

The Influence of Socio-cultural Factors on Female Teachers Leadership Aspirations in Primary Schools in Kericho County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study examined the sociocultural factors that influence aspirations of female teachers for primary school leadership positions in Kericho County, specifically the influence of stereotypical beliefs held about women aspiring and holding leadership positions and the influence of others and domestic responsibilities on the decision to join leadership in primary school. It is founded on the Model of administrative career mobility by Riehl and Byrd [1]. After analysis, the perception of socio-cultural factors was found not to be significantly correlated with leadership aspiration. However, qualitative analysis revealed that the socio-cultural influence over leadership aspiration was indirect and that the social requirements of female teachers do influence leadership aspiration. The findings provide sufficient practical knowledge to develop programs for enhancing the access of female teachers to leadership positions in primary schools. The study also contributes to the body of literature on women in educational leadership in Kenya.

Keywords: Aspirations for leadership, Socio-cultural factors.

INTRODUCTION

Research reveals that aspiration for leadership is largely associated with the access to leadership. Booth [2] defines aspiration for leadership as a measure of intrinsic career inspiration or motivation for becoming a leader and pursuing opportunities. Findings from a study by Nazemi, Mortazavi and Shahla [3] strongly supported the relationship between low leadership aspiration and women's inclination in adopting managerial positions. The study further identified career role salience and the women's perceived organisational barriers moderated their aspiration for leadership. In Kenya, women represent one half of the active population [4] and should therefore be able to participate on an equal footing with men in all spheres of political, economic and social life of the country, and particularly in the decision-making process.

However, Kenyan women are under-represented in the labour workforce and also in the management and decision making positions [5]. It is noted that great strides to ensure that girls' access and retention in schools is made compulsory [6]. There is a steady increase of female student teachers enrolment in PTTC [7]. In 2014, 19,323 female students enrolled in public and private primary teacher training colleges compared to 18,148 male students [8]. This study will seek to establish why the number of female leaders in

schools is low despite the increased primary female teachers into the profession.

The study's setting is Kericho County, one of the 47 counties in Kenya. The Kipsigis community, a subgroup of the Kalenjin people of Kenya comprises 87.5% of the population [9]. None the less there are many Luo migrant employees and business people, Kisii migrant employees and residents, Kikuyu farmers and business people and Luhya migrant employees [10]. The county's main economic activity is agriculture and is one of Kenya's largest tea producing regions. In some areas of the county, commercial horticultural farming, sugarcane farming and cattle keeping is also practiced.

Riehl and Byrd [11] showed that the factors such as having aspirations, having qualification and experience were important in predicting whether one was to become an administrator for both women and men teachers. However for women the probability of becoming an administrator remained lower than for men due to other intervening factors which probably could be gender related. By identifying these factors that influence aspiration of women to lead would be most important in encouraging them to pursue leadership position. Therefore, this article seeks to establish the relationship between female teachers' perception of socio-cultural factors and their aspiration for

public primary school leadership positions in Kericho County.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed method design consisting of both quantitative and qualitative techniques was utilized. Survey questionnaire and interview methods were used to collect data. The study population consist of all 461 public primary schools in Kericho County. The data was collected from a sample of female teachers and female school leaders in public primary schools in Kericho County. The study employed stratified and simple random sampling techniques to sample 327 female teacher respondents from the target population. Female senior teachers and deputy head teachers were purposively sampled from the sample of schools. This study employed the concurrent triangulation strategy to present analyse and interpret data. Descriptive techniques, the Pearson product moment correlation analysis were employed to analyse the quantitative data. The qualitative data obtained from the interview discussion, were transcribed, organized into categories, sub categories and themes, and presented in prose form.

Literature: Socio-cultural Factors on Female Leadership

Sustainable socio-economic development in any country requires the effective participation of all human resources. Women constitute approximately half of the population of the world and thus potentially half of its work forces [12]. According to International Labour Office [13] only 52% of women participate in the labour force, compared to 77% of men, suggesting that there is a huge population globally that is underutilised economically. Furthermore, in all regions, the proportion of women in leadership is much less than their overall proportion in the employed population. According to United Nations [14], the proportion of females in higher occupation rung ranges from a low of 10% to 40% globally, with less than 30% in Eastern Africa.

