

Challenges that contribute to low participation of women in educational leadership at government primary schools, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the challenges affecting women's participation in educational leadership. The participants were 106 teachers and 24 school leaders. The respondents were selected using stratified random sampling, purposive sampling and comprehensive sampling methods. The findings from the study revealed that the perception of school leaders and teachers was high towards women leaders' ability, skill and leadership competence. Despite their ability and competence, women are still largely underrepresented in the leadership of primary schools. There were several challenges at the self-image, organisational and societal levels preventing qualified women from ascending to junior positions in primary schools. At the self-image level, challenges such as women still acknowledging the world as masculine, women's fear of balancing professional work and family responsibility, fear of success in achievement, lack of mentor and role models, reluctance of women to hold position of power, lack of awareness and knowledge of organisational culture were found to be deterring women from taking up leadership positions. In addition, cultural challenges such as cultural and religious sentiment with regard to women inferior to men, male prejudice reflecting stereotype women as less acceptant than men in society, misconception of the society about women's roles, girls and boys being socialised by different roles and expectation in the society were seen as major hindrances of women's participation in educational leadership in the study area.

Keywords: Educational leadership, challenges, contribute, participation, primary school.

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1. Introduction

Education is a pillar for the development of a nation and other changes to bring about better understanding and communication, as well as interaction among people. Different research findings support the above-mentioned idea. Emebet (2003) pointed out that education is the basic indicator showing the status of a society, the rate of enrolment and success to determine the income level, status, influence rate of mobility and confidence. In addition to personal gains, education is considered to be the driving force behind the economic, social and cultural development of a country.

Education is emphasised on both Dakar and Beijing platforms for action as key to women's empowerment. It expands women's opportunities, enhances their capacity to develop their full potential, contributes to more equal gender relations and ultimately enables women to benefit from development intervention. The education of women improves their living standard, reduction of population growth and decrease child mortality. Furthermore, it enables them to use their 'voice' more effectively in decision-making in the house holds, community work place and public arena, and to get employed and conduct transactions informal institutions. The more educated a person is, the more legible they are for acquiring leadership positions. As women are educated, they would be capable of making decision, influencing other creative ideas and managing situations; while this lies true, traditionally management has been dominated by men (UNESCO, 2000).

In educational institutions, women are given the same opportunity as men to promote, but females do not become leaders due to the barriers resulting from societal structure, wrong perceptions from family and women's point of view towards leadership, the problem of working hours and career obstacles resulting from educational organisation and environment (Shakeshaft, 2009).

In the case of Ethiopia, right from the outset, the system of education has never been encouraging for women. Policies of education were highly affected by religious, cultural and other values, which consider the education of girls low priority and which destined women to marriage and household management. The type of lesson given to males and females was different, limiting women's education to reading only, not writing (Amanuel & Mulugeta, 2010).

There is a deeply rooted belief that women are not competent to lead; that is because there is a belief in people's minds between the qualities that we associate with muscularity decisiveness, aggressiveness and competence. There is much overlap between leadership qualities and those we associate with being feminine, which is an inclination towards consensus building, to be commands expressive and nurturing (Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2007). Much of the language of leadership is strongly linked to the current dominating image of masculinity and tough competitive confidence, logical, rational and decisive, with the emphasis on control rather than negotiation and collaboration.

Ethiopian women are subject to gender discrimination in every aspect of their lives like other women in any part of the world in economic, social, cultural and legal aspects. Gender discrimination affects not only women but also the overall growth of the country. They do have less access to leadership and employment. This significantly hampers any effort of women in pursuing their life goals (Frezer, 2009). According to Berouk (2004), in many parts of the world, women are either excluded or marginalised from higher level political, social, economic and cultural arrangements; indeed, the proportion of men elected and appointed as leaders and decision-makers compared to women in the same positions is highly skewed, with men overwhelmingly dominating the political field across the board. Prior researchers suggest that the situation in Ethiopia is different. Educational management is an area which has been given much attention. However, there are gaps between educational policy and its implementation as far as women's participation in educational leadership is concerned.

