

Full Length Research Paper

Hopes and hiccups expressed: Barriers to university female lecturers' promotion

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The study explored barriers to promotion for university female lecturers to leadership positions. In Zimbabwe, women have gained legal rights through government pronounced policies such as the Gender policy and Affirmative Action policy (Government of Zimbabwe, 2004; Chabaya et al., 2009). The theoretical framework used is critical feminism which deals with issues that marginalize women from leadership roles in Zimbabwean universities. A qualitative research design was employed. Inductive reasoning was used to explore the research argument. The design enabled the researchers to establish how society perceives the practice of selecting leaders in institutions of higher learning. A sample of 60 lecturers, 30 males and 30 females was drawn from a population of 200 lecturers at Great Zimbabwe University. Data was collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study found that very few women are in leadership positions. There is a culture of fear on the part of female lecturers to apply for vacancies. Men were not keen to support female leadership. The study recommends the need for a paradigm shift and change of mindset of women to seriously take leadership challenges that come their way. Women need to assertively compete for leadership positions whenever opportunities arise.

Key words: Barriers, female, university, promotion, lecturers, leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership literature is replete with research examining the supposed differences between male and female leadership styles (Richardson and Loubier, 2008: 142). Various explanations for gender related differences, such as biology (Bass, 1998; Kolb, 1999), societal role expectation (Chabaya et al., 2009; Kosh, 2004; Wood and Eagly, 2002), attributes (Jackson et al., 2003), and values-drive perceptions (Claes, 1999), leadership suitability and leadership efficacy (Gherardi, 1996; Sinclair, 1998; Power, 2002). Further, experience has shown that from the Holy Bible to contemporary gender practices, leadership is viewed from a patriarchal perspective.

Broady and Hammet (1999) describe leadership as an exclusively product-driven process where efficiency, control, power over, accountability, motivation and manipulation strategies are used. It is about one holding power over subordinates (Watkins, 1989). From a

feminist view, leadership is a transformational practice (Broady and Hammet, 1999). It means that women in leadership positions are seen as playing a transformational role. They are viewed as agents of change and hope for fellow women. Their attainment of leadership positions is seen to challenge Biblical, historical and traditional stereotypes that are gender blind. The stereotype view is a constraint for women gaining leadership positions because it assumes and demands a determined personality that challenges and transforms the status quo. Cultural and social factors are the most important barriers to women advancement (Mirghafouri, 2006: 101).

The third Millennium Development Goal aims to 'promote gender equality and empower women', that is, there should be a proportion of seats held by women in organizations (UNESCO, 2005: 294). On the contrary, Chabaya et al. (2009: 235) observed that women have low self esteem; lack confidence; women perceive that their role in the family overrides all other roles and lack support from family and the workplace. It was also noted

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in this study that sometimes women are passive, submissive, tame, meek, quiet, docile and unpredictable. The assumed gender differences account for lack of women in key leadership posts in universities (Winkler, 2000: 737).

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an international bill of rights for women. It defines discrimination against women as:

“...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field (Women Leadership and Governance Institute, 2002: 31)”.

By ratifying the convention, Zimbabwe as a member state also committed itself to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms. Our qualitative study attempted to explore and understand lived experiences of female university lecturers' barriers to top leadership positions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership in Zimbabwean universities still reflects the traditional myths that empower men and prejudice women. The persistent shortage of women in top leadership positions shows this trend. According to Chabaya et al. (2009) stereotyping, discrimination and gender blind practices also account for the marginalization and very low numbers of women in university leadership. The gender policy in Zimbabwe is meant to attain social justice, equality and equity in all institutions and employment sectors. However, there are still persistent gender bias practices and gender imbalance in university leadership.

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (1) Why are women under-represented in key university leadership positions?
- (2) What do university lecturers identify as barriers to female lecturers' promotion?
- (3) How does male-dominated university leadership impact on women's professional growth and development?

THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study is feminism. It is an ideology that seeks to unravel the mysteries of gender

relations and to transform the existing gender relations that are oppressive (Gentine, 1999). It is political in nature, because it seeks to undo the status quo. Feminism is against any and all forms of oppression although its main focus is to resist gender hierarchy and male supremacy (Women Leadership and Governance Institute, 2002). As an ideology, feminism seeks to establish equality of the sexes. It calls for equal opportunities and participation of men and women in institutions. It also offers a critique of male dominated institutions, values and social practices that are oppressive and destructive. Feminism views women's status as a result of conditioning. The social conditioning takes place in all educational and socialization processes which define masculinity and femininity. In this study, the feminist principles guided the researchers in methodology, in terms of choosing instrument items as well as in the presentation and discussion of findings.

Feminism asserts that patriarchy is used worldwide to describe the situation of male dominance over women and children within the family and the extension of the practice into all other areas of society. The ideology subsumes women's oppression under a system of patriarchy (Broady and Hammet, 1999). Under patriarchal practice, any man regardless of his status, age and achievement is considered superior to any woman no matter of how she may surpass the men in status, age, and achievement. Patriarchy is dominated by male privilege and dominance where women play the subordinate role in public as well as private. In the world today, women are oppressed and disadvantaged in areas such as attainment of higher educational qualifications; participation in positions of authority; decision making and occupational structure (Women Leadership and Governance Institute, 2002). In these critical areas women are mostly found at the lower levels. It was therefore the mandate of this study to investigate barriers to university female lecturers' promotion and explore ways to ameliorate or minimise such barriers for gender equality and equity.

METHODOLOGY

This study falls within a qualitative research paradigm. A descriptive survey was employed in this study. Inductive reasoning or narrative was used to explore the research argument. The qualitative approach employed is consistent with the views of Cohen et al. (2005: 37) that it enables a researcher to solicit rich data on attitudes, beliefs and feelings. The research design enabled the researchers to investigate educational, cultural and social arenas of the problem (Wiersma, 2000). It also enabled the researchers to establish how the Zimbabwean society in general views the practice of selecting leaders in institutions of higher learning. A purposive sample comprising of 60 lecturers, 30 males and 30 females from a population of 200 lecturers was selected in order to attain equal gender representation of the lecturers at Great Zimbabwe University. The purposefully selected participants were seen to be rich data sources for the case study. Data was collected using a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire

comprised 32 items seeking responses on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (SA) to strongly disagree (SD). The middle points were agree (A) and disagree (D). The questionnaire also had a one open-ended questionnaire sourcing lecturers' views on the research problem. Data was analysed using the descriptive analysis technique. Vignettes and excerpts were employed as narratives that carry within them an interpretation of the respondents' experiences (Ely et al., 1997).

RESULTS

The following are results obtained from the questionnaire.

Gender

Table 1 below shows results on issues pertaining to gender issues in relation to barriers to female university leadership at Great Zimbabwe University. The results in Table 1 show that 70% (42) of the participants affirm women's rights to leadership positions are limited. On the statement that internalization of traditional gender stereotypes make women inferior to men, 87% (52) agreed with the issue. Eighty-three percent (50) of the participants reported that women are viewed by what they are and not what they do. These results reveal that women barriers to promotion arise from cultural stereotypes and patriarchal beliefs. Table 2 presents results on leadership issues.

Leadership

Results in Table 2 show that 70% (42) reported that in management issues women are good followers. Sixty-one percent (38) agreed to the view that women do not participate equally with men in leadership roles. On the other hand, 61% (38) of the respondents disagreed with the view that men do not see female lecturers as equals and capable leaders. Whilst women lecturers were viewed as equals and capable, the results reflect that women experience reticence in applying and stereotypically gendered notions, as a result they remain followers.

Gender and leadership

Table 3 presents results on gender and leadership issues. Results in Table 3 show that 97% (58) of the respondents confirmed that women are capable of performing any leadership role, whilst, 71% (44) of the respondents acknowledged that women leadership style is different from that of men. Another 60% (34) reported that women are discriminated against because of their gender. Although women are discriminated against because of their gender, they are capable of performing any leadership role.

