

## **Factors Affecting Female Teachers' Involvement in School Leadership in Secondary Schools of Sidama Zone**

<sup>1</sup>Solomon L Lodesso, <sup>2</sup>Mesay Kebede

*Associate Professor, Department of Educational Planning and Management, College of Education, Hawassa University, Ethiopia*

*Lecturer, School of Teacher Education, College of Education, Hawassa University, Ethiopia*

*Corresponding Author: <sup>1</sup>Solomon L Lodesso*

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**Abstract:** The study investigated the factors that affect female teachers' involvement in school leadership positions in secondary schools of Sidama zone. For this purpose, quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed. Data were collected from various bodies of literature, as well as teachers and school principals at government secondary schools of Sidama zone, Ethiopia. Twenty four school leaders and two hundred thirty teachers were involved in the study. The findings indicated that all the four factors (socio-cultural, personal, institutional/policy and affirmative action factors negatively affect the participation of female teachers involvement in leadership position. Of all the factors affirmative action related factors found the most influencing. It was recommended that the woreda, zonal and regional education bureaus should implement affirmative action as advised by the Ministry of education and different policies of the country for female teachers to come to the leadership position

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### **I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Leadership has generally been associated with men and male characteristics of behavior, and as a consequence the perception of a leader is dominated by male stereotypes (Klenke, 1996). Broadbringe (2007) advanced a view that there is a gender difference in leadership and that women bring different qualities to leadership and management positions, which help schools to maintain competitive advantage. Rosener's (1990) study of female and male administrative with similar backgrounds concluded that women tended to manage in different ways than men. The study found that female managerial was more interested in transforming people's self-interest into organizational goals by encouraging feelings of individual self-worth, active participation, and sharing of power and information. The qualities stated above are correlated to successful achievements in students' learning, which may explain the success of most women leaders in educational organizations (Agezo, 2010).

A feminine style of leadership is often motivational than the masculine style of leadership which tends to emphasize individualism, duty and rules (Shakeshaft, 1998). Similarly, Ngcobo (1996) reported that teachers tended to accept female leaders as school principals, because they had good relations with staff, they were efficient organizers, self-disciplined and the ability to bring about positive change often democratically. Furthermore, Lad (2000) noted that female principals were better than males in the area of communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation of instruction, coordinating curriculum, maintaining high visibility, promoting professional development and providing incentives for learning.

The fact that women are inadequately represented in the educational management as well as in the teaching force in the country shows a considerable gender disparity in the ministry in terms of numbers, position held, benefits and influence. In educational management gender gap has been a global outcry, and particularly in Ethiopia. For example an investigation by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1999) showed that although the number of women employed in the education sector is relatively high, they are under-represented in educational management in most countries of the world. In support of this point Davies (1992), in her study on women in educational management in third world countries, observed that the proportion of female head teachers, supervisors, or senior ministry personnel bears no relation to their proportions in the teaching force. She concluded that women are under-represented in management positions in third world countries. The situation is the same in Ethiopia. In Ethiopia as MoE (2015/16) report the number of female teachers is lower than male teachers in SNNPR i.e. from the total 18468 teachers, females are 2920. This shows the low representation of female teachers in the region in teaching profession.

In Ethiopia, school leadership has been male dominated, due to this consequence the government has set a plan to increase the number of model female students and teachers in school as well as appointing those able women at leadership position (MoE, 2006). In line with this, some education sectors has been seen in increasing the proportion of female school leaders such as principals, vice principals, unit leaders, department heads and clubs heads (MoE, 2006). In educational setting while females hold the teaching staff position, men dominates the highest position of educational leadership (MoE, 2008). Therefore, it is to be high lightened that due to low educational attainment and societal stereotypes that hinders the upward movement of female within organizations, one could hardly find females holding a management and decision-making positions. This would retrain many women from facing the challenge and exercise decision-making role (Meron, 2003).

The number of women in administrative and leadership positions in Ethiopia remains extremely low in all administrative areas in general and schools in particular. For example, in the case of school leadership, it goes decreasing as one move from primary to secondary schools and institutions of higher learning (MoE, 2010). This decline of women leadership affects female students to get the opportunity of looking up to role models. Also male teachers are educated and qualified than female teachers, this let females to be less competitive to leadership positions. The proportion of females among the total teaching staff remains limited, despite the policy to attract 50% of female into teachers training. Similarly, females are grossly under-represented in positions of educational leadership and management as well as office expertise at all level of educational institutions including primary and secondary school principals, supervisors and other administrative bodies (MoE, 2010).

