Management practices and leadership styles of female Head teachers in high performing secondary schools in Kabwe urban, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

Recent empirical evidence has suggested that female Head teachers tend to outperform their male counterparts. In light of this, the study aimed to explore the leadership styles and management practices of female Head Teachers that could explain their better performance, leading to improved learner outcomes. The study was based on a qualitative case study design, focusing on three high-performing secondary schools in Kabwe urban district, Zambia, led by female Head teachers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three female Head Teachers, and data was manually analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that female Head teachers adopted different leadership styles, including democratic, servant, team, and authoritarian, depending on the situation. They also used consistent management practices which could account for the good performance. Key management practices included counseling or disciplining troublesome teachers and learners, regular teacher observation, consistent meetings, and awarding deserving teachers. The study also identified challenges faced by female Head teachers, including stereotyping and gender bias. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education should consider placing more women in leadership positions, recognizing their unique contributions to the effective running of schools. The findings contribute to understanding the role of female educational leaders in promoting excellence in secondary education.

Keywords: Stereotyping, gender bias, leadership styles, management practices, Head teachers, female

INTRODUCTION

Literature consistently shows that the success of a school depends on effective school leadership (Ibara, 2010; Kitavi, 2014; Ampaire & Namusonge, 2015). In this regard, the Head teacher plays a critical role in a school as a leader who influences subordinates and ensures the achievement of the school's primary objective of teaching and learning. This study aimed to understand the leadership styles and management practices of female Head teachers in selected high-performing schools in Kabwe urban district, Zambia.

This study arose from concerns expressed by various stakeholders that academic performance by learners in secondary schools in Zambia has drastically declined (Ministry of Education, 2017). Machina (2018), UNICEF (2022), The Ministry of Education (2016) confirm that for several years, there have been complaints of deteriorating quality of education in secondary schools revealed in national

examinations, including the Central Province of Zambia, the focus of this study. This perpetual failure in secondary schools is partly attributed to the leadership styles and management practices of Head Teachers (Ministry of Education, 2017; Kitavi, 2011; Ampaire & Namusonge, 2015).

It is important to note, however, that school leadership cannot be entirely blamed for poor learner performance because teachers, parents, and learners themselves share responsibility (Ministry of Education, 2017; Moola, 2015). Nevertheless, empirical evidence confirms that leadership influences school performance (Kabeta, 2015; Ololube, 2015; Wilhelm, 2016; Oyedele, 2018; Ndlovu & Proches, 2019). For example, a study conducted by Kabeta (2015) found that school leadership styles were key to learners' educational success. Similarly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2019), and Kambunga (2014) argue that the decline of educational standards in Zambia cannot exclude school leadership, including Head teachers and Deputy Head teachers.

The Ministry of Education (2017) reports that the high performance of sampled secondary schools' grade 9 and 12 results, headed by female Head Teachers for the past four years, has been excellent. For instance, Caritas Secondary, as school located in Kabwe Urban district (the district where the sample schools were drawn from) in 2019 recorded a pass rate of 98.5% and 100% in 2020 at grade 12, according to the Examinations Analysis by Kabwe DEBS (2021). This was partly attributed to the good management practices and leadership styles. Additionally, Stephen Luwisha Secondary School in Kabwe reported 100% pass rate at 12 level in 2020. It is important to point out that for the past 5 years, these schools among other secondary schools led by female head teachers have been performing well academically (Examination Analysis, Kabwe DEBS).

Statement of the Problem

Recent studies have provided evidence that schools led by female heads apparently perform better than those led by their male counterparts (Ministry of General Education, 2017; UNESCO, 2019). This could be attributed to various factors, including the leadership styles and management practices employed by female Head teachers. For instance, a study conducted by ABCD…

Some of the management practices employed by these female head teachers reported in literature which could explain learning outcomes include giving incentives to well performing teachers, regular teacher observation, supporting teachers and pupils morally and spiritually, having a dialogue when there is a problem among other management practices (Kalai, 2012).

