



Advancing Women in Leadership

JOURNAL

VOLUME 42, 2023
ISSN 1093-7099

EDITORS: BEVERLY J. IRBY, NAHED ABDELRAHMAN, BRAD BIZZELL, AND JULIA BALLENGER
ASSISTANT EDITOR: JORDAN DONOP

Full Length Research Paper

WOMEN TEACHERS IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: A CASE OF COMMUNITY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RURAL TANZANIA

Joyce Mbepera

Joyce Mbepera: Lecturer at The University of Dodoma, College of Education, Department of Educational Management and Policy Studies. joymbep@gmail.com/joymbep@yahoo.com

Accepted April 5, 2023

This study sought to determine the barriers to women teachers' access to top leadership positions in rural community secondary schools in Tanzania. The study adopted a qualitative research approach involving 77 participants [7 women heads of schools, 68 women teachers, 1 Regional Education Officer (REO) and 1 District Education Officer (DEO)]. The methods of data collection comprised interview and focus group discussion. The results show that there were only a few women in leadership positions in rural community secondary schools due to lack of support from the family to the societal level. Furthermore, poor working environment, perceived witchcraft and superstitious beliefs scared women teachers of taking leadership posts in rural areas. The study recommends sensitisation programmes on gender equality. Such sensitisation programmes should be incorporated into the education curriculum right from the low level of education to make children aware of the importance of having women leaders in secondary schools. Teamwork is also needed to unlock the hegemonic culture that dominates Tanzanian societies and restricts the number of women in leadership.

Keywords: *women leadership, under-representation, rural, community schools, Tanzania.*

Women are still under-represented in leadership positions in almost all sectors (Morley, 2013). For instance, the number of women in decision-making positions is still very low worldwide (Ingham, 2022; UNICEF, 2022). Globally, in the education sector, nearly 5 out of 10 secondary school teachers were women, and unfortunately, they are less presented in leadership (UNICEF, 2022). In the UK, 63% of teaching staff in secondary schools were women, and only 40% were head teachers (DfE, 2022). In Niger, women teachers were 58% in 2020/2021, while women leaders were only 17% (UNICEF, 2022). UNICEF further noted that in Zambia, women's workforce in primary schools was 59%, yet only 21% were leaders in 2021. In 2020/2021, women school head teachers in Ethiopia only comprised 12% of primary schools and 7% at the secondary level (Education Development Trust, 2020). Similarly, in Rwanda, only 42.4% of women were heads of secondary and 34.5% were head teachers of primary schools in 2011 (Uwamahoro, 2011). In Kenya only 12.8% and 27.3% were female heads of schools in primary and secondary schools, respectively, in 2011 (Chonge, 2015).

Tanzania is not different from other countries. In 2006, only 12.7% of women heads were in secondary schools (Bandiho, 2009). In 2010, the number of women teachers was 48.8%, yet

only 18% of them were heads of schools (Hungu, 2010). By 2013, the overall percentage of women leaders in secondary schools increased slightly to 18.7% in Tanzania (ADEM, 2013), yet there was an uneven increase in all areas. For instance, women heads of schools in secondary schools in Iringa Municipal was only 34.8% in 2022 (District Educational Office, 2022). In Dar es salaam Region, the percentage of women heads of schools was (48.7%) and male heads of schools was (51.3%) in 2013 (ADEM, 2013) which is almost equal. This trend is possibly caused by the status of Dar es Salaam as being a major city in Tanzania, where many women prefer to live with their husbands. Hungu reported in 2010 that the Southern Highlands Zone of Tanzania had no woman heads of schools despite an equal number of women and male teachers.

Although the government has made efforts to increase women in different sectors across the country in Tanzania, women leaders in education still remain few (Bhalalusesa & Mboya, 2003; Mbepera, 2022). Literature revealed that advancement of women into senior leadership positions was limited with challenges encountered in the execution process such as organizational constrained efforts of attaining gender equality in appointment of school heads (Dlanjwa, 2018; Mbepera, 2017).

Nonetheless, research on women's underrepresentation in the educational sector remains scanty and speculative in Sub-Saharan Africa (Mulkeen et al. 2004; Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006). In Tanzania, studies on women's leadership (Bandiho, 2009; Bhalalusesa & Mboya, 2003; Lindsay et al. 2017; Mluma, 2005) have not majored in women's leadership in rural context and on obstacles faced women advancement to leadership positions in community secondary schools. Similarly, most of these researches were conducted more than ten years ago. As a result, the researcher deemed it necessary to conduct the present research to discover obstacles that bar women teachers from attaining leadership positions in the education sector in rural areas in this era of globalisation. The findings of the study close the gap of knowledge on obstacles to women's educational leadership in developing countries. This study focused on rural community secondary schools because they comprise the majority and are mostly located in remote rural areas. The study specifically answered the following question:

What bars women teachers from accessing leadership posts in rural community secondary schools in Tanzania?

