

INFLUENCE OF THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION ON PROGRESSION OF WOMEN TO LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

OSIJE, Majina A., M.A

Department of Commerce, Kisii University, Migori Campus, Kenya

Dr. YAMBO, John M. O., PhD.

Department of Educational Administration and Planning and Economics, Kisii University, Kenya

ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in Maberera division, Kuria west, Migori County to investigate the factors that influence to progression of women to leadership positions. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, emphasized that 'women's equal participation in decision making is not only a demand for justice or democracy, but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. The objective of the article was to determine the influence of the level of education on progression of women to leadership position in Maberera Division, Migori County. The study was guided by The Classical Liberal Theory of Equity of Opportunity (Classical liberalism or libertarianism) that holds that women and men are self-owners capable of acquiring property rights over things. The study used descriptive survey that targeted a population of 9523 women from different households within the division. The Krejcie, Robert V., Morgan table was used to calculate the sample population size and that gave the researcher a sample size of 373 women interviewed. Questionnaires were used as research instruments which the respondents filled during the survey. Data collected from the field was coded and ultimately analyzed by performing several descriptive statistical computations such as frequency distribution tables and measures of central tendencies. Frequency tables were used to present data. The study revealed that majority of women interviewed 48.4% had primary level of education and only 35.8% managed to reach secondary level. Generally, this implies low levels of education in the area as far as women education is concerned. The researcher concluded that there is need to educate girl child in the division so that they can participate in leadership. The researcher recommended that Leadership Forums & Social Networking gatherings should provide opportunities for women to exchange experience and wisdom with other women in equivalent positions

Key words: Education, Level, Progression, women, leadership, positions, Kenya

Introduction

Ordinarily, in the world of work and labour, there has been a scarcity of women in top leadership.

Studies done by Piterman (2008) in Australia and Kendall (2002) in America, found that despite the documented progress of women in the workplace demonstrating that women now hold more than 40% of all managerial positions in the United States, there remains a paucity of women in executive roles and on corporate boards of directors.

A growing body of research suggests that women add value to companies when holding executive and board positions (Eagly and Linda 2007). However, in 2008 women held only 15.7 percent of corporate officer positions at Fortune 500 companies. The number of companies with no women corporate officers, according to Quick and Moen (2008) increased from 74 in 2007 to 75 in 2008. The number of companies with three or more women corporate officers also increased from 203 in 2007 to 206 in 2008. Similarly, in 2008, women held 15.2 percent of directorships at Fortune 500 companies; this number was 14.8 percent in 2007. The number of companies with no women board directors increased from 59 in 2007 to 66 in 2008 representing an average increase of only 0.5 percent annually over the last 10 years (UNICEF 2010). It seems that little progress has been made in the United States toward parity with men in top leadership positions. This problem of women's scarcity in top leadership positions first gained attention in 1977 when the nonprofit organization Catalyst, instituting a corporate board service to help introduce professional and business women to corporations, reported their findings that there were only 147 women directors represented on the 1,300 largest U.S. public companies' boards of directors (Huisinga 2009). Little difference has been found between women's and men's ambition; however the path to senior roles for women is often more challenging. According to Piterman (2008), women want to advance and are equally as ambitious as men and opportunities for learning, development, promotion and progression are a high priority.

The work of Ames (2004) and Mudis & Yambo (2015) noted that the glass ceiling phenomenon, the invisible barrier that stops women reaching senior positions, has been explored by many and its persistence has been addressed by various common wealth governments. More recently other metaphors regarding women's selection for certain leadership positions have been proposed.

In Africa, according to Ojera and Yambo (2014) and Gouws (2008) women come across many stumbling blocks as they aspire to leadership positions. The obstacles range from historical, cultural, and socio-political obstacles that inhibit their search to position themselves as leaders, hence there has been a drawback to the endeavor. Similarly in Eastern Africa, Gachukia (2002); Otieno (2001) and Amondi (2011) indicated that individual, organizational and socio-cultural obstacles render more women as underprivileged thereby impeding them from assuming decision-making positions in competition with male leaders, this therefore provides answer as to why there are few women in leadership positions. On the contrary, as argued by Yambo (2014) the level of education among the women folks have been a great concern hence giving only few of them chances and consequently there are not many female mentors and role models. To overcome the said barriers, there is need of leadership development for women to believe in themselves as leaders. In Kuria West where, Maberu division lies, the situation is not any better; very few women are occupying leadership positions than men.

