Challenges Facing Female Teachers as Leaders in Nigerian Public Secondary Schools: A Systematic Narrative of Literature

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Abstract
The study examined the challenges facing female teachers in becoming leaders in Nigeria. The primary purpose was to investigate how much women participate in tertiary education in Nigeria as leaders, secondly, the barriers to women's career progress in secondary school leadership in Nigeria, and thirdly, to determine the methods and, or policies that can be employed to end the underrepresentation of women in positions of leadership in Nigeria's secondary schools. The review of systematic narrative of literature was adopted. The findings revealed that there were societal solutions, organisational solutions, as well as the implications for principals and government. For the societal solutions, the past two to three decades have witnessed increased but not sufficient enrolment of the women population in secondary school education. However, a closer analysis of secondary education statistics reveals the different nature of the problem in different historical and cultural contexts. Women have to navigate cultural conventions and beliefs, in order to develop their own leadership styles and seek professions in education. The attitudes of the instructors and community people toward women in leadership were progressively altered by these women leaders as well. A number of cultural barriers still exist in Nigerian society as explored in findings-one, which seriously impedes women's development as citizens and professionals, especially within secondary school education. For Organisational solutions, the prevalence of instructional leadership promotes male-dominated autocratic leadership styles which are not inclusive of diversity, such as gender differences. Principals will need to consider developing women leaders to modify instructional leadership and bring about something closer to a distributed leadership style which brings out the best in male and female leaders. The study concluded that principals in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa must have a thorough awareness of the socioeconomic and cultural problems that pose obstacles to women's advancement in leadership. This awareness is necessary for teachers to promote equality.

Keywords: challenges, female teachers, leadership, secondary schools.

Introduction

The degree of attention given to women leadership in secondary school education in Nigeria has increased considerably in recent years especially after the government introduced affirmative action for both girls and women in education and employment in support of sustainable development goals, and the Nigerian blueprint for economic development (Imhangbe, Okecha & Obozuwa, 2019). In spite of all that, women are still underrepresented in leadership. Female leaders in secondary schools in Nigeria are more likely than male leaders to be effective, disciplined, and well-controlled, cautious with money, more devoted to their jobs, and more aware of the needs of their instructors. Women are supposedly more sensitive to human values and emotions and exhibit more traits of role models. Male leaders are perceived as being more democratic, less demanding and tough, more consistent in their behaviour, funnier, and more aware of the importance of finishing the duties assigned to them. Male and female leaders are shown to be more interested with systems and norms, whereas female leaders are more concerned with relationships and environment. Hence, the androgynous approach is better used here to balance whatever challenges facing female teachers in becoming leaders in Nigerian secondary schools, especially within the wider African contexts, and with considerations of the implications of these for principals and government.

It is a known fact that the technique of administration differs with gender, while female leaders place emphasis on how decisions are made and reached, share information via relevant technology, motivate their staff members and delegate tasks more effectively, male leaders keep information better and put priority to achieving goals. With regards to their styles, male leaders are affirmed to be democratic while females have the tendency to be autocratic. The annotated bibliographies have identified some of these qualities as important for school leadership (Iyekolo, Okafor & Abdulaziz, 2020; Okorafor, Obidile, Okorafor & Uduanochie, 2015; Aladejana & Aladaejana, 2005). Thus, it can be said that gender affects the quality, style and technique of administration of school leaders. Although to differing degrees, both male and female heads have demonstrated some of the numerous features that indicate effective leadership qualities of devotion to duty, empathy, competence, and consistency. The fact that most Nigerian teachers favour male administrators can be explained by the fact that some educators detest being punished and would rather attend institutions where they could do whatever they pleased. The culture that assigns the dominating positions to males has been regarded as the main issue faced by Nigerian women who head schools. The male-dominated society, the unwillingness of many men to accept women in leadership roles, religious feelings, and marital issues are just a few of the ways that this problem shows itself, as noted in this research. All of them artificially restrict the advancement of women, particularly in secondary education.

