



CHALLENGES THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS IN MASVINGO URBAN.

Alice Chititi. Department of Counselling; Zimbabwe Open University; Masvingo Regional Campus

ABSTRACT

Research study sought to evaluate the challenges that are specifically associated with women leaders in government institutions in Masvingo Urban. The study was necessitated by the fact that there are less female leaders than men in most institutions or companies. The study also postulated some benefits of having women as leaders. The researcher dealt with issues related to successful leadership skills, women and leadership qualities, subordinates' support for women leaders, challenges faced by women leaders, effectiveness of policies and strategies used to advance women leadership and empowerment and counsellors' role in supporting women leaders. For this study the descriptive survey design was used and required data was collected through questionnaires which were distributed to twenty five (25) women leaders in government institutions, five (5) counsellors in Masvingo urban and twenty-five (50) subordinates from government institutions. The study revealed that women have some leadership qualities. The government has played its part in empowering women and girls through the Quarter system, Affirmative action, Legal Projects Centres and the introduction of the Ministry of Women Affairs. It also revealed that women leaders face a variety of changes which include resistance to female leadership, discrimination, prejudice, trade-off between family and work as well as visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping. The study also established that women leaders do not get adequate support from the subordinates both male and female although the number of females who dislikes women leaders outnumbers that of the male subordinates. This has prompted the researcher to conclude that female do not support each other which has hence resulted in few women who are on leadership positions. The researcher has recommended the need to intensify programmes which boost women's self-esteem so that they will be able to take up leadership positions without hesitating or panicking. Women need to be taught to be assertive. Counsellors also need to be actively involved so that they will lighten the spirit of the female leaders so that they will even be braced to face even the most challenging scenarios in their organisations without succumbing to self-defeat. There is also need for the combined effort of the subordinates so as to ensure that women leaders will excel in their endeavors.

Key words:

Women leadership
Advancement
Affirmative
Discrimination
Leader

Author correspondence

Alice Chititi

Department of Counselling; Zimbabwe Open University; Masvingo Regional Campus

alicechititi@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The traditional organization is used to male leadership making it easy for men to be readily accepted as leaders compared to their female counterparts. In Zimbabwe, the pre-independence era was characterized by laws and regulations that directly discriminated against women. By then, women did not have voting rights; they could not own property in their own names and had to seek consent from male relatives to enter into most contracts. With the coming of independence in 1980, most of the discriminatory laws were removed, opening up new avenues for women as new Zimbabwe embraced the concept of equal opportunities for both women and men. Whilst it has taken a short time to change the laws, society's attitude towards women leaders is very conservative. Both men and women do not seem to be fully convinced that women can equally be effective leaders. Tradition has made men more easily accepted as natural leaders while women have to prove first that they are competent before they can be accepted. Carli and Eagly(2007) note that when

a woman leader is appointed, people will not assume she is competent for the position thereby putting the burden of proof on her. Friedan (2001) observes that when a man is hired or promoted, he is given the assumption of competence. People presume he is competent simply because he has been given the title and authority. He goes a step further to explain that often it takes a long time, many excuses and forgiveness while the team overlooks or covers up his mistakes.

According to Carli and Eagly (2007), some programmes such as affirmative action introduced to address the disparity between men and women regarding opportunities have turned to back fire as they are used to attack the same women they were meant to promote. In Zimbabwe, affirmative action was introduced in higher and tertiary education in the 1990s to increase women's access to higher education. Local political parties also introduced a quarter system aimed at shifting the balance of power to at least one third women representation. Affirmative action for instance has been misunderstood as confirming that women are less competent than men. Due to affirmative action policy, the labour market appears to be judging women harshly by concluding that there is merit in men's achievement than in a woman's even when they present the same qualifications. Women's achievement in higher education has pointlessly and mindlessly become associated with assisted or negotiated achievement. Similarly, the quota system introduced in political circles has not been taken in good light by men who view it as a direct attack and insult to democracy. They do not see the difference between reserving seats for women and imposing candidates/ on people whose right to choose is eventually infringed.