It was observed earlier that educational leadership is dominated by men even in areas where women form the majority of the teaching staff and/or are more qualified than the men. For instance, females have been observed to be powerfully taken up with family household tasks, with little chance of being educated or involving in decision-making, and some women are more willing to be housewives (MoE, 2010). The Ethiopian government has authorized a number of legal documents aimed at reducing discrimination against women. One such document is the Gender Equality which was put into effect in (United Nations, 2007). The government approved the National Plan of Action on Education for All (NPAEA), which aims at achieving gender equality in education by 2015. The national goal of the strategy is to: improve females' quality of material and spiritual life, as well as establishing the conditions necessary for women to enjoy their fundamental rights, and fully and equally involve in and benefit from all aspects of politics, economy, culture and social areas (United Nations, 2007). One of the specific objectives of the strategy is the Ethiopian government's commitment to increase the number of females in leadership positions at all levels and in all education sectors.

However, the plan has been not fully implemented to upgrade women to levels of management and leadership positions. Within the wider Ethiopian culture and Africa in general, people tend to perceive men as being competent, skillful, aggressive and able to get things done; and thus assign leadership to men, while women are observed as warm, expressive, quiet, gentle and lacking confidence (UNICEF, 1990; Tanye, 2008). Resultantly, most Ethiopian women are largely considered to be suitable for the role of housewives, meant to take charge of domestic duties hence given less opportunities to exercise leadership skills in the work place. While schools provide a fertile training ground for society's future leaders, as such school leadership practices should be reflective, responsive and sensitive to that challenge. This may involve advocating for the valuing of diversity of leadership styles (Rosener, 1990), a feature that may support and nurture women leadership in schools.

The problem of under-representation of female teachers' and their involvement in school leadership positions appear to be very important. The number of female teachers' involvement in secondary schools leadership positions is low. There is also a big gap between low and high level of school leadership position of female teachers' involvement in secondary schools. Thus, the study was guided by the following objectives

1. To identify to what extent socio-cultural, individual, policy/institutional and affirmative action related factors hinder female teachers involvement in school leadership position
2. Which factor(s) is/are considered as the most influential factors that affect female teachers participation in leadership

## **II. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Research Design**

To undertake this study, descriptive survey type of research design was used. This design was selected because it is preferred over other design as it enables to make investigations with predictions, narration of events, and drawing of conclusions about the real situation based on the information obtained from relatively

large and representative samples of the target population (Kothari, 2005). Quantitative and qualitative research methods were also employed to investigate factors affecting female teachers' involvement in school leadership position in government secondary schools in Sidama zone.

**Population, sample and sampling technique**

The target population in this research are teachers, principals, vice principals, secondary school supervisors in secondary schools of Sidama zone, and Woreda education officers. Sidama zone has 75 government secondary schools (SZED 2015/16). These schools are clustered in to four (4) Cluster Resource Centers (CRC) based on their geographic location. Out of 75 governmental primary schools 3 schools from each cluster were selected by simple random sampling technique. After determining schools using Daniel's (1999) sample size determination formula, 230 teachers were involved in the study. The sample size of teachers was distributed to 12 schools using proportional allocation method. Then, participants from each school for teachers were selected using simple random sampling method. 24 principals were selected using available sampling technique. The participants from female teachers, principals, vice principals and woreda education officers were selected purposively for interview.

**Instruments of Data Collection**

The same types of questionnaire were prepared in English Language and self-administered to all participant teachers. The questionnaires have two parts. The first part deals with the general background of the participants. The second and the largest part were containing closed-ended question items that address the basic questions of the study. Likert Scale was employed to identify the extent to which the respondents agree or disagree. The Likert scale consists of five scales: 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= undecided, 2= disagree, and 1= strongly disagree. In addition to the questionnaires, semi-structured interview questions were prepared in English and conducted in Amharic language for interview.

**III. METHODS OF DATA ANALYSIS**

The data collected from teachers and principals, through questionnaire (quantitative one) were processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical tools.

