## CULTURAL PRACTICES AND PROSPECTS OF WOMEN ASCENDING TO TOP MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN KENYA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the cultural practices in Kenya that hinder women from ascending to top management positions in Kenya's Education System. The concurrent triangulation research design, which is one of  the Mixed Methods Approach models, was used in the current study.The saturated sampling was used to establish sample size for the study. The target population in this study consisted of a total of thirty six participants.These include six Sub County Directors of Education (SCDE), Six Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASO), six Assistant Deputy Directors (Teacher Management), and six District Examination Officers (DXO) who  responded  to the structured questionnaires. The interviews were carried out with a separate group of six senior Education officials from both Kisumu  County Director of Education and Kisumu County Director of Teacher Management. The content validity was assured by expert judgement by lecturers of the Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST), while the reliability was ensured by split half method and a coefficient of r = 0.845 was reported.The quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics while the qualitative data was analysed using thematic framework.The study findings were that the social cultural factors were major obstacles to women's access to top managerial positions. Other obstacles include the patriarchal nature of the society, the labor policies in the Ministry of Education that are not sensitive to women's traditional multiple roles as wife, mother and a worker, the male domination of managerial positions and negative attitude on women as managers.The study recommends implementation of new Affirmative Action policies that could enhance women's participation in decision making as top managers and policy makerson equal footing with their male counterparts  in education sector in Kenya.*
*Key Words: Cultural Practices, Attitudes, Educational Management,Women Managers.*

## Introduction

The foundation of modern education in Kenya was laid by Christian Missionaries who introduced writing and reading to spread Christianity, and throughout the colonial period, women in Kenya experienced considerable social, economic and political inequalities relative to men. The state favoured males in the provision of paid labour needed by settler economies, thus, resulting into women being grossly underrepresented in paid labour but served as unskilled labour in the agricultural sector (Republic of Kenya, as cited in Chege and Sifuna, 2006). Available studies, (Odhiambo, 2011; Kamau, 2010; Nyamu, 2004; Onsongo, 2004; and Osumbah, 2011), reveal disparity in the levels of gender diversity at the top management positions in higher institutions of learning and the Ministry of Education in Kenya. The aim of this study was to provide a more precise explanation and understanding of the factors for gender imbalance facing women top educational managers in Kisumu county and the intervention measures that would enhance women's accessibility to these positions.

Growe and Montgomery (2010) reviewed a study of women high school leaders in the United States and highlighted that the under representation of qualified women in leadership position has created a gender gap that exists not only in education but in many areas of the work place.The study further revealed that 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. The society has determined that only males make good leaders; therefore it continues to deny easy access for women seeking leadership roles because they do not fit the norm. In addition, women who seek leadership positions face barriers and many times give up because they become overwhelmed in dealing with the barriers. Oliver (2013) asserts that in the United States of America, when given a suitable job description, women seem to believe that it is harder for them to succeed than it is for men due to the organisational structure and ineffective personal initiative while Eagly and Carli (2009) as cited in Roebuck and Smith (2011) argued that the path to leadership is often more problematic for women than men because women managers are often given less desirable assignments and no matter how well they do it, no promotion will result.

Other studies (Wakhahu and Keller, 2011; Osumbah, 2012; Wakhahu and Salvaterra, 2012); highlighted that it is a fact that there are a few women in leadership positions, there are not many female mentors and role models. Thus, the need for leadership development that may provide a means for women to build confidence and break the glass ceiling and empower them to take on a seat at the decision making table. Madlala (2007) supports the view that the barriers which retard women's progress in management include the endocentric bias and partriachal nature of the society, the traditional stereotypical perceptions of women's abilitites and attitudes towards women's family roles which makes it difficult for women to be accepted as managers. The study further suggested that, there is need to put more effort towards transforming the male-centered structures, policies, practices and culture of governing institutions that makes it difficult for women to gain access to top management and decision making roles.

The Kenya National Commission for Human Rights (2011) reported that although the discriminatory laws have been addressed in Kenya's New Constitution, women still face many challenges in regard to accessing top management and leadership positions. Kaimenyi, Kinya

and Chege (2013) in the review of the Analysis of Affirmative Action: The Two Third Gender Rule in Kenyan Constitution Act 27 (8) argued that affirmative action can work and promote gender equity in political representation and ultimately improve development outcomes if there is full commitment to its objectives and measures.

Statistics show that in the former Nyanza province (now Lake Region), there have been only 2 women Provincial Directors of Education (11.1%) against 18 men Directors of Education (88.9%) who have functioned in the same capacity since independence (MOE; Nyanza Province office, 2013). This gender imbalance in the top educational management is an issue of concern for the current research study. According to the Republic of Kenya's Vision 2030 (Republic of Kenya, 2007) the social pillar for gender, youth and vulnerable groups is gender equity in power and resource distribution. Onsongo (2009 stated that if two or more qualified persons present themselves for a position or promotion, then the disadvantaged person, say, a woman, is given the priority.  However, this does not take place.

