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Socio-cultural Factors Influencing Women Participation in the Management of Primary School Education in Rongo Sub-county, Kenya

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Abstract:

Participation of women in the management of primary school education in Kenya has been noted to be elusive despite numerous calls for affirmative action to enhance women participation in the education sector. In Rongo Sub-County, women are seriously under represented especially in primary school management where there are only 8(11.7%) female head teachers out of 68, 15(20.8%) deputy head teachers out of 72, 94(23%) School Management Committee female members out of 408, 4(15.3%) Sub- County Education Board female members out of 26, and only 3(17.64%) female Sub- County Quality Assurance and Standards Officers out of 17. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of socio-cultural factors on women participation in the management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County. A conceptual framework based on the concept that socio-cultural factors (independent variable) should be overcome in order to enhance women participation in headship, school committees, subject panels, affirmative action and improved academic performance (dependent variables) in primary education in Rongo Sub-County. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The study population consisted of 60 male head teachers, 8 female head teachers, 57 male deputy head teachers, 15 female deputy head teachers, 329 male teachers, 382 female teachers, 314 male BOM and 94 female BOM members from the five zones of Rongo Sub-County. Simple random sampling and saturated sampling were used to select 52 male head teachers, 8 female head teachers, 50 deputy male head teachers, 15 female deputy head teachers, 77 male teachers, 191 female teachers, 173 male BOM and 76 female BOM. The instruments for data collection were questionnaire, interview schedules and document analysis guides. Reliability was established by piloting in three schools where test-retest method was used whereby Pearson r of 0.7 and above was considered to correct the inconsistencies, ambiguity and weaknesses noted in the instruments. The study established that socio-cultural factors like gender bias in the promotion of teachers, female teachers sacrificing their roles as wives and mothers for professional career of leadership and women needing to seek their husbands consent to take leadership in schools had a high influence on participation of women in management of primary education. The study recommended that the women and government agencies should create awareness on women empowerment and leadership through sensitization campaigns. The findings of this study may be useful to stakeholders in education on issues of gender equity in management of education.

Keywords: Primary education, affirmative action, management, women participation

1. Background to the Study

Women continue to aspire for leadership positions in all spheres of governance in both the public and private sector, education sector inclusive. However, women have continued to face many challenges in taking management positions with specific reference to African women. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1999), various factors are at work in limiting women's potentials to aspire to positions of management. Studies done in many parts of the world reveal that women are still far from participating on the same footing as men in primary school management.

In Australia, by the middle of the twentieth century, the majority of teachers were women but the majority of school head teachers were men. Sadie (2005) advanced the argument that at the bottom of the constraints that women face is the patriarchal system where decision making powers are in the hands of males. In their discussion on barriers women face in leadership positions, Grove and Montgomery (2000) say that compared to men, women receive little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions. Administrative/leadership positions require hard work, long hours and are stressful. For women, this is a burden added on to their home and family responsibilities, a phenomenon referred to as the "double-shift" (Suda, 2007).

In the African context, traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the role and status of women in society are still prevalent and many women are part of this system; they find it difficult to disassociate themselves from this culture and tradition lest they be ostracized. Despite women's education and entry into the job market, the woman's role is typically of homemaker. The man on the other hand, is the breadwinner, head of household and has a right to public life (Kihara, 2003). Confining women's identity to the

domestic sphere is one of the barriers to women's entry into administration positions. Asengi (2011) in a study on Factors Influencing Effective Participation of Women in Management of Public Secondary Schools in Vihiga and Sabatia Districts, Kenya found out that socio-cultural factors had high influence; organizational factors had low influence but individual factors had the least influence on effective participation of women in management of secondary schools.

The turn of the new millennium has witnessed invigorated women participation in education leadership. Their representation and participation has brought with it challenges they have to grapple with in positions of authority like primary school leadership. Challenges which women face in breaking into school administration are well documented (Hennig & Jardin, 2007; Zirkel and Gluckerman, 2004; Swiderski, 1998, Maner, 1994; Thomas, 1997). These challenges include attitudinal, institutional and social/cultural obstacles.

