



Women's Participation in Leadership in Schools and Local Government in Ibumu and Image Wards in Kilolo District, Iringa Region, Tanzania

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed women's participation in decision making at schools and political leadership at local government in Ibumu and Image Ward in Kilolo District, Iringa region, Tanzania. It also assessed factors contributing to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions and low levels of their participation in decision making and what should be done in order to enable them have equal access to decision making and leadership. The study was conducted in Kilolo District. The study was guided by questions focusing on how women participated in decision making and leadership, reasons for the situation and strategies to address women's low level of participation in decision making and leadership. The methods of data collection were semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations. Data were analyzed using a thematic framework. The findings revealed that very few women participate in decision making and leadership positions due to lack of education, men were not ready to allow women to participate in decision making. The basis for the lack of women participation, came from threats from husbands, antiquated traditions and customs, family responsibilities, lack of confidence in women and stereotypes. Male leaders held most top political leadership position and were the main decision makers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Women's equal participation in decision making and leadership is necessary for justice and democracy. It is also seen as a necessary condition for women to be represented and their interests to be taken into account [1]. Without a perspective of women at all levels of decision making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved [2].

Since independence, Tanzania has consistently been working for development of people. Immediately after establishing independence, Tanzania declared three enemies to the future of the nation namely, ignorance, disease, and poverty. Although efforts towards alleviating these enemies have been exerted by both sexes, female citizens have to a great extent been left behind in terms of accessing and enjoying opportunities in terms of participation in political issues and decision making [3].

Tanzania recognizes the existence of gender imbalances in its own social-economic context and is responsive to these imbalances. It also recognizes that gender equality is an issue of human rights rather than of women's rights and that it requires both men and women to work together towards attaining gender equity.

In order to show its commitment to gender equality, Tanzania is a signatory to various UN conventions, just to mention a few like The UN Convention on Human Rights of 1946, The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and The Declaration on Gender and Development by the Southern African Development Community of 1997. Furthermore, Article 22 and 23 of the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 (1998 Revised) stipulate clearly equal opportunities for employment, expression and rights for every citizen.

Tanzania has a fully-fledged Ministry, which caters to Community Development, Women Affairs and Children. The Ministry has a department that is responsible for gender mainstreaming, women issues and coordination of all activities related to gender. The civil services department in the President's Office has a gender "desk" which deals with gender concerns in the area of civil service.

Despite these efforts by the international community and the Tanzania government, gender equality and equity have not been attained in different sectoral Ministries, public organizations, local communities or political aspects in Tanzania. This is because most efforts concentrated on gender awareness and sensitizations. The situation in Kilolo District is not different from other areas in the country, they face the same challenges.

Pursuant to the above reality, the researcher has come to the realization of the untapped capacity and talents of women and women's leadership. Over the last decade the rate of women's representation in national parliaments globally has incrementally increased from 15% in 2002 to 19.8% in 2012. In sub-Saharan Africa the number of women in parliaments has increased from 6.1 to 14.7 (IPU, 2012). In Tanzania women's engagement in politics has also recently been increasing. All in all, despite all the declarations, the realization of equal representation of women in educational leadership position in private schools remain elusive. To date despite insisting various deliberate measures aimed at increasing women's participation in leadership positions, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in Evangelical Lutheran Church managed private schools in Iringa Diocese. According to Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania Diocese of Iringa Statistic (2023) out of six Secondary Schools all are managed by male head of schools.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents the theoretical and empirical literature that informed the study.

The study employed Human Capital theory, the theory was selected as it emphasizes the factors which, contribute to underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. According to this theory one of the factors that complicates the job promotion of women is their smaller investment in human capital [4,5]. This theory suggests that many women who do not have time available outside working hours to invest in training, are excluded from job promotion. Similarly, women have fewer years of working experience and more interruptions, which slows down their professional progress [6-10].

Carli/Eagly [11] and Paustian-Underdahl/ Walker/ Woehr [12] further stress that although the proportion of women improved, women did not reach parity with men and remain disproportionately concentrated in lower-level hierarchies. Thus, statistics show selection rates for leadership positions vary between men and women both in USA as well as around the World.

Qadir [13] asserts that in most organisations in India, when management positions arise, men are the most preferred to take up the management positions as it is believed that they have the right talents and skills to succeed in the managerial positions as opposed to women whom is believed are suitable for home chores.

Studies by Yoon [14], and Zinyembe [15] reveal the impacts of special seats on women's political participation and democratization which was adopted in 1985 and increased the number of women in parliament. According to IPU, 2018 in Rwanda the percentage of women in the Parliament is 65%.

Similarly, Sipemba [16], in a study carried out in Karatu District, Tanzania he found that women were underrepresented in secondary school leadership positions due to cultural barriers, family responsibilities and inferiority complex, lack of models and gender stereotypes.