**Data analysis and presentation**

The quantitative data were presented on tables and qualitative narrated to support the findings of quantitative data

**Table 1: Respondents' Characteristics by Sex and Educational Qualification,**

No	Items	Teachers		Educational leaders		
		N	%	N	%	
1	Sex	M	140	60.9	21	87.5
		F	90	39.1	3	12.5
		Tota	230	100	24	100
2	Educational qualification					
		Diploma	14	6.1	-	-
		BED/BSC	202	87.8	17	70.8
		MA/MSC	14	6.1	7	29.2

As we have seen from Table 1, among the total number of respondents 140(60.9 %) were male, and the remaining 39.1% were female teachers. This implies that the teaching staff are dominated by male teachers. However, this number is adequate for female teachers to be involved in educational leadership positions even if there are no affirmative actions taken in favor of them. From the educational leaders 21(87.5%) were males and only 3(12.5) were females. This shows the low representation of females in school leadership position in Sidama Zone secondary schools. In relation to the qualification of teachers, out of the total respondents 202 (87.8%) of them had first degree, 14(6.1%) had Master's degree. But the remaining 14 (6.1%) didn't qualify the standard to teach in secondary schools. On the other hand, 7 (29.2%) and 17(70.8%) leaders had master and bachelor degree respectively.

**4.2.1 Socio-cultural related factors**

The respondents were asked to show their degree of agreement in relation to the socio-cultural related factors, which are believed to affect women's participation in school leadership position. To indicate the extent of influence, the factor exerting the mean value was interpreted as follows: Mean value less than 2.5 was considered as low, 2.6 – 3.5 as average and the mean value greater than 3.5 was taken as high.

**Table 2: Social-cultural Related Factors**

No	Items	Category	Mean	Std	t- test	P
1	Men are considered as more intelligent than women in leading schools	Teachers	2.83	1.35	.691	.208
		Leaders	2.83	1.14		
2	Male teachers prefer male than women for school leadership position	Teachers	2.30	1.22	.985	.326
		Leaders	2.04	1.49		
3	Men and women are socialized differently to assume different roles (gender role socialization)	Teachers	3.41	1.44	.5424	.000
		Leaders	1.75	1.33		
4	There is a belief that , it is difficult for women to lead male teachers	Teachers	2.36	1.38	-.062	.951
		Leaders	2.38	1.56		
5	Women's lack of support from family (partner) affects their participation	Teachers	3.27	1.51	4.658	.000
		Leaders	1.79	1.10		
6	Women are not effective in maintaining school discipline	Teachers	2.65	1.37	.799	.425
		Leaders	2.42	1.18		

As the result in Table 2 indicates for item 1, respondents don't consider men as more intelligent than women in leading schools. The mean value 2.83 for teachers and educational leaders indicated medium level of influence as perceived by the participants. The t-value indicated that there is no significant difference in the response of the two groups. This implies that women can also be intelligent enough as men as in leading schools. For item 3 and 5 teacher respondents reported the items as critical with the mean values of 3.41 and 3.27 respectively. On the other hand, leaders perceived these items as not important factors that affect women participation with the mean value of 1.75 and 1.97. Concerning items 2, 4 and 6 both participants reported medium level of agreement to the statements with mean value of 2.30, 2.36 and 2.65 for teachers and 2.04, 2.38 and 2.42 for leaders. The t-value also indicates that there is no significant difference between the two responses.

The weighted mean for socio-cultural factors for the six items indicated that (see Table 6) the factor exerts average level of influence. That means that the two groups of respondents perceive that socio-economic factors do not highly influence women to come to the leadership position in school in Sidama Zone. The result of interview with women teachers also supported the above idea .One of the interview participant female teacher said "now the perception of the community has changed towards women leadership and they accept our leadership. On the other hand, one of the interview participants from woreda education official assured that women can also possess high skill and ability to lead schools and can be chosen by male teachers and also there are so many exemplary women who are leading school successfully. In support of this finding, Combs (2004) in Hanna (2016) stated that female teachers are not moved into administrative position due to social and cultural factors

**Attitude of Women towards themselves (personal factors)**

In this section the respondents were asked to put their degree of agreement to the attitude of women towards themselves.