Barriers to promotion

The following table presents the different barriers to female university lecturers' promotion. Results in Table 4 show that 100% (60) of the participants disagreed that women are not suitably qualified for leadership positions in universities. On the other note, 87% (52) agreed to the statement that there are more men in appointment boards whose decisions dominate and want to maintain the status quo. The results show that society in general discriminates against women because of their sex. The gender policy is not being effectively implemented in universities and yet results show that it is wise to entrust women with key leadership positions.

Feminism issues

Results in Table 5 show that 93% (56) of the respondents reported that female lecturers are assets to institutions of higher learning. Of the respondents 75% (46) disagreed that for their success women leaders exploit men with leadership qualities. Overall, results show that female leaders are assets to institutions of higher learning and they attain leadership positions through very hard work, therefore they need not submit to male dominance and leadership.

Results from the open-ended question

The following were sentiments expressed by male lecturers. The government and university policies are against the discrimination of women; while universities preach the gospel of gender parity, reality on the ground is different; women are not in leadership positions in universities because there are very few women lecturers; it is up to women to take initiatives towards their promotion; women can match men in their leadership capability; some women are even better leaders than men if given the opportunity; society needs to be conscientised in as far as the roles and capabilities of women are concerned; society tends to favour males at the expense of females; hence, females suffer from an inferiority complex; females should be visible in all university activities whether academic or to do with workers' union; University culture allows for equal participation by all employees on the basis of their qualifications; and women are not interested in being given responsibilities and they rarely volunteer to take posts but talk and complain of being left out. From these male sentiments, of interest to note is that male lecturers blame the female lecturers for failure to attain leadership positions in universities.

The following issues were reported by female lecturers. While it is true that in some institutions women are sidelined, it is important to note that some organisations in the country including universities are doing a sterling

Table 1. Gender issues.

Gender items	N = 60			
	SA	A	D	SD
Women's rights to leadership positions are limited.	16	26	8	10
Women are viewed by what they are and not what they do	18	22	12	8
Internalisation of traditional gender stereotypes makes women feel inferior to men	12	40	4	4
Most men are oppressive	18	20	18	4
Men are business minded, serious, assertive, fearless and they act quickly	12	14	24	10
Women are timid, easily frustrated, cannot endure pressure, unsure of themselves.	4	22	30	4

Table 2. Leadership issues.

Leadership items	N = 60			
	SA	A	D	SD
In management issues women are good followers.	14	28	14	4
Women do not participate equally with men in leadership roles.	10	28	18	4
Women do not apply for advertised leadership positions within the university system.	8	22	20	10
Female leaders emulate a dominant male-oriented leadership characteristic.	6	34	14	6
Men do not see female lecturers as equals and capable leaders.	8	14	30	8

Table 3. Gender and leadership issues.

Gender and leadership items	N = 60			
	SA	A	D	SD
Women leadership style is different from that of men.	10	34	10	6
The success of women leadership depends on experiences of successful male leaders.	6	8	34	12
Women are discriminated against because of their gender.	10	24	18	8
Women are capable of performing any leadership role.	46	12	2	0
Women need affirmative action to attain leadership positions in institutions of higher learning.	16	16	16	12

Table 4. Barriers to promotion issues.

Barriers to promotion items	N = 60			
	SA	A	D	SD
Women are not suitably qualified for leadership positions in universities.	0	0	24	36
The university administrators are not keen to increase representation of women in key positions.	2	22	28	8
Women attach themselves more to their families than to their careers.	14	28	16	2
It is unwise to entrust women with key leadership.	0	0	22	38
Women do not engage in career planning.	0	4	32	24
Government is not facilitating gender equity in universities.	8	14	30	8
The gender policy is not being effectively implemented in universities.	10	28	18	4
Society in general discriminates against women because of their gender.	16	36	8	0
There are more men in appointment boards whose decisions dominate and want to maintain the status quo.	20	32	8	0
The present generation of leaders is not yet gender sensitive.	12	28	20	0

Table 5. Feminism issues.