In Kenya, a target of 30% representation of women in public service positions was set through a presidential decree in 2004 but has since been legalized as is stipulated in the Constitution of Kenya 2010. This requirement has resulted in many more women being nominated to political positions at the expense of other sectors like education. The report on mainstreaming the needs of women in Kenya indicated that women are facing major challenges in ascending to management positions as a result of internal and external pressures.

Onyango (2007) in a study on Factors Influencing Participation of Women in Secondary School Education Management in Siaya District found that women are under-represented in secondary school management in Kenya. Chisikwa (2011) in a study on Stakeholders Perspective on Factors Influencing Gender Imbalance in Appointment of Head teachers in Mixed Schools in Vihiga District established that factors influencing gender imbalance were unwillingness of female teachers to take up headship positions, fewer female teachers, inappropriate school location, failure by female teachers to apply for headship, female head teachers transfers, limited vacancies, male leadership dominance, dual roles, school leadership traditions, spouse attitude, ineffective government policies of affirmative action and women empowerment.

The marked disparity in women participation in the management of public primary schools in Rongo Sub-County is real as shown in Table 1 on page 4.

Management positions	Females		Males	
	F	%	M	%
Head teachers	08	11.7	60	88.2
Deputy Head teachers	15	20.8	57	79.1
B.O.M Members	94	23.0	314	76.9
S.C.E.B Members	04	15.3	22	84.6
S.C.Q.A.S.Os	03	17.6	14	82.3
TOTAL	124	21	467	79

Table 1: Distribution of men and women in education management positions in Rongo Sub-County 2012 - 2013
Source: Sub- County Education Office, Rongo. 2013

Table 1 indicates that there are only 8 (11.8%) female head teachers out of a total of 68 head teachers in the Sub-County and only 15 (20.8%) female deputy head teachers out of a total of 72. These percentages are low compared to the national figure of 30% given by the Ministry of Education. The table also shows that in Rongo Sub-County there are only 94 (23.0%) female BOM members out of a total of 408, only 4 (15.4%) women sit in the D.E.B against 22 men and the Sub-County is served by only 3 (17.7%) female QUASOs against 14 male officers. Overall, the distribution of men and women in education management positions in Rongo Sub-County was 79% men against 21% women. It was against this background that the study examined the extent to which socio-cultural factors influencing women participation in the management of Primary School Education in Rongo Sub-County.

2. Purpose of the Study/Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this study was to establish the socio-cultural factors influencing women participation in the management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County. The conceptual framework relating to the study was based on the premise that women participation in management of primary school education is greatly influenced by socio-cultural factors. This conceptual framework illustrates how these factors influence participation of women in the management of primary school education. The independent variables were culture norms, societal stereo types, religious beliefs, patriarchal society and school policies while the dependent variable was the number of women participating in the management of primary school education. The intervening variables were the attitude of teachers, community and spouse, distance from home, health and age.

3. Research Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design. A descriptive survey design was appropriate in establishing opinions, attitudes and knowledge about the participation of women in management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County. The research aimed at accurate information on factors influencing participation of women in the management of primary school education in the Sub-County.

The population of the study consisted of 60 male head teachers, 8 female head teachers, 57 male deputy head teachers, 15 female deputy head teachers, 329 male teachers, 382 female teachers, 314 male Board of Management Members and 94 female Board of Management Members serving in the 68 public primary schools in Rongo Sub-County. The sample size consisted of 642 respondents.

Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 52 male head teachers, 08 female head teachers, 50 male deputy head teachers, 15 female deputy head teachers, 77 male teachers, 191 female teachers, 173 BOM males and 76 BOM female members. Saturated sample technique was used to sample all the 8 female head teachers.

Data for the study were collected through questionnaires, interviews and document analysis guides. The instruments were Head teachers' Questionnaire; Deputy Head teachers' Questionnaire; Teachers' Questionnaire and BOM members' interview schedule. Document analysis was used to obtain useful information. The questionnaires had both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Secondary sources of data such as Ministry of Education circulars, BOM meeting minutes, BOM files, application letters, personal files, school charts, school records and returns were examined by the researcher for information on representation of women in management of primary education and ministry of education policies.