In view of the issues raised above, it is necessary to identify the real challenges that women leaders in all spheres of life face and attempt to address them. If society cannot do without female leaders, then it should collectively come up with clear strategies to advance women leadership. Some super forces have to emerge and assume a coordinating role to ensure that women leaders get the support that they deserve be it social, economic, technical, spiritual or psychological. Given that women come from a background of oppression and discrimination, there is need for them to be assisted so that they can be at par with their male counterparts. Women are an important resource that if fully utilized can significantly change and transform the society. Naturally women are peaceful, loving and caring. Peace and care are fundamentals of real change and development.

Statement of The Problem

Many women leaders are viewed with contempt. They command less respect than their male counterparts. Whilst men are easily accepted as capable of leading, women are expected to demonstrate their capabilities first before they can be accepted as leaders. This mentality has impacted negatively on women leadership growth and development. Realizing the hardships that women in leadership positions are enduring, others are now hesitating to take up the challenge. This problem has resulted in the numerical gap between men and women in leadership remaining wide. The pace at which the number of women leaders is increasing is both disappointing and frustrating. Unless distinct challenges for women leaders are openly discussed and addressed, advancement of women leadership will remain suppressed and subdued. This study is aimed at investigating challenges that are specifically associated with women leadership and suggest ways through which they can be addressed. Hence the research study is an endeavor to find responses to the challenges faced by women leaders in government institutions in Masvingo urban.

Objectives

- To find out the qualities possessed by women leaders.
- To find out the attitude of subordinates towards women leaders.
- To establish distinct challenges peculiar to women leaders and why women leaders are fewer than their male counterparts.
- To identify and appraise strategies/policies that government has used to advance women leadership and what counselors can do to support women.

The study is expected to put women leaders into perspective and help stakeholders to support and appreciate women leadership.

Research Questions

Following are research questions for the study:

- Why are there fewer women leaders compared to men?
- How effective are the policies and strategies used to advance women leadership and empowerment?
- What can counsellors do to support women leaders?

Literature Review

Women and leadership

Adler (1999) and Avolio (1999) argue that contemporary leaders need to be loving, caring, peaceful, good listener and communicator. They put emphasis on the social aspect of leadership. Avolio (1999) notes that these social qualities are more commonly aligned to women than men. Some contend that these differences between male and female managers create a female advantage in today's organizations (Helgesen, 1990). Because young girls are socialized to be cooperative, understanding, supportive, interpersonally sensitive, and flexible, they are more inclined to develop different managerial styles when they grow up and assume leadership positions in organizations (Helgesen, 1990). Furthermore, these traditional "feminine qualities" are more in line with contemporary organizations which value sharing information, collective decision-making, developing relationships, empowering others, and resolving conflict in non-confrontational ways.

According to Korabic (1992) women are great at turning a challenge into an opportunity instead of using the slash and burn approach. Women are able to stand- the –heat in any tough call situation (Williamson, 2011). Their decision making skills are rooted in a high level of confidence since they have to weather and surpass any corporate storms they have encountered over time. Many writers on leadership have argued that effective leadership is congruent with the ways that women lead (Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Rosener, 1995). For example, Rosener (1995) labeled women's leadership as interactive, involving collaboration and empowerment of employees, and men's leadership as command-and-control, involving the assertion of authority and the accumulation of power. Such authors construe men and women as quite different in the ways they lead, with men relying on a somewhat antiquated leadership style that does not fit the needs of most contemporary organizations.

Subordinates support for women leaders

Helgesen, (1990) and Rosener, (1995) observe that some subordinates do not support their female leaders because of existing stereotypes that women are not effective as leaders no matter what support you give them. Where such pre-conclusions are made, you cannot expect much help for the leader as subordinates see it as a worst of time to associate themselves with such a leader. Some usually assume that a female leader is incompetent and as such deliberately deny her necessary support to prove their claim. As for men who are used to lead and not to be led, female leadership is a direct challenge they feel should be proved otherwise. Women leaders therefore have to strive to prove their worth before they can think of getting support from their juniors. Book (2000), realizes that women leaders usually consider sharing their power and authority with their subordinates so as to secure their support and commitment. Subordinates who are constantly consulted and whose ideas are considered in taking up important decisions feel valued and are often more cooperative. By involving them in taking decisions, subordinates feel like they are leading themselves hence would not notice much someone is in control.

Challenges faced by women leaders

Eagly and Carli (2007) identify several possible factors that can become pitfalls for women on the path to leadership. These are discussed below.