Despite this evidence, it is sad to note that there are relatively few female school leaders worldwide (Esa & Peng, 2019; Ibara, 2010) and that not much research has documented the leadership styles and management practices of female Head teachers and how they may influence the performance of their teachers and learners. Against this background, this study sought to explore the leadership styles and management practices employed by female Head teachers in Kabwe district which may account for the superior performance of their schools in comparison to their male counterparts. The study also sought to investigate and analyze the challenges encountered by female head teachers that limit their leadership and management capabilities in the selected secondary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic performance of a school is influenced by the leadership styles and management practices adopted by the Head Teachers (Odeyele, 2018; Alcalde, 2020). Leadership styles refer to the behavior patterns that a leader uses to direct, organize, control and plan. Literature highlights several leadership styles, such as authoritarian, democratic, and laissez faire. Although most Head teachers exercise authoritative leadership, this style often results in intimidation and lack of respect for

subordinates (Ololube, 2015; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011).

The servant leadership style is characterized by leaders who genuinely care about people and are willing to sacrificially serve and prioritize the needs of their followers (Buskey, 2014). With the servant leadership style, the Head Teacher consider the needs of both teachers and pupils rather than focusing on self-interest. Their primary motivation is to help their subordinates first.

The democratic leadership style, which is the most frequently used leadership style, involves leaders making final decisions while involving team members in the decision-making process (Buskey, 2014; Clint, 2020). This leadership style encourages creativity, and team members are often highly engaged in projects and decisions.

The team leadership style involves subordinates sharing their ideas, skills, and knowledge with their leaders on how institutional matters should be handled. Subordinates and Head Teachers work together as a team to achieve institutional objectives and goals (Kadiyono et al, 2020; Clint, 2020).

The authoritative leadership style is characterized by leaders having complete power over staff members, with little opportunity for staff members to make suggestions, even if these suggestions are in the best interest of the school (Bell, 2013).

Management practices, on the other hand, refer to the methods and innovations that managers use to make their organizations more efficient (Luenendonk, 2017). In educational institutions, good management practices include providing regular, meaningful feedback to teachers and giving incentives to those who perform well (Kalai, 2012). Head teachers ensure that teachers and learners perform at their best to achieve high academic performance.

Female leaders in educational institutions face several challenges, including stereotypes that women are inferior and should be in the kitchen, and that they are not capable of leadership positions (Sleeter & Grant, 2011; Katundu, 2017; Katugu, 2016; Shimalungwe, 2016). Such stereotypes contribute to the low representation of women in leadership positions across the globe. For instance, in Austria, only 32% of lower secondary school heads were female, compared to 79% of primary school heads (European Commission/Eurydice, 2013; Alcalde and Subramaniam, 2020). In Tanzania, only 18.7% of Head Teachers were female in 2013, while in Ghana, they represented 35% (Regional Education office, 2015; Machano, 2014).

Even more saddening are the statistics in certain parts of the world, which demonstrate that females hold fewer top positions in secondary schools and tertiary education compared to primary schools. For instance, in Austria, only 32% of lower secondary school heads were female, while 79% of primary school heads were female. In Sweden, women occupied 73% of school leadership positions in primary schools and 45% in upper secondary schools (European Commission/Eurydice, 2013; Alcalde and Subramaniam, 2020).

This situation is not unique to African countries. In Rwanda, for example, only 19% of secondary principals and 30% of primary principals were women (Scott, 2018; United States Agency for International Development, 2014; UNESCO, 2015). In Tanzania, female Head teachers accounted for approximately 18.7% in 2013, and in Ghana, 35%, although they were found to perform better than their male counterparts (Regional Education office, 2015; Machano, 2014). These statistics clearly indicate that the overall number of women involved in educational leadership positions is generally low across the globe (UNESCO, 2020; Esa & Peng, 2019).

In Zambia, the teaching profession is predominantly female, yet males occupy most leadership positions (Ministry of Education, 2016; Alcalde, 2020; UNESCO, 2019). The National Assessment Survey conducted by the Ministry of Education in

junior secondary schools found that more male than female teachers were in administrative and management positions (Ministry of Education, 2016). Out of the sampled schools, male Head teachers represented 67.0% (128), while female Head Teachers represented 33.0% (63).