Feminism items	N = 60			
	SA	A	D	SD
Society is patriarchal and it upholds male-defined values.	30	30	0	0
Societies in general view women as being weak hence need male leadership.	18	28	14	0
Women attain leadership positions through very hard work unlike men.	20	24	14	2
Women have low self-esteem they need men to encourage them to accept leadership positions.	4	16	30	10
Women should always submit to male dominance and leadership.	0	4	24	32
For their success women leaders exploit men with leadership qualities.	2	12	40	6
Female leaders are assets to institutions of higher learning.	34	22	0	4

job in upgrading and promoting women; women sometimes are their own culprits, they look down upon themselves, and they have a low self-esteem; in most cases they do not apply for leadership posts but they want to be in post; there is need for a campaign to encourage women to apply for higher posts and brave themselves for leadership posts; leadership may not be viewed as basically a male domain because some people were born leaders whether they are male or female; and the socialisation process that people receive during nurturing exposes them to various leadership styles hence they end up adopting from society. The sentiments of the female lecturers are in agreement with male lecturers' views that female lecturers have themselves to blame for not attaining leadership posts.

The female lecturers further responded that the government needs to seriously facilitate gender equity in universities; female leaders are real assets to institutions and they are usually fully committed to duties delegated to them; women culturally are considered inferior to men and as such feel they can not take up leadership positions but with enlightenment and encouragement some are very keen to take up these positions; women have the leadership qualities that can change the status quo; they are organized and surpass men in terms of producing results; they always want to see the best results; for posts such as dean and chairperson, man and women should alternate so as to ensure equality; if they are open to votes, the tendency to vote for male leaders is very strong; and the feminine touch can be very effective in moulding law abiding citizens and efficiency in organisational structures. The sentiments expressed by female lecturers show that women are efficient and can be better leaders than man; all they expect is a paradigm shift in the sense that both man and women should be socialized to remove gender blindness and stereotyping.

Interview results

Views on women leadership at university level

From the respondents it was found that women are still very much under-represented; women can be competent

leaders although their leadership styles may be different; women command respect and men demand respect; leadership for both men and women is equally effective and women performance is equal to that of men in all aspects; those who are in leadership, while their performance is satisfactory they need to be more assertive and decisive in decision making; and women are good and effective leaders but female leadership in universities is almost 'invisible'. An inference into the respondents' views reveals that although women leadership is invisible in universities, women are equally competent and they command respect in their leadership style while men demand respect.

Willingness of women to take up university leadership posts

Results indicated that in most cases women are not willing to take up key positions because of social responsibilities such as pressure of work and family, for example many women put their families and marriages first; some women are equally courageous and more than willing to take up leadership positions; the majority lack confidence considering that most lectures in university departments are males; women fear serious competition from men, and they encounter challenges of a society which is patriarchal; some are willing but do not qualify while others do not want to work to earn these positions; and women past child bearing age, who have grown up children and supportive husbands are willing to take up leadership posts. These sentiments imply that most women are willing to take up leadership posts but they are incapacitated by social responsibilities.

Individual lecturers' response to taking up university leadership posts

Respondents who were willing to take up leadership posts expressed the following views: With the experience, it is everyone's wish to show potential and

make a contribution to university administration; leaders are born and not made; if women have top posts there is nothing which can stop a man from occupying higher posts; there are benefits attached to leadership posts such as improved salary; leadership helps one to grow professionally, one learns how to carry out other duties besides teaching; there are a lot of things that men do not do well and women can assist to make things better; those willing to take up leadership posts need the necessary support from the administration and colleagues. Those who were not willing to take posts gave the following views: Remuneration does not tally the amount of workload; leadership is too involving, lecturers need time to do personal business, and some were very comfortable in current area of operation as mere lecturers. An analysis of these views indicates that most lectures are willing to take up leaderships posts due to various benefits and experiences enjoyed.