Literature Review

The problem of underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in organisations is caused by individual, socio-cultural and economic factors (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). The situation is worse in rural areas (Oluoch, 2006). The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions strongly relates to gender stereotypes and societal culture because leadership is a culturally bound practice (Dimmock & Walker, 2006). That is, the culture shapes the men's and women's behaviours within a society, which ascribes the roles of men and women. This implies that society categorises males' and women's roles which creates opportunities for men and women, in turn, to have access to different opportunities, such as involvement in leadership (Dimmock & Walker, 2006). The roles ascribed by society control women more than men. In other words, women have less access to different opportunities than men. In that regard, women are regarded as home and family carers, while males are perceived and trained to be office workers, breadwinners, and heads of families (Fagenson, 1990a). Researchers observe gender-based socialisation, fear of failure, limited mobility, lack of ambitions and interrupted career development due to childbearing and rearing roles as among the internal barriers hindering women from becoming leaders (Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006). The research shows that women teachers have greater satisfaction in teaching, and they are, therefore, interested more in teaching than being in leadership (Iqbal et al., 2013). Women are also unwilling to apply for leadership posts (Gaus, 2011).

The study conducted in the United States of America revealed that some women teachers were satisfied with the leadership of their heads (Young & McLeod, 2001). Hence, they wish to refrain from taking leadership posts in future. This implies that women teachers become less active in leadership issues by

depending on men to lead them. In England, women preferred taking care of children at home to being leaders, an act which restricted their career development (Moreau et al., 2005). In Turkey, because of the patriarchal system, Celikten (2009, p. 173) reported that women prefer teaching because it allows them to continue motherhood and femininity. This implies that women teachers perceive balancing family and leadership responsibilities as challenging. Hence, they prefer teaching to leadership.

In Tanzania, the research report that women do less acquire leadership posts because of many family tasks, culture, and the patriarchal system (Bandiho, 2009; Bhalalusesa & Mboya, 2003; Lindsay et al., 2017; Mbepera, 2022). The researcher assumes that few women are in leadership positions in rural Tanzania because of socialisation and the hegemonic culture obstacles, which do not value women's contribution. Therefore, with this handful of empirical evidence, this study aimed to determine the obstacles to women teachers' occupation of leadership posts in rural Tanzania.

Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Gender Organisational System (GOS) approach. This approach is centred on women's leadership advancement (Fagenson, 1990a). The approach assumes that the involvement of women in top leadership is influenced by the interaction among the individuals, societal and institutional systems in which the organisation operates. Rowley & Yukongdi (2009) hold that this interaction may lead to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the education sector. This approach incorporates the assumptions and arguments of the gender-centred and organisational structure perspectives (Fagenson, 1990b). The GOS approach argues that an individual and their organisation cannot be understood separate from the society (culture) in which they work. Women are few in decision-making positions due to internal factors from socialisation. The GOS perspective suggests that women's internal factors resulting from socialisation and organisational structure impact and shape their actions and behaviours at work (Fagenson, 1990b). Furthermore, the GOS perspective considers that the organisation's culture, rules, stereotypes, policies, and ideology hinder women from becoming senior leaders (Fagenson, 1990a). Therefore, the organisational culture shapes women's behaviour, and hence, many chances are given to men (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013; Mbepera, 2017). It insists that principles and knowledge imparted to women from childhood influence them positively or negatively to take top leadership posts (Fagenson, 1990a). According to GOS, women are instilled with individual ambition, fewer aspirations for power, kindness, unselfishness, sympathy, submission, respect, inactiveness, irrationality, and a great concern for their personal lives (Hoyle & McMahan, 1986). Women are socialised to put more effort into their lives and to value peers more than their careers. This study assumes that a few women's leadership presences are caused by factors that are within women, the society surrounding women and organisations where women

work. Therefore, this has a significant influence on women's representation in leadership. Societal beliefs, gender role expectations, stereotypes concerning the role of men and women, and cultural values may affect structures, institutional practice, and women's behaviour at work.

Methods

The qualitative approach was used to collect in-depth information on experience, feelings, and women's behaviour in leadership in community secondary schools. Non-probability sampling technique was used to select women heads of schools (Creswell, 2009). The study involved seven female heads of schools, 68 women secondary school teachers, one Regional Educational Officer (REO) and one District Educational Officer (DEO), totalling 77 participants. The women heads of schools were purposively selected with the expectation that they could reveal information about their experiences as leaders. They were also expected to reveal the obstacles they encountered on the way to top leadership positions. They are involved because they also recommend teachers to District Education Office (DEO's office) for appointment to leadership positions. Since the district had only seven women heads of schools, all of them were involved in the study. The Regional Education Officer (REO) and District Education Officer (DEO) were purposively selected because their roles and positions in education equip them with crucial information about this study. DEO and REO were accountable for all educational issues in the district and region, respectively. They also recommend and appoint the heads of schools. Their experience, feelings, perceptions, and views on the participation of women in leadership were essential for this study. Since there was one DEO in the district and one REO only in the region, both were involved in the study. Moreover, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the teachers due to their roles and working experiences. Women teachers were included in the sample of this study because they are the ones recommended by the heads of schools for leadership positions. However, only women teachers with more than three years of career experience were involved in the study.