Female leadership in schools, particularly secondary schools, is comparable to male leadership in terms of quality and methods. As a result, it is important to guarantee that women hold more leadership roles. This would result in more women contributing to the growth of the country, particularly in a country like Nigeria where women now make up almost as much of the population as males in leadership positions. The primary aim of this paper is to investigate the challenges facing female teachers in becoming leaders in Nigerian secondary schools and their implications for principals and government in Nigeria. Specifically, the main objectives are (a) to assess the extent to which female teachers participate in leadership positions in Nigerian secondary schools, (b) to examine the major school organisational factors that affects female teachers in becoming leaders in Nigerian secondary schools, and (c) to identify what strategies are in place to promote female teachers' participation in leadership positions in Nigerian secondary schools.

Methods

The paper used a systematic narrative of literature review method to find out the challenges facing female teachers in becoming leaders in Nigerian public secondary schools. The reason for settling for a systematic narrative of literature review is that it may be difficult to carry out an empirical research because it may be difficult to get accurate data from the school principals. The samples contained selected journal articles from 2018 to 2023 due to the slow development of gender equality. Data were collected from *EBSCOhost, Elsevier, Google Scholar, ProQuest, SpringerLink, and Wiley*. This is a database that allows full-text articles and abstracts of journal articles, textbooks, and related and relevant publications. The search terms employed the following but not limited to female teachers/leaders, educational leadership, women leadership behaviour, factors relating to working conditions and (gender discrimination), advantages of a teacher leader, and challenges of being a teacher leader. Relevance studies were informed by the initial literature review and determined by the key themes, parameters, and context of the research question. Descriptive analysis was used to present the findings from the reviews. The findings from the review were summarised under the following sub-themes: (a) Theme I: Female Teachers' Participation in Leadership Positions in Nigerian Secondary Schools; (b) Theme II: School Organisational Factors: Female Teachers and Leadership in Nigerian Secondary Schools; and (c) Theme III: Strategies for Promoting Female Teachers' Participation in Leadership Positions in Nigerian Secondary Schools.

RESULTS

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Analysis of Finding One:

Female Teachers' Participation in Leadership Positions in Nigerian Secondary Schools - *It would seem that there are both negative and positive cultural and social challenges which face female teachers in becoming Nigerian secondary school leaders".*

The Negative Challenges

The negative challenges identified in the findings are that social, cultural, and historical factors which can create barriers to female teachers becoming principals. The positive challenges identified are

that the social and cultural identity of women gives them qualities that enable them to be very effective as democratic and collaborative leaders. The negative finding as validly supported by Lumby and Azaola (2014) as they acknowledged that it is impossible to overstate the impact of gender on the experiences of female school administrators and leaders. For instance, Lumby and Azaola (2014) discovered that even in the age brackets when women make up the vast majority of the workforce, women are still underrepresented in educational leadership positions in South Africa.

The Positive Challenges

In the words of Coleman (2007), after recognizing some of the benefits that female leaders bring to the workplace, some males began to change their leadership style, taking on more feminine or transformational qualities. In some of the schools found around the United Kingdom, when male and female principals were asked to rate the stereotypically female and male traits that each principal exhibited, the results showed that both genders had more stereotypically feminine traits. These stereotypically female traits included a greater focus on teamwork and collaboration.

Androgynous Leadership Style

In the past decade, researchers have begun to recognise that people do not always lead in ways that are consistent with gender specific qualities. This has initiated more studies on individuals with an androgynous leadership styles, displaying neither stereotypically male nor female traits (Appelbaum, Audet & Miller, 2003; Coleman, 2003; Stelter, 2002). While an androgynous leadership style came naturally to some people, others consciously had to try to change the way in which they led.

Discussions of Finding One

What are the implications of the analysis of finding one for women becoming leaders in secondary schools in Nigeria?

In Nigeria, women make up 50% of the population. They make an indispensable and generally unappreciated contribution to economic life and are extremely important in many facets of society. They were unable to meaningfully influence the decision-making processes, however, due to the restricted practices and limitations, which prevented them from taking advantage of their position and numbers. As a result, only a small portion of Nigeria's labour force, energy, and human resources are accessible for national development, and half of the country's potential is still unrealized. Due to traditional beliefs and practices that prevent their growth and participation in public life, Nigerian women have been marginalized in the official political structures.

