

## Principals' Gender and Management Effectiveness in Secondary Schools: Case of Mtito Andei Division, Kenya

Eunice Wangui Matheri  
South Eastern Kenya University, P.O . Box 170-90200, Kitui, Kenya  
Email: eunda2011@gmail.com

Selpher K. Cheloti(Ph.D)  
South Eastern Kenya University, P. O. Box 170-90200, Kitui, Kenya  
Email: selphercheloti@yahoo.com

David M. Mulwa, Ph. D\*  
South Eastern Kenya University, P. O. Box 170-90200, Kitui, Kenya  
Email: davimulwa@gmail.com

### Abstract

Educational leadership has a critical role in the transformation of society, and for change to happen, effective leaders are key. The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of principals' gender on management effectiveness in secondary schools in Mtito-Andei Division, Kenya. The study sought to establish the relationship between the Principals' gender and their effectiveness in management of the discipline, staff, students and school finance. The study used ex-post facto research design. Simple random sampling was used to select the respondents for the study. The sample size was 28 principals and 140 teachers. Data was collected by use of questionnaires and interview schedules and was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Conceptually, the chi-square test of independence statistic was computed. In hypotheses the four scores in management of discipline, management of staff personnel, management of students and management of financial resources were converted from continuous data to discreet data (categories) respectively and then Chi-square used to test the hypotheses. The researcher adopted a significance level of 0.05. The results of the data analysis show that there was a significant relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of discipline. It was also found out that there was no significant relationship between the principles gender and their effectiveness in personnel management, student management and financial management.. The study recommends that the teachers' employer (The Teachers' Service Commission) should consider gender while promoting deputy principals to become principals in order to ensure that there is gender equity in the secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Principals' Gender, Management effectiveness

### 1.0 Background to the Study

An effective public secondary school is one with safe and positive learning environment, where students are able to achieve their personal goals and develop the skills to make contributions to the society in the future (Otiato, 2009). It would also have high discipline and good use of financial resources. Building effective schools has been the nation's primary goal of education since the 1980s (Republic of Kenya, 2001). Research studies on effective schools such as that done by Orodho (2002) concentrated more on principal's instructional leadership. The Kenyan Government has given education a lot of prominence as evident in the 2012/2013 financial year budget in which education was allocated around 2.9 billion US dollars which was second to infrastructure which got 3.35 billion US dollars (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The recent economic blue prints notably the Vision 2030 and Millennium Development Goals have variously pegged their attainment to education improvement. The government declared a free and compulsory primary education in Kenya for all its citizens to be able to access education since most sectors depend on an educated society to get propelled. Maicibi (2005) observed that, proper leadership was the only necessary tool for effective performance by the students.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted that there was no tool for development which was more effective than education. He also observed that no other policy was as powerful as increasing the chances of education for the next generation. Therefore, by eliminating school fees for primary school education in Kenya, many children were privileged to go to school thus putting the country on the right track towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and Vision 2030 (Republic of Kenya, 2001). It is important to note that, if students were to get quality education in their schools the management of the schools needs to be improved under the steering of head teachers.

Armstrong (2004) defined leadership as influence, power and the legitimate authority acquired by a leader to be able to effectively transform the organization through the direction of the human resources that are the most important organizational assets, leading to the achievement of desired purpose. Human resource in

school includes teachers and the support staff. The main task of teachers is instructional work in the classrooms. Some teachers may be given other duties like heads of departments. They oversee the smooth running of their departments and report to the principal. Support staff includes cooks, secretaries, watchmen, matrons and messengers. These ensure smooth operation of support systems like cooking, cleanliness, security, clerical work and delivery of goods in the school. Desired purposes can be achieved through the articulation of the vision and mission of the organization and also ensuring the teachers are also able to define their power so as to share the vision.

Leadership as defined by Cole (2002) is the ability to inspire people to perform. Therefore, even with the availability of all the relevant resources required to make students perform well in examinations, lack of leadership to motivate the teachers and students would lead to poor performance. Educators have begun to recognize that the school must be the central unit in any successful reform effort. No matter how elegant the design, innovations that do not meet the needs of the school and approaches that have no support among staff members will never lead to meaningful change. To effect real improvement, schools must identify their unique needs and develop policies and plans that meet those needs. Throughout history, many have come to believe that leadership is a traditionally masculine activity. Kolb (1997) explained that if women in organizations are to emerge as leaders, it is important that they be perceived as individuals who can influence or motivate others. A look at research dating back to the 1970's indicated that there was a tremendous amount of gender bias regarding women's achievements in the business sector (Kolb, 1997).

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

With the increase in the number and size of secondary schools in Kenya, the problems of management by school principals could obviously become more complex. Some schools experience more conflicts than others in management of staff and financial resources and this may be attributed among other things to the gender of the principal and his/her level of leadership (Adesina, 1990). Discipline in schools is the offspring of effective leadership, while indiscipline is caused by absence of commitment on the part of the principal among other factors (KESI, 2011). This means that effective leaders will be required to manage these schools. Vroom (1983), Adigwu (2004) and Burke (2001) conducted studies on this area but did not explore the effects of gender in secondary schools therefore this study sought to determine the effects of principals' gender on leadership effectiveness in secondary schools in Mtito-Andei Division of Kibwezi Sub-County.