**Table 4: Women's attitude toward themselves**

No	Items	category	Mean	Std	t- test	P
1	Women still acknowledge the world as "masculine"	Teachers	3.58	1.25	5.831	.000
		Leaders	2.00			
2	Women exhibit poor risk taking of themselves	Teachers	3.63	1.44	4.341	.000
		Leaders	2.29			
3	Women underestimate their abilities and perceive themselves as less skillful and passive in leadership	Teachers	3.88	1.19	5.951	.000
		Leaders	2.38			

4	Women consider themselves to have lower level of acceptance than men	Teachers	3.80	1.28	4.821	.000
		Leaders	2.46			
5	Women perceive themselves that they are confined at lower tasks under men	Teachers	3.57	1.46	2.236	.026
		Leaders	2.88			

For interpretation of the mean value, mean value that is less than 2.5 was considered as low, 2.5 – 3.5 as average and the mean value greater than 3.5 was taken as highly affecting factors.

As presented in Table 4, the teacher respondents consider all the items as critical factors with the mean value above 3.57. This means that teachers consider that personal factor or the perception female teachers have for themselves affects their representation in the leadership position in secondary schools. On the other hands leaders reported these factors as medium. Meaning the perception that female teachers have for themselves seriously doesn't prevent women from coming to leadership position in secondary schools. The interview data also supported what was reported by the teachers. For example one of the female teacher participant said "the way we are socialized affects our interest to seek leadership position. Even if there is a possibility to compete for school leadership position, most of us are not willing to work in a leadership position." In relation to this, Limerick and Anderson, (1999) said that women's under-representation in management positions may be attributed to women's own decisions and interest, not to apply for leadership position. This may be due to lack of confidence, gender-based socialization, fear of failure, and lack of competitiveness.

**Institutional or Policy related factors**

The Education and Training Policy (MoE, 1994) of education has no specific strategy to implement the provision it states on female educational leadership, it states simply by saying that "education will be geared towards reorienting society's attitude and value pertaining to the role and contribution of women in development (MoE, 1994). Not having a clear strategy specifying how women hold the leadership position in educational institutions.

**Table 5:** Policy related factors

No	Items	category	Mean	Std	t- test	P
1	There is no favorable policy environment to promote women's leadership	Teachers	2.34	1.08	-3.624	.000
		Leaders	3.21	1.38		
2	Lack of mentors and support system for women affects their aspiration for leadership	Teachers	3.96	1.19	5.661	.000
		Leaders	2.46	1.59		
3	Implementers are less committed in applying affirmative action in practice	Teachers	3.92	1.28	6.396	.000
		Leaders	2.13	1.51		
4	Implementers have minimal knowledge of policies that could empower women in affirmative action	Teachers	3.89	1.14	4.770	.000
		Leaders	2.67	1.66		
5	Lack of supporting women to form professional network in leadership	Teachers	3.58	1.30	7.072	.000
		Leaders	1.63	1.14		

For interpretation of the mean value and weighted mean, less than 2.5 was considered as low, 2.5 – 3.5 as average and the mean value greater than 3.5 was taken as high.

As presented in Table 5, the teacher respondents reported for all the items except item 1 as very challenging factor with the mean value of 3.96, 3.92, 3.89 and 3.58 for items 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The leaders also reported that except the first item, all the other items do not strongly affect female participation in secondary school leadership. The t-test result for all the items shows significant difference between the two responses. This difference may be attributed to the fact that leaders are those who are expected to implement the policy in the school and they are reporting as if they have implemented what was expected from them.

In relation to this, Shakershaft as cited by Combs, (2004) underline the absence of mentors for women to come to leadership position as women had traditionally no support, encouragement or counseling from family, peers, subordinates, or representatives of educational institutions to pursue or maintain careers in leadership. One of the interview participating female teacher stated the problem related to policy implementation as follows:

*The appointment for leadership posts in the education system seems open for bias and corruption. Female teachers complained that there is no public advertisement for the vacant posts for secondary school principal. It is obvious that individuals who are very close to or favored by the woreda education officials and political leaders are most welcome to be appointed for the posts. Those who are far from the woreda officials, especially females do not know how and when people are assigned as school directors*

**Factors related to affirmative action**

Principals and teachers were also asked to show the extent of the level of implementation of the affirmative action to bring women to leadership position in secondary schools of Sidama Zone and their responses were summarized as follows