Theoretical framework

This study is guided by Taylor's Motivation Theory-Scientific Management theory, which is one of the earliest theories of workplace motivation. Its objective is to increase productivity in a team by having a leader who manages employees with effective practices and leadership styles. Frederick Winslow Taylor developed this theory to ensure that employees perform tasks efficiently, and believed that every job should be studied scientifically to identify the most efficient way to do it. The ultimate aim of the theory is to describe the most efficient manner of doing a job in a repeatable way. Taylor's theory is applicable to this study as it emphasizes the importance of management and labor cooperating to meet goals and focuses on efficiency (Gerald, 2014).

The study also draws from the behavioral leadership theory, which emerged in the 1940s and focused on the behaviors that leaders exhibited rather than their innate attributes. This theory proposed that leadership could be taught and that leaders could regulate their effectiveness by choosing the right behavior when leading others. Behavioral theories of leadership have been applied to understand matters pertaining to leadership in schools (Charry, 2012, Ololube, 2013).

Several studies have used Taylor's Motivation Theory-Scientific Management theory to investigate management and leadership issues in schools. For example, Phiri (2011) used the theory in his study on the effectiveness of Head teachers in their managerial roles in a dual administrative school system. Kiruriti (2010) also used the theory to examine obstacles faced by female educational administrators in educational organizations. Ibara (2010) used Taylor's

theory of management in the study on perspectives in educational administration.

Similarly, the behavioral theory of leadership was applied to understand leadership in schools. For instance, Chafwa (2012) used the theory in a study to understand the impact of management styles exhibited by school heads on staff performance in selected high schools in Kawambwa district of Luapula Province. Muchimba (2015) also used the behavioral theory to examine male and female secondary school Head teachers' leadership behavior in Lusaka District, Zambia and concluded that there was no significant difference in the leadership behavior of male and female Head teachers.

Conceptual framework

The study was guided by the integrated model of organizational effectiveness developed by Hoy and Miskel (2010), which covers three major variables: inputs, outputs, and processes. School effectiveness is measured by the degree to which a school is able to achieve its predetermined objectives, while overcoming any obstacles that may hinder the smooth operation of the institution. The Hoy and Miskel model is based on the principle of organizational effectiveness.

Figure 1.1 Educational Organizational Effectiveness Model
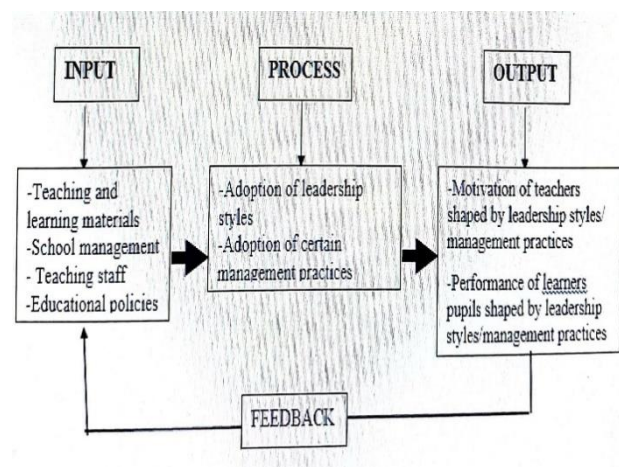
Source: Adapted From Integrated Model of Organizational Effectiveness by Hoy and Miskel, (2010).

The model proposes that students' academic performance is the result of the interaction between inputs during the process stage. Academic performance is achieved after the inputs undergo the production process in the educational system (Kombo and Tromp, 2011). However, inputs alone are not enough, and their management at the school level is essential. School management should pay close attention to the availability of basic education inputs (UNESCO, 2014), as there can be no output without sound basic input.

During the process, effective interaction of inputs, such as school management, teachers, pupils, and non-human materials like teaching and learning materials, is expected to be ensured by school leadership. This is achieved through various means, including the application of leadership skills or functions that are reflected in the school's leadership style and management practices. The way leadership skills are applied can be influenced by several factors, such as the level of supervision at individual school level, the availability of sufficient and quality staff, and the promotion of professional staff development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was situated within the interpretivist paradigm, which was deemed appropriate as it aimed to obtain a deep understanding of the leadership styles and management practices employed by high-performing female Head teachers in secondary schools. A qualitative-interpretivist approach was utilized to achieve this goal, as it is well-suited for gaining in-depth insight into the subject matter (Tatlah & Delport, 2012; Aspers, 2019).

