative abilities

With regards to the intellectual and creative abilities, it was found that women in secondary school leadership positions were no more or less intellectual than men. Respondents expressed to have experienced any significant difference in the way logical decisions were made by women supervisors. This agrees with Msila (2013) who discovered that leadership differences between men and women are very minimal despite the society's stereotypes and often misguided pronouncements.

The research also showed that women in secondary school leadership positions intellectually engaged the people they lead. This fundamentally dispelled traditional stereotype that women use their emotions in reasoning. Teachers who were supervised by women supervisors recounted how intellectually organised where these women leaders. It was found that women in secondary school leadership positions were reported to usually know ahead of time how people will respond to a new idea or proposal.

Additionally, a comparative analysis of pupils' academic performance revealed that secondary schools or departments lead by women are as competitive as those lead by men. This is also in line with Dotzler (1993) who discovered that there was no significant difference in the results of learner outcome regardless of the gender of people in school leadership positions. She contended that the literature review, results of the interviews and personal experience validate women's effective leadership skills and abilities.

To validate on the intellectual and creative abilities of women in secondary school leadership positions, it is worth mentioning here that in most of the schools and departments lead by women, there were study guide programs for pupils. Creative school leader devices methods that encourage learners to reflect, think and do rather than reproduce from rote memory are expected to be adopted and customised to the needs of individual learners (Chishiko, 2018).

The only difference was on the creative aspect where it was found that women did not take risks to be creative at the expense of the rules. On the positive side, this makes women in leadership position to be more law abiding; on the negative it limits opportunities to be creative in particular contexts.

Social and Moral Component

The findings on the social and moral aspects of women in secondary school leadership positions suggested that women leaders were prone to creating a motherly environment at workplaces. The Ministry of Education (2013) views the school head as the pivot of the school community through whom other school leaders draw inspiration to create a conducive workplace.

Participants in the research indicated that they had observed and experienced well developed social skills in their female supervisors. Comparatively, women supervisors were cited to have exhibited unique social skills such as creating a less intimidating working environment than most men school leaders. For example, respondents cited women's positive attitudes towards organizing social events within the school such as supporting staff with ailments, contributing towards weddings and supporting the bereaved members of

staff. These are very important social skills that motivate teachers to provide quality education to learners.

The findings from the research also revealed that most women leaders exhibited high moral standards which contributed to gaining respect as leaders. This discovery is in line with Ndlovu (2017) who observed that successful implementation and institutionalization of reform requires leadership at the school level to promote adaptations of school processes and systems, as well as cultures, attitudes and behaviours. Effective school leadership go beyond student quality learning outcome and create a healthy link between the school and the community. Therefore, the discovery that most women in secondary school leadership positions exhibit high moral standings within and outside the school is indicative of positive influence that has on the relationship between leaders and teachers and pupils.

Training and Experience

In this study, training implied the minimum professions qualifications as well as other leadership-related training. This study on the assessment of the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions discovered that these women had at least the minimum qualifications and experience. The minimum qualification for appointment into HOD, Deputy Head teacher and Head teacher in a secondary school is a secondary education degree (Kukano & Linenga, 2023). This study established that all the women in secondary schools and departments of selected schools at least had a first degree in secondary education. Some had either already acquired master's degrees or were studying to obtain them.

Having relevant qualifications is an essential contributing factor to effective leadership of any teacher in school leadership position. This study found that all the women HODs had at least a degree in relevant subject taught in such a department. For example, mathematics department female HODs had major in mathematics, Languages department HOD had major in Languages, and the like. Further, it was found that women Head teachers and Deputy Head teachers had at least secondary education degree in any teaching subject. Therefore, this predisposed them to execute their leadership roles effectively.

Kukano, Hapompwe, Siwale, and Chanda (2020) emphasize the importance of skilled human resources and capacity building among administrators if academic performance is to be enhanced in secondary schools. They stress that it is not enough to have facilities such as desks, computers, buildings etc but with no trained personnel to effectively implement teaching and learning especially at administrative levels.

On the experience aspect, the researcher found that all the women who occupied secondary school leadership positions had sufficient experience to lead a school or a department. Chishiko (2018) asserted that the priority focus of the school leader is to ensure that learners perform well. Leadership requires exhibiting certain qualities and abilities that can allow learners to achieve the goals.