Face validity of instruments was determined by presenting the questionnaires, interview schedule and the document analysis guide to experts in the school of education, Maseno University while a pilot study was done to determine reliability. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents twice at an interval of two weeks to establish reliability.

Quantitative data collected through closed ended part of the questionnaires and document analysis guide were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data obtained from open-ended parts of the questionnaires and interview schedules was arranged thematically on an ongoing process, organized into categories, sub-categories and themes as they emerged from the data. One way ANOVA was carried out between the responses of head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers to establish significant differences in the means of the three categories.

4. Results and Discussion

The research question responded to was: what is the influence of socio-cultural factors on women participation in management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County? The head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers were asked to rate on a 6-point rating scale the influence of socio-cultural factors on women participation in the management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County and their responses were as shown in Table 2 on page 7.

ASPECTS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS	RES	M	OM	ANOVA
Men discourage women from participating in Primary School Management.	HT	3.16	3.27	(F (2,328) = 3.679, p = .026)
	DHT	3.42		
	T	3.21		
Primary School Management is stereo-typed as masculine and a preserve for males.	HT	3.13	3.33	(F (2,328) = 1.798, p = .167)
	DHT	3.62		
	T	3.23		
There is gender bias in promotion of teachers to administrative positions in primary school education.	HT	3.08	3.33	(F (2,328) = 5.274, p = .006)
	DHT	3.1		
	T	3.72		
Some female teachers have sacrificed their role as wife and mother for professional career of leadership in primary school management	HT	3.53	3.66	(F (2,328) = .369, p = .692)
	DHT	3.74		
	T	3.72		
There is low attitude of the community towards women head teachers.	HT	3.88	4.12	(F (2,328) = 2.423, p = .090)
	DHT	4.11		
	T	4.36		
Some religious beliefs and cultural practices hinder women from participating in management of primary schools .e.g. the head of the house is the man.	HT	3.18	3.27	(F (2,328) = .218, p = .805)
	DHT	3.37		
	T	3.25		
Some women need to seek their husbands consent in order to take up leadership in schools.	HT	3.57	3.46	(F (2,328) = .858, p = .425)
	DHT	3.28		
	T	3.54		
Some stereotyped attitudes towards women affect their willingness to accept leadership positions .e.g. a woman's place is in the kitchen.	HT	3.13	3.44	(F (2,328) = 2.086, p = .126)
	DHT	3.74		
	T	3.44		
OVERALL	HT	3.28	3.50	(F (8,322) = 1.364, p = .211)
	DHT	3.65		
	T	3.56		

Table 2: Socio- Cultural Factors Influencing Participation of Women in Management of Primary School Education in Rongo Sub-County (HT- n= 60; DHT- n= 65; T- n= 268)

KEY: HT = Head teacher, DHT = Deputy Head Teacher, T = Teacher
Interpretation of mean ratings;

1.00 – 1.44= Very Low Influence (VLI) 1.45-2.44 = Low Influence (LI) 2.45- 3.44 = Moderate Influence (MI)
 3.45-4.44 = High Influence (HI) 4.45-5.44= Very High Influence (VHI) 5.45-6.00 = Extremely High Influence (EHI)
 OM = Overall Mean

From Table 2 it can be observed that men discourage women from participating in primary school management as this factor was rated 3.16 by head teachers, 3.42 by deputy head teachers and 3.21 by teachers. These mean ratings were statistically different ($F(2,328) = 3.679, P < 0.05$). This means that the deputy head teachers ($M = 3.42$) was higher than the head teachers ($M = 3.16$) and teachers ($M = 3.21$) respectively. This also means that the three respondents did not agree on the level of influence. The ($OM = 3.27$) signifies that there was moderate level of influence. The interview findings revealed that there was indeed moderate influence in men discouraging women from participating in primary school management. Most of the male and female BOM members interviewed stated that to some extent men discourage their female colleagues from participating in educational management majorly due to social stereo-types. In this respect one BOM member stated:

- Women are in problems when it comes to accepting to be in school BOMs because they cannot make decisions on their own and have to seek consent from their husbands. Many men feel threatened when their wives are part of management in schools and most of them never allow their wives to take up such roles.