Statement of the Problem

In order to achieve the MDGs in Kenya gender mainstreaming should be prioritized by giving women equal opportunities with men. When women get empowered they can spur more development than men and this development can only be realized if women occupy leadership positions where decision making is carried out. Unfortunately, in Maberu Division leadership positions are dominated by men and only very few opportunities are occupied by women. Women in this division do not opt for leadership positions even when such positions become available or are advertised and sometimes very few apply for these positions and at times the few who apply end up not being considered. The situation has become very complicated after the implementation

of the new constitution which requires that any formal group or organization must meet the one third rule as far as gender balance is concerned before it is registered.

This has left many people wondering about what the problem could be and what can be done to alleviate the worsening situation. Could it be their level of education, culture, family size or marital status of many women in this community which has created this problem? Therefore, this study intended to determine the influence of the level of education on progression of women to leadership position in Maberu Division, Migori County and give recommendations on how the problems can be addressed by the concerned authorities.

Influence of level of education on progression of women to leadership positions

According to UNICEF (2010) and World Bank (2001) there are 960 million illiterate adults in the world, two thirds are female. This number has been increasing at an alarming rate and it has made common wealth countries worldwide to make calls for universal enrolment in primary school by the year 2015, a time line influenced by the magnitude of the task. Despite progress in expanding access to primary education throughout the world, an estimated 130 million children - including 90 million girls – are not enrolled in primary school.

Studies done by Howard and Richard (2009) and UNICEF (2010) pointed out that while enrolment in primary and secondary school totaled to nearly 900 million children worldwide, there were about 85 million fewer girls than boys enrolled. In combination, high levels of education and access to family planning services translate into both lower infant mortality and lower fertility. Gender discrimination often begins long before a girl enters school and as suggested by Lips (2009) deep-rooted traditions of son preference can result in both passive and active neglect. In some communities in Peru for instance as alluded by Ames (2004), girl may be given less food than her brothers, be less likely to see a doctor when ill or be prevented from attending school in

order to help with household chores and child care. In 1997, as opined by Wang (2003) the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterated that women's rights are fundamental human rights. Women's social status and access to education, employment and health care are closely linked to economic development. Women in many countries still lack the right to own land, to inherit property or to have access to credit; girls are denied schooling; female workers routinely face job discrimination; and women's sexual and reproductive health needs are widely neglected (World Bank 2001). Women often face legal and institutional barriers to economic activity outside the home, including laws or customs that deny them the right to own land, inherit property, establish credit or move up in their field of work.

The work of Bloch, Beoku-Betts and Tabachnick (2004) and Quick & Moen (2008) suggests that enhancement of their productive roles is especially important for women whose status in society has been dependent solely on their reproductive capabilities. In the absence of other sources of status, a woman's ability to decide about a marriage partner or family size is limited. This is true for women in all countries. Development in the field of education has been essential for eradicating differences in gender-based educational attainment in the world. Level of education is important even for decision making at home and work place (Yambo & Tuitoek 2014).

Research on education for women in Kenya by Moraa (2009) has shown that educated girls on the average have better lives than those who are uneducated hence level of education is paramount. Educated girls are more capable of making their own decisions rather than relying solely on their parents or families, it allows them to be more self-reliant. This indicates that education is a very important factor in the development of any society. According to Amondi (2011) there is no way that a country can achieve development without the participation of women in society and