The study selected a purposive sample of three female Head teachers from a population of seven schools. This sample selection was based on the researcher's interest in exploring the leadership styles and management practices employed by female Head Teachers that may be contributing to good performance in the target schools.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Thematic data analysis procedures were employed to analyze the data. Trustworthiness of the qualitative data was ensured through an assertive discussion of the findings and the use of verbatim quotes obtained from the interviews.

Ethical principles were observed throughout the study, beginning with obtaining permission from the sampled secondary schools. The interested participants were required to sign a consent form, and confidentiality was maintained by not disclosing the details of the participants and the institutions they lead. To conceal the identity of the participants, the researcher used pseudonyms when reporting the interview results (Wilson, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Heffner, 2017; Lamont & Swindler, 2014).

FINDINGS

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of participants and sampled schools

Female Head Teacher (Participants)	Years as Head Teacher	Student Population	Ranking School in National Exams (Kabwe District)	Number of Teachers	Activities engaged with the School Community	Relationship with the School Community
Head Teacher A	4	568	5	35	Staff meetings, prayers, sports	Good
Head Teacher B	6	591	3	40	Sports, prayers, meetings, social gathering	Good
Head Teacher C	8	661	4	40	Recollection, school assemblies, staff meetings	Good

Source: Field data, 2021

The total number of participants were three females. Head Teachers were given pseudonyms including Head Teacher A, B and C. From the table, sampled head teachers headed schools that had more than 550 learners (Table 4.1). This information is

important because by knowing the population of the selected secondary schools in terms of the number of teachers and the pupils, the information helped the researcher to understand the leadership styles and management practices adopted by female Heads of schools and challenges encountered, as well as contextualize the findings of the study. The sampled Head Teachers held the position of Head Teacher for four to eight years.

In terms of activities engaged with the school sampled, table 4.1 provides information that the three Head Teachers were engaged in similar school activities such as staff meetings, prayers, school assemblies among other school activities. The other similarity was that relationship of the Head Teachers was also generally good with the school community of selected schools according to the participants and observation.

Leadership styles adopted by female Head Teachers of secondary schools in Kabwe

The findings indicate that none of the female Head teachers adopted a single leadership style as they all adapted different leadership styles based on the context. Depending on the school culture and conditions, Head teachers changed their leadership style from one to another. The study identified four major leadership styles that the Head Teachers used regularly, either in combination or individually. The most commonly used leadership styles were democratic, servant, team, authoritative, and servant. However, there was not an equal use of all leadership styles, with some being overused and others underused. Table 4.2 provides a summary of the leadership styles adopted by the sampled Head Teachers.

Table 4.2: Leadership styles adopted by Female Head Teachers in Kabwe Urban District

Female Head Teacher (Respondents)	Democratic	Servant	Team	Authoritarian
Head Teacher A	Mostly used	Averagely used	Mostly used	Least used
Head Teacher B	Mostly used	Mostly used	Mostly used	Averagely used
Head Teacher C	Mostly used	Mostly used	Averagely used	Least used

Source: Field Data, 2021

Table 4.2 shows the leadership styles used by female Head teachers in the selected secondary schools. From the table, the preference for the leadership styles among female Head teachers of secondary schools was as follows. The mostly adopted leadership style was democratic and the least used was authoritarian style of leadership. Details on each leadership style are presented below:

Democratic leadership style

The study findings confirmed the prevalence of democratic leadership style in selected secondary schools in Kabwe urban. As shown in Table 4.2, the democratic leadership style was the most commonly adopted leadership style. Head Teacher C stated the following:

> *I prefer democratic leadership style mostly. I always call a meeting when a particular matter arises at my school. In the staff meeting, I welcome the different views of my teachers on how it should be handled. I decide over the matter basing on my teachers' comments. On the other hand, in the school board we have a pupil and a teacher who represent other pupils and teachers respectively. This helps to ensure that everybody feels part of the school in terms of decision making.*

