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Critical Reflection on the Nature of Campus Female Students' Aspiration for Leadership Positions

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Abstract

The nature of aspiration for leadership is a necessary reflector of democracy, equality and equity is any situation. Although leadership in itself has intrinsic and extrinsic benefits to the leader and the led, there are many distractors to attaining it. Much research has been carried out in Western and Asian contexts on male dominance in leadership but less on-campus male dominance as reflected in the nature of female aspiration for leadership. This study sought to explore how the nature of campus female students' leadership aspirations results from the dominant male presence in the context. Using an institution in developing countries and drawing on the semi-structured interviews to access female students' voices on their leadership aspirations, the study finds and concludes that females are internally and externally disadvantaged through complexity, esteem, and strength. The study recommends institutions to formulate policies strategies and practices that promote and foster female integrated cultures; provide appropriate emotional support and mentorship, and develop a leadership framework that closes the gender numeric and financial gap.

Keywords: Leadership, Male Dominance, Female, Campus

Introduction

There is a plethora of literature written by scholars in western and Asian countries which focuses a lot in general terms on male dominance in leadership, as well as male influence on females to participate in leadership. This influence is particularly traced in the family, social, cultural, and religious. This study, in particular, focuses on the male-dominant presence in higher education in developing countries. The assumption is that the dominant male presence at campus influences female students' aspiration for leadership. The significance of this research is that University Management, the office in charge of gender, and the entire staff may benefit through the awareness of the need to instill and encourage female students take up leadership positions. This will be done through encouraging and at times appointing them to assume positions that are socially believed to be in the preserve of males. The study depends on female students' voices to establish how this presence is reflected in a female's nature of aspiration for leadership.

Literature review

Participation in leadership has been described by many scholars as traditionally masculine in attitude and practice (Eagly, Eaton, Rose, Riger & McHugh, 2012). When considering universities and how they operate, scholars have recognized that gender can influence organizational practices, such that images, cultures, interactions, and gender-appropriate behaviours are linked to socially construct masculine or feminine ideals within organizational operations (Britton & Logan, 2008). Heather and Kristen (2017) highlight that masculinities, or behaviours, actions and associations that are most often associated with men are perceived to be superior to femininities, or those behaviours most often associated with women. Patriarchal elements are virtually marginalising female participation in leadership in many spheres of public life (Scott-Samuel, Crawshaw & Oakley, 2015). This has made participation in leadership to remain largely male-dominated, despite substantial female students' progress (Matsa & Miller, 2013). Globally, many renowned scholars have advanced research on the influence of male participation which is used as a yardstick for the female participation in leadership (Galante &Ward, 2017; Heather & Kristen, 2017). Dasgupta and Asgari (2004) noted that some academic environments in male-dominated disciplines like sciences and maths produced an increase in automatic stereotypic beliefs in leadership among female students, thus the effect was mediated by the male course instructor. In other words, females' attitudes and beliefs about leadership are considered depending on the male disposition. Such perspectives about leadership emphasizing traits and behaviours often embodied by men emphasizing hierarchy, competition, individualistic achievement, and power through command and control, may serve to limit females' access to leadership participation (Heather & Kristen, 2017).

On the other hand, Stead (2013) found out that, men who are in leadership appeared to have little if any, detrimental influence on females in regard to their expectations, achievements, and involvement in leadership. This implies that their expectations and aspirations in leadership are less divergent at Higher Education level than at lower levels of education. Patriarchal issues related to female participation in University leadership have attracted a lot of attention from scholars (Banducci, 2010; Burton, 2015; Galante & Ward, 2017; Heather & Kristen, 2017). Scott-Samuel et al. (2015) found out that patriarchal social structure, attitudes, and practices are part of a wider set of social structural determinants of female under-representation in leadership. The female gender under-representation in leadership (Scott-Samuel et al., 2015; Onyango, Enose, Simatwa & Ondigi, 2011) could probably be due to the patriarchal social structures, attitudes, and practices that commonly give rise to these inequalities.