government. It is not just the participation of women in government that is the necessary solution, but the decisions that the government makes can be positively influenced by their participations (Ahlberg, 1991). It is not surprise to point out that ethnic groups' aspiration for power has been one of the problems in which women have been marginalized. Kenya has 70 ethnic groups living within its borders (Wood, 1999). Without the education and participation of Kenyan women, it is difficult to imagine that the government's plans will work (Ministry of Education, 1988). It can be argued that women should handle most of the decisions concerning social equality because they played an essential role in society. the studies done by Gouws (2008) opined that it has been claimed that large numbers of girls are denied education because they are either kept at home or sent to other households to be domestic workers as such, women's education would be essential if the government could afford to train women in various fields. Women's education is very important, because women have a central role in the management of households (Ahlberg, 1991). However, the participation of women in society and government has helped immensely, especially in the campaign to control rapid population growth. The Minister of Education's report indicated, "A campaign to promote family planning and maintain reasonable rate of population growth can be sustained by available resources". According to Republic of Kenya (2007) the importance of women in the social realm and their presence in decision-making roles encourages the government to educate more women so that the population will not go out of control, which would have a negative effect both on the society and the economy. The system of education is the significant factor in the development of society and is the only system people should rely on. Education is a critical ingredient in the empowerment process (Ames 2004). The level of education achieved by a woman has been strongly associated with both lower infant mortality and lower fertility. In poorer countries, where access to health care is often limited, each additional year of schooling is

associated with a 5 to 10 per cent decline in child deaths and the impact of a woman's educational attainment on family size is second only to that of access to family planning services. The goal of this article is to analyze the women's education in Kenya with focused on importance of education. Karl Marx has long been debating the relative importance of this subject (McMichael, 2004). Development is referred to here as discovering new knowledge about products, processes and services and then applying this knowledge to create new needs, which advances society toward change in one way or another (Bloch et al. 2004). However, female education has been identified as more crucial for the advancement of nations than just education in general (McMichael, 2004). It is now widely recognized that the social returns to female education is greatly exceeding happen without the participation of women in society. Education empowers women to participate in the implementation of necessary social changes, for instance raising smaller and healthier families; while women with no education usually have more children (Moraa, 2009). It is very clear under the customary law of most ethnic groups in Kenya that a woman cannot inherit land and must live on the land as a guest of male relatives by blood or marriage. Women continue to face both legal and customary discrimination in other areas as well (Hopkins & O'Neil (2007). A married woman is legally required to obtain the consent of her husband before obtaining a national identity card or a passport. Such circumstances of inhibit usually prevent society from achieving advancement. Complaints have also been launched by human rights activists concerning the raping of girls in Kenya and the fact that it has fueled the spread of HIV/AIDS in that country (Moraa, 2009; Ombuya, Yambo & Omolo 2012 and Hopkins & O'Neil 2007). Furthermore, those who face these difficulties are usually women from poor families. It is hard to see how Kenyan societies are going to control these brutal acts against girls. Some believe that those who deny girls formal education face shortages of economic income (Ombuya et al. 2012). Girls in many countries are frequently

kept at home and away from school to do domestic work simply because the education of girls is not valued. The purpose of this research is to facilitate a critical understanding of the multiple and often conflicting positions women occupy in the Third World in this age of globalization. Despite its importance to the everyday lives of those of us in the United States, the Third World, and especially the women who reside there, remains largely misunderstood. Through this research we will look at the historical and sociological background of women in the Third World so that we may better understand this complex region and its peoples.

Research Methodology

The study used the descriptive survey research design. According to Best and Kahn (2006), they describe a survey design as an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. The design was applied because it enabled the researcher to establish relationships between the dependent variables and independent variables. It aimed at collecting data from respondents to establish the current status of women as far as leadership is concerned. According to the data obtained from the Ministry of Finance & Planning (2009) the department of social services Kuria West population structure was approximately 9523 women in the study area covering three administrative locations and one political constituency as shown in the table below:

By using the Krejcie, Robert, Morgan (1970) table to calculate the sample population size the researcher came up with a sample size of 373 women who were given questionnaires. This was to ensure the effectiveness of the research work, since involving all the population would have been impossible due to the largeness of the population. The three hundred and seventy three persons

were to provide a larger sample in order to reduce the level of error and increase the level of precision.