African countries portray under-representation of female leaders in school, a case similar to that of the Western countries, however in Africa; teaching may not be dominated by female teachers [15]. According to Oplatka [16] review of 13 English-language published papers, developing countries experience low levels of girls' education and therefore few women join the

teaching profession. Even in Seychelles, being one African country that has met the targets for most of the eight millennium development goals, and having women account for the majority of teachers, their full participation in decision making processes at the administrative levels in primary and secondary schools has still not been achieved [17].

The education sector has experienced a gender gap in employment in favour of the men. In the year 2008 female primary school teachers constituted 46% against 54% male teachers. The trend in the secondary school level is the same and even wider with the male teachers still dominating at 64.7% compared to 35.3% females [18]. This suggests that we have more female teachers at the primary school level as compared to other levels of education in Kenya. Despite the relatively larger population of women in primary schools as compared to the other levels of education, females are still under-represented in the leadership of primary schools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response Rate

Complete and usable data came from three-hundred and seventeen (n = 317) female teachers, representing 97% of the teachers surveyed. The return rate of the female teachers' questionnaire was high thus justifying the validity of the data collected for the study.

The Social cultural factors that influence female teachers' leadership aspiration

Social cultural factors were measured by the influence of stereotypical beliefs held about women aspiring and holding leadership positions. Socio cultural factors were also determined by the influence of others and domestic responsibilities on the decision to join leadership. Table 9 includes a summary of item responses, means and standard deviations for items representing the socio-cultural factors. The item statements are also included in Table 9. The participants had to choose a response from a 5-point likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). To discuss descriptive statistics the likert scale was adjusted to a 3-point scale ranging from disagree (1) which clamped strongly disagree and disagree, to agree (3) clamping agree to strongly agree. Some of the items were worded positively while others were worded negatively.

Table 1: Summary of Item Means and Standard Deviations for Social Cultural Factors that Affect Leadership Aspiration.

	Items for Social-cultural factors	Percent who responded			Mean	Standard Deviation
		Disagree (1)	Un-Decided (2)	Agree (3)		
1	I do not plan to devote energy to getting promoted to a leadership position in primary schools	66.9 (212)	11.0 (35)	22.1 (70)	1.55	.83
2	Extended family responsibilities discourage me from pursuing leadership positions	67.5 (214)	6.6 (21)	25.9 (82)	1.58	.87
3	Family responsibilities for child care discourage me from pursuing leadership positions	66.2 (210)	4.4 (14)	29.0 (92)	1.63	.90
4	Spouses discourage female teachers to apply for school leadership positions	59.9 (190)	8.5 (27)	31.5 (100)	1.72	.91
5	I fear to be rejected by the society if I seek leadership positions.	83.6 (265)	7.6 (24)	8.8 (27)	1.25	.60
6	I fear to compete against my male colleagues when seeking for leadership.	86.1 (273)	3.2 (10)	10.7 (34)	1.25	.63
7	There is a belief that women must be better qualified than men for them to become leaders	69.9 (221)	7.9 (25)	22.2 (70)	1.52	.83

The Item 5, “I fear to be rejected by the society if I seek leadership positions” and item 6 “I fear to compete against my male colleagues when seeking for leadership” on the socio cultural scale had the lowest mean of 1.25. Majority of the female teachers did not agree with this statement and did not see the men as a threat when seeking leadership. Basing on the means of these two items (both 1.25) an almost neutral stand was taken by these female teachers.