**Table 6** Affirmative action related factors

No	Items	category	Mean	Std	t- test	P
1	During new teachers recruitment priority was given to female teachers	Teachers	3.88	1.14	-.652	.515
		leaders	4.04	1.20		
2	Promotion of teachers is based on active participation of women in secondary school management	Teachers	3.86	1.16	-.412	.681
		leaders	3.96	1.04		
3	Appointment of different positions in school are based on affirmative action	Teachers	2.92	1.45	2.030	.043
		leaders	2.29	1.30		
4	Adequate recognition is not given to strong (successful) women school leaders	Teachers	3.56	1.36	3.837	.000
		leaders	2.46	1.02		
5	Priority is given to train women rather than men	Teachers	3.13	1.45	-.269	.788
		leaders	3.21	1.18		

Analysis in Table 6 item 1 shows that the level of implementation of the affirmative action on the recruitment on new teachers' female teachers was not implemented as expected in the zone. Both respondents reported that the problem is higher compared to the other items in the table with the mean value of 3.88 and 4.04 for teachers and leaders respectively. Similarly they reported that item 2 and 5 were considered as critical. Meaning, due consideration was not given to implement affirmative action with respect to the items. From the interview finding as explained by the zonal education representative as the policy on affirmative action was there but not well implemented. He claimed that there was political interference and some of the principals are not willing to implement the affirmative action as expected.

The table consists of five items related to the issue. However, the result shows that the respondents have high agreement in most of the items and the weighted mean for the table presented in Table 7 indicate the highest mean value 3.27 for the teachers and 3.08 for the principals. From this result we can infer that failure to implement affirmative action in secondary schools critically affects female teaching from being appointed as a school leader. The research findings are consistent with Okojie (1996) who concluded that affirmative action can increase the participation of women in educational management.

One of the research questions was raised to identify the most challenging factors from the four (socio-economic, personal, institutional/policy and affirmative) factors and the following table presents the weighted mean of each table.

**Table 6** mean summary for the whole data

Challenging factors	category	N	mean	std
socio-cultural related factors	Teachers	230	2.80	.70
	Leaders	24	2.47	.51
personal related factors	Teachers	230	3.69	.66
	Leaders	24	2.40	.64
policy related factor	Teachers	230	3.54	.65

	Leaders	24	2.41	.51
affirmative action related factors	Teachers	230	3.27	.66
	Leaders	24	3.08	.57

From the four challenging factors teachers reported personal, institutional/policy and affirmative action related factors are the most influential with the mean value 3.69, 3.54 and 3.27 and socio-cultural as medium influencing factors with mean value of 2.80. On the other hand, leaders reported affirmative action related factor as the most influential with the mean value 3.08 and the rest three factors reported as medium. From this finding, the two groups of respondents indicated that lack of implementation of affirmative action mostly hinders the participation of female teachers from school leadership positions.

The interview participants were also asked to suggest strategies to improve women participation in the leadership position in secondary schools. They suggested the following points

- All concerned bodies should empower girls with skills for self-confidence
- The schools have to create conducive working environment
- Setting applicable school rules and regulations motivate women to apply for leadership position.
- If women fulfill the minimum requirement, then it is better to give the position
- Policy implementers, (education bureau officials, supervisors) have to get adequate training to implement the strategy, policy and affirmative action as it should be.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

It was found that lack of affirmative action for female teachers in secondary schools greatly influenced active participation of women in management of secondary schools in Sidama Zone. Therefore, it is recommended that the zonal education department and the woreda education office should implement affirmative action for female teachers to come to the leadership position. Even if there are good guidelines for the schools to implement different affirmative action, women do not take this opportunity because of lack of adequate knowledge of policy implementers. As result, there are few women in management position in Sidama Zone.

It was also noted that institutional/policy related factors also negatively influence active participation of women in secondary school leadership. Low level of favorable policy environment to promote women for leadership position was found to largely discourage many female teachers from applying for leadership positions. This may be due to lack of knowledge on different gender related policies. Therefore, the management of secondary schools was advised to make the path suitable for female teachers. Unless the policy is implemented fully, the number of women participating in secondary school leadership may not shoot in secondary schools of Sidama Zone.

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