Regarding the democratic leadership style, Head Teacher B commented that it was one of the best leadership styles. This is because it ensures the delegation of power, accountability, and transparency in the operations of the schools. Consistent with this, Head Teacher B made the following statement:

> *The use of democratic leadership style ensures shared power. It allows me as a Head Teacher to delegate power to subordinates in my absence or when it is deemed important. In my absence, I delegate the same to the academic master. In so doing, there is an opportunity to those whom power was delegated to know various issues like school income, expenditure which could remain in my hands if I do not delegate power. I have given some teachers an opportunity to attend Head Teachers' workshop in the recent past and I still do that. That exposure is good for my teachers.*

Servant leadership style

The study findings showed that the servant leadership style was the second most commonly adopted leadership style by Head Teachers in the selected schools. Head Teacher C commented as follows:

> *With these years I have led this school, the high performance has been realized because I have to work on the teachers' welfare so that they can deliver maximally. As a Head Teacher, it is my responsibility to walk with them side by side despite having my own problems. I have to sacrifice my time. I think by doing so I create a positive and fruitful school environment which is conducive for learning to take place.*

Team leadership style

Through interviews, it was found that the team leadership style was the third most commonly used style by Head Teachers in the selected schools.

Head Teacher B disclosed that she shares skills, ideas, and knowledge with her teachers during in-service talks on how to handle certain important matters of the school institution. This involves teachers with relevant expertise handling matters that require their specialized skills. For instance, a teacher trained in counseling may be requested to counsel a pupil.

Head Teacher C pointed out that team leadership was only practiced in particular situations. According to Head Teacher B, team leadership style cannot be fully adopted because not all matters require contributions from people with different specializations. Head Teacher A commented as follows:

> *I believe some cases may be judged by just one person without even consulting others. This leadership style helps in building trust and demonstrating courage among the teachers. It leads to better performance even if I am not there as a Head Teacher.*

Authoritative leadership style

The study found that authoritative leadership style was the least commonly adopted among the sampled Head Teachers. Head Teacher C commented as follows:
> *As the head of school I usually outline the tasks to be done by my subordinates. I direct properly on how should carry out the assigned duties. This helps my teachers and supporting staff members understand better the tasks to be done. Personally I do not entertain laziness so I want the tasks to be well done by my teachers. However, I do not use this type of leadership style frequently because it can be intimidating to my teachers.*

A Head Teacher B commented:

Sometimes, my teachers are lazy so they need a little bit of push so that they do things in a right way. It is a pity that sometimes some teachers are unprofessional when performing their duties. Therefore, authoritative leadership style can be of good help to the school so that teachers perform at their best for the school to yield high performance. If some teachers are left an attended nothing can happen in terms of teaching the pupils.

Head Teacher A acknowledged that the practice of authoritative leadership style in schools can be effective in addressing certain issues such as late coming and poor academic performance in national examinations. The Head Teacher insisted that authoritative leadership style is sometimes unavoidable due to the nature of teachers. According to the Head Teacher, some teachers are not competent in handling certain issues and therefore they are given guidelines to follow for assigned tasks. Head Teacher A further commented as follows:

Yes, sometimes, I need to direct them on how to do some tasks. Some teachers are unruly, dishonest and some are very inexperienced. So, if I let them do things in a manner they want to do it, they may do them incorrectly.

Such occurrences include situations where new teachers are involved in a school task, and the Head Teacher may not trust the teacher who has been assigned the task.

Management practices adopted by female Head teachers

The study aimed to investigate the management practices employed by female Head Teachers in selected secondary schools in Kabwe. Results revealed that the sampled Head Teachers utilized a variety of management practices, which varied according to the unique culture of each school. However, the extent to which these practices were implemented by Head Teachers differed across schools. Among the most common practices were teacher lesson observations. Additionally, disciplining troublesome teachers, conducting regular teacher observations, holding frequent staff meetings, and recognizing deserving teachers were also other commonly employed management practices.