Societal acceptance of female leaders

A high percentage (83.6%) of female teachers does not fear to be rejected by society if they assume leadership roles. This is an indication that attitudes towards women in leadership have changed. Female teachers in this study have embraced the idea that female teachers can lead irrespective of what the society dictates. This could be a positive effect of the campaigns for gender mainstreaming. However, this is contrary to perceptions of the female participants in Ngan [19] who believed that men are better leaders because of their innate traits such as assertiveness, emotional toughness and willingness to take risks which were considered more appropriate for leadership in higher education. This contrast can be explained by the differences in the institutions that women serve in. Higher education institutions may be perceived to be a preserve of male leadership as compared to the primary school leadership due to the number of women serving in these institutions. The female leaders in higher education institutions are few in number thus leaving

women to feel less able and consequently less self-confident to deal with the nature of tasks therein. On the other hand basic education institutions have relatively more women teachers, making the profession at this level feminized. In primary schools in Eldoret municipality, Kenya, stakeholders also rated female headteachers’ performance as good and were capable of performing tasks just like men [20].

The relatively larger numbers of female teachers in schools seem to enable the female teachers in this study to perceive that leadership is a possibility for them and that it is acceptable. Other countries such as North America, Europe, and Australia have also shown consistently that women in the teaching force are a majority [21]. A study by Paustian-Underdahl, Walker and Woehr [22], while drawing heavily from the Role Congruity Theory, found that female leaders were seen as more effective than male leaders in feminine organisations. Educational institutions are occupied by more female staff, especially at the elementary levels. This is evidenced by the increasing number of females enrolling in Primary Teacher Training Colleges compared to the males in both public and private institutions. It is noted that the perception of the congruity between the female gender role and leadership roles would be greater in contexts such as primary schools. This could be an explanation of why the female teachers in the study perceive leadership as acceptable to women in primary schools.

However, from the interview findings, it was revealed that female teachers dominate schools in urban areas and those found within the tea estates yet access to leadership was reported minimal. In this scenario, there are high chances that tokenism influences the appointment of school leaders. School management boards and County education officials most probably tend to consider appointing the high status minority tokens within the schools for leadership. The high status minority tokens are the few male teachers among a staff populated by female teachers.

Majority of the women did not anticipate rejection by the society if they ascended to leadership. Only 8.8% of the female participants agreed with the statement. This shows that the female teacher participants perceive that the community accepts them as leaders. Studies such as Mwebi [23] have cited community disapproval when a female teacher takes over leadership. In addition, Wangui [24] cited cases reported in the dailies (The standard 13th January 2011 and Daily Nation 8th January 2009) where parents in western Kenya protested against having a female teacher. Female teachers in this study were optimistic of the communities support if a female teacher became a school leader.

Majority (87%) of the women believe that women make good leaders. This suggests that according to the respondents, the female teachers who rise to leadership are very efficient at their work. This further confirms Paustian-Underdahl, Walker and Woehr [25] findings. Before a female teacher ascends to leadership her competence is first tried in other subordinate leadership roles and then approved by a significant other who urges them to join leadership. In most cases female teachers joining leadership are confident enough with leadership experience and with social support making her effective and efficient enough. In addition Huston [26] confirms that female leaders cannot risk making poor decisions or making poor judgement while at it because it would be costly for them compared to if a man made poor decisions. He attributes this claim to the fact that leadership is perceived male and due to this female leaders put in extra effort to ensure that she is efficient while avoiding risks. Female leaders strive to be perfectionists at their work for fear of being judged harshly and consequently they earn high rating from their subordinates. This could explain the high rating of female school leaders.

From the interview results, majority of the female leaders interviewed confirmed that the female teachers make good leaders. An interviewee revealed that the traditional culture that viewed women as subordinate beings unable to become leaders was no longer prevalent. She said;

The traditional culture is not as strong as before. People have become enlightened and women are easily viewed as leaders nowadays. What has even helped is the fact that the men who are religious easily accept women to join leadership and are slowly influencing the community. (DHT1)

An issue of whether a leader is a man or woman is no longer the basis of contention as the female deputy head teacher puts it. Another deputy head teacher interviewee explained that nowadays the community looks at performance. If a woman is performing then she is easily accepted as a leader. However the gender may be scrutinized when a school headed by a female may not be performing. This is in agreement with Crawford [27] who says that if there is no doubt about the management success and outstanding performance of a female leader then she may not be undervalued. Judgement of a female leader's performance will be made based on the available information but not using gender stereotypes. Crawford says "it is as if women leaders are assumed incompetent until proven competent" (p.5).