Trade-off between family and work

Women often face trade-offs between family and career and as such are forced to take more leave, maternity breaks, and work more regular hours. Another downside of this possible trade-off is that people expect women to put less effort into work than men, on the assumption that in the trade-off between family and career, women will choose family as their primary concern. Eagly and Carli (2007) found these assumptions to be mistaken, on the basis of the studies of Bielby and Bielby (1988). Women do not put less effort into their work but simply organize their work in a different way, by avoiding long lunches or after-work drinks for example. Women systematically underestimate their capabilities, undervalue their achievements and under-negotiate their worth. Women's lack of confidence in their skills and abilities as leaders and their failure to recognize those skills seem to be part of the explanation as well as the reality that many women juggle with family responsibilities and fear leadership roles taking over their lives. Most women even though they may be highly educated they value being housewives as their primary responsibility and view career as secondary achievement. These factors are also identified in the literature along with other barriers such as discrimination whether direct or indirect. Women sometimes actively decide to put their energies into grass roots activities as they feel they can be more effective at that level. Given the continued perceptions of a leader as being strong, visionary and male in this culture, such a view may seem real.

Prejudice

These forms of discriminatory behaviour can come from underlying processes creating prejudice, which is the third factor that Eagly and Carli (2007) recognize as a possible pitfall for female leaders. It does not necessarily concern outright forms of prejudice, but relates rather to subtle links which people tend to make (Alvesson and Billing, 1992; Eagly and Carli, 2007). "People associate women and men with different traits, linking men with more of the traits that connote leadership. Such conclusions can make people believe that no woman could have the 'right stuff' for powerful jobs". This link between male traits and leadership traits is a consequence of two phenomena, gender stereotyping (Eagly and Carli 2007) and gender symbolism (Alvesson and Billing, 1992).

Resistance to female leadership

The fourth possible pitfall for female leaders can be seen as a direct consequence of the unconscious use of gender stereotypes. When people make judgments on female leaders through the use of gender stereotypes, they can develop a tendency towards resistance to female leaders (Eagly and Carli, 2007). This resistance is based on two forms of stereotyping. On one hand, gender symbolism suggests that leadership roles are masculine, because they are associated with male characteristics. On the other hand, gender stereotypes see women as communal, being friendly, helpful and kind. The authors refer to this phenomenon as the "double bind" faced by female leaders (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Eagly and Carli, 2007). This double bind concerns a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and typical leader roles. On one hand, women tend to be evaluated less favorably because leadership abilities are perceived more to be stereotypical of men than of women (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly and Karau, 2002). On the other hand, women tend to be evaluated less favourably concerning their actual leadership behaviour, because perceived 'male' behaviour, such as assertive behaviour, is seen as less desirable in women than men (Eagly and Karau; Eagly and Carli, 2007). We can therefore conclude that there is a negative tension between women's role as leaders and their gender role: "conforming to their gender role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role can produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role".

Visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping

Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) distinguish three similar pitfalls which female leaders can encounter: visibility, exaggeration of differences and stereotyping. These pitfalls, the authors state, can lead to increasing levels of performance pressure and stress, which in their turn lead to decreased motivation for women to participate in the workplace. First, high visibility can lead to increasing performance pressure. As stated earlier, tokenism can make women feel as if they are 'under constant observation'. In several studies, women reported experiencing stress from constantly having the feeling they should perform better than their male colleagues have. Often women with a token status change their style accordingly, adopting a more 'masculine' style (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Kanter, 1977; van Engen, van der Leeden and Willemsen, 2001). Second, the exaggeration of differences can lead to isolation of female leaders and lack of support (Gardiner and Tiggemann, 1999). Third, stereotyping leads to the double bind discussed earlier, again increasing the level of performance pressure and stress. Eagly and Carli (2007) refer to a similar pressure-increasing phenomenon. When people are in a situation where they might confirm an unfavourable stereotype about a social group to which they belong, we speak of *stereotype threat*. Because of all these possible pitfalls which women may encounter on their path to leadership, we may state that it is correct to see this path as a labyrinth, slowing down and hindering women in achieving their leadership position. We cannot speak of clear and visible obstructions, such as outright discrimination; the pitfalls women may encounter are subtle, often even unintended and the result of unconscious stereotyping processes.