Researchers have found the impact on females participating in leadership with regards to hegemonic masculinity (Bacchi, 2009) and patriarchy (Scott-Samuel et al., 2015), in contributing to negative attitudes and behaviours of females as well as influencing men's beliefs steadfastly maintaining that women are less intelligent than men (Archard, 2012). In Kenya, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men prevail as many people uphold cultural practices which enhance the subordination of women. Consequently, men continue to

dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms (Kasomo, 2012). Such views intensify the gender division by supporting the notion of male dominance, which further solidifies gender disparities in leadership.

Females in traditionally male-dominated environments are expected to behave in a similar fashion as their male counterparts; this expectation becomes more pronounced as they reach leadership positions (Herrera, Duncan, Green & Skaggs, 2012). However, Archard (2012) found that girls, at times, lack confidence in themselves and their ability to enact leadership. Despite their highly competitive nature and educational successes, girls perceive lack of confidence as an important flaw in their capacity to become leaders (Baker, 2010). Recent research reported by Matsa & Miller (2013) uncovered a significant positive relationship between self-confidence and gender masculinity of leader emergence. It is likely that a positive relationship between self-confidence and leader emergence indicates that both attitudes toward leadership and leadership experience are stronger predictors of leader emergence than masculine gender role.

Although aspects of self-confidence are indirectly contained in the masculinity scale (for example, assertiveness, self-reliance, willingness to take a stand), these descriptors do not fully capture the construct of self-confidence (Kolehmainen, Brennan, Filut, Isaac & Carnes, 2014). Self-confidence, the degree of perceived probability of success in leadership (Hyde, 2014), has been linked to gender masculinity (Bryant-Anderson & Roby, 2012; Crites, Dickson & Lorenz, 2015). Hoyt, Johnson, Murphy, and Skinnell (2010) confirmed this when they indicated that self-confidence has a substantial impact on an individual's chances of being perceived as a group's emergent leader. This implies that females need more support building confidence to feel like they can be leaders and the lack of confidence affects an array of other activities tied to ultimately becoming leaders. This is consistent with results reported by other researchers (for example, Anderson, Ahamd, King, Lindsey, Feyre, Ragone & Kim, 2015; Bryant-Anderson & Roby, 2012) showing that situational influences moderate the differences in self-confidence seemingly attributable to biological sex. However, no significant differences in self-confidence between males and females were found when gender role identity was held constant. Despite several studies having linked self-confidence with masculinity leadership (Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad & Gaffney, 2012; Northouse, 2015; Tate & Yang, 2015; Williams, Kilanski & Muller, 2014), there are further indications that females need more support-building-confidence to feel like they can be leaders and lack of it may affect an array of other activities tied to ultimately becoming leaders. Therefore, females who identify with being leaders in school growing up, feel less confident to lead. So focus should specifically be on building their confidence and help them to boost their abilities.

Leadership is a powerful life skill that influences the future of our local, national and global communities (Voelkar, 2016). Apart from acquiring knowledge on how gender and power interact with leadership in HE (Brown, 2011; Morley, 2013; Stead, 2013; Voelkar, 2016), questions are raised about the relentless misrecognition of women's leadership capacities and suggests the need for an expanded chain of leadership with which to move into the University of the Future (Morley, 2013). Despite the many positive and productive changes observed in the leadership opportunities for women and girls, they remain highly under-represented in

positional leadership roles (Bong, Cho, Ahn & Kim, 2012; Morley, 2014; Nicholas & Nicholas, 2014 & Voelkar, 2016). Females' underrepresentation as leaders, in turn, limits their opportunities to advance into formal leadership positions at colleges and universities. It is therefore not surprising that men outnumber women even among newly appointed deans, provosts, and presidents (Hammond, 2015). Stereotypically male characteristics; independence, aggression, competitiveness, rationality, dominance, objectivity, all correlate with current expectations of leadership (Crites et al., 2015). Those expectations, in turn, affect females' and men's self-perceptions.

Female leadership is stereotypically in masculine terms, although some evidence exists that an androgynous leadership style also may be related to perceptions of leadership (Morley, 2014). Leadership was associated with hierarchy and hierarchy was seen as inextricably linked with the patriarchal domination over women. To liberate themselves from patriarchy, women were trying to organize without hierarchy, through collectives and networks. Instead of there being leaders and followers, women would empower themselves by taking responsibility for decisions, which would be reached by consensus (Sawer & Merrindahl, 2014). Traditional beliefs about the male gender role accounted for only a small percentage of the variance of men's influence on females' leadership participation.