The interviews were conducted for heads of schools, REO and DEO. The interviews took place in their offices to ensure their freedom and flexibility. The interviews lasted about an hour and were tape-recorded after seeking the respondents' consent. In addition, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were conducted with teachers to obtain balanced and detailed information and validate them. The FGDs were conducted in the classrooms and lasted less than one and a half hours. During the discussion, the final agreement by all participants was regarded as their data. The FGDs were audio-tape recorded, and the notes were taken to ensure no important information was left out. All the participants willingly agreed to participate in the discussions and were informed about their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any bother.

The procedure for analysing the interview and FGDs data was adapted from (Creswell (2009), which involved the following steps: First, organising and preparing the field information. This

step encompassed the activities such as transcribing raw data, typing field notes and classifying and arranging raw data based on its source. The second step involved repeatedly reading through the transcribed data to obtain general information about the respondents' views and reflecting on the overall meaning. The third step involved a comprehensive analysis of the coding procedure. In this step, the transcribed data were categorised into sections and subsections with the same theme (Creswell, 2009). The fourth step involved the production of the description and themes for analysis using the codes. The fifth step involved the presentation of the description and themes in terms of qualitative story or description. Creswell (2009) reports that the best means to present qualitative information is to use the story passage to present results obtained from the analysis.

Findings

This section presents the findings in response to the research question, which aimed to find out the obstacles to women teachers' access to leadership posts in rural community secondary schools. The section is organised based on themes that emerged during data collection as follows.

Women Teachers' Satisfaction with Being Classroom Teachers

The interviewed heads of schools, REO and DEO, believed that women teachers were more satisfied with their teaching careers than being leaders. Similarly, the women teachers in FGDs supported that women teachers were more contented to remain classroom teachers than being leaders because they wanted to be free from leadership responsibilities and use most of their time in taking care of their families. One of the women teachers had the following to say in one of the FGD sessions:

In my life, I do not think of being a leader. I am content with remaining a normal teacher, as I am free from leadership responsibilities and have time to take care of my family.

This statement was supported by DEO, who reported:

Some women teachers are not interested in being leaders because they avoid leadership-related stress and spend more time on child-rearing.

During the FGDs, teachers reported further that some women teachers perceived leadership as being against their culture. They reported patriarchal system hindered them from aspiring to become leaders even though they were interested. In support of the argument, one-woman teacher stated:

Patriarchy and religion are problematic. Women may be interested in leadership but are hindered by the patriarchal system instilled from the family to the community level. It seems they do not like leadership responsibilities, but deep inside, they do. The problem is the patriarchal system.

The findings of the study suggest that women teachers remain classroom teachers because of family responsibilities, culture,

and the patriarchal system, which strongly contributes to women teachers' negative attitudes towards leadership positions in secondary schools.

Women Teachers' Acceptance of Gender Imbalance in Education

Heads of schools, REO and DEO, through interviews and FGDs with women teachers, revealed that some women teachers accepted gender imbalance in education due to the culture and patriarchal system. They further reported that society still believed men had a greater responsibility for their families and should attain higher education. At the same time, women should take care of their families. Women teachers revealed that their male counterparts were breadwinners and should be more educated and become leaders. One-woman teacher commented the following during the focus group discussion:

Women accept remaining with a low level of education because they believe that men are culturally responsible for meeting the family needs and thus are the ones who should be more educated for the benefit of the family.

The women teachers further pointed out that society expected men to be breadwinners and women only to supplement what men earn. Such attitude made women unwilling to strive for a higher level of education which would qualify them to be leaders. One teacher commented:

Most males are breadwinners; hence they are dissatisfied with being ordinary teachers. They struggle to develop their careers to acquire the ability to support their families.

The women teachers added that society does not value highly educated women because they believed educated women tend to disobey their spouses. The attitude made some women teachers contented with their low levels of education. A woman teacher remarked:

You know, we remain uneducated because society has a negative attitude toward highly educated women, particularly if you earn more money than your husband. It is believed that more educated women are less respectful to their husbands.

The REO, DEO and heads of schools also pointed out the tendency of women teachers to maintain their low level of education. The REO reported that some women teachers who married rich husbands do not see the need to develop their careers. He had the following opinion:

Most women teachers married to rich men are less concerned about their career development. They are satisfied with their husbands' income and fail to use available opportunities to develop their careers.

Therefore, women teachers retain a low level of education not because they like it but because they are limited by their culture and society, which socialise them to value the family more than a career.

Women Teachers' Tendency to Decline Leadership Appointments

Heads of schools, REO and DEO and women teachers reported that some women teachers would decline appointment posts in rural schools for various reasons. The REO had the following comment regarding the women teachers' tendency to decline taking up appointment posts:

Some women teachers reject appointment posts when they are appointed and located in rural and remote schools. This discourages us from appointing them. It is a waste of time and resources as they tend to decline the posts as soon as they are appointed.

Reasons given by the respondents for the women teachers' tendency to decline taking up posts in rural areas are given in the following subsections.