These interviewees insinuates that women are no longer viewed as "token appointees" because their work is quite good comparable to that of men. Kiaye and Singh [28] explained that token appointments are the unintended consequences of employment equity legislation and affirmative action. When women are appointed to leadership they are perceived to be products of affirmative action and that the women may be lacking requisite qualifications, skills, networks and experience. As a consequence "affirmative appointees" are consciously set up to fail, not because they are incompetent but due to the fact that they denied necessary institutional and team support. However, a female deputy head teacher interviewee who had been in school leadership for fourteen years said that their previous work experiences and their effectiveness as school leaders have reversed these perceptions in their schools. According to the deputy head teacher, schools in her sub county that are headed by women are performing very well.

Stereotypes seem to have shifted such that women are considered to be better leaders and are even rated to be similar to men unlike the previously identified stereotypes that have worked negatively against women. These perceptions should be translated affirmatively to increase the female leaders in schools.

Domestic responsibilities

A large portion of female teacher respondents disagreed with the statements that extended family

responsibilities and childcare responsibilities discouraged one from aspiring for leadership. The female teachers who disagreed with these statements formed 67.5% and 66.2% of the sampled teachers, respectively. This reaction of female teachers could be similar to the views of female leaders in Rarieya [29] study on motherhood responsibilities. She pointed out that despite female leaders acknowledging the demands placed upon them as working mothers, some of them saw these demands as their personal problem that came with the territory of being a woman employed outside the home. The women viewed it as part and parcel of the female leader and that it was a non-issue. Rarieya suggests that "it is probable that the women felt that in publicly acknowledging these tensions, they would be admitting their inability to cope with the demands of the position, thereby making them unsuitable for leadership" (pg 35). The female teachers in this study could have held comparable views and may have refused to disclose that their natural dispensation could cause a hindrance in occupying leadership positions.

Interview findings however revealed the strain that female leaders experience when handling childcare and domestic responsibilities while at the same time being leaders. Most of the women identified domestic responsibilities as a major hurdle to access leadership. These responsibilities included those of household chores, child rearing, and even small scale farming. All except two interviewees stated that most men delegate total family responsibilities to their spouse, while the two mentioned that they shared the responsibilities with their spouse. Two of the interviewees also mentioned that their spouses work in other stations away from the home and therefore end up running the home single handedly most of the time. The prevailing culture in the county has gender typed roles in the home, leaving most family responsibilities to the wife. One interview participant said that:

Husbands do not participate in taking care of the children. Those who are employed come late to the homestead and when they come home they do not offer a helping hand. Women teachers have to rush home immediately after work to check whether activities at home are in order. (DHT1)

Most women reiterated that the family responsibilities sometimes do not complement the leadership responsibilities at the workplace. One headteacher gave her experience when she was newly promoted to deputize in a small school while she was a young mother.

Sometimes my children would become sick at night. So I would be forced to stay most of the time awake to attend to them. My husband on the other

hand would demand my attention. By the time you are sleeping you are totally finished only to be woken by an alarm. You then arrive in school in the morning confused (DHT3)

This scenario spells out the many challenges that women face carrying out domestic chores while at the same time being leaders. The female teachers demonstrated that being a female school leader involved wearing two hats which weighed heavily on them and had consequences. The deputy headteacher further said:

I have a son who was young when I was appointed to leadership. I stayed away from him because of the work, to the point that he did not know that I was his parent. I am trying now so much to go close to him to recover the lost time when it is too late. At 17 [years] he is so attached to me and he never wants to leave my side. I often think to myself that it could be because I never gave him time when he was small. It makes me guilty. (DHT3)