Reasons why women are under-represented in key university leadership positions

On this issue respondents had this to say: In the traditional society fewer women had schooling opportunities; women have been discriminated against from a cultural and policy point of view and this has resulted in the system developing very few women to top leadership positions; on aggregate, women are less educated than men, and professionally, there are fewer females in universities; cultural bias affects women as they feel that men should lead; there is fear, lack of self-esteem and fear of pressure from the university's highest offices; many women first consider those leadership positions that do not compromise their families' stability, they do not apply for top positions; female lecturers are discouraged by fellow women; they are safe under male leadership; in universities top leaders are males who still feel that males are more capable leaders than women; in some faculties it could be that some men feel threatened by the affirmative action; women do not qualify for such positions because are erratic in their coming to work; most women are not interested in taking challenging duties because they are afraid of the stresses associated with leadership as well as conflicts; and the gendered nature of universities against women holds them back, coupled with cultural factors which view women as more appropriate for supporting roles.

To a large extent pre-colonial government policies contributed to the under representation of women in university leadership. Women themselves are also to blame because given a choice and even when they are in the majority they do not vote or support each other. Men do not subscribe to female leadership; society at large takes the blame, there are cultural stereotypes, as women are socialized to be docile hence find it difficult to take up challenging leadership posts.

Reasons for female lecturers' failure to apply for key university leadership posts

The following were respondents' views: Very few female lecturers apply for advertised leadership posts, and the number is so insignificant given the high number of male applicants; women usually do not like to be harassed by authorities over work related issues; fear of pressure and also uncertainty of success in interviews militate against their willingness to apply; women underrate themselves, they feel they are not suitable for the posts; women do not apply due to lack of interest and fear of being intimidated by male counterparts who may also be interested in the key posts; women are bound by family ties; they normally do not want to move far away from their families; grapevine stories of harassment of women in leadership at universities have scared away potential women applicants; There are few models in leadership positions for women to emulate; leadership is associated with conflicts and stresses, some women need peaceful duties and environments; women fear that they would upset the 'perfect order'; and balancing domestic responsibilities and leadership duties are a mammoth task to most women.

Do lecturers recommend women to leadership positions?

Respondents indicated that: During consultations in departments and faculties women are strongly recommended to be leaders because a female touch is needed in some of the university activities; Recommending female lecturers to leadership positions would be a very good development; and women would be recommended provided they possess the prerequisite qualifications and capabilities not just that they are women, but they should compete just like everyone else.

Benefits of society from women leadership

Respondents indicated that: Society benefits because in most cases women are hard working, take a motherly approach, understanding, and are more tolerant than men, they are good listeners and hence prudent in decisions; women have passion, expertise and skills that can benefit society other than being mothers; when women assume leadership positions, society can benefit a lot since it can shift from seeing women and girls as second class citizens; in most cases, women leaders are good role models for the youths and society would benefit from them; and as custodians of culture and its teachers, women are best suited for leadership.

The impact of male-dominated university leadership on women's professional growth and development

Respondents expressed that: Male-dominated leadership

stifles women's professional growth, as they are not given the opportunity to explore their potential, and would view themselves as not leadership material; A lot of women who are potential good leaders are left to rot, hence, they do not realise their potential; this explains why very few women who start very well do not reach the top; They remain oppressed by men; This constrains women's professional development because there will be a lack of paucity of a feminine touch in all university activities; they feel looked down upon and rate themselves unable; women's professional growth and development is thwarted, as a strategy of avoiding competition, it is hindered greatly; and the relegation of female leadership voices would cascade down to the marginalization of women in all facets of life.