Historically, leadership positions have been conceived as a sole province of masculine concept. Until very recently, women were not given opportunities to become leaders because of the nature of the work place and organisational atmospheres that traditionally reflect masculine values of competition aggression and achievement (Zellman, 2016). As a result, men and women's values, traits and activities

of leadership were traditionally associated with masculinity (Welsh, 2015). In this regard, women's possibility of assuming leadership and managerial positions seemed to be confounded by sex-role stereotypes.

Women have been victims of traditional culture for many centuries. In addition, sex biases have prevented them from full participation in the field of leadership and decision-making. There is no exception to the rule when it comes to their participation in educational leadership (Sarah, 2011).

The underrepresentation of women in positions of senior management levels within educational institutions continues to be a matter of some concern, particularly as the teaching force is largely dominated nationally and internationally. Women's studies in gender and leadership have revealed a number of barriers to women seeking educational leadership and management positions (Leela, 2003).

A research was conducted with regard to the problems of the underrepresentation of Ethiopian women in educational administration (Jemberu, 2010). The study shows the effects of stereotypes on women and men's aspiration for leadership positions, which indicates that women had a low level of aspiration to these positions.

Asefa (2012), in his discussion on promotion of the status of women in Ethiopia, indicated that the traditional domain of women in home management, child bearing and rearing function are still the predominant roles of many women in Ethiopia and women in the country are underrepresented in most of the social and economic programmes of the country. Similarly, the Ministry of Women's Affair (2006) in the analysis on gender gap with respect to leadership and decision-making found that women's status in Ethiopia in the political and public sectors is low. Accordingly, the report recognised that women are still largely underrepresented in decision-making positions at all levels with no major progress in attaining political power in legislative bodies.

Therefore, this study investigates the challenges that contributed to low participation of women in leadership in government primary schools of Sekela district.

1.1. Basic research questions

1. What is the perception of school leaders and teachers towards women's ability as school principals?
2. To what extent organisational challenges affect the participation of women in educational leadership?
3. To what extent the influence of women's self-imaging affects them in their participation in educational leadership?
4. To what extent cultural challenges affect women's participation in educational leadership?

1.2. Objectives of the study

The overall objective of this study was to explore the existing status with regard to the challenges of women's participation in educational leadership in some selected government primary schools of Sekela district and to come up with remedial solutions in order to improve their involvement and participation of women. Accordingly, the specific objectives of this study are:

1. To study the perception of teachers and school leaders towards women's ability as school principals.
2. To identify how organisational challenges affect women's participation in educational leadership.
3. To identify how women's self-image influences their participation of in educational leadership.
4. To identify how cultural challenges affect women's participation in educational leadership.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Design of the study

The researchers employed a quantitative descriptive survey method for this study. The quantitative method focuses on gathering, organising, analysing and interpreting numerical data with a specific survey method. With respect to this, Creswell (2003) stated that survey research is useful for generalising a sample of the population, so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitude or behaviour of the population. The survey design is the preferred type of data collection procedure for the study as it is advantageous in terms of the economy of the design and the rapid turnaround in data collection. It is also the preferred type of data collection procedure because it uses formal instruments to study the trends, attitudes or practices of the sample. It describes with emphasis what actually exists, such as current condition, practice, situation or any phenomena. Since the current study is aimed at examining women’s participation in educational leadership and challenges, the survey method is appropriate to use for the study. So, the researchers found the descriptive survey method to be convenient for the study for the above-mentioned reasons.