With these challenges, these women in leadership pointed out the importance of hiring domestic help to ease the workload at home. It is ironical though that as much as domestic help may be readily available, many of these school leaders cannot afford to pay for the labor due to low remuneration and allowances. One interviewee, explained;

I had to tolerate a house help so much and I sacrificed a lot to pay her so that I could sustain her to avoid changing all the time. When you keep changing house helps you are disadvantaged. We need to keep one who is reliable because of the heavy workload that keeps us in school. (DHT3)

Due to the workload associated with being a leader and a mother, hired domestic help would come in handy to ease the weight. Even though Barng'etung [30] confirms that, in Kenya this kind of labour is easily available at rates affordable by women, the women in the study categorically stated that their pay may not sustain the employment of a good house girl. What came out strongly is their ability to cope with the demands and the urge to even aspire for higher positions. No participant reported dropping out from aspiring for leadership, in its place each female leader developed strategies that enabled them cope with the demands. These included hiring domestic help and enlisting the support of the spouse and extended family.

Spousal support

A larger portion (60%) of teacher respondents disagreed with the statement that a spouse may discourage a female teacher from applying for school leadership positions. Spouses may not be seen as overtly coming out to stop a female teacher from applying for leadership as was suggested by this group of teachers. They may be non committal to the issue of their wife's ambition of which may be interpreted positively. The percentage of the respondents who agreed that spouses discourage female teachers from applying for leadership positions was 32. Discouragement may come indirectly in the form of limited support when it comes to domestic chores or being rigid to move with the family when it comes to transfers. However, if a spouse happens to show interest and give moral support and encouragement, then it gives a boost to the female teacher's aspiration for leadership. Contrary, Chisikwa's [31] findings revealed that some female teachers opted out of leadership in mixed secondary schools due to family tensions brought about by negative spousal attitude. Similarly some female teachers in Mwebi [32] felt that their husbands were a hindrance to their aspiration for headship positions especially if the husbands were mere teachers without any positions of leadership.

All the female leaders interviewed and were married by the time of the interview mentioned that their husbands gave them immense support as they carried on with their duties in school. Support came in, in terms of moral support, help with domestic chores and even the technical support. A senior teacher who was widowed confirmed her late husband's tremendous support with the domestic chores while away on duty. She reminisced:

My husband was very supportive. Whenever I would reach the house late he would take up the domestic responsibility. In fact we would share the work on a fifty-fifty basis. He never had the attitude that the kitchen belonged to the woman. He would give me advice concerning issues I faced at work and even help me with speech writing. (ST3)

Another interviewee reported that her husband is her cheer leader despite his alcoholism and his minimum financial contribution towards running the home. She said:

My husband is proud of the fact that I am a senior teacher in school. In the bar he often shouts "don't you know my wife is a very senior person in the school and without her that school would fail. (ST2)

This shows that husband support and approval is so crucial to the women in leadership. It demonstrates the patriarchal nature of the community. The husband is a figure of authority who gives consent to their spouses' career decisions either directly or indirectly.

Ironically, the senior teacher claimed that it was her husband's alcoholism that delayed her from taking up leadership responsibilities. She was forced to prioritize her family and home duties because her husband was irresponsible and she was the main bread winner. She therefore points out that alcohol should be stamped out of the community because it is an enemy and roadblock to development and opportunities, not only for the addict, but also for those around him or her.

A deputy head teacher who was widowed pointed out that with the absence of her husband her extended family has supported her in terms of taking care of her children. Her mother in law offers to take care of her children while she is away on duty and her children are at home for one reason or another. This indicates that support of the relationships either from the husband or other relatives have enabled teachers to aspire for leadership. Having been assured of this support then one is likely to take up leadership roles in schools. One of the deputy head teachers for example said:

After appointment by the AEO I was still hesitant to take up the deputy headship. My husband encouraged me saying that there is a reason why I was chosen to that position. After assurance from my partner I took up the role. (DHT3)

Two of the interviewees cited cases that they knew of, where spouses refused their wives to become school leaders for fear of becoming susceptible to infidelity. One of the cases was that of a husband who was insecure because he was a high school drop-out who feared that his wife would mingle with senior people in society and then be deserted. When there are issues of insecurities on the part of the spouse, the female teachers are likely to be discouraged by their husbands to take up leadership roles.

