

COLLEAGUE'S PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE MANAGERS OF NATIONAL VOCATION TRAINING INSTITUTIONS (NVTIS): A CASE STUDY IN THE EASTERN REGION OF GHANA

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated the perception of instructors of National Vocational Training Institutes (NVTIs) about female managers and stereotypical beliefs and perceptions that affect women participation in leadership in NVTIs in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The population of the study comprises the instructors of ST. Mary Vocational Training Institute Asamankese, Abetefi Vocational Training Institute and Anum Presbyterian Vocational Training Institute in 2016/2017 academic year. This research employed quantitative research approach in the data collection and analyses of responses. Data collected from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies and mean scores. The findings of the study revealed that NVTIs' instructors held the views that female heads do not accept other people views, female heads are less corrupt and are weak in decisions making. They also lack self-confidence in leadership and are not courageous. The study also revealed that stereotypical beliefs and perception affects women participation in leadership roles in NVTIs institutions in the Eastern Region. Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.*

KEYWORDS: gender, leadership, female head, female manager, stereotypical, perception,

INTRODUCTION

Gender gap existed between male and female long ago and United Nations have made considerable efforts to address this phenomenon. Beijing conference of 1985, Education for All, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are some examples of these efforts to

bridge the gender gap and many initiatives (United Nations Organization, 2010; United Nations Development Programme, 2011). Today, both developed and developing nations lack the representation of women in the leadership position as well as educational leadership and Ghana is no exception (Darkwah, 2010; Woodard, 2007). Traditionally, among many cultures in Ghana women are brought up through the stages of life to be home-makers and less respected in the society (Talbot, 2003; Addo-Adeku, 2002). In some cultures, the women's traditional role is to stay at home, care for the children and make sure there is food for the whole family (Ayikue, 2018). From the cultural point of view, men are seen as better suited than women to hold high office. Women on the other hand, are seen as different from men, generally women are reliant on males, obedient and conforming. Ayikue (2018), further contends that this makes women lack the qualities of becoming good leaders or managers in society.

Ayikue, (2018), observes that women are loaded with multiple homemaking and community duties. Roles such as proving care their children, the sick and weak of their family and the community in which they find themselves. Due to their multiple home duties, most women have less time to pursue leadership positions in their environment. Due to the socio-economic standing of most women in Ghana particularly, hinders their educational and employment attainments (Ayikue, 2018). Women have few opportunities to become Managers (Heads) because of high level of educational qualification is required for the leadership positions.

Women found it difficult to fund their education or their wards education especially single mothers. Women do not have access to the control of factors of production such as land, capital etc. (Manwa, 2002). Women in Ghana represent the majority below the poverty line and cannot afford funds to educate themselves to the highest level (Darkwah, 2010). In the National Vocational Training Institutes (NVTI), only few women are appointed as the Centre Managers. The number of women appointed for leadership roles at the National Vocational Training Institutes keeps on dwindling even though advocacy is done to encourage women to aspire for high level position. Out of the 724 employees of the National Vocation Training Institutes in Ghana, thirty-two (33%) are women and only four percent of these women are appointed as Managers (Amponsah, 2016).

In Ghana, women represent about 60% of the total population (Darkwah, 2010). The 2010 Population census indicated that women are the majority, yet there are a greater proportion of men managers in top management position than women, although the women are also qualified academically and professionally (Coleman, 2001). In the NVTIs in Eastern Region of Ghana, women outnumber their male counterpart in the yet they are less represented at the top management positions. In view of this, one is tempted to believe that there are obvious negative gender attitude and discrimination towards the women managers in Ghana. Women represent 50% of the workforce globally and yet the percentage of women managers is still too low in higher positions (Coleman, 2001). However, not much research has been conducted into the stereotypical perception of the NVTI women in educational leadership in Ghana. Hence, this research seeks to explore into barriers,

believes, attitudes and stereotypes toward women managers in NVTI in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

Research Objectives

1. To assess the stereotypical perceptions, and believes that affect women in educational leadership position in NVTI in the Eastern Region?
2. To identify barriers that impede women in educational leadership

Research Questions

1. How do stereotypical perceptions, and believes affect women in educational leadership position in NVTI in the Eastern Region?
2. What barriers impede women in educational leadership position in NVTI in the Eastern Region?