2.2. Population, sample size and sampling techniques

Table 1. Background information of respondents

Back ground of Respondents		Respondents					
		Male		Female		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Responsibility	Teachers	58	87.9%	48	88.9%	106	88.3
	Vice principals	11	91.7%	1	8.3%	12	100
	Principals	9	75%	3	25%	12	100
Service years in teaching	1–5	8	10,25%	5	9.62%	13	10
	6–10	15	19.23%	17	32.69%	32	24.62
	11–15	37	47.44%	19	36.52%	56	43.30
	16–20	14	17.94%	11	21.15%	25	19.23
	21 and above	4	5.12%	–	–	4	3.07
Educational qualification	Certificate	26	44.83%	31	59.62%	57	41.30
	Diploma	45	57.69%	21	40.38%	66	52.89
	Degree	7	8.97%	–	–	7	5.38

The study was conducted in the administrative district of Sekela. The researchers selected the place for its accessibility to obtain the necessary sample size for conducting the present research. The determination of the population and sample schools was based on the 2018Annual Statistical Report of the district’s education office. According to this report, there were 12primary schools (all government schools). In the 12primary schools, there are 12 principals, 12 vice principals (totally24 school leaders) and 106 teachers. Among the 12 government primary schools, 3 of these schools had female principals and the remaining9hadmale principals. In order to make the sample size more manageable, 12 sample primary schools were selected by using purposive sampling techniques because purposive sampling is convenient to get data from female principals. From these schools, a total of 58 male and 48 female (totally106) teachers were selected. Besides the 9 male and 3 female principals, 11 male and1 female vice principals (totally 24 school leaders) participated.

2.3. Data gathering instruments

The tool that was used to gather data was a questionnaire which consisted of closed and open-ended items.

2.3.1. Questionnaire

In order to collect relevant data, the questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended items was set for school leaders and teachers with the intention to secure pertinent information with less consumption of time. The questionnaire consisted of items dealing with personal data of all respondents, whereas the remaining were used to identify the major challenges encountered in participation of women in educational leadership. One set of the questionnaire, which comprised 32 closed and 4 open-ended items, was prepared for teachers and school leaders in order to explore their opinions and perceptions of the current challenges affecting women’s participation in educational leadership.

2.4. Data analysis techniques

As mentioned earlier, data which were gathered through the questionnaire had two parts. The first part of the questionnaire related to factual information, which was related to background information. These data were presented and analysed based on different variables. The second part of the questionnaire was related to the basic questions of the research. These data were tabulated and expressed in simple descriptive statistical tools. A mean score was used to describe which portion of subjects agreed or disagreed with the given items. Independent *t*-test was used to detect whether there was a statistically significant mean difference between the views of the two independent groups of the respondents on the same given item. One sample *t*-test was also used to check which inhibiting challenge was significantly affecting women’s participation in educational leadership in the study area. Open-ended questions that were answered by the respondents were discussed qualitatively.

3. Analysis and discussion of the results

Table 2. Perception of teachers and school leaders towards women principals

n	Items	Respondents				t-value	df	Sig(2-tailed)
		Teachers n = 106		School leaders n = 24				
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std			
1	Women by nature possess skills to managing and leading their subordinates	3.85	0.935	3.56	0.712	-1.425	66	0.156
2	Women have capacity to plan and coordinate desired activities	3.95	0.959	3.71	0.851	-1.239	57	0.217
3	Women can implement rules and regulations	3.99	0.961	3.90	0.856	0.446	57	0.657
4	Women have promote optimum use of resources	3.76	1.056	3.87	0.975	0.529	55	0.597
5	Women have ability to delegate duties and responsibilities	3.79	1.039	3.84	0.723	0.529	73	0.754
6	Women have ability to create better working atmosphere	3.89	1.022	3.78	0.941	-0.567	55	0.571
7	Women view things from different perspective in advance of decision	3.71	1.119	3.40	1.073	-1.389	53	0.167
8	Women can make decision that are not affected by nepotism	3.95	0.959	3.90	0.777	-0.251	62	0.802

NB. The significance level at $p < 0.05$ has been used in the whole discussion in this thesis writing process.

School leaders = school principals and vice principals from Tables2–4.

STD = standard deviation from Tables2–5.

DF = degree of freedom from Tables2–5.