Given societal changes in the perceptions of the roles of men and women, it may be that women today, particularly young women leaders, view themselves and are viewed by others as possessing more characteristics that are traditionally, and stereotypically, described as masculine (Wielkiewicz, Fischer, Stelzner, Overland & Sinner, 2012). This view was supported by Schuh, Bark, Quaquebeke, Hossiep, Frieg, and Dick (2013) who concluded that female graduate students in business rate themselves higher in masculinity than in femininity. Similarly, Morley (2014) found that self-perceptions of masculine gender role characteristics would predict individuals who were perceived by others as leaders.

Despite the fact that behaviours traditionally associated with masculine leaders include aggressiveness, ambition, competitiveness, dominance, self-confidence, and individualism, females, however, have maintained femininity behaviours including compassion, affection, helpful, friendly, sympathetic, and caring (Herrera et al., 2012). Studies have been conducted that support these stereotypes in the perceptions of others when gauging female leadership ability (Northouse, 2015). While arguments display various perceptions of masculine versus feminine leadership, it is an important stereotype that can have an influence on the advancement of women in leadership positions. This leads to the various aspects and encountered situations which hinder females due to stereotypes about their abilities to lead (Herrera et al., 2012). In the study by Wielkiewicz et al., (2012), while students of both genders had high expectations but unsophisticated beliefs about their own leadership abilities, men thought significantly more hierarchically about leadership than women did, whereas women preferred more systemic, communal leadership. According to Morley (2014), incoming male and female first-year college students tended to have different beliefs about leadership.

However, not all research has found the association between the male presence and female students' participation in leadership to be particularly strong (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Ghajarieh & Cheng, 2011). In fact, counter to their predictions, Mwisukha and Rintaugu (2013) found that gender, age, and positional status had variant relationships with the factors that cause female participation in leadership. This finding suggests that other factors, perhaps more proximal predictors of female participation in leadership, may better explain this association. Moreover, whereas Mwisukha and Rintaugu (2013) examined gender, age and positional status of the female as a dimensional construct, a substantial literature has presented a set of underlying aspects that influence female participation in leadership.

Although females are still underrepresented in leadership roles, which pose an ethical challenge to society at large (Bong et al., 2011; Hora, 2014; Mwisukha & Rintaugu, 2013; Oguntoyinbo, 2014), specifically it was found that females consistently reported lower power motivation than men. This, in turn, mediated the link between gender and leadership role occupied (Schuh et al., 2014). The leadership development and empowerment of women and girls has become increasingly popular and Voelkar (2016) provides unique opportunities to develop leadership skills for female, including embracing leadership diversity and deconstructing gender stereotyping, building networking and mentorship and encouraging girls to use their voice and exercise leadership skills in order to help physical educators and coaches maximize the leadership development of girls.

The socio-cultural attitudes and lack of acquisition of the necessary experience for taking part in public decision-making, over-burden of domestic responsibilities, continuation of the negative attitudes regarding women's ability to lead and govern, lack of role models of women leaders for young women and girls, and the like can be stated as limiting women participation in leadership (Lang, Szabo, Catana, Konecna & Skalova, 2013). Therefore, there is a complex web of influences, with individual value preferences being a particularly strong predictor of students' participative leadership expectations. Further research on the psychological factors that impinge on women in leadership may be a worthwhile venture (Mwisukha & Rintaugu, 2013). Klofstad, Anderson, and Peters (2012) results show that both men and women select male and female leaders with lower voices. These findings suggest that men and women with lower-pitched voices may be more successful in obtaining positions of leadership. This might also suggest that because women, on average, have higher-pitched voices than men, voice pitch could be a factor that contributes to fewer women holding leadership roles than men. Nevertheless, the determinants of participation in leadership differed among adolescents in different educational courses (Mburu, 2013).