This affects the fully and equitable participation of women in public life which is essential in building and sustaining strong vibrant democracies. Women's leadership positions participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines and more suitable peace.

Furthermore, women's participation in leadership positions helps to advance gender equality and it affects both the range of policy issues that are considered and the types of solutions that are proposed. Research indicates that it is critical that women are present in politics to represent the concerns of women and other marginalized citizens, additionally it helps improve the responsiveness of policy making and governance [1].

There is strong evidence that as more women are elected to office there is also a corollary increase in policy making that emphasize quality of life and reflects the priorities of families, women and ethnic and racial minorities. Women's leadership positions participation has a

profound democratic impact on all aspects of a nation, including communities, legislatures, political parties and citizen's life and ultimately helps ensure democracy thrives [1].

2.1 Statement of the Problem

National development depends upon equal participation for both women and men in all spheres of life, including leadership positions. The persistence of female underrepresentation in leadership positions has been impeding the progress toward implementation of gender equality [17]. In spite of various measures taken by the Tanzania government to address issues of gender equality in leadership positions, the problems of women under representations still exist in leadership positions [18,19]. Therefore, this study intends to assess women's participation in leadership and the decision-making process in Ibumu and Image Ward in Kilolo District.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study was to assess gender equality in leadership position in Ibumu and Image Ward.

Specific objectives which guided the study were to:

- i. Assess women's under-representation in leadership positions.
- ii. Identify factors contributing to women's under-representation in leadership positions.
- iii. Examine strategies to resolve problems of women's under-representations in leadership positions.

2.3 Research Questions

- a) To what degree are women represented in leadership and decision-making positions?
- b) What factors contribute to the under representation of women in leadership and decision-making positions?
- c) What strategies help resolve the problem of women's under-representation in leadership and decision-making positions.

3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was used in this study to assess, capture thoughts and opinion related to the factors causing women's rate of representation in leadership positions and decision making in Kilolo District, in the Iringa Region. The inquiry involved using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

3.1 Study Sites and Participants

The study was conducted in Ibumu and Image Wards in Kilolo District in Iringa Region which are among the leading Regions in Tanzania in terms of cases of women's under-representation in leadership positions and decision making for evidence in Ibumu and Image Ward all head teachers are male. Iringa Region, Kilolo District and the two wards were purposely selected. The two Wards Ibumu and Image were selected as representative of other Wards in Tanzania. The target population of the study included 123 participants and were obtained from two Wards. 4 Head of schools, 8 Head teachers, 9 Village chairpersons, 2 Educational Ward Coordinators, 2 Ward Executive Officer, 50 teachers and 50 community members from the two Wards.

3.2 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The question of sampling arises directly out the issue defining the population on which the research will focus [20]. In the present study the selection of the sample considered different factors such as information required, the purpose of the study and the time frame. The study employed three types of samples random, purposive and stratified sampling. Teachers and community members were selected through both stratified and simple random sampling. Heads of schools, Head teachers, Educational Ward Coordinators, village chairpersons were obtained through purposive sampling.

3.3 Data Collections

In this study the following methods were employed to collect information. These included semi -structured interviews administered to head of schools, head teachers, Educational Ward Coordinators, Ward Executive Officer and village Chairpersons and questionnaires were administered to teachers and community members.

Semi-structured questions were prepared beforehand to guide the discussion which took time between 30 minutes to one hour. Dependability of data was ensured through using a tape recorder to tape information and then transcribing the data collected verbatim, as well as presenting respondent's quotes in the results.

The study used asemi-structured interview technique to gain in-depth and meaningful

insights and generate rich data from ward leaders, chairperson and participants from the general public. A tape recorder was used to record semi-structured interviews and then they were transcribed verbatim. Transcripts in Kiswahili were translated into English and they were printed for further analysis. Data were analyzed following a thematic framework, general themes were coded. From transcripts emerging themes were determined and participant quotes were selected to illustrate the themes and topics that emerged from the semi-structured interviews.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants were asked to assess the number of leaders by gender in Ibumu and Image Ward. Findings are summarized in Table 1.

The findings from this study revealed the following:

In leadership position all Ibumu and Image wards all 9 chairperson of villages are men. Ibumu and Image ward have 8 Primary schools which have all male head teachers. Furthermore, in these two wards have three Secondary schools out of three head of schools only one is Female. The leadership in these two wards for Ward Executive one is male and another is a female while forward Educational officer all are male. The representation in the village government members at Ibumu village male are 18 and female are 7 while Image male are 17 and female are 8. These findings indicate that femaleis under-represented in leadership position. Female representation is far lower than that of men.