Policies and strategies used to advance women leadership and empowerment

On attainment of independence, the government of Zimbabwe realized that there was need to swiftly change the status of women by removing all laws which suppressed women empowerment. Girl Child Network (2009) is in support with the above, it serves as a centre where girls and women can access peer and staff counselling, workshops on leadership, self-esteem and human rights, vocational skills and business training, sports and art programmes and advocacy regarding children's rights, sexual abuse and the enforcement of current laws to protect women and children.

First it was through repeal of discriminatory laws and enactment of laws that recognized and appreciated women effort in total development of the nation. Through these laws women in formal employment saw their working conditions being improved. Today men and women working for the same organisations and doing the same job have similar job conditions and are assumed to have similar opportunities for promotion. In agreement with this, Women of Zimbabwe Arise (2011) fights for the empowerment of female leadership

which lead to community involvement in pressing for solutions to the current crisis, facilitating women to stand for their rights and freedom. Through lobbying and civic education tradition and religion has been challenged so as to accept that women are equal partners in day to day social life. What was considered taboo for women in terms of power, position and even professional duties has gradually been changed and accepted as normal for women. It is now common to have women preachers and women leaders in organisations across all sectors of society.

The government initiated affirmative action to ensure equal access to tertiary education between men and women in all study disciplines. This saw an increase in women being enrolled for programmes previously dominated by men. The quarter system introduced for certain programmes such as medicine and engineering required that female students to be accepted with lower entry requirements than those set for men. In politics, political parties such as Zanu PF have introduced quarter system demanding at least one third of parliamentary seats to be reserved for women. This was done in fulfillment of resolutions by world and regional bodies such as United Nations, European Union and the Southern Africa Development Committee.

Besides changes in law, affirmative action, changing culture and religious reforms, there are other several ways through which promotion of women empowerment has been engendered. So many non-governmental and civic organisations have come up with different projects to educate and support materially the cause of women and the girl child. Notable examples of these initiatives are Musasa Project and Women of Zimbabwe Arise, Girl Child Network, Legal Project Centre, Women University in Africa, Beauty Pageants and Ministry of Women Affairs. It remains to individuals to judge whether these initiatives have produced desired results but at face value one can be forgiven to conclude that they have gone a long way to address the concerns of women.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study was largely quantitative. The research instrument used to gather information from the respondents is the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised open-ended questions, structured questions as well as matrix questions. The open-ended questions were used to probe respondents' perceptions, beliefs and opinions on the challenges faced by women leaders. Respondents came from the government departments in Masvingo urban. The researcher used convenience sampling involving choosing readily available people for the study (Brink 1997). The researcher chose twenty-five (25) women leaders; twenty-five (25) female subordinates; twenty-five (25) male subordinates from government institutions in the city of Masvingo; and five (5) counsellors to participate in the study. This made a total of 80 sample participants

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Data of Female Leader Respondents

Table 1 below shows the educational qualifications held by the twenty-five selected female leaders in government institutions in Masvingo Urban.

Table 1: Qualifications Held By Female Leaders N=25

Qualification	Number Of Leaders	Percentage (%)
Certificate	1	4
Diploma	3	12
Degree	11	44
Post Graduate	10	40
Total	25	100

Distribution By Working Experience

The captured serving periods of the selected female leaders in Masvingo Urban are summarized as in table 4.2 below:

Table 2: Overall working experience of women leaders n=25

Serving Period	Number Of Leaders Involved	Percentage (%)
0-5 years	1	4
5-10 years	1	4
10-15 years	4	16
15-20 years	6	24
Above 20 years	13	52
Total	25	100

Distribution by Marital Status (n=25)

Table 3 below show the marital status of female leaders in government institutions in Masvingo Urban.

Current status	Number of leaders	When promotion was gained before current status	After current status
Single	-	-	-
Single mother	8	5	3
Married	4	4	4
Divorced	10	6	4
Widowed	3	-	3
Total	25	15	10

Distribution by Sectors Served (n=25)

Table 4 below shows the sectors that are served by female leaders in Masvingo Urban.

Sector	Number Of Leaders	Percentage	Rank
Education	15	60	1
Health	5	20	2
Accounting & Finance	0	0	0
Security & Intelligence	1	4	4
Human resources	2	8	3
Justice	1	4	4
General administration	1	4	4
Engineering	-	0	0
Agriculture	-	0	0
Total	25	100	

Results From Questionnaire For Women Leaders

When asked to comment on their work environment and relations, the women in leadership raised the following issues presented in table 5.