Societal culture practices, as perceived by students, have an additional impact on the leadership ideals. This was echoed in Lang et al., (2013)'s findings that suggested a complex web of influences, with individual value preferences being a particularly strong predictor of students' participation in leadership. Depending on the experiences involved, male role models may shape a young person's emerging ideal of leadership in the participative as well as non-participative direction (Vasavada, 2012). However individual value preferences play an important role in shaping leadership expectations. Early role models may also influence the development of students' leadership ideals (Hora, 2014). This was not different from

Manyibe, and Otiso, (2013) who found that family, church, African cultures, and high school influences, influenced the leadership participation of females during their stay at the campus, and eventually described these factors as inclusive.

In addition to, Beaman, Duflo, Pande, and Topalova (2012) aver that adolescent females' career aspirations and educational attainment influence their participation in leadership. However, as according to Hora (2014) there are also major barriers hindering women from public leadership and decision-making positions. However, the strength of females' leadership lies not in their ability to conform to prevailing masculine stereotypes of leadership, but in women's unique abilities (Vasavada, 2012). Research has also identified how high school experiences significantly influenced females' leadership participation. Nevertheless, Manyibe et al. (2013) revealed that the outstanding performance of the participants in curricular or extracurricular activities gave them an edge that propelled them to leadership roles in high school. Therefore, good academic interaction is one area that one should not forsake in order to embrace any leadership position.

Christofides, Hoy, Milla, and Stengos (2012) relatedly affirmed that parental expectations and peer effects had a significant influence on female leadership participation. Apart from this indirect path, parents and careers also influence female participation in leadership directly (Rajesh & Chandrasekaran, 2014). This implies that policy measures that operate on parental influences may modify leadership outcomes in desired directions. The findings of Morley (2014) and Voelkar (2016) attribute female participation in leadership to the school atmosphere, attitude from the student, social support from the fathers and a sense of coherence (Sealy & Singh, 2009). For instance, Nicholas and Nicholas (2014)'s study indicated that those females whose fathers were so dominant in various aspects of their lives had a lower aspiration for leadership compared to those whose fathers were not dominant in any way. This implies that paternal dominance and involvement in one way has both a positive and negative influence on the female participation in leadership. However, while participation in leadership by students on higher education levels was associated with father's education (Lumpkin, 2008), the leadership of their peers on lower educational levels had a stronger association with mother's education and perceived social support from the father and friends (Mendonça, Cheng, Melo & Junior, 2014; Taylor, Conger, Robins & Widaman, 2015). Moreover, the environment, the family, and the individual adolescent are all associated with the level of participation in leadership, but in a different way for different educational courses. On the contrary, other studies deny social support from the father and friends as not associated with female participation in leadership (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Guta & Mukerem, 2015; Atinaf & Petros, 2016).

Methods

In order to pursue the purpose of this study, we opted to use Makerere University as our contextual case where there are distinct differences in male-female percentage ratios in administration 52.3:47.7; academic staff 73.1:26.9; and students 52.7:47.3 (Makerere University Directorate of Quality Assurance, 2016). We drew on the interpretive paradigm and used focused interviews on four factors that stood out from the above literature, namely;

complexity, self-confidence, numeric advantage and financial ability so as explore campus male influence in female students' participation in leadership. We chose four colleges from the two disciplinary fields; two from sciences (College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT), and College of Health Sciences (CHS)) and two from humanities (College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS), and College of Education and External Studies (CEES)). We interviewed two female students from every college, making a total of eight individual cases. The names herein are pseudonyms. We posed questions on three factors that we developed based on the leadership context and systems within which female students operate. The factors are; complexity, esteem, and strength. These have been highlighted in the introduction as a precursor to the problem, and subsequently reviewed in the literature. The factors enabled us to understand the nature of campus female students' aspiration for leadership positions. After the transcription of data, we categorized responses according to the above three factors. We arranged the voices according to the most commonly given reason to the least. We analyzed the results which we present as findings.

Findings

Complexity

Female students' dependence on males stood out vividly from all the eight participants when they confirmed that without males they couldn't survive on their own. For example, Chantal stated:

> Females feel so timid, and it has incapacitated them to the extent that they can't do anything on their own. … Inferiority complex makes the female students to entirely depend on men, which dehumanizes their ability to participate in leadership.

Participants further claimed that female students had been made to think they are not good enough to participate in most of the top leadership positions. This has influenced the females' inability to participate in leadership. Particularly Felicity intimated:

> Sometimes we are inferior because we think we don't have what it takes to compete with men, and because we think we are not as good as men. All we have to do is to do what we know best and leave the rest to the males. When we are made inferior, we can't do it however much we try, because we are females. Even in the top management of Makerere University, there are very few females. Most are males because they think they can do best.