Poor Transport Facilities

Participants reported the poor transport facilities as one of the causes for posts' rejection by some women teachers in rural areas. The motorcycles, which constitute the significant means of transport in rural areas, were inconvenient for most women teachers due to their socialisation. Women feared using motorcycles frequently due to recurrent accidents involving motorcycles. One-woman head of school commented:

We mostly use motorcycles to travel to town. I had accidents involving motorcycles. People are dying due to accidents. It is also risky travelling through the forest. So, we get scared since we do not have reliable alternative means of transport, which causes some women teachers to decline the position.

DEO also conveyed a similar view regarding the use of motorcycles for transport in rural areas:

Reliable transport is a challenge in this area. Women teachers are more challenged by the transport means from rural to town. Motorcycles are often used to travel through the thick forest. It is too risky for women considering that they are always ridden by young men.

Therefore, the findings revealed the serious transport challenge among women teachers and heads of schools in rural areas as one of the obstacles for women to accept leadership posts.

Lack of Important Social Services

Heads of schools, teachers and DEO reported the lack of important social services, such as safe and clean water, housing, reliable health care and electricity, among the causes for women to reject leadership positions. One-woman head of school commented the following during the interview:

I refused the post in this area at once because the area lacks important social services such as clean and safe water. I only took the post when all my children were grown up and lived on their own in boarding schools.

Otherwise, I would not have managed to live with them in this environment without water and poor housing.

Another head of school commented:

The little water we get is neither safe nor clean because people and animals share wells and boreholes providing seasonal water. The women teachers with children who are not native need to tolerate living in this unsafe environment. So, some women teachers decline to take leadership posts in this area.

The teachers and heads of schools also indicated that living and working in rural areas exposed women teachers to dangers and rape since the rural area is less secure. A woman teacher observed:

Imagine the environment of my school (the school's name is mentioned). It is so harsh. There is only one teacher's house. Sometimes, there is rape at night... walking for more than 10 kilometres fighting for unclean water which is shared with cattle. It is so discouraging.

The findings indicate that the cause of rejecting the rural environment was not within women themselves but caused the poor provision of important social services such as water.

Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Superstitious Beliefs

All respondents reported that women teachers were scared of taking posts in rural areas because they feared being bewitched. One of the heads of the schools commented:

Due to sorcery, women cannot easily accept taking up leadership positions in these rural areas. Imagine that sometimes you cannot sleep the whole night. You may hear voices in your room, yet you cannot see anyone making such noises.

The REO also had the following views regarding witchcraft practices in rural areas:

Teachers reject the posts fearing witchcraft practices. Many people in this area believe in witchcraft. Some teachers complain about finding themselves sleeping outside their houses when they wake up in the morning.

Regarding the same idea, one of the women teachers had the following observation:

Working in this area is like a punishment because we sometimes experience things which are not obvious, terrible, and fearful.

Heads of schools and teachers added that they reported the witchcraft incidences to the top district educational leaders. They also talked to the villagers through the meeting about such behaviours. The villagers were alerted that all teachers would be transferred to urban areas and that their schools would remain without teachers. The teachers reported that the meetings helped to minimise the witchcraft incidents, although they still existed.

Appointment of School Heads

The participants reported that the guidelines for appointing heads of schools were unfair. The women teachers and REO revealed that the processes of appointing heads of schools were based on religious belief, nepotism, and sex rather than the teachers' credentials. One of the women teachers remarked:

You know that most leaders appoint and recommend school heads based on their interests, like home mates, friends and same-religion members, rather than one's qualifications. All these are based on the fact that there is no advertisement for the post, no interview, no competition and a straightforward guide.

REO had the following comments in support of the argument in question:

It is a waste of time and resources to appoint someone who eventually declines to take the headship position. We mainly appoint male teachers who rarely refuse the post.

The REO, DEO and heads of schools further reported the lack of a specific gender-based appointment policy for appointing heads of schools. They articulated that the current Educational Training Policy of 2014 does not explicitly support an equal representation of women in leadership positions in secondary schools.

Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings based on the barriers to women teachers' access to leadership posts in rural community secondary schools.

Literature indicates that women teachers were happier to remain normal teachers than being heads of schools (Iqbal et al., 2013). Similarly, the current study found that women teachers prefer remaining classroom teachers to leadership positions in community secondary schools. Their preference was influenced by culture, traditional orientation, religion, and beliefs regarding women's leadership. This finding supports gender centred perspective that due to culture and socialisation; women are more likely to accept lower-level qualifications (Fagenson, 1990a). Cultural and patriarchal systems are reported to contribute to women teachers' negative attitudes towards leadership and force them to remain normal teachers. Iqbal et al. (2013); Luke (2001) revealed that cultural values, religion, and patriarchy affect women to decide in involving in decision-making. The findings revealed that due to culture, women denounce leadership posts at the expense of their families and spouses. Haonga (2013) supported that male prejudice stops capable women from participating in leadership. This suggests that culture and women's socialisation from early childhood contributes to their lower status, lack of self-confidence in making decisions about their lives and career and less involvement in leadership positions. Literature revealed that women belief in their ability and capacity of being leaders (McCormick et al., 2002) but they perceived the role of leaders

as more challenging in terms of effort compared with their male counterparts. However, at early academic-career stages, women are more likely than men to hold low self-efficacy beliefs for leadership (Hoyt, 2005) this is probably because of they lack exposure and early socialisations. Although women themselves like to involve in leadership culture and patriarchal system block their aspiration from childhood. The implication is that if no deliberate actions are taken to change this belief, women teachers will continue to be underrepresented in community school leadership.