The social cultural expectation of a mature woman in the society and more so those who hold leadership positions was clearly brought out by those female leaders who were interviewed. The interviewees except one were either married or once married. Two were widowed. Leadership and marital status go hand in hand according to the interview findings. Marriage in Kenya is seen as compulsory for both men and women. Kamau [33] points out that the traditional Kenyan culture taught women that one actualized at the point of

marriage. From the interviewees it was apparent that these beliefs are still held with utmost importance. Similarly in the neighboring country, Tanzania, Mollel and Tshabangu [34] revealed that most women entering senior leadership would be respected most when married with an established family coupled with substantial personal and work related experience. After noticing the trend of their marital status, one interviewee, explained that;

Single women are not respected when they become school leaders because they are perceived to have gotten positions by having affairs or sometimes they are assumed to be having an affair with the head teacher or senior men in higher positions. (DHT5)

This illustrates how the society has very low opinion on women who have not fulfilled the societal expectations on marriage. Their ability to progress and rise to leadership becomes questionable. The society tends to believe that a woman has to have some support from a male figure. For a mature woman, it is believed that a husband should back a woman as she transcend through the career ladder.

What is evident is that the respondents did not conform to the gender stereotypes regarding leadership as was identified in other studies. Majority of the respondents confirmed spousal support and social acceptance of female leaders in primary schools. Basing on the trend exhibited on these items more female teachers should be ready and willing to move upward within the hierarchies of school management. However as observed by Addi-Raccah [35] gender-neutral attitudes exhibited by female teachers imply that they conform to the prevailing dominant culture and may not be courageous enough to express prejudice that they face as the affected lot.

There seems to be a variation between the survey findings and the interview findings when exploring the socio-cultural factors. While survey results depict non influence of stereotypical beliefs about female leaders, the female leaders interviewed exposes that the traditional culture is at play when one aspires for leadership. Because of these inconsistencies further research need to be carried out using the sequential mixed method approach giving more weight to the qualitative data. Creswell [36] describes the sequential exploratory strategy as involving a first phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, followed by a second phase of quantitative data collection and analysis that builds on the results of the first qualitative phase. This approach will likely determine why surveys provide divergent views in relation to social-cultural influence and most probably assist in the revision of the existing survey instrument. Majority of the studies such as Ngan [37] and Al-Suwaihel [38] among others utilised qualitative techniques pegging it on its appropriateness when showing different perspectives on how culture and leadership experiences interact. However, it is important to note that the two research approaches are sufficient enough to answer the social phenomena such as leadership aspirations.

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was performed to explore the relationship between female teachers’ perception of socio-cultural factors and their aspiration for public primary school leadership positions. The bivariate correlation coefficient was computed for female teacher’s perception of socio-cultural factors and their leadership aspiration. The correlation was non significant, $r(315) = -.095, p > 0.05$ (Table10). The relationship was negative but not significant. This implies that socio-cultural factors do not have an impact on female teachers’ aspiration to leadership positions. We therefore fail to reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is no significant relationship between the female teachers’ perception of socio cultural factors and their leadership aspiration.