### 1.2 Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives;

- i. To determine the relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of discipline in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.
- ii. To establish the relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of personnel in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.
- iii. To assess the relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of students in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.
- iv. To determine the relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of financial resources in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.

### 1.3 Research hypotheses:

Ho<sub>1</sub>. There is no significant relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of discipline in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.

Ho<sub>2</sub>. There is no significant relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of personnel in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.

Ho<sub>3</sub>. There is no significant relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of students in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.

Ho<sub>4</sub>. There is no significant relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of financial resources in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Global and Regional Perspective of Gender and Leadership Effectiveness in Learning Institutions

Gender literature shows that education management is dominated by males in most areas of the world (Kolb, 1997). She says that globally there are fewer women heads of education institutions than there were previously. She asserts that the number of women in leadership positions in education in Australia, Britain and U.S.A has decreased. India, despite having a strong women's movement, women continue to be marginally represented in policy and decision making processes. The 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 noted that poverty had a women's face and 70 % of the world's poor then were female. This was partly linked to a lack of

voice in political life, decision making, social subordination and exclusion and lack of resources and opportunities for human development. Despite their educational and other advances women still face major obstacles in entering senior positions in society (DFID, 2000). The document continues to argue that in South Africa teaching was dominated numerically by women. About 70 % of all black and white teachers were women. However, women were under-represented in positions of education management. According to Mbilinyi (2000), there is a tendency for many women who have qualifications, expertise and aptitude not to apply for positions of leadership in education management. Gender difference, a product of institutions, emanates from institutionalized patterns of distributing resources social value and power in public and private spheres worldwide.

Alhourani (2013) argues that gender does not impact on leadership effectiveness. There was no significant effect of gender on leadership effectiveness. Thus women leaders were as effective as men leaders in those universities where the research was done. Men used transactional leadership & women transformational leadership. He continues to argue that current statistics from the world's principal associations of universities attest to the need to improve the presence of women at the top of higher education. According to UNESCO (2009), the gender issue has gained worldwide attention as a crucial component in the development process assuming that inequalities will be redressed more effectively through strengthening basic and higher education management in developing countries.

## **2.2 Gender and Leadership in Institutions in Kenya**

Mueller & Mulinge (1998) argues that developing nations, Kenya included are enmeshed in struggle over gender inequality in almost all sectors and the degree of inequality is greater with few legal structures that support gender equality. Sang (2012) argues that previous constitutions derailed the move to equal opportunity in education management and may be the massive improvements in the new constitution could be a watershed for gender equity. A report carried out by the Southern and Eastern Africa Commission for Monitoring Education Quality (2010) showed that less than 15 % of secondary schools in Kenya are administered by female principals. To be effective, principals use different leadership styles. According to Kendra (2015), there are ten leadership styles which include Charismatic, Democratic, Autocratic, Command and control, Laissez-Faire, Pace-setter, Servant, Situational, Transformational and transactional style. The study will explore Transformational, Autocratic, Bureaucratic, situational, Democratic and Charismatic leadership styles.

## **2.3 Relationship Between Principal's Gender and Leadership Effectiveness**

Educational leadership has a critical role in the transformation of society, and for change to happen, effective leaders are key. Along with the widespread belief that the quality of leadership makes a significant difference to school and student outcomes, there is also increasing recognition that effective school leaders and managers have to be developed if they are to provide the best possible education for their learners. Throughout history, many have come to believe that leadership is a traditionally masculine activity. Kolb (1997) argued that if women in organizations are to emerge as leaders, it is important that they be perceived as individuals who can influence or motivate others. A look at research dating back to the 1970's indicated that there was a tremendous amount of gender bias regarding women's achievements in the business sector.

Thomas (2004) says that research has demonstrated that there are far more similarities than differences in the leadership behaviors of women and men, and that they are equally effective. Still, women are less likely to be pre-selected as leaders, and the same leadership behavior is often evaluated more positively when attributed to a male than to a female. Bunyi (1985) found that when males were in the majority, they emerged as leaders 100% of the time. When females were in the majority, females did emerge as leaders but not beyond the expectations one would have on the basis of chance. In contrast, Schneier (1980) observed that the likelihood that a female would emerge as a leader did increase as the number of women in the group increased. Kent (1994) argued that women were slightly more likely than men to be perceived as leaders by group members when the percentage of women per group was controlled statistically.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

This study was guided by Situational Theory of Leadership. The situational theory of leadership was originally developed by Paul Hersey, author of the book *Situational Leader* and Ken Blanchard in 1969. According to this theory, effective leadership is determined by the leader, the group being led and the task to be done. The theory fundamental underpinning is that there is no single best style of leadership. Effective leadership is task-relevant and the most successful leaders are those that adapt their leadership style to the maturity of the individual or group they are attempting to lead or influencing. According to Thomas (2004) situational leadership brings affection to the role of the follower. This leadership is about being flexible and using needed leadership style to nurse a given development level of a follower to be successful in a given working environment. This theory was found suitable for this study because for one to be effective in leadership, one has to adopt his/ her leadership

style to suit the situation at hand. All situations in a school system cannot be handled using one style of leadership hence the need to observe a situation and apply the best leadership style.