History-based barriers to female education continue to impede women's political participation despite constitutional commitments to equal access to education for all and, national drives to register all school-age children, and plans for mass adult and non-formal education. When young girls make selections about their educational pathways under the heavy influence of their family, peer groups, and other influences, they frequently limit the options available to women and lead them towards traditionally female vocations. Nigeria's national development is significantly impacted by social factors. This has a significant impact on how women participate in politics because it limits both their ability to participate and their ability to be present.

This is the type of barrier that Nigerian women encounter the most frequently. Women who have completed more schooling have a stronger propensity to engage in politics, acquire jobs, and avoid tense situations. One could have anticipated that women would predominate in politics, especially in democracies, given that they make up more than half of the population of the world's countries. However, because they do either underpaid or unpaid tasks, the majority of women are entrapped in abject poverty that never ends. It is important to keep in mind that this circumstance is what led to the manufactured political powerlessness of Nigerian women.

There is no disputing the reality that women are mainly absent from politics. We can expand their participation and affect change at the family and grassroots levels by empowering them. The nation's overall development will gain from this. Future research may examine the attitudes of various generations towards women in leadership positions. Our understanding of how deeply embedded gendered ideas are in a culture and whether they are changing to suit societal changes would be improved by this. Above all, in the Nigerian context, if cultural change comes about, the feminine qualities of leadership could become blended into the qualities of all effective leadership, male and female. As we shall see in finding two, this would be democratic and distributed leadership rather than the more male-dominated and autocratic instructional leadership prevalent in public schools.

Analysis of Finding Two:

School Organizational Factors: Female Teachers and Leadership in Nigerian Secondary Schools - *It would seem that many Nigerian and Sub-Saharan secondary schools, autocratic, male-dominated instructional leadership may be a major challenge to the recognition and development of feminine leadership styles.*

An instructional leader at a small school will inevitably be fairly hands-on, whereas in a larger school, they will focus on increasing the leadership ability of other staff. Again, anybody who influences learning outcomes is an instructional leader, there is a place for instructional leadership outside of the classroom context as well. Given this, it might be argued that the word "instructional leadership" has no clear meaning and can be employed in a variety of educational contexts. However, while the function of instructional leaders may vary depending on the context, all instructional leaders have an impact on learning outcomes (Wolverton, Ackerman & Holt, 2005). Consequently, the term instructional leadership can be explained as anyone who influences learning outcomes (Nixon, 2015).

In line with the GLOBE study's findings (Dorfman, *et al.*, 2012; House, *et al*., 2014), Meyer affirms the need of "genuine flexibility," in which leaders remain true to their own beliefs and fundamental aims while adjusting the behaviours and perspectives of other staff members. Three of her eight themes, communication, trust-building, and decision-making, are crucial to leadership and had an impact on the current study. Hence, communication, trust-building, and decision-making can be used by Nigeria and Sub-Saharan school organisations to address issues of male-dominated features, particularly, the instructional leadership style. When determining successful organisational structures and leadership activities, particularly those in education, leaders must consider societal culture (Bryant, Walker & Lee, 2018; Gronn, 2001; Lumby, 2012; Romanowski, 2013; Tang, Yin & Min, 2011; Walker & Riordan, 2010).

It is crucial to link instructional leadership to the organisational structure of the school and to how it affects the personal and professional growth of future female leaders. The influence has been a mainstay of the research on school effectiveness, especially for high-income nations (Grissom, Egalite & Lindsay, 2021). A substantial amount of research indicates that schools with strong administrators typically provide higher student learning results. After classroom instruction, school leadership has been found to be the second most significant internal element impacting student learning (UNESCO, 2018).

Discussions of Finding Two

What are the implications of instructional leadership for the development of potential women leaders in Nigerian and Sub-Saharan secondary schools? Potential female leaders have had limited access to training or professional development on the difficulties faced by female teachers who want to lead secondary schools in Nigeria, with reference to larger African contexts, and with consideration of the implications of these for principals and the government **(**Okorafor, Obidile, Okorafor & Uduanochie, 2015). Using their expertise as a guide, female leaders of diverse teams may already be modifying their behaviours to fit the cultural norms of their subordinates. The converse might also be true; some people could not be aware of the advantages of such comprehension and adaptability. Regardless of prior experience, professional development opportunities with a focus on pertinent knowledge and abilities should be made available to support their performance (Okorafor, *et al.*, 2015).