As shown in Table2, on item 1, which requested the respondents' degree of agreement on the women by nature possess skills to lead and manage their subordinates, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.85 and 3.56, respectively, which indicated that the respondents agreed that women by nature possess skills to lead and manage their subordinates. Independent *t*-test was computed and there was a statistical mean difference among the two groups of respondents. Porat (2008) states that female leaders have attributes of nurturing; being sensitive, empathetic, cooperative and accommodative are increasingly associated with effective administration. While these characteristics are innate and valuable, women possessing the qualities of a good leader still face higher attrition and slower career mobility; Sakhi (2007) also strongly argues that women have a strong leadership ability based on the nature of a woman as a mother.

As illustrated in Table 2, item 2, regarding women principal abilities, women have the capacity to plan and coordinate the desired activities, was rated high in their agreement as indicated by the mean scores of teachers and school leaders which were 3.95 and 3.71, respectively. As revealed in the result of the study, respondents agreed that women have the capacity to plan and coordinate the desired activities. Independent *t*-test was computed and there was a significant mean difference among the two groups. According to the open-ended questions held with educational heads, they said that women were very much competent with respect to adhering strictly to the desired activities of the schools and maintaining the defined standards of performance in order to accomplish the organisational goals.

Item 3, in Table 2, indicates that the grand mean score of the respondents in all groups fall between 3.5 and 4.49, which marked high agreement of respondents in their response to women can implement rule and regulation of the schools. To obtain the significant difference among the two groups of respondents, independent *t*-test was computed and there was no mean significant difference among the two groups.

In the same table, for item 4, the mean scores of teachers and principals were 3.76 and 3.90, respectively, which indicated agreement of respondents with women can promote optimum use of school resources. To obtain the existence of significant difference among the respondent groups, independent *t*-test was computed and no statistical mean difference was observed among the respondents. In this study's results, it is shown that women use their administrative abilities for coordinating various utilisation of allotted resources and for getting things done by their subordinates.

As indicated in item 5, in Table 2, which states that women have the ability to delegate duties and responsibilities, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.78 and 3.84, respectively, which showed the agreement of respondents on the issue raised. Independent *t*-test was computed to obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among the two groups of respondents, but there was no significant mean difference observed. Morrison (2009) states that woman in leaderships or those seeking leadership positions must acquire skills to survive in the work place. The first skill is demonstrating a commitment to work in order to stay ahead of the competition and to learn to delegate effectively. A good delegator will be able to analyse the job, decide what needs to be delegated, plan the delegation, select the person or persons and follow-up with the delegated activity.

With regard to the responses to Table 2, for item 6, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.89 and 3.78, respectively, which indicated an agreement that women principals in their respective primary schools have the ability to create a better working atmosphere. Independent *t*-test was computed and no significant difference was observed. Conner (2013) stated that women in educational leadership administrators focus on instructional leadership in supervisory practice and are concerned with students' individual differences, knowledge of curriculum teaching methods and objectives of teaching in the area. From the above discussion, we can conclude that by creating a leader-teacher relationship quality in educational leadership, principals can effectively motivate teachers to improve the effectiveness of their teaching practice.

For item 7, in Table 2, which states that women view things from a different perspective in advance of decision, teachers and school leaders agreed on the issue raised as shown by the mean scores that fall between 3.5 and 4.49, respectively. Independent *t*-test was computed to obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among two groups and a significant mean difference was observed.

As depicted in item 8, in Table 2, respondents were requested whether women can make decisions that are not affected by nepotism. Accordingly, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.95 and 3.90, respectively, which indicated agreement in making decision that women are not affected by nepotism in their respective primary schools. Independent *t*-test was computed to obtain the existence of a mean difference between the two groups and there was no significant mean difference observed. This view is supported by the related literature in Moshal (2011), who states that women evaluate their decisions more often than their male counterpart, and on top of that they exercise more participative and inclusive strategies in decision-making and also resolve conflicts than men in the educational administration.

In the open-ended questions, the respondents reported that chances have to be given for female teachers to participate in the educational leadership; female teachers are more effective than male teachers in leadership activities in clubs and department heads in practice. These respondents also underlined that female students were responsive than male students of the same position.

Table 3. Organisational challenges that hinder women from taking up educational leadership positions.