These findings concur with Asengi's (2011) who found that in Vihiga Sub-County men discouraged women from participating in school management. Men indeed discourage women because they feel that women would abdicate their domestic responsibilities and duties such as taking care of the children and domestic chores. This view is rather not justifiable because these roles can be performed by house helps in the present time. Moreover women are equal to the tasks since they have the required expertise and it has been demonstrated by many women in many sectors. For instance, in education there are many successful women University administrators as Vice Chancellors, Deputy Vice Chancellors and Dean of Students among others.

Primary school management is stereo-typed as masculine and as a preserve for males were rated at 3.13 by head teachers, 3.62 by deputy head teachers and 3.23 by teachers. These mean ratings were not statistically different ($F(2,328) = 1.798, P > 0.05$). This indicated that the three respondents agreed that primary school management is stereo-typed as masculine and as a preserve for males. The overall level of influence was moderate as signified by the overall mean of 3.33. The interview findings also agreed with some BOM members attesting to the fact that management is actually stereo-typed by the society as masculine and a male domain. These findings agree with Onyango (2007) who found out that in Siaya County there was a strong cultural belief that all leadership positions were meant for men as they were the head of the family and were to dictate decisions in management in all areas because a woman's place was in the kitchen. Looking at the success of various women who are head teachers and principals of primary schools, secondary schools and colleges this is an out-dated thought that should be done away with. It does not require masculinity and vigorous energy to be at the helm of school management.

The respondents mean rating on whether there were gender biases in the promotion of teachers to administrative positions in primary school management were 3.08 by head teachers, 3.1 by deputy head teachers and 3.72 by teachers. This showed statistically significant difference between the three means ($F(2,328) = 5.274, P < 0.05$). The mean for teachers (3.72) was higher than the deputy head teachers (3.1) and the head teachers (3.08). This means that the teachers highly rated the aspect that there is high influence in gender biasness in promotion of teachers. The overall level of influence was moderate as signified by the ($OM = 3.33$). This may be attributed to the fact that there are very few female teachers who have been promoted to management positions vis-a-vis the number of female teachers in the field. The interview findings also confirmed that there was gender bias in the promotion of teacher to headship when one BOM member expressed concern that despite their school having more female teachers than male teachers, only male teachers were posted to head the school. The BOM member stated:

- It is a fact that almost all primary schools in the Sub-County are headed by male teachers whereas there are many female teachers who are competent and work hard to realize good results in our schools and have even furthered their studies to improve their CVs and they are never promoted to headship positions even when they apply.

School charts showed only names of male head teachers in leadership succession since the inception of the school almost a decade ago. Suda (2007) found that there was a serious gender disparity in Kenya labour market.

On the fact that some female teachers have sacrificed their role as wife and mother for professional career of leadership in primary school management, the head teachers rating (3.53), deputy head teachers (3.74) and teachers (3.72) showed no statistically significant difference ($F(2,328) = .369, P < 0.05$). This implies that the respondents believed that some female teachers have sacrificed their role as wife and mother to take up administrative positions in primary school management because the overall level of influence was high as signified by ($OM = 3.66$). These findings agree with the sentiments of a BOM member interviewed who observed that many meetings which take long hours and even during holidays and weekends have made some women managers to forget their usual roles at home. The study supports White (2006) who found out that some institutional management meetings are scheduled at odd hours and in odd places like restaurants and this has cost some women their marriages.

As shown in Table 2, the respondents rating on whether there was low attitude of the community towards women head teachers were (3.88) for head teachers, (4.11) for deputy head teachers and (4.36) for teachers. There was no statistical difference in the means ($F(2,328) = 2.423, P > 0.05$). The mean ratings imply that the community has low attitude towards women head teachers as the level of influence was high as signified by the ($OM = 4.12$). During the interviews of BOM members many observations were made like lack of women mentors who have succeeded in managing primary schools in the community to be role modeled by other women and the stereo-typed thinking that men are better managers. In this regard one BOM stated:

- The worst thing is that most community members who participate in election of BOM members especially in primary schools are women because they are usually the majority in parents' general meetings. The women have a tendency of not supporting their fellow women to these positions due to personal and petty issues. It is a pity that women are their own enemies

A study by Grambs (2002) revealed that women were their own enemies and do not get adequate and necessary support from one another to enable them to be effective managers. This discouraging formed opinion and low attitude towards the female gender has discouraged many women from accepting to be in management positions in primary schools.