Future middle level, whole school leaders should be prepared by taking courses that emphasise the knowledge, abilities, and skills needed to lead multicultural communities in the future. Given that schools throughout the world are becoming more and more multicultural, this is relevant for both national and international institutions of learning. By increasing understanding of how instructional leadership may enhance student learning and by providing the necessary training, schools may become more efficient. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) place a strong emphasis on the value of top-notch education for societal and economic advancement. The research presented in this study demonstrates the potential for instructional leadership to improve student learning, which is a crucial component of quality. Although students may respond to female leaders' expertise differently than that of males, women leaders are frequently just as smart, confident, knowledgeable and experienced in the classroom.

The need to develop leadership skills at all levels was highlighted in the conclusion. There is a distinct misconception that when a leadership role is offered, subject knowledge and comprehension

take precedence over the development of necessary skills. There is evidence that leaders need people skills more than subject knowledge when engaging with individuals in a range of situations. The attractive characteristics of leadership roles include the requirement for excellent communication skills, the capacity for task delegation, diplomatic skills, particularly when facing unfavorable remarks, and, finally, the requirement to avoid domination and ensure inclusion. It is challenging for women to alter the negative view of their leadership abilities. Despite recent studies on more androgynous leadership philosophies, they either fall short of upholding the idea of motherhood by displaying the masculine leadership traits or fall short as leaders by showing female caring traits.

Analysis of Finding Three

Strategies for Promoting Female Teachers' Participation in Leadership Positions in Nigerian Secondary Schools - *It would seem that there are challenges facing female teachers becoming leaders in Nigerian and sub-Saharan secondary schools. For these challenges, there are societal solutions, organisational solutions, as well as the implications for principals and government of the solutions identified in the societal and organisational solutions.*

Societal Solutions

A number of cultural barriers still exist in Nigerian society as explored in findings one which seriously impedes women's development as citizens and professionals, especially within secondary school education. A major way forward is to develop the positive maternal leadership qualities of women which are a cultural strength. Women share the duties of motherhood, which are viewed as maternal labour and basic care, in certain African nations, most notably Nigeria.

Efforts to increase women's education in Nigeria need to go beyond rhetoric and should involve policies and programmes with measurable results. Existing women principals should change the perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge that are necessary to effectively manage a school. Possessing confidence, courage, and determination is invaluable in entering and navigating the male-dominated Nigerian cultural setting. Existing women principals can seek effective mentorship by selecting anyone with whom they choose to collaborate and commiserate. These mentors should have longstanding reputations in Nigerian settings and they should be the listening ones and always ready to share ideas.

Organisational Solutions

How can principals develop androgynous kinds of leadership that give recognition to female qualities but develop their potential to modify male autocratic leadership? (Imhangbe, Okecha & Obozuwa, 2019). A move in an "androgynous" direction may help to lessen the double bind paradox, which refers to the conflicting expectations that female leaders should behave in a communal way (e.g., compassionate, caring) to fulfil the female gender role while also acting in an agentic way (e.g., assertive, competitive). It could also make it simpler for women to cope with the issue of leadership roles' role incongruity.

Principals will need to consider developing women leaders to modify instructional leadership and bring about something closer to a distributed leadership style that brings out the best in male and female leaders**.** One of the most important concepts that have emerged in the area of educational leadership over the past ten years is dispersed leadership, which calls for the extension of leadership responsibilities in schools beyond those in official leadership or administrative positions. Researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates for educational reform all over the world have embraced the concept of distributed leadership, which refers to leadership that is shared inside and across schools.