Table 5 Distasteful Experiences Raised By Female Leaders (n=25)

Distasteful Experiences Raised	No.	(%)
1. Subordinates lack respect and always try to frustrate me	14	56
2. Male subordinates always try to prove that they can do better than I do	18	72
3. I feel that I am over criticized, sometimes unfairly	15	60
4. Female subordinates always compare me to their former male bosses	22	88
5. Female subordinates are less supportive and cooperative compared to their male counterparts.	13	52
6. My marital status is my topical issue	21	84
7. Clients are often surprised to realize that I am in charge	22	88
8. People ask me about how I got to the top	21	84

Self-Awareness Of Women Leaders

When the selected female leaders were asked about their strength and weaknesses, they showed some self-awareness by raising issues listed in table 6 below;

Table 6: Women Leaders' Strengths And Weaknesses. (n=25)

Strengths	No. Out of 25	Rank
1. Open communication with subordinates	25	1
2. Consulting subordinates on issues that affect them	23	2
3. Encourage collective decision making	23	2
4. Listen to subordinates' problems and try to assist them	22	4
5. Exercise patience with struggling subordinates and help to improve them.	20	5
6. Promote transparency.	20	5
7. Promote peace and harmony in the organization.	20	5
Weaknesses	No out of 25	Rank
1. Less assertive than men hence some subordinates take advantage of that.	21	1
2. Sometimes take offence from those who refer to their gender.	20	2

3. Less time on the job due to divided attention between family and career	17	3
4. Trust subordinates too much that others end up betraying their trust	16	4

These exceptional qualities claimed by women leaders were confirmed by fifty (50) subordinates who described their female leaders as is given in table 7 below.

Table 7: Qualities Of Women Leaders (n=50)

Qualities	No.Of Subordinates Citing It	Percentage (%)	Rank
Caring	45	90	1
Honest	40	80	2
Fairness	40	80	2
Supportive	38	76	4
Motivating	35	70	5
Peaceful	35	70	5
Sympathetic	34	68	7
Efficient	30	60	8
Committed	28	56	9
Collaborative	26	52	10

Challenges That Women Leaders Face

The 25 selected leaders come up with almost the same list of challenges. The only difference is that the extent to which the challenges are experienced is different. Table 8 below shows the challenges raised in order of their commonality.

Table 8: Challenges faced by women leaders (n=25)

Challenge	No of Leaders Citing It	Percentage (%)	Rank
1. Trade- off between family and career.	23	92	1
2. Resistance of women leadership due to traditional and religious beliefs.	20	80	2
3. Pre-emptive judgment that man is better, that is, women's performance is never fairly evaluated.	19	76	3
4. Numeral disadvantage that is, women in higher positions are fewer than men hence their views are always taken for granted.	16	64	4
5. Policy makers are men hence policy is biased towards men.	16	64	4
6. Increased performance pressure due to high visibility that is women are always exposed to the burden of proof. They have to demonstrate their competence before acceptance.	15	60	6
7. Discriminatory tendencies. There are certain areas where women are accorded limited opportunities compared to their male counterparts.	7	28	7

Effectiveness Of Existing Policy And Legal Framework

All the 25 selected women leaders concurred that Zimbabwe as a country has done well to advance women leadership. They all cited enactment of gender sensitive laws, embracement of the United Nations Human Rights Charter and gender equality, affirmative action in education, quarter system aimed at increasing women representation in government and politics as well as setting up a government ministry responsible for women affairs as important initiatives in promoting women. There was also consensus among them that the major problem left now is people's attitude that has not changed. Unfortunately, it is difficult to come up with laws, policies that can effectively deal with attitude.

Results From Questionnaire For Subordinates

Support Towards Women Leaders

Responses tabulated in table 9 below were obtained when 25 female and 25 male subordinates were asked if they enjoyed working under a female boss.