The findings further revealed that women accepted that their male counterparts were the breadwinners and that males should be more educated than them and make important decisions as dictated by cultural and hegemonic systems. These findings are similar to Oakley (2000) that gender stereotypes and cultural or traditional beliefs task men to provide everything for their families and make decisions while women take care of the family. The findings are also in consonant with the gender perspective, which argues that since childhood, women's socialised to take care of the family and be leaders' bystanders (Fagenson, 1990a).

In this study, findings revealed further that women remain in low status because highly job titles; well-paid and educated women were sometimes not getting married as perceived to be stubborn and disrespectful to their husbands. Similarly, Raburu (2011) revealed that some highly educated women are unmarried as males hesitate to marry them as they are perceived to be too authoritative and irrespectful. Correspondingly, those who are married are prohibited by their spouses from developing their careers. Haonga (2013) reported that Tanzania has many "talented women" who could develop their careers to higher levels but fail due to their husbands' prohibition. Therefore, this indicates a limited understanding of men for the career development of their wives, which was attributed to cultural factors. Being jealous of their wives who go away for studies may constitute further explanations for prohibiting married women from developing their careers.

It should be noted that degree qualification is a criterion for appointment to school leadership posts in Tanzania. Hence lack of such qualifications means a minimal chance for women to be appointed to leadership posts. Although the problem still exists, the economic changes have encouraged some men to allow their wives to develop their careers to degree level, hoping they would contribute to the family's income. This slight change is expected to transform the perception of most rural men and women in the future.

The findings further revealed that women declined to take up rural leadership positions due to poor transport facilities, lack of safe and clean water, poor housing and witchcraft beliefs which dominated the rural areas. Literature indicates that teachers in rural schools work in a more challenging environment and are more demotivated than those in urban schools because of poor living and working conditions and reject the posts (International Labour Organization, 2016). For example, in Tanzania in 2003,

about 2,000 out of 9,000 newly qualified teachers refused rural posts (International Labour Organization, 2016). The findings are consistent with Chisikwa (2010) that women rejected leadership posts when appointed, a fact which leads to few women leaders in schools. The literature further supports that many teachers from urban backgrounds may find it challenging to adapt to living in rural areas and often resist being posted to rural schools (International Labour Organization, 2016). The implication is that if the rural environment is not improved, schools will remain with few leaders and unqualified teachers.

Previous studies also revealed that rural Africa is dominated by poor transport and communication (Mlama, 2005). It was revealed that the motorcycles which constitute the dominant means of transport in rural areas, were prone to accidents due to poor roads and sometimes carelessness of the riders. Women were the most affected because they frequently travelled to towns to visit their families. Mulkeen and Chen (2008) also observe that due to poor infrastructure, most women teachers in rural schools spend more time on the way visiting their families who live in town than their male counterparts. This suggests that if women leaders in rural schools will continue to be underrepresented will hamper girls from getting role models and stop them from aspiring for leadership roles.

Furthermore, the lack of safe and clean water sometimes forces women teachers to walk more than 10 kilometres to find unsafe and unclean water from boreholes. This finding is supported by USAID (2010) in that women had to walk many kilometres to fetch water in some Tanzanian districts. The USAID showed that women and young girls were the most affected group. For instance, girls are sometimes raped on the way to fetch water (Mbepera, 2015). This is due to the fact that the traditional division of labour in most African societies requires women to fetch water for their families. In Tanzania, fetching water is not only a gendered role but also a cultural manifestation of respect by wives for their husbands. Mlama (2005, p. 2) is of the opinion that "gender-based constraints to education tend to be more pronounced in rural areas than urban areas due to the fact that the environment in the rural areas is normally more accommodative of gender inequality". Therefore, limited provision of social services in rural areas, such as safe and clean water, prevents women teachers from taking up leadership positions, leading to under-representation in leadership.

In addition, witchcraft incidents limit women teachers from taking leadership posts in rural schools. To support the findings, Eboiyehi (2017) revealed that the witchcraft practices in Sub-Saharan Africa constitute a major problem as many older women are accused of witchcraft. Similarly, Loitare (2016) reported that witchcraft is a significant problem which affects many people in rural Tanzania. The government of Tanzania has the witchcraft Law of 1928 under Act 25, amended in 2009 and required individuals not to exercise witchcraft, yet witchcraft still persists in Tanzania.

The explanation is that issues of witchcraft are very contextual and associated with cultural and spiritual beliefs, which need to

be handled with care as one may not prove its existence. Witchcraft is sometimes based on fear, psychological perception, and hearsay, which affect innocent teachers who have devoted their lives to work in rural areas. The issue of witchcraft is dominant in rural areas probably since the majority of people are characterised by low income and low education. Indeed, witchcraft may be associated with poverty. The wicked behaviour of the witchcraft hinders the teachers from working with morale and causes some of them to reject the posts in rural schools. The implication is that rural areas would remain with limited number of women teachers and heads of schools if this community does not change behaviours of witching teaching.