Ratings by the head teachers (3.18), deputy head teachers (3.37) and teachers (3.25) on the aspect that some religious beliefs and cultural practices hinder women from participating in management of primary schools showed no statistically significant difference ($F(2,328) = .218, P > 0.05$). This means that religious beliefs and cultural practices have moderate influence in hindering women from participating in management of primary schools as signified by the ($OM = 3.2$). All the respondents including the BOM members interviewed agree that there are some churches that have doctrines that do not allow women to sit in managerial positions. For instance the Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventists that are dominant in the community do not allow women to be priests and pastors respectively. Some cultural practices like a general belief that the head of the house is a man make the community believe that women cannot manage a school effectively like men do. These support Chisikwa (2010) who reported that the patriarchal society views men to be superior to women in terms of leadership.

On the aspect that some women seek to find their husbands consent in order to take up leadership in schools, rated at (3.57) by head teachers, (3.28) by deputy head teachers and (3.54) by teachers showed no statistically significant difference ($F(2,328) = .858, P > 0.05$). This translates that all the three respondents agreed that there was high influence of husbands giving consent to their wives to accept leadership in schools as signified by the ($OM = 3.46$). This is because men view their wives as inferior when it comes to making decisions. One BOM member asserted during the interview that: "Biblically women are submissive to men and therefore they should not make important decisions on their own."

Therefore women fear accepting to take up leadership positions before they seek consent from their husbands. This concurred with a report by UNESCO (2002) on mainstreaming the needs of women which noted that in Africa men still treat women as second class citizens which had a big impact in slowing development of a nation.

Stereotyped attitudes towards women affecting their willingness to accept leadership positions was rated at 3.13 by head teachers, 3.74 by deputy head teachers and 3.44 by teachers. This indicates that there was no statistical difference in their response ($F(2,328) = 2.086, P > 0.05$). The ($OM = 3.44$) revealed that there was moderate influence. During the interviews BOM members expressed varied views on women leadership. Some asserted that women are seen as the weaker gender who cannot manage schools effectively as this requires strong men who are able to take leadership challenges head on. Domestic and family roles have also been seen as a heavy burden to the women folk hence a big work load if they accept leadership positions. Women themselves also have a feeling of inferiority complex which make them have low self- esteem and lack of confidence as leaders as observed by one female BOM member. Kakane (1997) agrees that women are more comfortable with light duties and would be unwilling to take up challenging duties like heading a school.

Overall, socio-cultural factors do influence women participation in the management of primary education in Rongo Sub-County as concluded from the results in Table 2 that indicate overall head teachers rating ($M = 3.28$), deputy head teachers ($M = 3.65$) and teachers ($M = 3.56$). The average mean for the three respondents is ($OM = 3.50$) which is an indication that there was high influence of socio-cultural factors on women participation in the management of primary education in Rongo Sub- County. This showed that there was no statistical significant difference ($F(8,322) = 1.364, P > .05$). This means that the three respondents agreed on the level of influence of socio-cultural factors on participation of women in the management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County.

5. Conclusion

Social- cultural factors had high influence in participation of women in management of primary school education in Rongo Sub-County as signified by the ($OM = 3.50$). Negative attitude of men towards women leadership discouraged the women from participating in primary school Management and Primary School Management is largely stereo-typed as masculine and a preserve for males in Rongo Sub-County. There is also gender bias in promotion of teachers to administrative positions in primary school education in Rongo Sub-County where some female teachers have sacrificed their role as wife and mother for professional career of leadership in primary school management.

There is low attitude of the community towards women head teachers and some religious beliefs and cultural practices hinder women from participating in management of primary schools in Rongo Sub- County. Some women also need to seek their husbands consent in order to take up leadership in schools in the primary schools. Moreover, some stereo-typed attitudes towards women affect their willingness to accept leadership positions in Rongo Sub-County.

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