No	Items	Respondents				<i>t</i> -value	Df	Sig (2- tailed)
		Teachers <i>n</i> = 106		School leaders <i>n</i> = 24				
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std			
3.1	The rules, regulations and norms of the organisations do not encourage women to come to leadership positions.	3.66	1.249	3.28	1.373	1.470	48	0.144
3.2	Organisational and occupational segregation in the work place.	3.37	1.369	3.09	1.173	1.151	58	0.255
3.3	Lack of role model women in the area.	3.50	1.311	3.28	1.275	0.868	52	0.387
3.4	Insufficiency of support and motivation from stakeholders and colleagues in their organisations.	3.57	1.265	3.96	0.694	-2.318	80	0.023
3.5	Negative attitude of male towards affirmative action programmes for females.	3.66	1.943	3.12	1.070	2.274	56	0.025
3.6	Disrespecting of male in their respective organisations.	3.58	1.178	3.68	1.060	-0.441	56	0.660
3.7	As educational organisations are complex by their very nature they cannot be led by women.	3.48	1.181	3.02	1.092	1.921	55	0.057
3.8	Women do not manifest quality leadership skill as men.	3.57	1.286	3.43	1.162	0.543	56	0.588

As it can be seen from Table 3, item1, the mean score of teachers and school leaders were 3.66 and 3.28, respectively, which indicated agreement and partial agreement of respondents in the rules, regulations and norms of the organisations, which did not encourage women to take up leadership positions. To obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among the groups, independent *t*-test was computed and there was a significant mean difference observed among the respondents. This view is supported by the review literature in Whitaker and Lane (2014), who argued persuasively that

organisations rely on male standards and experience from earlier decess, these masculine norms inhibit experience and contributions of women.

As shown in Table 3, item 2, concerning organisational and occupational segregation in the work place, the mean scores of teachers and principal were 3.37 and 3.09, respectively, which indicated a partial agreement on the issue raised. Independent *t*-test was applied to test the existent of a significant mean difference among the two groups of respondents on the item raised and a significant mean difference was observed. According to Bond (2015), the institutional challenges affecting women negatively include discriminatory appointment and promotion practice male resistance to women in management positions, absence of policies and legislations to ensure participation of women and limited opportunities for leadership training and for demonstrating competence as a result of power structure in the work place, which were pointed out as the most important disable challenges for women's participation in leadership.

With regard to the responses to Table 3, for item 3, the mean scores of teachers and principals were 3.50 and 3.28, respectively, which indicated agreement and partial agreement as the lack of role model women in the area affects women's participation in the study area. Independent *t*-test was computed and a significant mean difference was observed.

From this we can conclude that the absence of role model women from the educational leadership organisation has a negative effect on women participation in primary education leadership.

As shown in Table 3, item 4, regarding insufficiency of support and motivation from stakeholders and colleagues in their institution, the mean scores of teachers and principals were 3.57 and 3.96, respectively, which indicated an agreement of the respondents on the issue raised. To obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among the respondents, independent *t*-test was computed and a significant mean difference was observed. From this finding, it is possible to conclude that the surrounding stakeholders and colleagues did not play a significant role in supporting and motivating female teachers in their participation in educational leadership. This implies that stakeholders and colleagues did lack of adequate information on the empowerment of women in the educational leadership.

With regard to item 5, in Table 3, which states that there is a negative attitude of males towards affirmative action programmes for females, the mean scores of teachers and principals were 3.66 and 3.12, respectively, which shows that teachers agreed and school leaders partial agreed. Independent *t*-test was computed to obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among the two groups of respondents and a significant mean difference was observed. From the above discussion, it is possible to understand that teachers and school leaders were not actively participating in the implementation of women's participation programme on educational leadership. This issue needs due attention from both school leaders and teachers since women educational programme needs collaboration of all concerned bodies. Thus, empowering women in every aspect of life is not only their own human right but also essential for the development of a nation as far as women are supposed to be half of the work force.