Furthermore, the literature indicates that women are under-represented in educational leadership positions due to sex discrimination during promotion (Lindsay et al., 2017; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). Equally, the current study revealed that gender bias causes many women teachers to lag behind in leadership during the appointment. This finding implies that the society is dominated by a patriarchal system whereby the children were instilled from childhood that women cannot be good leaders as their main role is to take care of the family. Therefore, it appears that those who recommend and appoint the heads of schools still have such prejudice and practice during their appointment.

Furthermore, the study findings revealed a lack of clear educational policy which guides the appointment of the heads of schools by gender. This may lead to a low number of women teachers in leadership posts. The current educational policy is limited emphasises the appointment of heads of schools by considering gender equality (URT, 2014). This is also informed by Bensimon and Marshall (1997), who contended that recommending and appointing senior leaders is based on a policy that does not consider gender equality in leadership, leading to unfair recommendations and unequal appointments. The lack of clear appointment policy and guidelines means that those who appoint leaders are likely biased due to the patriarchal system and culture dominated in some areas of Tanzania. The implication is that gender inequality in rural community schools' leadership will continue to exist.

Due to the lack of clear gender policies in the appointment of school leadership, findings indicate that educational officers hesitate to appoint women to leadership since some of them reject the post when appointed. The decision of educational officers to ignore appointing women teachers to leadership positions hoping that they would reject the positions, may be inappropriate. The leaders should take the responsibility of encouraging women to take the post and provide quality services in rural areas. It was observed that those who appoint leaders to leadership positions are mostly men and have a negative attitude toward women leaders, thus appointing those who share the same interest. These findings in question are similar to those of Sperandio and Kagoda (2010), who revealed that male domination of top leadership discourages women from seeking leadership positions. This is also supported by Gaus (2011), who

reported that women's under-representation in leadership is due to recruitment procedures dictated by corruption, ethnicity, nepotism, and discrimination. Generally, the bias and discriminatory practices in the appointment of the heads of schools in Tanzania are caused by early socialisation, patriarchy, and culture, which consider women's roles to be that of taking care of the family.

Conclusion

Despite the individual barriers which result from culture and socialisation, and which keep women classroom teachers with low-level educational qualifications, the current educational policy and gender bias in appointment limit qualified women teachers from acquiring leadership positions. Cultural beliefs such as witchcraft also affect women's desire to take leadership positions in the context of this study, as they were physically and psychologically tortured. Environmental factors such as poor transport and the lack of water caused women to hesitate to take leadership responsibilities in rural areas. Although women's rejection of rural posts sounds like an individual factor, the underlying cause is government, which provides limited social services to rural areas and cultural values and beliefs that affect women to take posts in such areas.

In other words, women teachers face obstacles in all spheres at the family, societal and organisational levels, thus discouraging them from involving in leadership positions. Although individual, societal, and organisational factors are interconnected and linked with women's under-representation in leadership positions, the hegemonic culture, norms, and values are the most influential factors at a deep level. This implies that the culture, social beliefs, and practices affect the individual women teachers in terms of accepting posts in rural areas. Furthermore, culture, values and norms affect the rules and regulations for recommending and appointing the heads of schools. Society has low expectations of women, a fact that influences the minds of those who practise bias along gender lines in appointing school leaders. Similarly, society influences women to be less confident. This makes them put more emphasis on the family, thus ending up occupying low inferior positions. Therefore, the holistic view of society, organisation and individuality should be used to understand obstacles that cause women to be under-represented in school leadership in rural Tanzania. Consequently, this study adds new knowledge to the existing literature on the obstacles which hinder women from accessing school leadership posts in rural areas in Tanzania. Issues of the poor working environment and witchcraft beliefs are new in the literature concerning women's underrepresentation in leadership.

Recommendation for Action

In consideration of the findings of the study. The study has several recommendations for addressing gender equality in

workplaces and for further investigation by other researchers. In this light, the study recommends the following:

Mainstreaming Gender in Policies

There is a need for educational policies to consider gender equality during the appointment of senior leaders of community secondary schools in Tanzania. Through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the government should review the Education and Training Policy of 2014 to stipulate gender equality in recommending and appointing school heads.

Sensitisation of Rural Communities About the Importance of Gender Equality

The government should sensitise rural communities, which constitute the home of most Tanzanians. The sensitisation programmes should be embedded in the education curriculum so that children can develop a sense of gender equality in their childhood. People in rural communities should also be sensitised about gender equality from the family, societal and organisational levels. This should be done through awareness campaigns such as workshops, seminars, and media like radio, which reach the majority of rural dwellers.

Recommendation for Improvement of Infrastructure and Social Services

Through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the government should improve infrastructures and social services in rural areas by providing water, better housing, good and reliable transport facilities, security, and power.

Recommendation on Witchcraft

Although witchcraft is still a myth, serious actions should be taken by the community leaders and local government against the suspected witches in rural areas. Sensitisation programs and warnings should be provided to rural people regarding the impact of oppressing teachers through witchcraft. Continuing oppressing teachers through witchcraft practices will render the teaching and learning activities in rural community secondary schools ineffective. The investigation should continually be made, and solutions should be found by local leaders and government officials.