The research  study was guided by the African feminism as a theoretical frame work developed by African scholars (Ekpa, 2000; Chilisa and Ntseane, 2010; Arndt, 2002; Nnaemeka, 2003; Ngunjiri, 2010), who argued that, African Feminism is opposed to how Western Feminism dichotomises human relations by placing males against females, as well as the individualism and competitiveness which is dentrimental to the African female course. They contend that, the theory developed as changes gave rise to the explanation of a woman's position in the social world. Simien (2006) observed that African feminists do not look to cast a shadow over men, as it is the case for some feminists, but rather includes men and women into the movement because it is about the recognition of race and gender which is about ideology, and not biology. African feminism is centered on describing the change in situations and experiences which women have faced and looks to improve the conditions which women currently face. Kamau (2012), is in agreement with this notion that African Feminism. Chukwuma (2006) while in a Forum on Public Policy reiterated that in Africa, women are all too often confronted with poverty, terrible labour conditions, faulty education and healthcare. Thus, the African women have lately joined in the other nations in their quest for the rights, for opportunity, relevance and recognition.

A dominant view in the global literature is that women are under represented in the senior leadership positions in almost all sectors of life. (Bagilhole and White, 2011; Ohene, 2010;  Onsongo, 2004; Obejide, 2003; Rab, 2010). Stuff and Coyne, (2009),while reviewing literatute in Advancing Women Leadership Journal in Sam Houston University in the United States, highlighted that throughout time, stereotypes regarding women and men have permeated society, creating many obstacles for women, especially in the professional world. Words like nurturing, compassionate, emotional, expressive, communal, uncertain, passive, subjective and supportive have historically been used to describe women as opposed to intelligent, powerful, competent, objective, independent, methodical and driven that have typically been reserved to desribe men. However, one pertinent fact remains overlooked, that, although men may fit the stereotypical roles of a leader, it should not be  forgotten that women are just as capable. The study revealed that while many female applicants actively pursue administrative positions, data indicates that male applicants are commonly chosen.The current research study fills in the gaps for the reviewed literature.

Binns and Kerfoot (2011) admitted that, the skills, competencies and dispositions deemed essential to leadership including assertivenness, competitiveness, autonomy and authority are embedded in socially constructed definitions of masculinity.This view is carried forward by Tiao (2006) as earlier cited, that unlike their male counterparts, women leaders face the additional requirement of coping with cultural expectations of being "feminine" while projecting a masculine leader image. Lips and Kenner (2007) argued that leadership is viewd as unfeminine so that,when women do arrive in leadership positions, particularly in male dominated areas, they tend to be judged more harshly than their male counterparts. As a result of these barriers, when women in education, regardless of qualification and aspirations, are seen to stay behind the scenes and do work that continues to be overlooked and underpaid. These studies were carried out among high school female teachers and educational managers in the United States which is far from the location of current study in Kenya. Thus, the current study fills in the gaps for the reviewed literature.xxxxxxxxxxxx

Tiffani (2013) while examining women leadership role across 14 sectors of the United States of America, to quantify and qualify where women were-or were not-in positional leadership roles, concluded that throughout all sectors, women were underepresented in leadership and underpaid, regardless of their performance. Kelly (2011) affirms that women are often given jobs that relate to caretaking and qualities associated with approppriate leaders are deemed inapproppriate for women. There is need therfore, to put interventions and strategies to address the various levels of enablers and barriers to women becoming valued educational leaders. Such include the laws and policies in place, but also to be aware of those who are in charge and how they behave. The two reviewed studies above were done in the western countries but not in Kenya. Therefore, the present study fills in gaps in literature review.

It has been hypothesized in research work (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Binns and Kerfoot, 2011;Wakahiu and Diane, 2011; Osumbah, 2011; Lewis, 2013)that the skills, competitiveness and dispositions deemed essential to leadership including assertiveness, competitiveness, autonomy and authority are embedded in socially constructed definitions of masculinity and thus, leading to the widening gap between genders. UNESCO (2009) reports that gender roles can be affected by such factors as education and economics, and vary widely within and among the cultures. While individual's sex may not change, gender roles are socially determined and can evolve over time and their expectations are often identified as factors hindering the equal rights and status of women with adverse consequences that affect life, family and socio-economic status.The cultural environment in Africa is among the factors that have influenced participation rate of women and men both in public and in private sphere.Whereas there are significant local and national particuliarities, roles assigned to men and women are largely culturally pre-determined and different (African Development Bank, 2001).Badawi (2010) argued that women in Sudan face the multiplicity of roles that they play in the domestic, productive and reporductive spheres which limit their capabilities, the familial and socio-cultural factors that add to women's burden curbing their ambition and forcing them to skip training chances, giving men a competitive advantage, and some attitudinal barriers related to deeply rooted perceptions towards women's roles and abilities. The study by Badawi was carried out in Sudan but not in Kenya. The present study therefore fills in gaps in literature by focusing on Kisumu County of Kenya.