Relegating females to lower leadership positions was further blamed on males by Rehema that:

> Males have made females think that they don't fit in the society. So you either go for the low positions or leave politics. When they [females] are criticized over the mistakes they do, which mistakes are also done by men but go without

being criticized, it dehumanizes them. Since women fear being criticized, they step aside and give the floor to males.

As a matter of fact, Allen clearly stated, "I fear being criticized, so I can't opt to try out something new because I don't believe that I will be successful." And as for Shakira, "I have all it takes to be the guild president, but I fear to be criticized."

Participants noted that female students had been made to think that they do not have the ability to lead especially in the top leadership positions because, as Carol supplemented, "males can't trust a woman with such a big responsibility because she is a woman, and have a feeling she can't manage."

Esteem
According to seven participants, having low esteem has affected female students' participation in leadership. In support of this Felicity said, "loss of esteem among females is mainly due to the way most boys treat the girls, they make you feel that you can't measure up to them." Nevertheless, as Florence shares, being low esteemed not only diminishes the females' ability to participate in leadership but also incapacitates them:

> The loss of esteem in girls is mainly due to the ways most boys treat them, that's why you see mostly boys are dominant in leadership. For instance, when a girl contests to become a Guild President, during the campaign, these notorious boys … make her do all sorts of despicable things, vulgar language inclusive. … And because in most cases there is always a candidate from their hall they will give all the support to him and then you they will make her feel demoralized that she can't measure up to them. So when girls look at that they feel like they can't go for such a post, they would rather be secretaries in their faculty associations.

Although leadership comes from God, the fact remains that males have more chances than females. They are always uncertain, and they can't come out stronger and feel convinced that they can do it better and win the race. Therefore, this makes the females uncertain. Josephine strongly confirmed this when she said:

> The Guild President is a male we have had very few female presidents. I feel females don't have what it takes, that's why they are never sure of themselves, and another thing: men look at females as if we do not have enough of what it takes to be in this position. But I believe if we were given this chance we would make it, or we could also do better. But males feel more powerful … so the low esteem puts us in a system where we find ourselves in lower positions.

Being low esteemed among the females have brought about noncommittal attitude. Josephine confirmed this when she stated, "this weakness came from the past; it feels like the males are supposed to be the supreme leaders and so females lose commitment to the right cause." This has really affected the female participation in a top leadership position just as Rehama

echoed, "In Makerere University, it is hard to have an unshaken female candidate because there is always a comparison between male and female leadership."

Strength

This was reflected in terms of people and financial. Eight participants said that females always have fewer followers, so the chances are high that they will be disregarded and will earn very few votes. This was confirmed by Josephine when she said:

> Looking at the ratio of 3:1, of course, females are fewer, even standing for such a post, they will be few. Because of their fewer numbers, it will be hard for them to get support from the opposite sex. And of course, voters give respect to those with big crowds. Because people follow crowds, if you have a big crowd, many will vote for you. People want to be very sure that their votes are not put to waste. They will support those who have larger crowds.

It's not enough to be vocal and confident, but also having the assurance of the outcome of one's ventures. Participants shared that females are always unsure of the outcome due to the small numbers of voters supporting them. In her submission, Josephine said, "It's a bit hard for girls to win because they are always doubtful of their voters; the number of those behind the guys is big, and even their support is overwhelming." Similarly, Allen confirmed:

If girls are few in number, definitely they will be outnumbered. They fear what the guys and other people will say. And also because most girls do not go to vote, they are doubtful, and they fear to waste their votes. So it's really hard to convince the guys that even a girl can actually lead them. The male ego the guys have is strong; the girls can't beat that. The dream of winning in leadership calls for more than guts but also for the ability in terms of finance. Participants noted that it was easier for one with money to persist over the entire period of campaigns. Felicity confirmed to this when she noted:

> It is always the males who have got more money to put in leadership, and since they have got those top stages of leadership, the females think that they can't go for the same posts, because the person seeking that post is a male, has a lot of money and capability and that person in that position is a male. So females just believe assume that without money the position will be won by a male, and so all hope is lost.

