

Factors Affecting The Attitude Of Secondary School Teachers Towards Representation Of Women In School Leadership Positions

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Abstract

The issue of women in school leadership and administrative positions has been a matter of concern worldwide. This is because it had a negative impact on female capabilities with regard to their leadership and administrative roles in different organizations in general and those of educational institutions in particular. In many countries, including India, women are regarded as people who cannot lead and manage schools as men can do. Although women comprise over two-thirds of the teacher population, men dominate the positions of school administration. There are several studies on the representation of women in school leadership positions. But it remains unexplored in Indian context. The present study is an attempt to explore the factors affecting the attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in School Leadership positions in relation to certain demographic variables, viz., gender, designation, type of school management and location of the institution. Descriptive Survey method has been adopted in this study. The sample consisting of 350 teachers (150 Male and 200 Female) from 40 secondary schools of Visakhapatnam district has been selected using Stratified Random Sampling method. The data were collected using a questionnaire developed and standardized by the researchers. The tool consists of 30 items (10 items from each of the three attitudinal dimensions) to find out the attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in School Leadership positions. The data were analyzed using different statistical techniques such as means, standard deviations, t-tests and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The major findings of the study revealed that the variables – gender and location of the institution have a significant positive influence on the attitude of teachers towards representation of women in School Leadership positions. However, designation and type of school management have no influence on their attitude towards representation of women in School Leadership positions.

Keywords: Secondary School Teachers, Educational Administrators, leadership

INTRODUCTION

School Leadership or administrative position refers to the Headship given to a teacher in a particular school category with a designation assigned by the Departments of Education in the respective states and Union Territories. The School Leadership positions in India are broadly divided into four major categories, viz., the Principals, the Vice-Principals, the acting Headmasters and the designated Headmasters.

The acting Headmasters or the In-charge Headmasters are those in the school leadership position where there is no designated Head or sanctioned post of Headmaster, or where the vacancy of designated post is not yet filled through regular appointment. Usually, a senior teacher may be asked to be the acting or In-charge Headmaster. Designated Headmaster is a regular appointment meant for Primary + Upper Primary Schools, which are large sized; Upper Primary + Secondary schools; and Primary + Upper Primary + Secondary schools. The Principal and the Vice-Principal posts refer to the designated school leadership positions in senior secondary schools such as Primary + Upper Primary + Secondary + Higher Secondary schools; and Upper Primary + Secondary + Higher Secondary schools. Appointments for regular positions are made through an open selection process by the District or State Selection Committees; or by promotion depending on the seniority of teachers or as per the existing policies of the respective state governments.

Today most of the leadership positions are occupied by men rather than women in schools though women comprise over two-thirds of the teacher population. The theories of Organizational leadership did not speak anything on gender in organizations; but discussed only those issues relating to authority, power and division of labour in organizations as being essential and neutral. Johnson (2010) argues that 'to lead' is to be at the center of the group rather than in front of others. Leadership, therefore, is seen as the ability to act with others; to do things that would not be done by an individual. This clearly indicates that a leader can either be male or female. On the other hand, some authorities have strong sentiments

against the promotion of women in administrative positions. Rammer and Davies (2008) advocate the victim model of leadership, which throws the blame on women themselves for their under-representation in administrative positions. The model highlights several reasons for not considering women for promotion to administrative positions. The model says that women are less likely to be committed to their work; they are likely to get married and so will stop or at least postpone their career even as professionals, as they feel that their main responsibility is with their homes and family members. Women cannot handle responsibility because they are not natural leaders; and they lack confidence in work related competition (Rammer and Davies, 2008).