Mordi, Adedoyin and Ajonladi (2011)explored barriers to career progress of females in acquiring top management positions and the challenges that come with such career development within the Nigerian context. Data was obtained through structured interviews of women working in the manufacturing, banking, insurance, telecommunication, and two public service sectors in Nigeria. The findings suggest that the challenges posed by individual factors i.e. cultural expectation of female within the family set up and Nigerian society and organizational factors within their context of operation are key barriers perceived by female managers to attaining the highest positions. The study further noted that, the entrenchment of patriarchy makes women react with fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please where more self-assertive actions are needed and that, the African man is still steeped in his centuries-old attitudes of patriarchy which he does not wish to abandon because male domination is advantageous to him. Anugwom (2009) argues that, despite more and more women in Nigeria acquiring tertiary education, they do not get involved in the labor process in Nigeria. This is attributed to such factors like the patriarchal nature of the Nigerian labor market. The studies were carried out in Nigeria among the middle managers of various companies and not in educational institution. Thus, the present study fills in gaps in literature.

Hannagam (2005) puts it that African women are socialized to be silent, and fear is instilled in them such that they learn not to question men.  The social environment, both at home and at work, can be hostile to women, leading to women not aspire for such high positions because the working environment is male-biased, full of harassment including female/male intrusion in areas of responsibilities and interruptions at meetings, leading to chaotic working relationships and /or violence. Hora (2014) aimed at identifying status of women in Bedele town administration in Ethiopia, as well as point out factors hindering women from the participating in public and forward some possible recommendations for solving the problems identified through study. Primarily, the study was of descriptive in nature and survey method was used in data gathering. Data used in this paper is mainly primary but to some extent secondary data as well, quantitative and qualitative types was incorporated. Study revealed that, in public institutions existed in Bedele Town, the majority of women were having an educational status of diploma and lower, holding lower non decision making and leadership positions, and observed major barriers hindering women from public leadership and decision-making positions include: Socio-cultural attitudes and lack of acquisition of the necessary experience for taking part in public decision-making, overburden of domestic responsibilities continuation of the negative attitudes regarding women's ability to lead and govern and lack of role models of women leaders for young women and girls can be stated.  The study was carried out in Ethiopia among women administrators and not educational managers in Kenya. Thus, the present study fills in the gaps in literature.

Ngunjiri (2009) pointed out that women around the world often find themselves on the periphery of organizational leadership, underrepresented in positions of power and authority because of structural, cultural and social barriers that create glass ceiling they can barely break. Furthermore, African women are surrounded by cultural, social, economic and political barriers to ascending to positions of leadership. While women are influential in nutrition, rearing of children and agriculture, there are minimal spaces for women's voices at the community and government.

Mueller and Mulinge (2001) asserted that this equality has not been reached in Kenya, and in fact there has been little progress. The previous Constitution (1963-2010) was seen as propagating gender inequality in Kenya because, whereas discrimination on the basis of the race, place of origin, political opinion or color was not allowed, discrimination on the basis of gender was not expressly outlawed in that Constitution or any labor relations Laws. New Constitution has addressed this by containing one of the Bills of Rights in the history of Constitution making in Kenya. However, Gumbi (2006) holds a divergent view that, leadership in higher education is still a man's world; women are less likely than men to participate in upper levels of administration. Aislyn (2011) emphasized a similar view that, the traditional norms that encourage women to become housewives while men as leaders and heads of households prevent women from advancing into leadership position and acquire employment; Furthermore, men feared that if women were allowed to be educated they might hold power and fail to depend on their husbands.In addition, the society's concept of men as the heads of the family and therefore the sole bread winners coupled with the colonial period where men were viewed as more competent to handle the new changes that came with the colonialism and that they could adapt to the colonial ways easily, marked the beginning of gender discrimination in the provision of education and employment opportunities.

Timor (2004) in the research of Timorese women's participation in literacy program illustrated that a woman's decision to participate or not participate is not solely based on individual wants or disinterest, but a decision strongly informed by the norms, roles, values and perceptions embedded in the home and community. These influences on the everyday life of a Timorese have hindered women's participation. Furthermore, the successful women managers face cultural barriers in the form of their own internalized view of roles and the expectations that others have of them. The report opined that the traditional society's concept of men as the heads of family and therefore the sole bread winners marked the beginning of gender discrimination in the provision of education and employment opportunities. Onsongo, (2006) and Kariuki, (2010) asserted that the problem of gender imbalances can be traced back to school and universities enrolment. The number of women who access higher education is smaller compared to that of men. In essence, since fewer women are available for upward mobility, they tend to be poorly represented in leadership positions especially the top managerial levels. Section 35(4) of the Kenyas new Constitution (2010) states clearly that, any law, culture, custom or tradition that undermines the dignity, welfare, interest or status of women is prohibited.This statement goes along way towards redressing women's concerns in the area of customary laws and practices.