Effects of male-dominated university leadership on national development

Participants expressed the following: Demographically, women are in the majority nationwide, as a result it follows that they should take a lead in development; depriving them of that role may have a negative impact on national development; Since capable women are left out of influence, the effect may not be apparent as the nation has been going on with insignificant contribution of women; male-dominated university leadership is against national goals and it encourages segregation against women; it leads towards male-dominated national leadership; this translates into low representation even in other areas where women could make a positive contribution; Male leaders can derail national development because of corruption; it promotes inferiority complex on the part of the female population; the nation will continue to develop in the traditional way, since it is the culture of most national institutions; politically and religiously, men have more leadership roles than women; women's interests are ignored and undermined; women remain under-represented in all government institutions and parastatals; A one dimensional view of issues emerges, leading to lack of diversity and alternatives which usually spur development; and Where both men and women are represented in leadership the society develops holistically.

Are women comfortable with situations where they are always subordinate to men?

Participants revealed that: Women are not comfortable at all, they also want leadership positions; A lot of women groups have agitated for equal representation, but the reluctance by women are an indication that they are not capable at all; It appears women are at home with the male dominance or the status quo because they do not apply for leadership positions; Suppression and

oppression have a negative effect on women and people may not see it now but it retards development at national level; most women are comfortable with male-dominated leadership since they feel as if they have time to do other duties while men resolve crisis; women are good followers and so they are comfortable but not always, especially if someone who does not qualify is leading just because he is a man; women always complain about some decisions made by male leaders to show their discomfort; selected ladies are not comfortable since they are just as good as men and want to see women elevated; Women are not a homogeneous group, for those with leadership qualities they will always look for opportunities to climb up the ladder, frustration takes center stage if denied the chance to prove themselves especially those who know they can perform better than the incumbent; and it seems as if women will continue to suffer male-dominance if they are not bold enough to take up leadership challenges.

How could female lecturers be empowered to take up leadership positions in universities?

Respondents stated that: A 50 to 50% scenario would be ideal though women are more than men demographically; There should be deliberate efforts to leave some university posts to be occupied specifically by women; this would encourage women to apply; mounting gender empowerment staff development workshops to eradicate gender blindness in men and develop women to be confident and assertive on leadership issues; attend national, regional and international women empowerment conferences and workshops to share ideas on leadership; developing and implementing a policy that promotes women in leadership positions; Women themselves should be aggressive in trying to attain gender equality in leadership positions; they should agitate for equal representation in decision making positions; they need to apply to take up leadership posts knowing that they are capable of being leaders; women associations and support groups within universities should encourage and help each other; talent should be identified, nurtured and encouraged instead of being looked down upon, intimidated and made to feel insecure; women should be given scholarships to further their education and then take up leadership posts; A quota system in appointment should be adopted and appointments should be rational in all areas, if a term for a male officer expires, the next office bearer should be a woman; and female lecturers can empower themselves by studying for higher degrees and research extensively, to widen their horizons. From the results, the researchers comment that it is time women themselves realise that they are fearfully and wonderfully made, hence they are equal to everyone else and should be aggressive in trying to attain gender equality in leadership positions.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study found that university female lecturers face many barriers to leadership promotion emanating from many variables and practices. Gender roles tend to place both men and women in engendered positions. Women's heavy involvement in reproductive work is seen as a barrier to better employment opportunities. For men their less involvement in reproductive work gives them the opportunity to participate actively in public space and exploit opportunities as they arise (Women Leadership and Governance Institute, 2002). In the work place, stereotypes result in certain jobs being barred for a certain sex, and thereby deprive the nation of the best person for the job. It also results in what is called occupational stereotyping. Gender stereotypes prevent women from realizing their full potential because of the societal barriers. Women who aspire to be leaders are not accepted by the society because of cultural values, they are victimized, face open attack in word and deed by their male counterparts, and endure careless talk about them as well as negative labels. Women suffer from intrinsic, internal or personal barriers which are mostly psychological. From a national perspective it means women are disadvantaged (Gentine, 1999).

From the results, women's contribution is being ignored and as a result development suffers (Winkler, 2000; Mirghafouri, 2006). There is need for efficient and effective development through the integration of women in existing leadership and developmental processes. There should be equal opportunity for women in terms of access to education, access to formal employment, access to positions of power and influence, and access to managerial positions. Women claim affirmative action in the provision of education and training; it entails more than equal opportunity, it is about gaining power and control within the decision making processes.