Table 10: Co-relationships between sociocultural factors and leadership aspiration

		socio cultural
Leadership Aspiration	Pearson correlation	-.095
	N	315

* $p < 0.05$, ** < 0.001

The finding is not consistent with the literature. Based on studies such as Chisikwa (2010) and Ngan (2011), it would seem logical that traditional stereotypes would correlate and influence the female teachers’ choice to aspire for leadership. Socio-cultural factors encompass the society’s expectation of gender roles. When there is

a clash between the way people perceive the characteristics of women and the requirements of leader roles, then prejudice against the female leader or aspirant develops [39]. Therefore, in spite of how the female teacher would view themselves as capable of leadership the wider society may have a low evaluation

as an actual or potential occupant of the leadership role. In addition the prevailing culture expects a woman's domestic responsibilities to override other work responsibility including leadership roles either in the home or outside the home

The finding however, tallies with Ming, Ahmad and Ismail [40] study that found that there was a non-significant relationship between work-family conflict and career aspiration. Ming, Ahmad and Ismail *ibid* attributed the findings to the fact that that middle managerial women could afford child care service and "after school service" provided by day care centres or even households in these localities. In addition these services were available and reliable in the two localities in central Peninsular Malaysia.

The finding also implies that spouses influence did not correlate with the leadership aspiration of female teachers. This was incongruent with the findings of Chisikwa [41] study which found out that spouse attitude had influenced gender imbalance in appointment of headteachers in mixed secondary schools in Vihiga district. Female teachers in Chisikwa's study opted not to seek for leadership roles in schools for fear of family tensions. For this study, a spouse's position regarding the wife's aspiration for leadership was inconsequential according to the female teachers.

The findings in the present study revealed that female teachers view themselves as capable for leadership just as men. This shows that they do not subscribe to the traditional stereotypical beliefs of viewing leadership as male domain. This finding agrees with Berkery, Morley, and Tiernan, [42] study that determined whether or not gender moderated the relationship between gender role stereotypes and necessary managerial characteristics. Their finding was that the gender of the respondent did have an impact on the relationship between gender role stereotypes and requisite management positions, with male gender typing the managerial roles in favour of men while the females, in contrast, did not gender type the managerial role. They saw leadership to be androgynous. Androgynous leadership combines both masculine and feminine leadership styles and does not associate the characteristics of leadership to either gender. Female teachers in the study viewed themselves and other female teachers as possessing characteristics necessary for leadership success; however it should be noted that the study did not compare the perceptions of the male teachers and leaders and the way they evaluate leadership success. Despite the changing description of leadership by the female teachers this factor did not correlate with leadership aspiration. Stereotypical beliefs which are now changing to favour women and

leadership according to this study did not influence the leadership aspiration of the female teachers.

It is noted therefore that the female teachers are conscious of their capabilities as leaders and their improved status in the society. However, despite being cognisant of this, it does not account for the female teachers' aspiration for leadership. Judging from this, other factors other than perception of socio cultural factors that correlate with leadership aspiration may influence one's decision for leadership. Women are breaking away from the held stereotypical beliefs about who should be a leader; however this is only one aspect in increasing women in leadership, a lot more needs to be done to make an impact in the female teachers' leadership aspiration.

One other hypothesis for this finding could be that female teachers follow a different path when accessing leadership. They relate more to Mertz and McNeely's [43] group of teachers named "Work hard, be loyal and you will be rewarded". This set of female teachers refrained from active female advocacy, discounted the presence of sex discrimination, and did not initially seek administrative careers. The second group of female teachers of which very few female teachers in the study seem to belong to are referred to as "Work hard, work smart and make it happen". This second category tended to vigorously advocate for other females, they recognize gender discrimination, and initially aspire to careers in educational administration. Women who actively aspire for administrative positions criticized the perceived lack of mutual female support.

To establish that most of the female teachers in the study are inclined to "Work hard, be loyal and you will be rewarded" category, majority of the interviewees (70%) in the present study, had other people suggest to them to take up leadership roles in the school. In most cases these women identified their respective head teachers at that time as the ones who played this important role. For example a deputy headteacher explained;

There was an advertisement from the DEO's office for the post of the deputy head teachers. The head teacher requested me to apply but I was reluctant because there were senior members of staff who I thought deserved the position. During a staff meeting I was proposed to again to apply for the position. The others refused to apply and pleaded with me to make the application. (DHT2)

Another deputy head teacher revealed that it was by chance that she got into leadership. She stumbled into the position after the head teacher was

transferred. She felt that the education officials could not get people to replace the head teacher and so they landed on her. After a lengthy discussion with the AEO, she decided to take over the responsibility of a deputy head teacher despite not being prepared. Some parents came in to encourage her into taking up leadership.