4.1 Factors Causing

Participants were asked to identify factors contributing to women's under-representation in leadership positions. Teachers and community members through questionnaires respondent as indicated in Table 2.

Data regarding on factors causing women under-representations in leadership positions are as follows: The traditions and cultural barriers, lack of confidence, Gender bias, family responsibilities. These factors were supported by semi structured interview from heads schools, Ward Executive officer, Ward Educational Coordinators, Head teachers and Village chairperson as discussed in detail in below paragraphs:

Table 1. Number of leaders by gender in Ibumu and image ward

Position	Number		Total
	Male	Female	
Village Chairperson	9	-	9
Headteachers	8	-	8
Heads of schools	3	1	4
Ward Executive Officer	1	1	2
Ward Educational Coordinator	2	-	2
Community members	35	15	50
Total	58	17	75

Source: Researcher: 2022

Table 2. Questionnaires for respondent

Factors	Teachers %	Community members %
Traditions and cultural barriers	40(80)	30(60)
Lack of Confidence	30(60)	40(80)
Family responsibilities	25(50)	15(30)
Gender bias	20(40)	18(36)
Stereotypes	35(70)	45(90)

Source: Researcher 2022

4.2 Traditions and cultural barriers

Traditional and persistent social cultural barriers hinder the active pursuit of women to obtain positions of leadership. This was confirmed by one participant who said,

*“Women are not ready to participate in leadership position due to traditions and culture.”*3/November /2022

This is consonant with [16] and Enderstein [21] stated that Social cultural factors are critical to the selection and appointment of head to the school leadership based on gender. Culture still influences leadership positions; women exclude themselves from participating in leadership because of the oppressive culture which made them to be convinced that leadership are for men. Further, Hora [22] argued that in most patriarch societies, females are regarded as the inferior species. Because of this, women are denied access to both honored and utilitarian roles who are always open only to males. Such roles as administration and disposal of property, leadership roles in societal affairs including religious and governance are exclusively belonging to males. Women still face certain barriers on the journey to leadership [23,24].

4.3 Lack of Confidence

It is the fact that many women have the qualifications and ability to hold political position

but most women they lack courage and confidence,

This was confirmed by one participant when said,

There have been big changes in laws, regulations culture and traditions regarding women participation in leadership but still women lack courage and confidence in competing with men during election 4/November /2022

Also lack of unity and trust among women should be blamed, one participant from semi-structured said.

Most of women they lack unity and trust which make them struggle independently, and they are not ready to seek advice from their fellow women’s. This makes them to lack support from their fellow women’s.

Another participant said that, *“Most of the voters are women but they are not ready to vote for the women. From her experiences he said that women vote for men and not for the women because they don’t believe that women can lead them well as men do.* 4/November/2022

This is in line with the statement which confirmed that women have lower confidence in applying for leadership positions [25].

4.4 Stereotypes

The findings revealed that stereotypes from the entire community led to many people to believe that leadership is for men. This was confirmed by one participant who said, "*Women always prefer to perform subordinate and supporting roles and usually the community believes that women are unable to lead.*" This is supported by Mwachombela [26] who argued that the effects of stereotyping on women can include the lack of women willing to face the challenges and problems associated with being stereotyped, thus limiting the number of women who will potentially fill leadership positions. Lack of women in leadership positions results in a lack of true representations in leadership positions for at least half of the population and so young girls and women absorb the stigma about where they belong in the society. In addition, World Economic Forum [27] state that despite many policies to increase gender equality in recent decades, gender discrimination based on gender stereotypes continues to exist and continues to cause underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Further, with regard to characteristics associated with leadership stereotype still persist that establish that women take care of and assist people, while men take control and focus on the task [28,29]. In addition, gender stereotypes can halt or hinder to a great extent the career development of women in senior management, given that when any ambiguity exist about their competence, they are likely to be judged as incompetent and when their competence is beyond reproach, they run the risk of being penalized socially [30].

4.5 Family Responsibilities

The study revealed that parenting responsibilities which assigned to women led them to become busy with family matters child rearing, careering old parents as well as sick people in the family. This is in line with one participant who said that, "*women put great efforts in balancing family commitments and their career goals although women are employed, they still have to do all the domestic activities such as cooking and taking care of children.*" 8/November/2022

In this regard, findings by Zinyemba [15] on women in leadership positions show that the biggest challenge faced by women is that of work life balance, emanating from pressure of time and the need to fulfill the multiple roles that a woman leader must fulfill as wife, mother and

leader at work. Therefore, since women are caregivers in the family in order to support them to be available in their jobs without interfering with family responsibilities considerations, are made. The government have policies which allow women to work few hours, in order to allow them to attend family issues particularly when they take care of their born children [31,32]. This trend if will be improved by all organizations will encourage women to opt for leadership positions. Furthermore, Professions women often face significant challenges balancing work and family. That's because despite the fact they have full-time jobs, they also frequently have the lion's share of household responsibilities, such as caring for young, sick, or elderly family members [22].