As shown in item 6, in Table 3, the respondents were asked about the disrespect of males in their respective primary schools. Accordingly, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.58 and 3.68, respectively, which marked an agreement in this regard. Independent *t*-test was computed and no significant mean difference was observed among the two groups of respondents. From this discussion, it is possible to conclude that the male primary school teachers displayed negative attitudes through uncooperative and non-supportive behaviour with the head official's activities.

Item 7, in Table 3, indicates that the mean scores of respondents in all groups fall between 2.5 and 3.49, which marked a partial agreement of respondents in their response that the educational organisations are complex by their very nature and cannot be led by women. To obtain the significant mean difference among the different groups of respondents, independent *t*-test was computed and a significant mean difference was found. The open-ended questions suggested by the district education head office and other leaders also indicate that one of the challenges that prevents women's

participation in the educational leadership is the complexity of the schools, such as the distribution (location) of the schools, the distance from the town to the schools and there is no infrastructure; these are other challenges that hinder women’s participation in primary schools.

Item 8, in Table 3, indicates that the mean scores of the respondents fall between 3.5 and 4.5, which revealed an agreement of the respondents that women do not manifest quality leadership skill as men. To obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among the respondent groups, independent *t*-test was computed and no significant mean difference was observed.

Table 4. Women’s poor self-image challenges that hinder them from taking up educational leadership positions

No	Items	Teachers <i>n</i> = 106		School leaders <i>n</i> = 24		<i>t</i> -value	df	Sig (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std	Mean	Std			
3.1	Women still acknowledge/recognizes the world as ‘masculine’.	3.64	1.243	3.96	0.739	-1.838	87	0.069
3.2	Women perceive themselves as less skill full in leadership.	3.36	1.354	3.75	1.077	-1.650	63	0.104
3.3	Women are having less aspiration to become school principals.	3.61	1.151	3.78	0.974	-0.748	59	0.456
3.4	Women’s lack of awareness and knowledge of the organisational cultural and politics.	3.45	1.139	4.03	0.782	-3.266	74	0.002
3.5	Women’s fear of success in achievement will lead to negative attitudes from colleagues.	3.92	1.084	4.00	0.622	-0.496	91	0.64
3.6	Lack mentors and role models discourage women’s seeking the position.	3.66	1.161	3.65	0.865	0.865	68	0.983
3.7	Women themselves are reluctant to hold position power.	3.61	1.167	3.59	0.979	0.094	60	0.925
3.8	Women’s fear of balancing professional work and family responsibility.	3.89	1.032	3.87	0.751	0.128	69	0.891

Item 1, in Table 4, regarding women still acknowledge/recognise the world as masculine, was rated high in their agreement as indicated by the mean scores of teachers and school leaders which were 3.64 and 3.96, respectively, as revealed in the results of the study; the respondents agreed that women who still acknowledges the world as masculine had a major challenge in participating in educational leadership positions at school level. To obtain a significant mean difference across the two groups of respondents, independent *t*-test was computed and a significant mean difference was observed. This view is supported by the literature in Sarah’s (2011) study, where women acknowledge the world as masculine and perceive themselves as compliant, passive, submissive and less skilful than their male counter parts.

For item 2, in Table 4, which state that women perceive themselves as less skilful in leadership, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.36 and 3.75, respectively, which indicated teachers’ partial agreement and school leaders’ agreement on the issue raised. Independent *t*-test was computed and there was a significant mean difference among the two groups of respondents on the issue raised. This suggestion, supported in the review literature by Nzomo (2006), concludes that women and men have equal potential for individual development but the only differences in the realisation of that potential, therefore, must result from externally imposed constraints and from influence of social institutions and values.

With regard to the responses given by teachers and school leaders on item 3, in Table 4, their mean scores were 3.61 and 3.71, respectively, which indicated an agreement of respondents that women have less aspiration to become school principals in primary schools. Independent *t*-test was computed to obtain the existence of a significant mean difference among the two independent groups and a significant mean difference was found. In line with this finding, Asefa (2012), in his discussion on promotion of the status of women in Ethiopia, generalised that women showed less aspiration to position in educational leadership.