Nzomo (2002) puts it that one underlying problem for women in Kenya, has been the difficulty in dealing with the inherent patriarchal structures that pervade the lives of people, the process of state and the party. In many societies of Africa, women are still assigned a secondary place by the prevailing customs and culture. Thus, if women were born to be led' attitude still forms part of our Kenyan belief system, then such are a great obstacles to women aspiring to be leaders. Tripp (2001) is in agreement with this view, that, women who vie for top management or public offices, have to consider the risk of being labeled "loose" or "unfit" as mothers and wives, and being socially stigmatized. As such, many otherwise qualified women leaders shy away from taking the top managerial positions. Osumbah (2014), as earlier cited,

observed that men dominate the Kenya's Ministry of Education and are the bosses whose recommendation is required for a candidate to get into the shortlist. Consequently, there are fewer women than men to employ and to promote. Sadie (2005) advanced the same argument that at the bottom of the constraints that women face is the patriarchal system where decision making powers are in the hands of males. Moreover, in the African context, the traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the role and status of women in society are prevalent and many women are part of this system, finding it difficult to dislocate from this culture and tradition lest they be ostracized.

**Research Methodology**

The concurrent triangulation design, which is one of  the Mixed Methods Approach models, was used in the current study. According to Creswell (2014), this model is selected when the researcher uses two different methods in an attempt to confirm, cross-validate or corroborate findings within a single study.  The target population  in this study  consisted of  the thirty six Sub-County Education officers in the six sub-counties of Kisumu county. These are the six Sub County Directors of Education(SCDEOs), the six Quality Assurance and Standards officers (SCQASOs), the six Deputy Assitant Directors (Teacher Management), the six Sub-County Examinations Officers (SCXO), to whom the questionnaire was administered and the six senior Sub-County officers from the Kisumu County Director of Education's Office, who were interviewed by the researcher on the day and time that was agreed upon.Thus, they were to form a total 42 education officers/participants in the research study.The participants in the current research study were 30 respondents.  Thus, the saturated sample was employed.

The main Instruments of data collection in this research were the  questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis guide (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).Descriptive statistics was used in data analysis which entails the use of frequency distribution tables and percentages to summarize data on the closed-ended items in the questionnaire (Kothari, 2004).

**Findings & Discussion**

The study investigated the cultural practices in Kenya that hinder women from ascending to top management positions in Kenya's Education System.  To address this objective of the study, the researcher designed 5 sets of questions with closed ended statements to investigate cultural practices in Kenya that hinder women from ascending to top management positions.  Items of the questionnaire were constructed in a way that they were linked to socio-cultural practices which were related to hindrance to women in ascending top management positions.   The respondents were presented with statements that were grouped in five different sub-headings but had socio-cultural connotations that were believed to prohibit women from accending top management positions in Education.

The issues addressed included; factors  limiting  women from being considered for career development as education managers, factors at family level limiting women from accessing top management position, personal factors considered to be the  obstacles to women ascending to top managerial position in education, factors considered not favouring promotion of women to management positions and perceptions on personal attributes  that enable women to get management positions. The respondents were asked to tick as many as possible statements based on their perception of the statement in regard to women opportunity at top

management positions. From the responses, the researcher computed percentage frequencies of the responses.

Table 1 presents the summary of the factors limiting women from being considered for career development as education managers.

**Table 1: Limitation of Women for Career Development as Reported by Respondents (n = 24)**

| Items | Male (n=15) f (%) | Female (n=9) f (%) | Total (N=24) f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Poverty or lack of money. | 1(50.0%) | 1(50.0%) | 2(8.3%) |
| Lack of psychological/Intellectual support from senior management. | 3(60.0%) | 2(40.0%) | 5(20.8%) |
| Being the only woman in senior management. | 0(0.0%) | 1(100.0%) | 1(4.2%) |
| Heavy workload . | 5(62.5%) | 3(37.5%) | 8(33.3%) |
| Gender bias . | 10(55.6%) | 8(44.4%) | 18(75.0%) |
| Political appointment. | 5(45.5%) | 6(54.5%) | 11(45.8%) |
| Meager opportunities for career development. | 1(100%) | 0(0.0%) | 1(4.2%) |
| Others | 0(0.0%) | 1(100%) | 1(4.2%) |

Table 1 which shows the responses on factors that limit women from being considered for career development as education managers, reveals that gender bias 18(75.0%) was the most serious hindrance to women from ascending to top management position in education within the County. Both male and female respondents affirmed through their responses that the most single factor that impedes recruitment of women to the top leadership of education at the County is gender bias. During the interviews, a senior education officer responded:

> *Let the Policy be developed to address the gender biasness in recruitment, appointment and promotion of women in the management positions. There should be fair play in recruitment and appointment in management position. Avoid at all cost the gender favoritism* (SEO 8).