The administration of disciplinary procedures in their schools was one of the management practices identified by the sampled Head Teachers. For instance, the study showed that Head Teacher C made sure to reprimand both learners and teachers appropriately and did not turn a blind eye to inappropriate behavior. Head Teacher A added that the school's good academic success was a result of the teachers'being disciplined. The following was said by Head Teacher B on discipline:

Teachers who are unruly are usually dealt with according to the code of conduct stipulated by the Ministry of General Education. I ensure the disciplinary procedures are followed when a teacher is unmanageable. Usually teachers who fail to perform as per requirement of their job description are surrendered at the DEBS office.

Head Teacher C added:

Discipline is the key to success in our school. We have never recorded any affair between a teacher and a pupil. This has helped us to maintain discipline easily.

Head Teacher B further commented on discipline:

Discipline is paramount to high performance in a school and that is what has helped this school to be where it is. The students have

a duty to follow school rules to be part of this school community. We make sure they are fully involved in the making process of the school rules.

Regular teacher observation
The Head Teachers maintained that class observation was important to ensure that teachers were teaching the right content to the learners and also adhering to the syllabi.

Head Teacher C remarked:
Teachers who are effective tend to produce good results unlike teachers who are not. As a Head Teacher, it is my responsibility to observe the teachers. The teachers know what is expected of them. Therefore, teachers who fail to perform according to the expectation of the school are closely mentored. We do not want to leave anyone behind. And this has really helped us to produce good academic results.

Head Teacher B contended that without regular teacher observation, the school would yield low academic performance.

Head Teacher A remarked:
Last term because of teacher observation I discovered that some teachers go to class very late and yet they want to get a salary at the end of the month. And another teacher was not following the syllabi. All this was corrected and I am happy the Head of Department (H.O.Ds) as immediate supervisors to the teachers are monitoring these teachers closely.

Study findings indicated that one of the effective practices employed by female Head Teachers was counseling erring teachers and learners, as noted by Head Teacher B:

Us Head Teachers we do not scold or punish our subordinates we sit down with them and show

them the right way. It is like guiding a child and it yields better results'.

Head Teacher C remarked:

Being a female Head Teacher is something special. We are mothers and issues we handle are so complex and require a motherly heart. There are teachers who are going through a lot of trauma and my duty as a custodian of the school is to give counsel to such teachers. Where I fail an expert is engaged to journey with the teacher or learner. This has helped a lot. When everyone feels valued and cared for in the school it brings about positive outcomes academically.

Regular staff meetings
The sampled Head Teachers also revealed that regular staff meetings were vital to achieve high performance in all aspects of the school.
Head Teacher C remarked:
Staff meetings in the field of education, is one of the most significant practices of enriching the teachers experiences, re-enforce their abilities and build their performance in the school. To achieve some educational goals the Head Teacher has the responsibility to engage the teachers on how the goals can be achieved.
Head Teacher A emphasized:
I make ensure that as a school we have regular meetings to update each other on educational policies. Policies guide us in the way schools are run. Teachers must be continuously reminded of important policies such as working hour policy, re-entry policy among others. These policies are then transmitted to the learners so that they understand them. If teachers do not know anything about policies it may affect the performance of our school.

Awarding deserving teachers

The results of this investigation also showed that the sampled Head teachers gave meritorious teachers rewards. The Head Teachers believed that this was an effective management strategy because it greatly motivated the dedicated teachers. The custom, which was intended to reward teachers for their accomplishments, was not an isolated incident. For instance, Head Teacher B said:

> *We have been consistent in awarding deserving teachers and that has really helped us to perform well at national examination level. When teachers who are performing well are given incentives it is a great motivation to do even more in their work. Besides, I must say we have some good teachers who are self-motivated and that has also kept us going strong.*

Yet again Head Teacher C remarked,

> *We have come up with a policy on performance. When a teacher gets hundred percent (100%) in his or her subject an award in monetary form is given to that teacher. Most of our teachers are hard working.*

Challenges faced by female Head Teachers when carrying out their duties

The following were some of the general difficulties that participants encountered when managing and directing their schools: stakeholders' hostility toward them, prejudice on the part of their coworkers and subordinates, and stereotypes.