Recommendations for Further Studies

This study was limited to community secondary schools in rural areas. A similar study should be conducted in primary and secondary schools in both rural and urban areas. In addition, since the current study was mainly conducted on women teachers and leaders, further study should involve male teachers to get their perception of women teachers' involvement in educational matters. This will allow researchers to achieve more conclusive results concerning the obstacles women teachers face in attaining leadership positions.

Limitations of the study

Despite achieving the aim of this research, some limitations were unavoidable. Firstly, the researcher is a woman in the field of

educational leadership who is knowledgeable about women in leadership. This implies that her personal beliefs and feelings could be reflected in the study. However, professionalism was strictly observed in the whole data collection and analysis process on the assumption that she was new to the subject matter.

Secondly, the findings of this study may not represent the experience of the other areas due to differences in culture, beliefs, and organisational structure. However, the findings significantly contribute to understanding women's leadership in community secondary schools and provide the baseline for similar studies elsewhere.

References

- ADEM. (2013). *Training on educational leadership, management and administration for heads of secondary schools in Tanzania Mainland*. Dar es Salaam: ADEM
- Akpinar-sposito, C. (2013). Women in management research: theoretical perspectives. *4eme Franco-Tchèque Trends in International Business*. LYON, France. pp.11. <https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00839365/document>
- Bandiho, H. (2009). Status of educational leadership and female participation: The case of Tanzania. In H. C. Sobehart. (Ed.), *Women leading education across the continent* (pp. 43–48). Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Bensimon, E. M., & Marshall, C. (1997). *Policy analysis for post-secondary education: Feminist and critical perspectives*. The Falmer Press.
- Bhalalusesa, E., & Mboya, M. (2003). *Gender analysis to the factors influencing performance management and leadership*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Celikten, M. (2009). Portraying women administrators: Turkish cases. In H. C. Sobehart (Ed.), *women leading education across the continent: sharing the spirit, fanning the flame* (pp. 168–174). Rowman and Littlefield Education.
- Chisikwa, P. I. (2010). Influence of social-cultural factors on gender imbalance in the appointment of head teachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga District, Kenya. *International Research Journals*, 1(10), 535 - 541.
- Creswell, W. J. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approach*. Sage.
- Cubillo, L., & Brown, M. (2003). Women into educational leadership and management: international differences. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 41(3), 278–291.
- DfE. (2022). *School leadership in England 2010 to 2020: characteristics and trends*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1071794/School_leadership_in_England_2010_to_2020_characteristics_and_trends_-_report.pdf
- Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (2006). Women, educational leadership and cultural context. In I. O. R. H.-Lazarowitz (Ed.), *Women principals in a multicultural*