There is a skewed power relationship between men and women (Cobb-Clark, 1999). There is need to embark on a process that will enable women to deconstruct the stereotyped images, which would remove barriers of accessing factors of production and the barrier which limit women in their participation in decision making. The need for both men and women to participate in the process that transforms the oppressive gender relations cannot be overemphasised. There is need for conscientisation of both genders on women's subordinate position (Williams et al., 1997).

Burke and Nelson (2002) emphasise that the new challenge in the management arena is to foster the advancement of capable women to the ranks of executive leadership. In authors' view, the evidence to date suggests that this challenge is formidable because competitiveness in the 21st century will depend on the quality of leadership guiding today and tomorrow's organizations (Gentine, 1999; Power, 2002; Women Leadership and Governance Institute, 2002). The effect

of the deeply entrenched stereotype view of women remains at the core of modern society (Brown and Jordanova, 1982). Women today are stereotypically identified with the so called caring professions of teaching, nursing and social work. In the researchers' experience women are naturally tireless models of motherhood. The culture of organizations, including institutions of higher learning has been shaped by men. Sinclair, 1994: 7; Sinclair, 1998: 1) describes the executive culture in Australia as "a man's world" not just the domain of man. Congruent to the idea, Power (2002) concluded that there is an overriding dilemma, identified as 'male advantage' experienced by women.

Intrinsic, internal or personal barriers found in this study are in most instances psychologically inherent and have to do with a person's value system and attitude. These are the so called female limitations that are ingrained in the traditional and stereotype attitudes of societies about typically feminine characteristics (Van der Westhuizen, 1997). Stereotypes to women are based on certain views about women, and include the following: lack of self assertion, poor self-esteem and images, lack of self confidence. The general accepted characteristic leadership resembles behavior of the patriarchal society (Burke and Nelson, 2002). The researchers are of the view that society simply accept that women leaders should reflect the masculine leadership styles. This expectation prejudices most women who endeavor to attain leadership roles at their work places.

Another barrier to university female lecturers' promotion found is the stereotype attitude that women in leadership positions diverge from the accepted norm of a women's personality profile. The researchers contend, it is assumed that women in leadership should emulate masculine behavior and suppress their feminine approach to life. In most cases women are coerced by the endocentric perception to behave both masculinity and femininity in order to attain key leadership posts in institutions of higher learning (Mirghafouri, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The study explored barriers to female university lecturers' promotion. Feminism was employed as a theoretical framework. Overall the findings revealed that there are many barriers to university female lecturers' attainment of key leadership posts and yet leadership is a critical factor of acknowledging gender equality and equity. Recognizing gender representativeness can inform policy, beliefs, attitudes, decision making and work related behaviours.

Basing on the above findings, the study made the following recommendations:

1. Gender policies have remained a political and academic exercise with very little commitment and genuine

enforcement plan from both policy makers and implementers. These policies must be reviewed to determine the extent to which they promote equality and equity in universities and other employment sectors. There is need therefore, to call upon both political and academic fathers to ensure their enforcement for women empowerment and development.

2. There is need for paradigm shift and change of the mindset of women to seriously take leadership challenges that come their way; the women must assertively compete for leadership positions whenever opportunities arise lest they remain marginalized as well as onlookers in an environment where they are in the majority and can play a very important functional role. The women should move out of their entrapped and entrenched social and cultural cocoons, to embrace a more aggressive approach when it comes to competing for leadership positions at institutions of higher learning and in society.

3. From time immemorial, women have played a very significant supporting role to men in their quest for leadership positions. It is now time for men to support women to take up leadership positions and when they are in leadership. Universities should create structures and channels of communication which allow female lecturers to speak out against unjust gender bias practices. The institutions of higher learning should challenge injustices and be committed to empower female lecturers by scaffolding and providing them with ethically structured support.

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