Subordinates' and stakeholder negative attitudes towards female Head Teachers

As indicated earlier, Head Teachers faced challenges of negative attitudes from their subordinates, particularly from female subordinates. Head Teacher B commented on this issue as follows:

> *Some female teachers have a negative attitude towards me instead of supporting me. I am pleased working with some male teachers. For me male teachers are easy to work with because they have a positive energy.*

Head Teacher A added the following with regards negative attitude

> *I remember when I was newly appointed as Head of this school some teachers could not even talk to me especially that some teachers have been serving for a long time and they are not promoted. I believe the long serving teachers influence other teachers because of frustrations. Well I had to transfer all the long serving teachers and begin with a young and supportive staff. This really helped us to reach were we are today.*

Discrimination by their colleagues and subordinates

The findings revealed that female Head Teachers face discrimination from their colleagues and subordinates. For instance, Head Teacher remarked:

> *I have faced a lot of challenges because of my gender including rejection, threats and discrimination. I remember some time back a male teacher just stood up during a staff meeting and started talking about how much he hated me and how much he was looking forward to having a male Head Teacher. It was hurtful but I managed it well.*

Head Teacher C commented:

> *When we go for workshops as Heads of schools male Head Teachers dominate in everything especially if the facilitator is male. I think we are supposed to be appreciated.*

Stereotypes

Another significant challenge faced by women is the stereotype that they are "lesser beings" who are incapable of taking up leadership roles in schools. For instance,

> *There are stereotypes such as the thinking that a male is above a female. Some teachers do not want to take instructions from a female Head Teacher. They believe that females should only take care of the house and leave office work for males.*

Head Teacher B lamented:

> *It is very sad that many females cannot be given a chance to shine. Sir take a look at Kabwe district how many female Head teachers are leading secondary schools. We have many females who are qualified and experienced but males still dominate. People think that leadership is only for males. I do not believe in that. We have to be given an equal platform to challenge for any leadership position in our ministry.*

DISCUSSION

The findings clearly indicate that the three participants employed multiple leadership styles such as democratic, servant, team, and authoritarian. This could explain why the female Head Teachers exhibited good performance in their schools. Nelliteawati (2020) asserts that these leadership styles are suitable for managing educational institutions because they promote a high degree of innovativeness, boost morale among teachers and students, foster togetherness, and improve performance. Involving employees in decision-making encourages team-building, creativity, and fosters a keenness to work hard to achieve institutional goals. Therefore, effective leadership and management are crucial. There are a lot of leadership styles used in learning institutions. There are some leadership styles which are good such as

democratic, team, servant and charismatic, on the other hand there are leadership styles which are not so good for example authoritarian and laissez-Faire leadership styles (Ampaire & Namusonge, 2015; Atkinson, 2013).

Democratic Leadership Style

According to Nelliteawati (2020), the democratic leadership style involves giving power to employees while maintaining control and allowing for change and adaptation. Power delegation and transparency, especially in financial matters, can lead to a sense of obligation among employees to work hard towards achieving the vision of the school, as well as their own goals, ultimately resulting in higher academic performance.

Servant Leadership

The findings on servant leadership are supported by Kantharia (2012), who highlights the primary objective of servant leaders as the growth and development of their employees. This leadership style relies on self-sacrifice without seeking personal glory and emphasizes service to others. By focusing on their subordinates' needs, servant leaders build trust and foster a sense of reciprocity among their employees, resulting in better performance and higher institutional expectations.

Team Leadership

The findings on team leadership, which emphasizes trust and courage among teachers, are supported by Ampaire and Namusonge (2015). They highlight how team leadership can bring together people of different specializations to achieve institutional goals. In this leadership style, the leader acts as an advisor to different professionals, encouraging complementary work among employees. Similarly, Penn (2017) recommends team leadership as the most effective, as it fosters collaboration and trust among employees, ultimately leading to respect and better outcomes

Authoritative leadership Style

The finding on authoritative leadership style that subordinates are directed clearly on how

to carry out a certain tasks, is in line with that of Kitavi (2014) who points out that authoritative leadership style helps staff understand explicitly the tasks they are assigned. Moreover, the authoritative leadership style is said to encourage novelty among workers. The subordinates are free to work according to the prevailing institutional rules and regulations. Ampaire & Namusonge (2015), indicate that with this kind of leadership style, the employees feel accountable in discharging their duties.