As can be seen in item 4, in Table 4, regarding women's lack of awareness and knowledge organisational culture and politics, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.45 and 4.03, respectively, which showed that teachers partially agreed and school leaders agreed, which indicated that the respondents believed that the given inhibiting challenge affects women's participation in the study area. Independent *t*-test was computed and a significant mean difference was observed. Smith (2005) states that in a male dominated society, men head most institutions and the work forces are designed by them in order to fit men's needs, women leaders, to survive on the face of the realities of the working world of them, have to learn the organisations culture, that is how it is set up and how it functions. This does not mean that women must assume the behaviours defined by culture, but they must be aware of the organisational environment in order to work in or around it and maximise their effectiveness.

As can be observed from the result in the Table 4, item5, regarding women's fear success in achievement will led to negative attitude from colleagues inhibiting challenges from women in the participation of educational leadership were rated on the scale of agreement as indicated by the mean score values teachers and school leaders were 3.92 and 4.00, respectively. Independent *t*-test was computed and there was significance mean difference was observed among the independent two groups of respondents. As revealed on the result of the study the respondents agreed that the given inhibiting challenges had negative impact to women in the participation of in educational leadership in the study area. Shake shaft (2009) point out that, female's fear that success in competitive achievement situation will lead to negative consequences such as loss of femininity and unpopularity .This failure or success dilemma is the self-image women have regarding this lack of acceptance by male or and female peers, superiors and subordinates.

Item 6, in Table 4, which states that lack of mentors and role models discourages women seeking the position, indicated mean scores of teachers and school leaders 3.66 and 3.65, respectively, which indicated an agreement that challenges affect women's participation in educational leadership at school levels. Independent *t*-test was computed and no significant mean difference was observed among the responses of the two groups. This view is supported in Whitaker and Lane (2014), who indicated that lack of highly prominent women visible as role models in the position of authority and responsibility influenced female teachers' unsuitability for positions of power and responsibility. The scholars also concluded that one answer to the barriers and obstacles women administrators deal with on a daily basis is mentoring.

From this we can understand that mentoring is an important activity which should be done by the school leader in order to develop female teachers' self-confidence, administrative skills and knowledge, and it was found that there was a practices of mentoring female teachers on their performance in the target area primary schools to keep female teachers on the right track, provide positive reinforcement for good leadership behaviour and quick feedback unacceptable or increasing their participations although it was not as expected.

As indicated in Table 4, item7, the respondents were asked to point out their views regarding women themselves are reluctant to hold position or power. Accordingly, the mean score values of teachers and school leaders were 3.61 and 3.59, respectively, rated by the respondents which indicated an agreement with the challenges affecting women's participation in the study area. Independent *t*-test was computed to obtain the existence of a significant statistical mean difference among the two groups and no significant mean difference was observed. This idea is supported by the related literature in

Ndongko (2009), who stressed that women themselves exhibit forms of behaviour that prevent them from attaining leadership positions or getting appointed to management positions in the educational system. From this we can understand that female teachers cause problems for themselves by virtue of their personalities. That is lack of self-motivation in the educational leadership positions.

As can be seen in item 8, in Table 4, respondents were requested whether there were women’s fear of balancing professional work and family responsibility in their primary schools. Accordingly, the mean scores of teachers and school leaders were 3.79 and 3.87, respectively, which indicated an agreement with the challenges affecting women’s participation in primary schools. Independent *t*-test was computed and no significant mean difference was found.

From this discussion, we can understand that domestic issues are challenges that are originated from home. Women manifest themselves from within the family (home) situation. Apart from school managers, women are part of a family. They play a central role in their family’s development. Both men and women contribute to the family, but women play a key role in the running of the family. The double role played by women as managers and as home works places an enormous stress on them. These had roles conflict, by trying to maintain a balance between family responsibility and administrative duties.