Table 9 Subordinates' support for women leaders (n=50)

Question	Total	Responses							
		Yes				No			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1. Have you ever worked for under a man?	50	25	50	20	40	-	-	5	10
2. Are there any major differences between men and women leaders?	50	20	40	23	46	5	10	2	4
3. Given the choice would you prefer to work under a female boss?	50	18	36	10	20	7	14	15	30
4. Would you recommend more women to take up leadership positions?	50	17	34	10	20	8	16	15	30

Results from Questionnaire For Counsellors

Counsellors Role In Supporting Female Leaders

Counsellors who were involved in the research study made their contributions in view of the challenges they face at their workplaces as well as at home and in the community they reside. All the five counsellors confirmed that they at some point counsel a female leader. The views of the five (5) counsellors involved in the research study are presented in table 10 below:

Table 10 Problems Often Brought By Women Leaders To Counsellors (n=5)

Type Of Problem Faced	No. Of Counsellors Citing It	Percentage (%)
1. Stress	5	100
2. Family	3	60
3. Vocational	-	-
4. Abuse	3	60
5. Psychosocial	4	80

4.2.4.2 Issues which benefit women leaders from counsellors

Women leaders need to make some positive contributions in the therapeutic relationship with the counsellor so as for them to achieve maximum benefits from the counselling sessions. Table 11 below are suggestions by counsellors of what women leaders should do so as to yield benefits from counselling;

Table 11: Expectations Of Women Leaders By Counsellors (n=5)

Suggestions Made By Counsellors	No. Of Counsellors Citing It	Percentage (%)
1. Women leaders should constantly seek psychosocial support	4	80
2. Women leaders need to be open enough (Transparency) so that the counsellors would be able to diagnose their problem hence enabling them to be assisted to overcome their problems amicably.	5	100
3. Avoid defense mechanisms. To enable building up of a trusting and lasting therapeutic relationship.	5	100
4. Women leaders should frequently visit their counsellors so that they will be able to cope up with the pressures of being leaders.	3	60
5. These female leaders also need to engage their subordinates and or families in the therapeutic relationship.	4	80

Creation Of A Supportive Environment For Women Leaders By Counsellors

Table 12 below gives some strategies that counsellors can use to create a supportive environment for women leaders.

Table12: How Counsellors Can Create A Supportive Environment For Women Leaders (n=5)

Supportive Environment Offered By Counsellors	Counsellors Citing it	Percentage %	Rank
1. Creation rapport with female leaders	5	100	1
2. Having a genuine, empathetic, authentic and unconditional positive regard with the female leaders.	5	100	1
3. Help to identify and develop programs for leaders with special needs. Developing a common vision for collaborative outcomes among the leaders and their subordinates as well as developing a common philosophy of service delivery.	4	80	7
4. Providing small group and/or individual counseling for such issues as social skills and anger control and helping to realign power through shared decision making and encouraging inter-professional visits and exchanges.	4	80	7
5. Helping leaders to cope with stressful working environment and providing instruction in pro-social skills.	5	100	1
6. Conduct professional development workshops and discussions with organization leaders and other personnel on subjects such as power sharing, abuse of authority or exercise of power.	5	100	1
7. Providing staff development on topics such as positive behavior supports and intervention, prevention of violence, and crisis intervention.	3	60	10
8. Consulting with all members of the organization to develop positive behavior supports and interventions.	5	100	1
9. Working with organisations to develop written policies and procedures for managing issues of confidentiality.	5	100	1
10. Consulting with leaders regarding the social/emotional/behavioral needs of people they lead as well as consulting with leaders regarding approaches to address insubordination.	4	80	7

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Qualifications held by female leaders

The analysis of qualifications held by the selected female leaders presented in Table 1 revealed that graduates make the majority of them. Inferior educational qualification was sighted in literature as one of the sources of problems that leaders can face however, in light of the above, can be concluded that challenges that women leaders face have nothing or very little to do with their level of education since they hold acceptable qualification.

Distribution by working experience

An analysis of the results presented in Table 2 reveal that the majority of women leaders are long servicing members - 52% have served beyond 20 years. This confirms the conception held in literature that women have to prove their worthy first before they can be noticed. Naturally it takes time for one to prove beyond reasonable doubt that they are capable and are worth to be promoted. Whilst, it is good for people (both men and women) to assume leadership positions when they are mature and have gained substantial experience. This study did not include comparative thrust to determine if it takes women longer than men to be recognized for promotion.

Distribution by marital status of women leaders

An analysis of the results which were shown in Table 3 revealed the following inferences:

- 4 out of 10 women (40%) got promoted after divorcing.
- 6 out of 10 women (60%) had to divorce after promotion.
- 5 women who got promoted while single later became single mothers either by decision or due to circumstances. Stated differently, single women who get promoted find it difficult to marry.
- 3 single mothers and 3 widows later saw promotion coming their way.