Relatedly, Carol and Josephine also intimated that males with small businesses could use that to act as a stepping stone to acquire finance to support them during the entire campaigns. For example, Carol said:

> When we are on campus, it is very easy for males to have small businesses that can support them financially, which is totally different for the girls because they usually depend entirely on the parents. It is very hard on campus to find a girl having her own business. It's mainly because guys are very assertive; they can always find a way of surviving. They can even get loans and start

businesses and pay after making some profits which is not so much the case for the girls. And if your parents are not willing to support you, it is a bit hard for a young girl to get other sources to finance her campaigns. Actually, it's hard for a girl to be a gild president because of the lack of finances.

Discussion

Complexity

Leadership is seen as a process of leaders engaging and mobilizing the human needs of followers. Although women are readily recognized as leaders, men always change their own leadership styles, complying women with dependency. This is true because femininity has always been stereotyped as a dependent, submissive and conforming, and hence women have been seen as lacking in leadership qualities (Kellogg Insight, 2013). The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as mere command or control. This seems to be related to patriarchal societies. Female students' dependence on males stood out vividly from all participants, who confirmed that females think that without the males they can't survive on their own. Since females feel they are inferior and fear criticisms, they have remained at the mercy of the males. This has influenced their participation in leadership just like Chantal stated, "This has made the females to feel so timid, and has incapacitated them to the extent that they can't do anything on their own."

Globally, many renowned scholars have advanced research on the influence of male dominance which might be used as a yardstick for the female students' participation in leadership (Galante & Ward, 2017; Heather & Kristen, 2017). Some academic environments in male-dominated disciplines like sciences and maths have produced an increase in automatic stereotypic beliefs in leadership among female students, thus the effect is mediated by the male course instructor (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004) In other words females' attitudes and beliefs about leadership are considered depending on the male disposition. Such perspectives about leadership emphasizing traits and behaviours often embodied by men emphasizing hierarchy, competition, individualistic achievement, and power through command and control, serve to limit females' access to leadership participation (Heather & Kristen, 2017). This has made participation in leadership to remain largely male-dominated, despite substantial female students' progress (Matsa & Miller, 2013). In Kenya, traditional perceptions of women as inferior to men prevail as many people uphold cultural practices which enhance the subordination of women. Consequently, men continue to dominate women in political, economic, social, and religious realms (Kasomo, 2012). Views such as this intensify the gender division by supporting the notion of male dominance, which further solidifies gender disparities in leadership.

Esteem

Females in traditionally male-dominated environments are expected to behave in a similar fashion as their male counterparts. This expectation becomes more pronounced as they reach leadership positions (Herrera et al., 2012). However, girls at times lack self-esteem, and their ability to enact leadership is compromised (Archard, 2012). Despite their highly competitive nature and educational successes, girls perceive lack of esteem as an important flaw in their

capacity to become leaders (Baker, 2010). Recent research has reported a significant positive relationship between self-confidence and gender masculinity of leader emergence (Matsa & Miller, 2013). It is likely that a positive relationship between self-confidence and leader emergence indicates that both attitudes toward leadership and leadership experience are stronger predictors of leader emergence than masculine gender role. Although aspects of self-confidence are indirectly contained in the masculinity scale, these descriptors do not fully capture the construct of self-confidence (Kolehmainen, 2014).