Implications for the Government

School management plays a significant role in supporting efforts to implement gender equality in schools. The education management system in schools generally does not consider aspects of gender equality and justice in planning, implementing, and evaluating. This can be seen from the roles and regulations that often do not cover bullying or indecent treatment of women that affect men and women's relationships. In order to meet the needs mentioned above, efforts should be made to develop gender-responsive planning and budgets. What is meant by gender-responsive school budgets refer to the efforts made by schools to ensure that the budgets issued and the underlying policies and programmes are implemented to answer the needs of every learning citizen from any group, both male and female. A gender-responsive budget is not a 50% budget for men and 50% for women. Nor one that simply has separate budgets for women and men. In the context of schools, in this case, related to

education, gender-responsive budgets include all budgets allocated for education development. Therefore, it is necessary to have a funding framework to address gender issues that are inclusive (Pius-Uwhubetiyi, 2020).

Both the various governments (national, state, and local) and nongovernmental agencies should set up, through the media, educational and information programmes on promoting equal status of women and men. It is necessary to improve networks for utilising findings of research and studies on gender-based issues to raise social awareness on the issue of equal rights and opportunities in education and employment. These can be done through the following ways: (a) use the media to promote international documents pertaining to women's rights and gender equality; (b) disseminate data and findings of studies providing information on the situation of women and men in Nigeria- support research institutions conducting such studies. The policy makers in education need to develop practical oriented mechanisms targeted at ensuring equal access to education for women and men (in all types of schools and at all levels) and taking particular account of the situation in rural areas. This can be achieved through provision of specialised school and vocational counseling, free of stereotypes reinforcing the segmentation of the labour market and feminisation of some of its sectors. Equal access, for girls and boys, to physical activities, and other classes, run both at and outside of school.

Conclusion

This paper has so far addressed three solutions and implications emanating from findings on the challenges facing female teachers in becoming leaders in Nigerian secondary schools, with reference to wider African contexts, and with considerations of these for principals and government. The solutions and implications discussed throughout the findings formed the basis of the recommendations for principals and government. Principals who are male and female both appear to have fairly different routes to success in that position. Only principals who possess the necessary skills, dispositions, enthusiasm, and tenacity to hold the post of the school's top administrator have a chance to endure and even thrive in a role that is equal to any other in the value and service of educating and serving students. As they are a mirror of the culture that supports and generates them, gender issues are reflected in schools. The principalship's duties are significantly influenced by societal expectations. Female principal candidates should be aware of these challenges. There may be discrepancies and challenges in how women are seen in the principalship. Women are expected to work through issues and responsibilities, identify performance barriers, take on challenges head-on, and try to eradicate them.

Recommendations

1. Principals in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa must have a thorough awareness of the socioeconomic and cultural problems that pose obstacles to women's advancement in leadership. In particular, principals need to be aware of the strengths of feminine leadership. Secondary school principals and administrators in Nigeria and Sub-Saharan Africa need to have a better awareness of organisational difficulties that have an equal influence on female leadership.
2. Principals must serve as prominent role models. challenging government and institutional prejudices and stereotypes, as well as demonstrating androgynous leadership in their senior leadership teams. The existence of societal and cultural hurdles and issues must be acknowledged by principals. The necessity for androgynous leadership among male and female principals is a key recommendation.
3. Through conversations, meetings, emails, direct acts, and policy creation, principals put social solutions into practice and have an impact on governmental policy. In the end, the teachers must serve as role models for gender equality. Additionally, the problem of demeaning female leaders has to be addressed.
4. While women need to work on their own self-image, confidence, and skills, they will definitely need family support in order to increase mobility, aspiration, and ultimate accession to school management positions.
5. Women leaders need structures like mentoring and networking if they want to succeed as school leaders. The report advised that the Ministry of Education develop initiatives to support women and give them the first preference whenever a job needed to be filled. It also suggested that the

appointments and recruiting process be transparent to prevent discrepancies and blame-shifting. To allow them to apply their administrative skills to enhance school administration, the government should appoint more women as secondary school principals.

6. In order to bridge the gender equity gaps now present in secondary schools in sub-Saharan Africa, policies for workplace equity and gender equality should be created and implemented, and there should be strict guidelines for recruiting and promoting people. Departments and units should be obliged to have a minimum percentage of female employees in order to address the unusual and occasionally complete absence of women in leadership positions.

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