### **3.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **3.1 Principals' responses on gender of the principal and management of discipline in secondary schools**

Findings shows that majority 62.5% of male principals strongly agreed that in order to enforce adequate discipline in schools the behaviour of the students and teachers needs to be taken into consideration and that a high standard of discipline must be observed for effective school management compared to 25.0% and 75.0% female principals who agreed with the statements (Table 1). Majority 75.0% of female principals strongly agreed that they establish clear rules and regulations to enforce discipline compared to 31.3% of male principals who agreed with the statement. Majority 81.3% of male principals strongly agreed that discipline was the central pillar for the entire school programmes success and excellent performance compared to 100.0% of female principals. This shows that the principals despite their gender were involved in discipline management. Data also shows that 31.2% of male principals agreed that discipline ensures that effective teaching and learning takes place in an orderly environment. This agrees with Alhourani(2013) who indicated that head of schools are delegated duties concerned with day-to-day life in school. These include coordination of co-curricular activities, dealing with minor cases of discipline and taking responsibility of students' welfare. To test  $H_{01}$  which stated that 'there is no significant relationship between principals' gender and effectiveness in discipline management' a Chi-Square test was tabulated (Table 2). The Chi-square value obtained was 0.03379 (df=2, p=0.000). Since  $p < 0.05$ , then there was found to be a significant relationship between the Principals' gender and effectiveness in discipline management. The hypothesis that there is no relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in discipline management was therefore rejected.

#### **3.2 The relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in management of personnel in secondary schools in MtitoAndei Division**

96.5% of female principals and 95.4% of male principals said they were highly effective while 3.5% of female principals and 4.6% of male principals rated themselves as effective. When teachers were asked to give their opinion on Principals' effectiveness in management of personnel, majority of the teachers' whose Principals were either male or female rated their principals as effective while a small number of principals were rated as ineffective. This implies that a great number of principals were effective in personnel management irrespective of their gender. When the null hypothesis that 'there is no relationship between the Principals' gender and effectiveness in personnel management' was tested, it was found out the relationship was not significant. The Chi-Square value obtained was 5.38, df=5 and sig. 0.371.  $P > 0.05$  hence we failed to reject the null hypothesis

#### **3.3. The relationship between the principals' gender and effectiveness in students' management in secondary schools in MtitoAndei Division**

Majority of male (96.5%) and female (93.7%) principals rated themselves as highly effective. 90% of female Principal led teachers and 87.6% of male Principal led teachers rated their Principals as highly effective. This implies that the principals were relatively effective in student management irrespective of their gender. The Chi-square test results ( $X^2$  value = 19.044, df = 25, sig = 0.795) on the hypothesis that 'there is no relationship between principals' gender and effectiveness in students' management in secondary schools in Mtito Andei division' revealed that there is no significant relationship between the variables. We therefore failed to reject the null hypothesis.

#### **3.4 The relationship between principals' gender and effectiveness in management of financial resources in secondary schools in Mtito Andei Division**

Majority of the female and male principals rated themselves as highly effective in financial resource management. Majority of female headed teachers 87.5% and 83.3% of male headed teachers indicated that their principals were highly effective in financial resources management. Male and female were relatively effective in financial resources management. The Chi-square test results revealed no significant relationship between principals' gender and effectiveness in financial resources management ( $X^2$  value = 6.546, df = 10, Sig = 0.821). The null hypothesis was thus retained at  $p < 0.05$ .

### **4. Conclusion**

From the study, it is clear that there is a relationship between Principals gender and Principals' effectiveness in discipline management. There was no significant relationship and personnel management, students' management and financial resource management. The study also established that both the male and female Principals' were perceived as highly effective.

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## Tables

Table1: **Principals' responses on gender of the principal and management of discipline in secondary schools**

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
In order to enforce adequate discipline in schools the behaviour of the students and teachers needs to be taken into consideration	10 (62.5%)	3 (25.0%)	6 (37.5%)	9 (75.0%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
I establish clear rules and regulations to enforce discipline	5 (31.3%)	9 (75.0%)	11 (68.8%)	3 (25.0%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
A high standard of discipline must be observed for effective school management	10 (62.5%)	9 (75.0%)	6 (37.5%)	3 (25.0%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Discipline is the central pillar for the entire school programmes success and excellent performance	13 (81.3%)	12 (100.0%)	3 (18.8%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Discipline ensures that effective teaching and learning takes place in an orderly environment	11 (68.8%)	9 (75.0%)	5 (31.2%)	3 (25.0%)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)

**Table 2: Chi square results for the relationship between principals' gender and effectiveness in discipline management**

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig (2 sided)
Pearson's chi square	0.03374 (a)	2	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	36.352	2	0.000
Linear-by-linear Association	3.440	1	0.64
No. of valid cases	28		

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