It is interesting that the respondents who argued that gender bias was limiting women from ascending at the apex of education administration were both male and female participants. This finding is in agreement with Lips and Kenner (2007) which reported that leadership is viewd as unfeminine so that, when women do arrive in leadership positions, particularly in male dominated areas, they tend to be judged more harshly than their male counterparts.

The second factor preventing women from being at top leadership responsibility was political appointment 11(45.8%) which favored men only. Participants who felt that political appointment was of a great interference to equal and equitable opportunities for both men and women to ascend to the top leadership of education management in the County were women 6(54.5%). This finding agrees with those of Meaza (2009) who argued that administration

involves hard work, long hours and lots of in-house politics which is stress provoking. That, women do not participate in politics as much as men do and this disadvanteges women grossly. When child care and home responsibilities are added, it brings family responsibilities' conflict and thus make women to withdraw from their aspirations as managers and or decision makers.

The findings of the study also show that a significant number 8(33.3%) of respondents, believed that heavy workload at the top of management leadership do not favor women. The same view was established by the researcher during the interview.  A senior participant retorted that;

> *Women shy away from top positions and would rather work under men.*
> *They fear these appointments due to the challenges associated with such*
> *positions* (SEO 2).

This means that as much as the top management positions are available for all qualifiers, women tend to fear such positions due to the heavy work load associated with them.  They seem to be pessimistic and fear the frustrations which may be faced due to their failure to meet the expected threshold. This is consistent with the findings of Omokojie (2013) that, given the endocentric bias and patriarchal nature of the society as regards traditional perception of the society on women's abilities and roles in the family, it is rare for women to be accepted as managers. The belief that success at the top leadership requires total commitment and devotions which entails a lot of hard work with heavy load of all effort and time towards the duty, which makes it difficult for women to participate at top management effectively.  It also emerged from the present study that lack of psychological and intellectual support to women from senior management, 5(20.8%) who are mostly men, creates bottlenecks for women to rise to top management positions. A respondent:

> *If a man is the boss, he looks down upon women and thinks that women*
> *cannot perform. In fact he will only appreciate you after you have done*
> *the task or work well. The society is so patriarchal* (SEO 1).

This view is consistent to the generally held opinion that only men make good leaders given their zeal and enthusiasm, hence women give up from eyeing the top leadership positions (Meaza, 2009). The other items which participants considered less important in limiting women from advancing their career as managers include Poverty or lack of money 2(8.3%); Being the only woman from senior management 1(4.2%); and meagre opportunities for career development 1(4.2%). Their lack of significance implies that even though they may be real but opportunity to overcome them as barriers are available.

Table 2 presents the summary of respondents' views on factors at family level that limit women from accessing top management position education.

**Table 2 Limitation of Women at Family Level as Reported by Respondents (n = 24)**

| Item | Male (n=15) f (%) | Female (n=9) f (%) | Total (N=24) f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| None | 1(100%) | 0(0.0%) | 1(4.2%) |
| Family obligation demands | 14(60.9%) | 9(39.1%) | 23(95.8%) |
| Lack of support from the husband | 9(64.3%) | 5(35.7%) | 14(58.3%) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Heavy work that lead to divorce | 0(0.0%) | 1(100%) | 1(4.2%) |
| Moral obligations | 3(42.9%) | 4(57.1%) | 7(29.2%) |
| Financial obligations | 0(0.0%) | 2(100%) | 2(8.3%) |

From Table 2, it was established that 23(95.8%) of the respondents held the opinion that family obligation demands discourages women from  wanting to be at the top of the educational management, meaning that Family obligation demands, overwhelm potential women top leadership.This finding fits well with that of Aguiluz (2011) in which he explained that most women often underestimate their own abilities, accept more than their share of responsibilities when it comes to caring for their children, and give up on taking on more challenging work because of pre mature work-life balance uncertainties. This position presumes that the most critical problem a female leader faces is the balancing of family, career and community services. Furthermore, the stress and workload of high positions force many women to choose carefully without creating overload in their family obligations. During the interview a participant reiterated;

> *A woman is the care provider of the family and so weighs carefully her obligations in the family and her promotion. The husband of such women would prefer their wives to be close to the family and care for them than to work very far from their homes or keep on moving to places for meetings and or seminars that are associated with top managerial positions. In fact, others may opt to resign from work for the sake of the family* (SEO 2).