These findings can raise questions as to why chances of promotion are higher among the single women than the married or why married women have problems keeping their marriages after promotion? Other people may also have interest in establishing who to promote these women and why they seem to have bias towards the unattached ladies.

While the results above can be interpreted differently, this researcher fundamentally recognizes a trade-off between family and leadership. Apparently family demands have negative impact on women leaders. This confirms notions held in literature that professional women find it difficult to share their time between work and family chores. It takes an extra-ordinary woman to strike a balance between work and family but for the weaker ones, they find themselves compromising and sacrificing one of the two. This explains why most successful women have shaky or unstable families.

Distribution by Sectors Served (Sector of service)

The results in table 4 revealed that women leaders are tolerated more in education and health sectors respectively and are making some inroads in human resources, management. Women have not made any gains in areas such as finance and accounting, agriculture and engineering. A closer look at the above results tempt one to conclude that women have gained prominence in services where they have greatest interest- that is education and health. This is so because societies directly hold women responsible for care giving. Education is dominated with children who generally need mothers care most while looking after the sick and ensuring that the family is kept health has always been seen from the traditional point of view as women's duty. These findings also confirm assertions by Bass (1990) that women have interest and are comfortable working with children and whoever requires special care. The other reason why there are more women leaders in education is that the two sectors employ a substantial number of women. When it comes to health, nursing schools used to and still recruits more women than men. The emerging passion and interest in human resources management may best be explained by the fact that women are social and more democratic that they have no problems working with people.

Distasteful Experiences Raised

The results which were presented in table 5 pre-empted the worries and challenges faced by women leaders. The way how they are related to by their subordinates revealed that;

- Their leadership is always subject to comparison with that of men. In fact, there is much pressure for them to behave like men.
- People assume them to be less competent than men. Men will actually try to prove that they are better whenever they get a chance. While men are assumed to be competent before they do anything.
- Women have a burden to prove their competence first before they can get support and acknowledgement from subordinates.
- Women subordinates lack support for women leaders- in fact, they will do anything in their power to undermine her authority including name calling and back-biting.
- Unless they are respectable married women, single women in leadership positions have nightmares dealing with insults heaped at them by society. Their marital status which falls short of expectations is always used to discredit them. Eroded integrity results in loss of respect and frustration. Female subordinates view their unmarried leaders with contempt while the male subordinates socially want to be closer as much as possible but for mischievous reasons.
- The 'leader is male' mentality still reign supreme to the extent that some people get surprised when they realize a woman is in charge. Gender dominates women's leadership.
- People are keen to know how women get to the top primarily because they consider leading as a preserve for men and also associate women with inferior performance. In fact, there is suspicion that most women use unscrupulous means to get to the top. People assume that without some assistance, women cannot be promoted ahead of men.

Women Leaders Strengths and Weaknesses

The strengths and weaknesses revealed by women leaders in table 6 only showed that they are human and cannot be much attributed to gender except their lack of assertiveness. Their strengths mirror management attributes identified in literature as contemporary management qualities. Adler (1999) and Avolio (1999) asserts that contemporary leaders should be loving, caring, peaceful, cooperative, understanding, supportive, interpersonally sensitive and flexible. These qualities are more feminine in nature including valuing sharing of information, collective decision making, developing relationships, empowering others and resolving conflict in non-confrontational ways.

Qualities of women leaders

It can therefore safely be concluded in table 7 that women have the qualities required for one to be a leader. If these qualities are what people expect of any leader (male or female), then the only difference left to separate men and women regarding leadership is gender. This is supported by Korabic 1992; Powell 1999 in Chin who noted that more experienced women are managing organisations and the higher their positions, the higher in masculinity they are. Adding more to that women are great at turning a challenge into an opportunity instead of using the slash and burn approach. Women are able to stand- the –heat in any tough call situation (Williamson, 2011).

Challenges faced by women leaders

In table 8, the challenges that are faced by women leaders are the same as that given in literature. However, the issue of discrimination is fast getting overtaken as more opportunities have been opened up for women particularly in the education and the labour market. It seems as if the major challenges that remain for women leaders have to do with how they should balance their family and career demands as well as dealing with people's attitudes biased in the past scenario where only men used to lead.