The under-representation of qualified women in leadership positions has created a gender gap that exists not only in education but in many areas of the workplace. In the twenty-first century, women are still underrepresented in educational leadership positions; and their small share of leadership positions in schools has not changed significantly in recent decades (Kruger, 2008; Marczynski and Gates 2013). As women began to climb the ladder in their organizations, balancing their family life with leadership roles has become a problem (Naidoo and Perumal, 2014). One of the concepts that express all these career barriers for women is the 'glass ceiling syndrome', wherein invisible obstacles fueled by prejudices that prevent women from reaching senior management positions (Wirth, 2001). Women who manage to break the glass ceiling face many challenges in their placement to leadership positions; and develop necessary skills to deal with these challenges (Smith, 2008).

The stereotypic image of a leader was found to be equal to that of a male, even though many theories argue that the most effective leader should behave androgynously. Beason (1992) reported that majority of female secondary school principals obtained their first administrative position later than male principals; and faced problems of sex-discrimination, negative attitude towards women in administration, lack of role models and lack of professional networks. The Role congruency theory advocated by Eagly and Karau (2002) says that when raters experience incongruence between the behavior they expect of a leader and what they expect of a woman, they under-value the female leaders' behavior and performance and prejudice toward female leaders. The result of Agezo's study (2010) explores Ghanaian context and reveals that women are not perceived as leaders. They are perceived home makers; but not the good decision makers. In South Africa, women principals are discriminated simply on the basis of their gender; and have been portrayed as weak, passive, dependent, soft hearted and good followers. On the other hand, men are portrayed as strong and independent; and are capable of making sound decisions. According to Shakeshaft, Irby, Brown, Geron and Ballenger (2007), barriers to women in educational leadership include their poor self-image, lack of aspiration and motivation, family and home responsibilities, unfavorable working conditions, lack of support in socialization and sex role stereotyping.

WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

India has women as half of the human capital; but it also has the largest number of illiterates as compared to several other countries in the world. The literacy rate of Indian females is 65.46% as compared to 82.14% of males as per the Census of India, 2011. In India, gender inequality in education and training reinforced by social attitudes has largely contributed to occupational segregation, whereby men and women are streamed with different trades, professions and jobs. For example, in teaching profession, majority of teachers are women; but one finds very few women at top level positions such as Vice Chancellors, Directors of Public Instruction, Deans or Principals (Vimala Ramachandran, 2003). The stereotype that 'Women teach and men Manage' seems true for current educational organizations in India. Though women's movements, introduction of gender sensitive policies and educational budget have challenged the male-dominance structure and gender-inequalities in developing countries (Oplatke, 2006), it is observed that girls are still missing out on primary and secondary education in far greater numbers than boys. Among those women who do receive the benefits of health and education, many are unable to contribute fully and productively to the economy because of the barriers to their entry into the workforce or barriers in accessing the positions of leadership.

A review of related literature provides us the scenario of placement of women as educational administrators.

Review of Related Studies

The studies carried out earlier by the other researchers that aim at finding out the factors affecting the attitude of teachers towards placement of women as educational administrators have been examined; and a brief review of the same is provided in the following paragraphs.

Agyei, R. and Ofosu-Brakoh, V. (2022) conducted a study to examine Carl Rogers' humanistic approach in supporting women in leadership positions and to make a formed decision on how to manage the challenges they face. A qualitative approach was adopted for the study. The population of the study included fifteen (15) headmistresses and housemistresses in the Senior High Schools in the New Juaben Municipality in the Eastern Region. The purposive sampling technique was used to select schools, headmistresses and housemistresses in the schools. The schools selected were Oyoko Methodist Senior High School (OMESS), SDA Senior High School (SEDASS), Ghana Senior High School (GHANASS), Koforidua Technical Institute (KOTECH), Nana Kwaku Boateng Senior High School (OBOSS) and New Juaben Senior High School (NJUASCO). The main instruments used for data collection were a semi-structured interview guide and Reflective dialogue. Data was analysed through the use of the thematic approach. Within-case and across-case analytical

technique was used to analyse the qualitative data. Themes that were extracted from the interview corresponding to Carl Rogers' humanistic (person-centred) approach include: inherent potentialities, support, motivation, power relation, INSET, cultural dimension; and guidance and counselling. The study revealed that women face challenges using inadequate school facilities. They do their best possible to manage their challenges with the few facilities available. The introduction of Carl Rogers' intervention, women became more aware of their potential in managing the challenges they face at work in their leadership positions. It is recommended that guidance programmes should be conducted often to inform both teachers and students about the potential of women. It has also emerged that women leaders do not know who they are; and therefore they should undergo counselling in order to be self-actualised.