- society: *New insights into feminist educational leadership* (pp. 33–47). Sense Publications.
- District Educational Office. (2022). *Teachers and Heads of Schools by Gender*: Iringa Municipal, DEO.
- Dlanjwa, M. (2018). *Gender equality and the advancement of women into senior management positions: assessing the perceptions of the diversity and gender initiatives section of the City of Cape Town*.
<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Gender-equality-and-the-advancement-of-women-into-%3A-Dlanjwa/6c7ea234745866ce253b470b80d2cb849b4fd899>
- Eboiyehi, F. A. (2017). Convicted without evidence: Elderly women and witchcraft accusations in contemporary Nigeria. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 18(4), 247–265.
- Education Development Trust. (2020). *Women's Barriers to educational leadership in Ethiopia: Background report and recommendations for target*. Addis Ababa: Ethiopia.
<https://www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/our-research-and-insights/commentary/women-in-education-leadership>
- Fagenson, E. A. (1990a). At the heart of women in management research: Theoretical and methodological approaches and their biases. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 9, 267–274. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00380326>
- Fagenson, E. A. (1990b). Received masculine and feminine attributes examined as the function of individual sex and level in the organisational power. A test of four theoretical perspectives. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75(2), 204–211.
- Gaus, N. (2011). Women and school leadership: Factors deterring female teachers from holding principal positions at elementary schools in Makassar. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, 175–188.
- Haonga, M. (2013, July 13). Ignore chauvinism to pursue higher education; minister urges women. *The Guardian*.
- Hoyt, C.L. (2005). The role of leadership efficacy and stereotype activation in women's identification with leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 11(4), 2-14
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190501100401>
- Hoyle, E., & McMahon, A. (1986). *The management of school: World yearbook of education*. Routledge.
- Hungi, N. (2010). *Is there gender equity in school managerial positions? SACMEQ Policy Issues* (Issue 8).
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/315108683_Is_there_gender_equity_in_school_managerial_position
- Ingham, J. (2022). *Tackling the under-representation of women in leadership roles*.
<https://www.alliancembs.manchester.ac.uk/original-thinking-applied/original-thinkers/tackling-the-under-representation-of-women-in-leadership-roles/>
- International Labour Organization. (2016). *Rural teachers' in Africa: A report for ILO* (Issue 312).
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_543617.pdf
- Iqbal, A., Ali, M. S., Akhtar, M. S., & Ahmed, S. (2013). A comparison of the perceptions of secondary school teachers' satisfaction about their jobs. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 7(5), 92–98.
- Lindsay, B., Kofie, S., & Mbepera, J. G. (2017). Administrative matters for African educational leaders: Illustrations from women secondary school administrators in Tanzania and Ghana. In W. Duncan & B. Ira (Eds.), *The Wiley International Handbook of Educational Leadership*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118956717.ch15>
- Loitare, E. (2016). *Combating witchcraft based violations of the right to life of albinos in Tanzania: A critique on law and other measures* [Unpublished master of laws]. Mzumbe University.
- Luke, C. (2001). *Globalisation and women in academia: North/West-South/East*. L. Erlbaum Associates.
- McCormick, M.J, Tanguma J., & Lopez-Forment, A.S. (2002). Extending self-efficacy theory to leadership: a review and empirical test. *Journal of Leadership Education* 1(2), 34–49.
- Mbepera, J. (2022). Women leaders in community secondary schools in rural Tanzania: Challenges and coping strategies. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 36(1), 59-77.
 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/jelpp-2021-0004>
- Mbepera, J. (2017). The organisational factors influencing women's under-representation in leadership positions in Community Secondary Schools (CSSs) in rural Tanzania. *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy*, 14(2), 79–100.
- Mbepera, J. G. (2015). *An Exploration of the Influences of Female Underrepresentation in Senior Leadership Positions in Community Secondary Schools (CSSs) in Rural Tanzania*. [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. University College London.
- Mlama, P. (2005). Gender and education for rural people. *Ministerial seminar on education for rural people in Africa: Policy lessons, options and priorities: 7-9 September 2005, Addis Ababa*.
- Moreau, M. P., Osgood, J., & Halsall, A. (2005). *The career progression of women teachers in England: a study of barriers to promotion and career development*. IPSE.
- Morley, L. (2013). The rules of the game: Women and the leadership turn in higher education. *Gender and Education*, 25(1), 116–131.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2012.740888>
- Mulkeen, A, Chapman, D., DeJaeghere, J., Akukwe, G., Emart, H., Miric, S., Ndem, E., Saily, A., Jeffers, G., Martin, M., Casey, E., Coolahan, J., Len, E., & Bryner, K. (2004). *Retaining and retraining secondary school*

- teachers and principals in Sub-Saharan Africa. Prepared for the World Bank through the Academy of Educational Development.*
https://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSCContentserver/WDSP/IB/2005/11/23/000090341_200511231149/Rendered/PDF/343120AFROtheme141pqp.pdf
- Mulkeen, A., & Chen, D. (2008). *Teachers for Rural Schools*. World Bank. Washington, DC.
<https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-7479-5>
- Oakley, J. G. (2000). (2000). Gender-based barriers to senior management positions: Understanding the scarcity of female CEOs. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 27(4), 321–334.
- Oluoch, E. T. (2006). Policy choices in secondary education in Africa: Challenges seen from different perspectives in an African country. A case study of Tanzania Mainland as seen by Tanzania Teachers' Union (TTU). *The launch seminar of the Norwegian Post-Primary Education Program for Africa (NPED), September 2006*, 1–21. www.academia.edu/8903753/Exekiah_Oluoch-1
- Oplatka, I., & Hertz-Lazarowitz, H. L. (2006). Women's leadership in education. In I. Oplatka & H. L. Hertz-Lazarowitz (eds.), *women principals in a multicultural society: New insights into feminist educational leadership* (pp. 17–32). Sense Publications.
- Raburu, P. A. (2011). *Women academics' careers in Kenya*. [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. Lancaster University.
- Rowley, C., & Yukongdi, V. (2009). *The changing face of women managers in Asia*. Routledge.
- Sperandio, J., & Kagoda, A. M. (2010). Women teachers' aspirations to school leadership in Uganda. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 24(1), 22–33.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/09513541011013024>
- UNICEF. (2022). *Increasing women's representation in school leadership: A promising path towards improving learning*.
[file:///C:/Users/HP_USER/Desktop/Documents/girls education/Increasing-Womens-Representation-in-School-Leadership-a-promising-path-towards-improving-learning.pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP_USER/Desktop/Documents/girls%20education/Increasing-Womens-Representation-in-School-Leadership-a-promising-path-towards-improving-learning.pdf)
- URT. (2014). *The Education and Training Policy 2014*. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Dar es Salaam: URT.
- USAID. (2010). *The whole village project village reports for Mnenia, Filimo, and Kalema Kuu in Kondoa District*.
<http://wholevillage.umn.edu/documents/Kondoa.pdf>
- Uwamahoro, J. (2011). *Barriers to women in accessing principalship in secondary schools in Rwanda: a case study of two secondary schools in the Gicumbi District*. [Unpublished master dissertation]. University of the Witwatersrand.
- Young, M. D., & McLeod, S. (2001). Flukes, opportunities and planned interventions: factors affecting women's decisions to become school administrators *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 37(4), 462–502.