One other characteristic of the first group of female administrators as identified by Mertz and McNeely's study is that they defined themselves by their position and not by their gender. Gender to them was not an important factor to consider and viewed themselves as similar to the men. This explains this study's finding that reveal female teachers' perception of the absence of gender stereotypes in the choice of leaders. This school of thought advocates for hard work, dedication and loyalty to the system in order to be made visible from which one will be rewarded by being given a position.

In the present study, the female teachers were nudged to apply or contest for these positions, however, these female teachers portrayed potentiality for leadership abilities since they were involved in other school responsibilities. They all believed that their promotion was out of merit because of the hard work that they were already exhibiting at the work place.

All the interviewees were involved in other informal leadership responsibilities in and out of school before being appointed. Some of the activities that the interviewees were involved in included, the library, games, scouting activities, guidance and counseling, music and drama. Four interviewees (36%) mentioned that they were class teachers and taught core subjects in upper primary where they were able to demonstrate their leadership qualities. It is noted that majority of the female teachers prefer to teach at the lower levels in the primary schools where it seems more appropriate for the female teacher. The upper primary classes and teaching subjects were reported by the interviewees as a preserve of the male teachers in most schools. The female leaders also reported that outside the school they were involved in the leadership of community activities and projects. For example one of the deputy head teachers was a pastor at her local church.

The female leaders proved capable of leadership thus earning themselves some goodwill from those who suggested to them and those who appointed them. Although majority were involved in other leadership activities before their appointment, they initially had no intention of rising up the rungs.

Since majority of the female teacher in the study fall in the first category they tended not to actively aspire for leadership positions. Actively aspiring for leadership involves, applying for positions, attending training pertaining to leadership, networking with the gatekeepers, occupying line positions and planning careers. By actively undertaking these activities to access leadership implied that the female teachers were competing with the dominant group. Chances of accessing leadership if one took this route would lead to negative results. It seemed prudent for these women to be asked to apply and as Mertz and McNeely put it "they waited for positions to come to them ... to be an obvious choice, before applying" (p.9). According to Addi-Racciah [44], these gender neutral practices and strategies (and attitudes) perpetuate the image of an organisation managed by male cultures and as such worked to the disadvantage of the female teachers.

Female teachers did not perceive existence of stereotypical beliefs held about women aspiring and holding leadership positions. Majority did not believe that spouses, children and domestic responsibility affect the decision to join leadership. The bivariate correlation coefficient computed for the relationship between female teacher's perception of socio-cultural factors and their leadership aspiration revealed a non significant correlation; $r(315) = -.095, p > 0.05$ (Table 4.11). The relationship was negative but not significant. This implies that socio-cultural factors do not have an impact on female teachers' aspiration to leadership positions. The null hypothesis failed to be rejected.

Conclusion

The study findings reveal that female teachers' perception of socio cultural factors did not have a significant relationship with their leadership aspiration. The general expectation basing on previous research reveals that gendered stereotypical beliefs regarding leadership and their traditional roles, influences their aspiration and possibly entry into leadership. Socio-cultural factors may still serve as a barrier into getting an education and subsequently into the teaching profession, but seems to stop playing a role once one is within the school's vicinity and system. The study has identified policies such as the two thirds gender rule enshrined in the Kenya constitution 2010 and Free Primary Education policy as shielding women against gender discrimination, stereotyping their capabilities and exonerates them from being perceived as inefficient. The findings of this study suggest that socio cultural factors are non significant when female teachers aspire for leadership. However, if these socio cultural factors that bring about social inequality are not recognized and acknowledged, then it becomes difficult to deal with institutional factors and personal deterrents to leadership. As Saeeda (nd) says that "...no law can

enforce equality and social justice unless equality is socially acknowledged and practised”

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