4.6 Gender Bias

Globally, women experience serious gender bias when being evaluated for promotion on both their level of performance and their potential impact. Studies conducted on the professional group show that women have to work significantly harder so as to be perceived as equally competent (Lyness & Helman, 2006). The study conducted at Ibumu and Image Wards revealed gender bias in the appointment of head teachers of Primary schools at Ibumu and Image wards. This was confirmed by one participant who argued that, "*Sometimes the appointing authority is bias in the appointment process, thus why all primary schools at Ibumu and Image wards are headed by men.*" 15/November/2022.

This supported by (Wangari & Kyalo, 2015) noted that male principals had the likelihood of recommending male teachers for administrative positions, so female teachers were left out in the administrative positions in the sub country. In addition, gender bias work against professional women's leadership aspirations. Employers tend to interpret men's assertive behavior in the workplace as strong, commanding and direct, but when women display the same assertiveness, their employers often see them as aggressive, push and shrill. In this regard Mckinsey [33] argued that invisible barriers are holding women back, rather than overt sexism alone. Gender biases in the mindsets of managers can prevent women from advancing into leadership positions. This concur with Onyango [34] who states that gender biasness was a major factor that brought about gender imbalance in school leadership positions in his school under investigation.

Table 3. Women under-representations in leadership positions

Serial number	Strategies of gender parity	Non-Standard Coefficient B	Standard Error	Standard Beta	t	Significance
1	Gender Awareness	.097	.045			.032
2	Empowering	-.094	.059	.094	1.597	.112
3	Gender equality in leadership	-.216	.037	.233	5.818	.000
4	Mentoring and training	.051	.032	-.067	1.619	.107
5	Networking and role model	-.440	.051	-.420	8.58	.000
		-.272	.039	.275	7.001	.000

Strategies positions. Strategies to minimize gender under-representations in leadership positions:

Participants were asked to identify strategies to minimize women under-representations in leadership positions. The Table 3 indicate the following findings:.

The data in the table show that gender awareness is significant at 0.112 and empowering has a significance of 0.000. Further, mentoring and training has a significance of 0.000. Not only that but also networking and role modelling have a significance of 0.000. All these significances are less than 0.05, indicating that the likelihood of having in place some strategies to minimize gender inequality in leadership positions in schools and Ibumu and Image Wards. That means that training, mentoring, empowering and networking, role model are strategies that could minimize the problem of gender inequality in leadership positions in our schools and wards. These results are in line with the findings from different interviewees and focus group discussion members. Interviewee from W primary school pointed out that, "sensitization on the importance of gender equality in leadership positions is important for the entire community" Another, participants from X and Y Ward Said "The strategy for creating gender equality in leadership positions is to build the self-confidence of women and girls and assigning roles without discrimination and girls should be given opportunity to speak out.

One participant in semi-structure said:

In order to minimize women under-representations in leadership positions women should be given training in leadership. Furthermore, another stated that women should be mentored to become leaders. Also, one head of school Y pointed that appointing committees

should avoid bias in appointing leaders in leadership positions and improve career networking for women. All these initiatives are in line with strategies undertaken by MKUKUTA in Tanzania to reduce female underrepresentation in leadership positions.25/November/ 2022

This is supported by Meena, Rusimbi and Israel [35] who argued that parent contributed a lot in empowering women in educating their daughters and inspiring them at an early age. This is also in line with Mythili [36] and Nyoni and Che [37] they emphasize the importance of girls and women empowerment as a key, prerequisites for women and girls to aspire and function well at school leadership.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Women's leadership participation results in tangible gains for democracy, including great responsiveness to citizen needs, increased cooperation across society and ethnic lines and more suitable peace. Women's political participation advances gender equality by influencing both the range of policy issues considered and the types of solutions proposed. Despite the good intention of the Tanzania government and Non-governmental Organization to achieve gender balance, more efforts are needed to reach this target.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, the study recommends the following to be taken into the considerations:

First recruit and train Tanzanian women who wish to get involved in politics but do not know how, by organizing training sessions in their respective local areas. This will empower women and restructure their minds set. Second encouraging women and men to participate in

leadership position arena through capacity building programmes. Third women should be well informed on leadership issues, their leadership rights, family rights, skills and knowledge of leadership and avoid stereotypes. Fourth develop a curriculum in primary and secondary school which will prepare female students to participate in leadership and decision making confidently and reduce traditional and social cultural barriers for female.

ETHICAL APPROVAL AND CONSENT

Research ethical issues were ensured through obtaining informed written consent of Ward and participants. Permission to record semi-structured interview was requested. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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