Management Practices

The management practices employed by the Head Teachers in the current study seem to have played a significant role in explaining why their schools perform better than that of their male counterparts. One of these practices was discipline, which is essential for creating a climate of mutual respect and an environment conducive to teaching and learning (Berg & Karlsen, 2012). However, it is important to note that discipline should be enforced not only by effective management but also by personal discipline exhibited by the Head Teacher. Failure to abide by the code of conduct can lead to charges or even dismissal depending on the severity of the case (Ololube, 2013).

Additionally, effective disciplinary strategies are characterized by having a set of rules that show the consequences of not abiding by them (Kambunga, 2014). Regular teacher observation is another management practice mentioned by all three Head Teachers, which ensures effective teaching and learning are taking place.

Negative attitudes towards female Head Teachers were found to be prevalent among some teachers, and in most cases, those with negative attitudes tended to underperform. Female Head Teachers had to work extra hard to break the bonds of negative attitude, which can bring about negative energy (Kitele, 2013). It was also observed that people who have internalized traditional gender role attitudes object to female leadership positions, preferring males to lead them (Ndlovu & Proches, 2019).

Female Head Teachers face societal demands and traditions that their male counterparts do not face, which may impact their credibility as leaders (Oyedele, 2018). Male principals are automatically given respect and intellectual credibility, while female Head Teachers have to work extra hard to prove themselves (Oyedele, 2018). Khaled and Al-Jaradat (2014) contend that some difficult characters that Head Teachers encounter cannot be changed, but can be managed so that they do not disrupt the normal routine.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the leadership styles and management practices of female Head Teachers that could explain why their schools perform better than those of their male counterparts through a case study of selected high performing secondary schools led by female Head Teachers in Kabwe urban district. The study also sought to investigate the challenges faced by female Head Teachers in carrying out their administrative duties. The major finding was that female Head Teachers in high-performing selected secondary schools mostly used a combination of democratic, servant, and team leadership styles. It was also revealed that the Head Teachers occasionally used an authoritarian leadership style, especially in situations that required urgent attention.

The study also found that the Head Teachers performed certain management practices that could explain why their schools performed well. The practices included disciplining troublesome teachers and pupils, regular teacher observation, regular staff meetings, and awarding deserving teachers, among others. Generally, the Head Teachers also noted that they followed the professional code of ethics when solving problems with the teachers and pupils.

The study findings also showed that Head Teachers faced some challenges that included subordinates' negative attitudes, discrimination by their colleagues and subordinates, and stereotypes, among others. These challenges are generally in

conformity with the literature (Northouse, 2016; Whelan and Wood, 2013).

The study strongly advocates for the Ministry of Education to prioritize the promotion of women to leadership roles in schools, particularly as Head Teachers. By increasing the representation of female leaders, the education system can tap into their distinct leadership approaches and management expertise, ultimately enriching the learning environment. This strategic move has the potential to significantly enhance teacher performance, student outcomes, and overall educational excellence. Empowering women in leadership positions can bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and inclusive decision-making, leading to a more dynamic and effective education system.

The study further recommends that educational leaders should encourage and promote the adoption of similar leadership styles and management practices employed by female Head Teachers to enhance male Head Teachers' effectiveness in their schools. Additionally, the study suggests that research can be conducted to understand the feminist perspectives that may be influencing female Head Teachers' excellent leadership styles and management practices.

Limitations and future research
This research study has limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the sample size of the study is small, as data was only collected from three Head Teachers. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Secondly, the high performance of learners in the selected schools could be attributed to other factors, such as the students' abilities, the quality of teaching, and the school culture, which were not specifically addressed in this study. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the leadership styles and management practices of female Head Teachers may not be the only contributing factors to the high performance of the selected schools. Despite these limitations, this study provides insights into the leadership styles and management practices of female Head Teachers in high-performing schools and contributes to the existing literature on this topic.

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