Table 1. Determining Sample Size for Research Activities

N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	100	80	280	162	800	260	2800	338
15	14	110	86	290	165	850	265	3000	341
20	19	120	92	300	169	900	269	3500	246
25	24	130	97	320	175	950	274	4000	351
30	28	140	103	340	181	1000	278	4500	351
35	32	150	108	360	186	1100	285	5000	357
40	36	160	113	380	181	1200	291	6000	361
45	40	180	118	400	196	1300	297	7000	364
50	44	190	123	420	201	1400	302	8000	367
55	48	200	127	440	205	1500	306	9000	368
60	52	210	132	460	210	1600	310	10000	373
65	56	220	136	480	214	1700	313	15000	375
70	59	230	140	500	217	1800	317	20000	377
75	63	240	144	550	225	1900	320	30000	379
80	66	250	148	600	234	2000	322	40000	380
85	70	260	152	650	242	2200	327	50000	381
90	73	270	155	700	248	2400	331	75000	382
95	76	270	159	750	256	2600	335	100000	384

Note: "N" is population size "S" is sample size.

Krejcie et al. (1970) came up with a table of determining Sample Size for Research Activities in Educational and Psychological Measurements which was used in this study to provide representative sample.

Table 2 Number of women in Mabera division 2009

Name of Locations	Number of Females	Sample Size
Tagare	3349	131
Bugumbe West	3180	125
Bugumbe South	2994	117
TOTAL	9523	373

The study used a questionnaire as a research tool. Questionnaire was suitable for collection of a lot of information over a very short period of time and that which can easily be described in writing (Oso & Onen, 2005). The questionnaire targeted the women in the division. It was developed to include both structured and unstructured questions. The questionnaire was organized into different categories in such a way to gather data on levels of education of the respondents, cultural background, and marital status and number of children per household.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of the level of education on progression of women to leadership positions

Education level of the respondents

Ordinarily, level of education has been viewed by many scholars in administration to be directly proportional to leadership positions (Yambo & Tuitoek 2014). This characteristic was of concern to the study as it revealed the educational background of the respondents. In view of this the women were asked to give their education level. The respondents gave their education levels as illustrated in the table 3.

Table 3 Education level of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Primary	138	48.4
Secondary	102	35.8
Diploma	18	6.3
Degree	27	9.5
TOTAL	285	100

Table 3 indicates that out of the 285 women who responded to the questions, 138 (48.4%) had primary level of education, 102 (35.8%) had secondary level of education, 18 (6.3%) had diplomas

and 27 (9.5%) had degrees. It is interesting to note that none had higher level of education beyond degrees. This implied that majority of women in Maberu Division had only Primary Education which may not allow them to vie for leadership positions in the division. This sentiment was supported by Yambo (2014) who postulated that employers would do job placement depending on academic qualifications. A small number of women had degrees represented by a low percentage (9.5%) that is 27 out of a total of 285. Female education has been identified as more crucial for the advancement of nations than just education in general (Okoth & Yambo 2016 and McMichael, 2004).

When asked whether the level of education can influence one's ascension to leadership position, the respondents responded as shown below in table 4:

Table 4 Influence of the level of education

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	146	51.2
Agree	90	31.6
Disagree	49	17.2
TOTAL	285	100

The findings in table 4.8 above revealed the following; 146 (51.2%) strongly agreed that the levels of education of women has a major influence on the ability of women to ascend to leadership positions, 90 (31.6%) agree, 49 (17.2%) disagree that level of education has influence on the ability of women to ascend to leadership positions. This was found to be in line with the sentiments of Ombuya et al. (2012).

Summary of Influence of Level of education on progression of women to leadership positions

The study has revealed that many women in this area do not have high level of education. Out of the 285 women who responded to the questions, 138 (48.4%) had primary level of education, 102 (35.8%) had secondary level of education, 18 (6.3%) had diplomas and 27 (9.5%) had degrees. It

is interesting to note that none had higher level of education beyond a degree. This further explains why very few women are in top management positions.

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