Self-confidence, the degree of perceived probability of success in leadership (Hyde, 2014), has been linked to gender masculinity (Bryant-Anderson & Roby, 2012; Crites et al., 2015). Hoyt et al. (2010) confirm this when they indicate that self-confidence has a substantial impact on an individual's chances of being perceived as a group's emergent leader. This means that females need more support in building esteem to feel like they can be leaders and the lack of it affects an array of other activities tied to ultimately becoming leaders. Despite several studies having linked self-esteem with masculinity leadership (Bligh et al., 2012; Northouse, 2015; Tate & Yang, 2015; Williams et al., 2014), indications show that females need to be supported in building self-esteem in order for them to believe in themselves and participate in leadership, females who identify with being leaders in school growing up, feel less esteemed to lead. Therefore, the focus should specifically be put on building their esteem and help them such that their leadership abilities can be boosted. In the Makerere University environment where the structure is still male-dominated, female's low esteem is interpreted negatively especially regarding leadership matters. Female's low esteem is also reflected in the lower levels of leadership participation (Paustian-Underdahl, Walker & Woehr, 2014). Females have failed to encourage themselves to do certain things better, because they see themselves as being low, dependent on others for everything, having no power to engage in any leadership activity, hence reject the leader identity (Zhao & Jones, 2017). Having low esteem has affected female students' participation in leadership. In support of this Felicity said, "Loss of esteem among females is mainly due to the way most boys treat the girls, they make you feel inferior that you can't measure up to them." Nevertheless, as Florence shares, being timid not only diminishes the females' ability to participate in leadership but also incapacitates thus, "the loss of esteem in girls is mainly due to the ways most boys treat them, that's why you see mostly boys are dominant in leadership."

Strength

Gender stereotypes are especially problematic in contexts where males outnumber females, and males' views predominate in all aspects (Baitinger, 2015; Groch-Begley, 2014; McGee & Martin, 2012). The impact of men's perceptions of women leaders could be substantial and devastating simply because men so far outnumber women in leadership (De Welde, 2017; Frede & Hill, 2014; Solometo & Moss, 2013). Although the proportion of females at Makerere University has increased remarkably within the past few years, females remain vastly underrepresented in some of the Colleges. Participant Josephine confirmed that "looking at the ratio of 3:1, of course, females are fewer, even standing for such a post, they will be few. Because of their fewer numbers, it will be hard for them to get support from the opposite sex. And of course, voters give respect to those with big crowds." It's not enough to

be vocal and confident, but also having the assurance of the outcome of one's ventures. Females are always unsure of the outcome due to the small numbers of supporters.

Conclusion

As equal members of the academic community, female students ought to equitably access opportunities for leadership in higher education institutions. However, the research done in Makerere University paints a different image. Female students' voices allude to the fact that due to male behaviors and actions plus systemic arrangements the feelings of inferiority complex by females are bred. These discourage them from aspiring for leadership positions.

The willingness and ability to lead is a result of one's self-esteem. It is also supported by their proper disposition towards leadership. Female students in many developing countries are disadvantaged by the patriarchal systems and attitudes, social stereotypes, and sexual-related mind-sets. These translate into a loss of esteem and lack of confidence to compete for particular leadership positions due to the thinking that they are reserved for males.

People and money are key external enablers of accessing leadership. In most political interactions in higher education, the contestant needs to have supporters as well as money to sustain their candidature. In the developing countries where the wake to educate the girl child is still recent, there is still less female enrolment to higher education. In the same context where a girl is still perceived as suitable for domestic chores, and not directly involved in money-making interactions, there is a much female financial dependency on males. Low female enrolment at higher education and low involvement in money-making projects also disadvantages the female pursuance of leadership in higher education.

Recommendations

Although Makerere and other institutions may have policies that promote gender equality, it is important not to treat them a reserved for shelves. Implementing them to alleviate any forms of inequality in leadership makes the policies more relevant and beneficial. More policies that curb demeaning male behavior and actions need to be formulated and implemented. In addition, systems that propagate gender imbalance in seeking leadership need to be informed in order to maintain equitable pursuance for leadership. This may help to promote leadership strategies and practices by which female-integrated cultures are created and fostered

The change of mind-sets, stereotypic thinking, and patriarchal attitudes are not an overnight overhaul. More so, confidence begins from within, and the externals simply strengthen or discourage it. Female students must believe in themselves that they can lead. The esteem they maintain from within catches the attention and attracts support from others. In this relation, higher education institutions need to provide appropriate emotional support and mentorship, such that females' self-confidence and independence can be boosted in order to engage in leadership activities. In this relation, encouraging and at times appointing females to assume positions that are socially believed to be in the preserve of males may also be necessary.

There is a steady annual increase in female enrolment on higher education programmes in developing countries. It is as well important that institutions develop a leadership framework that enables to close the numeric gap between males and females which disables female's access to leadership. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on higher education institutions to run entrepreneurial workshops that encourage females to engage in money-making ventures even when undertaking the study. This may help to improve their financial ability to compete with the males equally.

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