This Participant's (SEO2) arguments were in agreement with the study of Raburu (2015) that reaffirms the conflict that Kenya women academics face when juggling between career and family responsibilities finding that family roles tie women more than men because many female workers are also mothers. They may improve their professional opportunities, yet are still responsible for the majority of the chores and care giving duties. So, women feel that they cannot handle balancing work and family life with the rigorous demands of the leadership position.

It also emerged from the study findings that lack of appropriate support from the husband   slows the women progression to the helm of leadership. More than half 14(58.3%) of the respondents consider lack of support from the husband as bottleneck towards advancement on job. In fact, majority of the respondents who held this opinion were males. This view is in agreement with Paulk (2008) argument that the dominant cultures in the United Kingdom, such as a woman's success being dependent on a man's support, for centuries have prevailed over women's acquisition of economic power, so that any discourse on women empowerment is a threat to these cultures. However, 7(29.2%) of those who participated in this study argued that lack of moral obligations among women is in itself hindrance to their rise. On the same note, another 2(8.3%) of them held the notion that the heavy financial obligation that go hand in hand with top leadership denies women opportunity to progress to top management leadership.

Similarly, Joshi and Bhogayata (2007) while studying the barrier faced by women managers in Indian university reported a similar view that the social pattern in India makes males believe that they are the sole deciding factor and that women can be controlled.  This

type of mentality is cultured due to the tradition of male dominance.  Despite all these, some respondents held the contrary opinion that women have equal opportunity to ascend to the top management leadership. 1(4.2%) of the education officials in Kisumu County who took part in the study said there is nothing at all that prevents women from scaling the heights of top management leadership in education sector. Kimotho (2012) reports a similar view that in the Kenyan's new constitution, any form of gender biases is outlawed and that all Kenya citizens, women included, have equal opportunity to apply to be considered for top managerial position as long as he or she qualifies.

Table 3 presents the data on the personal factors respondents considered to be the obstacles to women ascending to top management positions in educational administration.

**Table 3: Personal Factors Limiting Women as Reported by Respondents (n = 24)**

|  | Male (n=15) f (%) | Female (n=9) f (%) | Total (N=24) f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Women do not aspire for the higher managerial positions. | 5(50.0%) | 5(50.0%) | 10(41.7%) |
| Lack of confidence among women . | 8(61.5%) | 5(38.5%) | 13(54.2%) |
| Eligible women turn down appointments. | 8(72.7%) | 3(27.3%) | 11(45.8%) |
| Timidity of women/Fear of public office . | 4(57.1%) | 3(42.9%) | 7(29.2%) |
| Family commitments . | 12(63.2%) | 7(36.8%) | 19(79.2%) |
| Lack of ambition . | 7(63.6%) | 4(36.4&) | 11(45.8%) |
| Low academic qualifications . | 1(20.0%) | 4(80.0%) | 5(20.8%) |
| Lack of motivation. | 5(71.4%) | 2(28.6%) | 7(29.2%) |
| No role models . | 4(57.1%) | 3(42.9%) | 7(29.2%) |
| Women tend to be helpers/work behind the scene. | 2(28.6%) | 5(71.4%) | 7(29.2%) |
| Lack of experience. | 1(25.0%) | 3(75.0%) | 4(16.7%) |
| Women want favours . | 2(50.0%) | 2(50.0%) | 4(16.7%) |

The findings of the study as summarized in Table 3 show that the family commitment 19(79.2%) is believed to be the outstanding personal factor that limit women from ascending to top managerial position in Education.  Timor (2004) was in agreement with this view that a woman's decision to participate or not to participate is not solely based on individual wants or disinterest, but a decision strongly informed by the norms, roles, values and perceptions embedded in the home and community.  A participant observed:

> While women may look influential in the society, there are minimal spaces or chances for their voices to be heard at the community and or in the government (SEO 2).

The view of (SEO 2) indicate that women are less likely to assert themselves and negotiate for top managerial positions or what they want unless the communities where they emanate from give them a backing lest they be considered less socially attractive or desirable. Shin and Bhang (2013) supports this finding by arguing that consistent to the generally held view that skills, competitiveness and dispositions considered neccesary to leadership including

assertiveness, competitiveness, autonomy and authority inherently lack in females, the finding of the study show that majority 13(54.2%) of the respondents felt that lack of confidence among most women is a great threat to their progression to higher managerial positions.