Subordinates' support for women leaders

In table 9, of the 90% that had experienced both male and female leadership, 86% felt that men and women lead differently. This does not however come as a surprise because naturally men and women are different. Women are gentler than men and their feminine qualities are rarely exhibited by men. Of the 56% that expressed interest in working under women leadership 36% are men. This indicated that more men than women have positive attitude towards women leaders. This confirms assertions held in literature that women are the greatest obstacle of their empowerment. Helgesen (1990) and Rosener (1995) noted that subordinates do not support their female leaders due to existing stereotypes that women are not effective leaders. They generally do not want to support each other as they prefer to perpetuate the dominance of men.

Problems Brought to Counsellors by Female Leaders

The information in table 10 reveal that all the five (5) counsellors agreed that women leaders bring to them problems which are related to stress as a result of their positions at their workplaces. 60% of the counsellors noted that women leaders face family related as well as different forms of abuse at home and at work. 80% of the counsellors noted that psychosocial problems were also brought to them by women leaders which visited their centers for therapeutic intervention.

Expectations of Women Leaders by Counsellors

The results in table 11 indicated that counsellors seem to be of the same opinions in their suggestions since their ideas vary slightly. If women leaders value counselling, then their leadership skills will improve tremendously. According to Glossoff and Koprowicz (1990), consultation by counsellors who work primarily with leaders typically involves conducting professional development workshops and discussions with organization leaders and other personnel on subjects such as power sharing, abuse of authority or exercise of power and assist leaders in working with individual or group of followers.

How counsellors can create a supportive environment for women leaders

The results tabulated in table 12 showed that counsellors are capable of providing an environment which is conducive for female leaders to excel in their leadership endeavors. Counsellors seem to understand the needs of women leaders as well as the what needs to be put into practice for the welfare of the women leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

In view of the findings presented above, it can be concluded that the challenges that women face have nothing to do with their suitability and competence but have to all to do with gender stereotype and people's failure to accept change. So many people remain trapped in religion and tradition which recognize leadership as the preserve of man. It has also been noted that expectations of society about women impact negatively on their careers. Generally women do a lot more than men in day to day care of the family. This study revealed that women have leadership qualities have the potential to lead outstandingly since they are capable of doing what men can do. Female leaders are also said to be more accessible than males to their subordinates. Men and women who choose managerial careers could differ less from each other initially than men and women in the broader population, and once on the job, the forces of the job role could shape them to be even more similar so the gender of a leader should not be put into consideration when choosing a leader since what

matters most are the leadership qualities and traits. The problem of women is that they are yet to be accorded the same power and acceptance automatically granted to men in the same position and with similar qualifications. It has been noted that women showed a more mature and higher achieving motivational profile than the male managers.

Recommendations

In the view of the observations and results highlighted above, the following recommendations are made:

Colleges and Universities should:

- ensure that issues of power and discrimination are given attention examined in any training;
- develop different approaches to leadership and styles that are appropriate for and comfortable with women;
- ensure that training looks holistically at women lives, recognising that other parts of women's lives impact on what they do. The approach that may work best in terms of encouraging women working within their communities to take on decision making, influencing and leadership roles in Zimbabwe.

Women leaders should:

- Help to realign power through shared decision making and encouraging inter-professional visits and exchanges.
- Establish an association for women leaders to enhance and promote professional interaction among themselves. Through the association, they can also voice their concerns as a united front.
- Develop a common vision for collaborative outcomes among the leaders and their subordinates as well as developing a common philosophy of service delivery.
- Develop clearly defined outcomes of the collaboration effort such as improved communication, reducing conflict and discouraging insubordination.

Policy makers should:

- Work closely with women organisations on policies that affect women.
- Work with organisations to develop written policies and procedures for managing issues of gender equality and confidentiality.
- Constantly review existing gender laws and policies such that they effectively deal with any form of discrimination.

As a partner in organizational development, the counsellor should assist by providing services within the prevention/intervention continuum, such as:

- Consulting with leaders regarding the social/emotional/behavioral needs of people they lead.
- Consulting with leaders regarding organisation-wide approaches to address insubordination.
- Consulting with all members of the organisation to develop positive behavior supports and interventions.
- Helping leaders to cope with stressful working environment
- Environment and pro-social skills.
- Providing small group and/or individual counselling for such issues as social skills and anger control.

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