This study established that women HODs served as teachers for some years before being appointed to such positions. Further, women Deputy Head teachers had served as HODs and women Head teachers had served as Deputy Head teachers. The ascension of these women through rank and file is indicative of their appointment on merit. This also revealed that they would be as effective as the education system requires.

CONCLUSIONS

Deriving inference from the premises established after the data collected, presented and analysed on the assessment of the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions in Kafue district, the researcher can conclude that there are various factors that indicate that such women are effective. It dispels various traditional misconceptions about women's ability to take leadership in essential organisations such as a secondary school.

Secondary school teachers have very good experiences of women as their supervisors as opposed to misconceptions that women in leadership positions tend to be difficult. Basing on what was found, it can be concluded that women in secondary school leadership positions have a well-balanced emotional, social, intellectual and creativity approaches as well as relevant qualifications and experience to be effective leaders.

Basing on the findings with regards to emotional intelligence required for effective leadership, it can be concluded that women in secondary school leadership positions have the mastery of their emotion. This implies that despite being known more emotional than men, this does not hinder them from discharging their leadership duties effectively. If anything, they tend to channel their emotions to positive use such as showing great concert, care and sympathy which can eventually lead to effective leadership.

From the socially aspect of women in secondary school leadership position, the researcher can conclude that they tend to see a school as a family in which family values such as love, support, sympathy should be encouraged. As such, women leaders tend to create a community within the school where teachers are encouraged to work more as a team than as just individuals. For example, they really encourage teachers' support of one another during social and distress times such as weddings or funerals. This predisposes those women in secondary school leadership positions to execute their duties effectively.

Another essential aspect of effective leadership is the leader's intellectual and creativity abilities. From the findings obtain in this research, it can be concluded that women in secondary school leadership positions exhibited intellectual abilities required of the leader in the same way men do. In other words, the study established that there's no difference in the way women leaders made logical decisions in comparison to men leaders. Therefore, the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership in terms of how they make logical decision can be on the advantage or disadvantage side.

However, the researcher also discovered that women's creativity in making independent decisions can easily be hindered by their not being prone to taking risks. This study suggests that because women don't take many risks, they tend to be law abiding as leaders and this makes them perform their leadership duties according to the rules and regulation.

The researcher also concludes that there's not cause for doubting the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions because such women have required qualifications and experience. This implies that appointment of women to secondary school leadership positions have not been just in a bid to increase the number of women in those positions, but they get appointed on merit. Therefore, pupils' academic performance in schools or departments was never dependent on whether it's a woman or not but on individual's leadership strategies that come with qualification as well as experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the research findings established and subsequent conclusions, below are the researcher's recommendations on the effectiveness of women in secondary school leadership positions:

- Government needs to provide continued support for the women into secondary school leadership positions.
- There should be leadership trainings tailored to promote professional development among the women in secondary schools.
- Government should re-emphasize on sensitizing the public and secondary school teachers in particular on gender stereotype against women in secondary school leadership positions.
- There should be gender balance in terms of numbers of teachers in secondary school leadership

positions to maximize the benefits of the strengths of the leadership styles of each gender.

- Female secondary school teachers need to support each other so as to foster effectiveness of their counterparts in school leadership positions. Implement leadership development programs specifically designed for women in secondary school leadership positions. These programs should focus on building skills such as strategic planning, decision-making, conflict resolution, and team management (Sengela, 2024).
- Mentorship and Networking Opportunities: Establish mentorship programs where experienced women leaders can provide guidance and support to aspiring leaders. Encourage networking opportunities for women in leadership roles to share best practices, exchange ideas, and build a support system.
- Gender-Sensitive Policies and Practices: Review and revise existing policies and practices to ensure they are gender-sensitive and promote equal opportunities for women in leadership positions. This may include the recruitment and promotion processes, workload

Recommendations for further research

- Effects of women in secondary school leadership positions on the pupils' academic performance.
- Challenges facing women in secondary school leadership positions.
- The role of women leaders in the creation of a conducive secondary school working environment.

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