The data also indicates that 11(45.8%) of the respondents observed that the female administration leaders have little ambition and determination to enable them propel themselves to the top echelon of leadership.  They also turn down appointments due to various obstacles they meet enroot to top managerial positions. The more a person is able to contribute and feel that their contribution is valued, the more they will feel valued as an individual.  The experience of positive feedback will help to increase a person's self-confidence and improve on their motivation (Raburu, 2000).  Women therefore should not just sit back, but should train/learn to be assertive, develop self-confidence and go for the top positions in educational management. Furthermore, 5(20.8%) of respondent believed that the low academic qualification among most women is personal factors that are obstacles to women ascending to top managerial position in education.  More than a quarter 7(29.2%) of the respondents say women lack no role models to emulate given that just very few women are at the top of leadership s was in the study by Raburu (2015).  This agrees with another perception of another group of respondents who felt that the reason for stagnation among the women is their lack of experience.

Table 4 presents the respondents' views on the socio-cultural factors that do not favour promotion of women to top managerial position in education**.**

**Table 4:  Socio-Cultural Factors Not Favoring Promotion of Women as Reported            by Respondents (n = 24)**

| Item | Male (n=15) f (%) | Female (n=9) f (%) | Total (N=24) f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Few opportunities for women. | 2(50.0%) | 2(50.0%) | 4(16.7%) |
| Men are seen as decision makers. | 6(42.9%) | 8(57.1%) | 14(58.3%) |
| Society condemns women to subordinate status. | 9(69.2%) | 4(30.8%) | 13(54.2%) |
| Discrimination against women in the church. | 1(50.0%) | 1(50.0%) | 2(8.3%) |
| Men get social support. | 1(16.7%) | 5(83.3%) | 6(25.0%) |
| World male dominance. | 7(50.0%) | 7(50.0%) | 14(58.3%) |
| Women in authority not recognized. | 1(20.0%) | 4(80.0%) | 5(20.8%) |
| Discrimination against girls' education. | 4(50.0%) | 4(50.0%) | 8(33.3%) |
| Motherhood. | 6(50.0%) | 6(50.0%) | 12(50.0%) |
| Fear of isolation. | 0(0.0%) | 5(100.0%) | 5(20.8%) |
| Women lack social networks. | 2(40.0%) | 3(60.0%) | 5(20.8%) |
| Cultural /traditional values. | 9(60.0%) | 6(40.0%) | 15(62.5%) |

The findings of the study show that there are several socio-cultural factors that do not favor promotion of women to management positions, shown in Table 4. Majority 15(62.5%) of the respondents observed that generally the socio-cultural system are biased against women, the world is largely male dominated. This dominance does not augur well with female employees particularly in regard to promotion to management positions. To support this finding, Lips and Kenner (2007) reported that leadership is viewd as unfeminine so that, when women do arrive in leadership positions, particularly in male dominated areas, they tend to be judged more harshly than their male counterparts. As a result of these barriers, when women in education, regardless of qualification and aspirations, are seen to stay behind the scenes and do work that continues to be overlooked and underpaid.

The 14(58.3%) of the education officers who took part in the study observed that men are normally considered as decision makers, while women are seen as their subordinates. In fact, about a fifth 5(20.8%) of the respondents said that women in authority are not recognized in the equal measure as their male colleagues. Surprisingly, 4(80.0%) of those who advanced this argument were females. This suggests that females feel deficient in themselves. Omokojie (2013) empirically examine the extent to which socio-cultural factors militate against the work performance and advancement of female executives in Nigerian Public Health Institutions. To this effect, a survey was carried out and the sampled population for the study consisted of male and female executives of health and health related Institutions in Benin City, Nigeria. Likert-type (1 - 5 point) questionnaires were administered to 270 respondents, who were systematically and randomly selected and of which 185 were retrieved. The data collected were analysed using descriptive inferential statistics. Research findings show that the work performance of female executives in the institutions surveyed are significantly affected negatively by a number of socio-cultural factors such as biological nature of women, women's role in children's upbringing and extension of cultural practices to workplace. Given the foregoing findings, the researcher recommends the need for concerted efforts by all stakeholders dealing with gender issues to adopt deliberate and systematic gender mainstreaming involving multi-sectoral approach, while the government should demonstrate political will and financial commitment which will ensure the minimization of negative cultural factors militating against the work performance, advancement and upward mobility of female executives in the public health Institutions. The study further supported the view that, the entrenchment of patriarchy makes women react with fear, dependency complexes and attitudes to please where more self-assertive actions are needed. Another finding was that the African man is still steeped in his centuries-old attitudes of patriarchy which he does not wish to abandon because male domination is advantageous to him. Furthermore, patriarchy is one of the major factors of female oppression worldwide. The research having been carried among health workers in Nigeria and not among educational managers fill the gaps to the current study that aims to explore the factors that hinder women from accessing top management positions in educational sector.