Table 5. Comparison of challenges which are significantly affecting women’s participation in educational leadership in the study area

Challenges	Respondents No	Mean	St dev	<i>t</i> -value	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Organisational	130	3.4330	0.70293	-1.120	129	-.06703
Cultural	130	3.6313	0.74746	2.064	129	0.13134
Women self-image	130	3.5951	0.74597	1.498	129	0.09511

One sample *t*-test was used to detect which inhibiting challenge is significantly affecting women’s participation in educational leadership in the study area ($t = 3$).

1 = strongly agree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree; $p < 0.05$.

Table 5 reports the mean, SD, *t*-value and two-tailed significance test of each challenge in the study. The mean values of all challenges were found to be greater than the expected mean or the scale mean ($M = 3.00$), which were used to measure the extent of challenges significantly affecting women’s participation.

Moreover, Table 5 reports that the mean of each challenge obtained from the respondents confirmed that cultural challenge is the most dominant factor which hinders women from being educational leaders of schools in the study area. Lodiaga and Mbevi (2011) in their study revealed that there were cultural causes for the underrepresentation of women in positions of authority and responsibility. These were deep-rooted traditional/cultural concepts that influence women’s participation in educational leadership. These socio-cultural beliefs and stereotypical views promoted the notion of women’s unsuitability for positions of power and responsibility. As a result, these attitudes were significantly gender-based differences conflicting both family and workplace. Nzomo (2006) also contends that the socio-cultural beliefs and myths about the role of women in society are major determinants of women’s failure to advance to the top management in public sector.

From this it is possible to understand that even where women are well-qualified and experienced, the predominance of males in management has resulted in culture where male behavioural patterns are perceived to be the norm and women often find it difficult to be accepted as equals by their communities.

4. Major findings of the study

- With regard to women’s ability as school principals, the findings of the study revealed that women can implement rules and regulations, women can make decisions that are not affected

by nepotism, women have the capacity to plan and coordinate desired activities, women by nature possess skills to manage and lead their subordinates, women view things from a different perspective in advance of their decision, women have the ability to create a better atmosphere and delegate duties and responsibilities. These were rated and agreed by majority of the respondents.

- Concerning organisational challenges that include the rules, regulations and norms of the organisation which do not encourage women to leadership positions, insufficient support and motivation from stakeholders and colleagues in their organisations, negative attitude of males towards affirmative action programmes for females, women do not manifest quality leadership skill as men and lack of role model women in the area were rated and agreed.
- Women's self-image influences the finding of the study revealed that the majority of respondents agreed that the following women self-image influences were found to be serious problems. These include women still acknowledge/recognise the world as 'masculine', women perceive themselves as less skilful in leadership, women are having less aspirations to become school principals, women's lack of awareness and knowledge of the organisational culture and politics and women's fear of success in achievement, which lead to negative attitudes from colleagues.
- Respondents agreed that the cultural beliefs and myths about the role of women in the society are the major determinants of women's failure to participate in educational leadership.

5. Conclusion

From the finding of this study it was possible to conclude that the perception of school leaders and teachers was high towards women's ability, skill and leadership competence recognising and accepting their ability. Women possess the necessary ability, skills and competence to accomplish the respective responsibilities in primary schools. Despite their ability and competence, women are still largely underrepresented in primary school leadership in the study area. The findings revealed that female leaders in primary schools face unique obstacles in their substantive position in school administration. Organisational, poor self-image and cultural challenges were major factors affecting women's participation in educational leadership positions.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are expressed:

- Female teachers possess the necessary ability, skill and competency to accomplish the respective responsibilities in primary schools.
- They should be competent and committed for every duty and responsibility in schools to break through the traditional belief of the society that is considered as the leading role fit only for males.
- Women who are serving as principals should develop an effective networking system that is designed to encourage and support other women principals.

- In every activity that disseminates information to the public, the organisation should integrate egalitarian sex-role stereotypes that emphasise equal participation of males and females in those tasks traditionally considered appropriate for either sex.
- The school governing body should be engaged to assist women leaders in disciplining education.
- Women should involve themselves in managerial work to gain experience from networks with other women in similar positions.

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