Mert, P. (2021) conducted a study on 'Leadership characteristics of female school principals according to female teachers'. In this study, the perspectives of female teachers working in private schools who are gradually raising their educational levels are discussed in depth about female head teachers. For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 37 female teachers working in private schools in the Anatolian part of Istanbul selected using purposive sampling method. The data were analysed using content analysis, one of the qualitative analysis methods. The researcher identified three main themes for the investigation. These themes include the characteristics of female leaders; the competencies of female leaders; and the impact on the work environment. Under the theme of 'characteristics of female leaders', there are five categories: being selfish, forming problematic working relationships, being detail-obsessed, being jealous, acting emotionally; under the theme of 'competencies of female leaders': they lead well, their leadership skills are weak, they cannot be fair and impartial, they are not solution-oriented. The theme of the impact of female leaders on the work environment include the categories: a chaotic environment; communication is important, supportive environment.

The study revealed that not all female and male principals have the same characteristics. It is essential to examine the behavior of the leader without putting gender-related factors in focus. At the same time, school principals must be consistent in the decisions they make and implement; and demonstrate leadership with a professional approach. This research examined the behaviors of female school principals from the point of view of female teachers working in private schools and presented different views on this issue. However, the study group includes private schools only in Istanbul. It is suggested to conduct further research in other types of schools or focus on principals' stereotypes of age and professional seniority, apart from gender, and the extent to which these stereotypes predict teachers' performance.

Getachew Alebachew Mekonnen (2021) opined that women face multi-faceted challenges in participating in management positions due to different factors. The purpose of this study is to investigate factors that affect participation of women in leadership positions in Bahir Dar city administration. To address this objective, the study adopted mixed research methods with descriptive survey design. A total of 190 women public civil servants were taken as a sample. Moreover, a key informant interview with women in leadership positions was conducted. In addition, FGD were also a very important data-gathering instrument for this study. The findings revealed that there are three major factors for women's low participation in leadership positions, i.e. institutional, socio-cultural and individual factors. Those factors have decisive contributions for low participation of women in leadership positions. With proper implementation of women's policies in the organization, equal treatment during assignment of leadership positions and creating awareness in society that woman are capable for leadership positions would certainly help women take administrative roles.

Darshna Vaghela Banker (2017) conducted a study to understand the scenario of women in leadership positions in Indian higher education sector. Qualitative approach has been employed for investigating the women academic leadership in India. Secondary sources such as websites of institutes/universities; UGC and Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) were used to collect data. A database of 810 universities in India with details regarding their vice chancellors (VCs), Deans, or Directors was collected. Universities were categorized into central, state, state private, deemed, institutes of national importance and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

The study revealed that the representation of women has been found to be as less as 6.67% as compared to 89.51% of men in Indian higher education institutions. A total of 16 IITs in India are the stalwarts of education in science and engineering. However, they are also notoriously famous for being male-dominated institutions. The gender ratio at IITs is much skewed with only one female per five male students. It is skewed even greater at faculty level also. Out of 24 professors at the department of Electrical Engineering at IIT Delhi, only three are women. It is not surprising to say that there is currently no woman heading any of the 16 IITs as its director. What is more surprising is that there have been no women Directors at IITs till date. The situation is similar at IIMs, where currently all the Directors heading the 13 IIMs are males.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The teaching profession is often viewed as a more female friendly work environment as compared to other professions such as Informational Technology, business and industry, which are frequently described as male-dominated and less female friendly.