From the table it can be observed that more than half 13(54.2%) of the respondents argued that the society condemns women to subordinate status and 4(30.84%) of the women were in that agreement. All these do not favor promotion of women to management positions. Joshi and Bhogayata (2007) conducted open-ended, unstructured, and relatively in-depth interviews with women in Indian university. The participants were engaged to explore and

elaborate their perceptions of the barriers faced by them. The interviews were centered around the 'what', 'why', and 'how' of the perceived barriers of women educational managers. The analysis of the content of the data collected revealed that lack of women's leadership in higher education is due to Indian culture that condemns women to the domestic and family care. This is a similar view that it is true to the claim that African culture condemns women to domestic and family care, which to some extent, has continued to date. The results of this study indicate that significantly big proportion of the respondents observed that cultural and traditional values in our society today still do not favour progression of women in top management positions and of course Kisumu County is not an exception.

Table 5 presents the summary of the respondents' views on the perception on personal attributes enabling women to get top managerial position in education.

**Table 5. Personal Attributes Enabling Women Get Management Position as Reported by Respondents (n = 24)**

| Item | Male (n=15) f (%) | Female (n=9) f (%) | Total (N=24) f (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Administrative skills | 12(57.1%) | 9(42.9%) | 21(87.5%) |
| Eloquence | 2 (50.0%) | 2(50.0%) | 4(16.7%) |
| Assertiveness | 1(33.3%) | 2(66.7%) | 3(12.5%) |
| Diligence | 5(55.6%) | 4(44.4%) | 9(37.5%) |
| Outgoing personality | 10(71.4%) | 5(20.6%) | 14(58.3%) |
| Perseverance | 2(50.0%0 | 2(50.0%) | 4(16.7%) |
| Hard work | 9(60.0%) | 6(40.0%) | 15(62.5%) |
| Commitment to duty | 9(56.3%) | 7(43.7%) | 16(66.7%) |
| Self-confidence | 2 (50.0%) | 2(50.0%) | 4(16.7%) |
| Decisiveness | 1(25.0%) | 3(75.0%) | 4(16.7%) |
| Interpersonal skills | 2(28.6%) | 5(71.4%) | 7(29.2%) |
| Visibility | 3(75.0%) | 1(25.0%) | 4(16.7%) |

The findings of the study indicate that women have a number of personal attribute that enable them get management positions. Administrative skills 21(87.5%) were established to be strongest quality that most women have and enable them be strategically placed above men for management position. Linge, VanRensburg and Sikalie (2010) share the same view that factors that lead to the progression of women managers include mentoring, training and development, career, planning, individual characteristics and hard work.

Hard work 15(62.5%) and total commitment to duty 16(66.7%) were some virtues that were found to be possessed by women that would enable them get management positions. A review of literature has shown that, contrary to the belief that men are better suited for leadership positions and that women are to be lead, several scholars (Madichie, 2009; Hannagam, 2005 and Mordi, 2009) suggest in their studies that women can make effective top executive if the working conditions are devoid of cultural influence and intimidating attitude. Although eloquence 4 (16.7%) as a personal attribute, is equally spread among all gender, but it is not clearly pronounced in females, as a quality that is required for effective management process. Other qualities that were found to be possessed by women include diligence 9(37.5%),

interpersonal skills 7(29.2%) and out-going personality 14(58.3%), among others. A participant responded:

> Women also do not apply for the managerial positions, because they fear being away from their families, as well as facing the challenges of the leadership position. They would rather assist men. (EO2).

It appears that for women, the subtle gender bias that persists in traditional society disrupt the cycle at the heart of becoming a leader. Similarly, Wakahiu and Salvarette (2012) concurred with this view that leadership development is a viable strategy in encouraging women to develop relevant leadership competencies that will allow them participate in decision making policy development in higher hierarchy of leadership. That, it is not enough to identify and instill the right skills and competencies as if in a social vacuum, but that there is the need for corrections that will make the context support a woman's motivation to take up the top leadership roles and also increase the likelihood that others will recognize and encourage her efforts.However, the study findings show that there are some areas that women need to improve in to compete for management positions in education. These areas include; assertiveness 3(12.5%), self-confidence 4(16.75%), perseverance 4(16.7%), decisiveness 4(16.7%) and visibility 4(16.7%). Growe and Montgomery (2010) alluded to this view by arguing that the answer to barriers and obstacles women administrators deal with include mentoring, training and re-training in their professions and the display of competencies and skills.

## Conclusion & Recommendation

The study investigated the socio-cultural attitudes towards women which state that women are best suited for family responsibilities only. Secondly, the gender biases in the society that perceived women as subordinate to men resulting in obstruction of women from progressing to top leadership. It is therefore conclude that both socio-cultural attitude and the gender bias that insubordinate women educational managers are practices that have lost their usefulness in the current age and time. Care should be taken so that such attitude and practices do not obstruct the leadership identity and the development of the entire women population.The Ministry of Education should strive to put in place and effect the policy that will ensure gender equality and equity in the recruitment and promotion of education officers in top management positions irrespective of gender as long as one meets the required qualifications.

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