Women exercise their power in a more 'facilitative' way rather than in a 'dominant way'. Women head teachers identify themselves as caring, creative and aware of individual differences. All women agree that their leadership is about caring for others rather than leading others. Male principals, on the other hand, see themselves as more defensive and aggressive.

They think their work is about leading, testing and evaluating others rather than about caring for others. Female principals are more concerned about harmonious staff relationships and develop a friendlier atmosphere in the school. Female leadership has steadily increased over the years; but continues to be underrepresented in an occupation that is predominately women. The under-representation of women as school leaders is due to socio-cultural traditions such as patriarchy in the education system. It may also be due to non-acceptance of leadership of women by other women as well as men colleagues, hesitation on the part of the women to take risks as school leaders, lack of family support and other social compulsions, cultural context of the society where competitiveness is not encouraged or accepted and many other factors that limit women from aspiring and seeking identity as school leaders. In this context, the researchers felt it necessary to explore the attitude of teachers working in secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions. The study makes an attempt to know the influence of certain demographic variables, viz., gender, designation, type of school management and location of the institution on the attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in school leadership positions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
2. To examine the influence of demographic variables – gender, designation, type of school management and location of the institution on the attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in school leadership positions.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of Headmasters and School Assistants towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
3. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in Government, Local Body and Private secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
4. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the attitude of 350 secondary school teachers working in 40 secondary schools located in rural as well as urban areas in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh. Further, the study is confined to find out the influence of four demographic variables, viz., gender, designation, type of school management and location of the institution on the attitude of teachers towards representation of women in school leadership positions.

Methodology

(a) Method of Research

The researchers followed the Survey Method of the descriptive research for the present investigation.

(b) Sample

The sample of the study consists of 350 teachers (150 Male and 200 Female) from the selected secondary schools located in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique.

(c) Research Tool

The researchers used a well prepared and standardized questionnaire consisting of 30 items on three attitudinal dimensions of secondary school teachers to collect data for the present investigation.

(d) Administration of the Tool

The research tool consisting of 30 items on three different perceptual dimensions, viz., Teachers' beliefs on leadership positions, Home conditions and Working environment, is administered to 350 teachers (150 Male teachers and 200 Female) working in 40 selected secondary schools in the rural as well as urban areas in Visakhapatnam district of Andhra Pradesh.

(e) Analysis and Interpretation of data

The investigators used different statistical techniques such as Mean Scores, Standard Deviations, t- tests and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for data analysis and interpretation.

Table showing Mean scores, Standard Deviations, t-ratios/F-values relating to the Attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in School Leadership positions

S. No.	Variable	N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio/F-value	Result
1	Gender	150	93.17	25.34		*Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
	Male	200	106.30	24.46	4.88*	

		Female					
2	Designation	Headmaster School Assistant	40 310	103.00 95.21	26.90 26.79	1.72*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
3	Type of School Management	Government Local Body Private	30 210 110	102.50 97.45 99.23	24.41 26.80 28.70	0.039*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
4.	Location of the institution	Rural Urban	130 220	94.19 101.50	27.96 27.45	2.38*	*Significant at 0.05 level

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- There is significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers working in secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
Female teachers working in secondary schools have exhibited better attitude towards representation of women in school leadership positions as compared to their male counterparts.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of Headmasters and School Assistants working in secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
- There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in Government, Local Body and Private secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
- There is significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban secondary schools towards representation of women in school leadership positions.
Teachers working in urban secondary schools have exhibited better attitude towards representation of women in school leadership positions as compared to their rural counterparts.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that 'gender' and 'location of the institution' have a significant positive relationship on the attitude of secondary school teachers towards representation of women in school leadership positions. However, 'designation' and 'type of school management' have no influence on their attitude towards representation of women in school leadership positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has suggested that there should not be any gender discrimination in the placement of women as administrators in different school leadership positions.

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