METHODOLOGY

Research design signifies to the totalscheme the researcher employs to collect data to enable him/her answer research questions including the specific data analysis techniques or methods (Creswell, 2012).The researcher, therefore, used a case study as the approach for the research. The study was based on finding out the instructor's perceptions of female managers of NVTI in Ghana. This research employed quantitative research approach in the data collection and analyses of responses.

The population for the study was the staff (instructors) of all the three NVTIs in the Eastern Region of Ghana. This comprises the instructors of ST. Mary Vocational Training Institute Asamankese, Abetefi Vocational Training Institute and Anum Presbyterian Vocational Training Institute in 2016/2017 academic year. Questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather primary data for the study. Stratified and simple probability sampling techniques were used, to sample NVTI 61 instructors out of a total population of 67 NVTI instructors from the three NVTI institutions in the Eastern Region of Ghana.Frequencies and percentages were used to present the data.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The study results indicate that majority 38(63%) of the respondents were male. Twenty-two (37%) of the respondents were also female. This finding thus indicates that there are more male than their female counterparts in the NVTIs institutions. This finding is not strange as male often out-numbered female in most public educational institutions in Ghana.

Moreover, the study findings revealed that the various levels of the educational background of the respondents. Out of the 60 respondents, 9(15%) of the respondents were diploma holder, 28(47%) of the respondents were Higher National Diploma (HND) holders, 20(33%) were degree holders and 3(5%) were master's holders. However, none of the

respondents were holding certificate “A”. The findings therefore revealed that majority of the NVTIs’ instructors are HNDs’ holders. This can be attributed to the fact that study leave with pay is limited to only few subjects in the second cycle institutions in Ghana. Consequently, only few instructors have the opportunity to do their first and second degrees.

The results show that 10(17%) of the respondent agreed that selection of heads of departments is based on academic qualification and experience. Twelve (20%) also confirmed that gender play a role in selection of heads of departments. Professional qualification and age were also rated as 13(21%) and 15(25%) respectively. The finding thus revealed that age, professional qualification and gender are rated as the top three criteria used for selecting heads of departments in NVTIs. This finding contradicts with Yukl (2002) who believed that the best criteria for selecting leaders should be based on experience, professional and academic qualifications.

Stereotypical perceptions, and believes affect women in educational leadership position in NVTI

The study shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the stereotypical beliefs and practices that affect women participation in educational leadership. The responses revealed that majority 50 (83%) of the respondents agreed that women are supposed to differ from men while 10 (17%) disagreed to the statement. This stereotypical belief held by instructors in NVTIs obviously women will shy away from leadership roles. This finding also confirms Baker’s (2003), observation that many organizations have women who are qualified to be promoted to executive positions but will not basically be promoted because they are women.

Also, 48 (80%) of the respondents agreed that women lack self-confidence in leadership while 12 (20%) of the respondents disagreed. Women are often perceived to lack confidence in leadership roles. Thus, female administrators rarely see themselves as experts since they are in an environment where leaders are supposed to be men (Baker, 2003). Furthermore, 45 (75%) of the respondents agreed that men are naturally casted and cultured to be the head at all affairs whilst 15 (25%) of the respondents disagreed. This finding is consistent with Gray (1995), finding that the dominant male culture has projected men to dominate in all aspects of life. Culturally, the perceived characteristics of men is to be more assertive, dominant, aggressive, ambitious, independent and most of the time appear powerful leaders than women (Morris (2004).

Moreover, 41(68%) of the respondents perceived female heads to be less courageous while 19 (32%) of the respondents disagreed. This finding also, confirms the stereotype as factor that affects women in educational leadership. This finding again supports Davidson and Copper (1992), assertion that some women believe that their occupation of higher position is due to luck and not by experience. This then discourages women from vying for leadership roles in many institutions.

Additionally, 40 (67%) of the respondents agreed that women are expected to care for the family and domestic duties while 20 (33%) of the respondents disagreed with that statement. The majority of the respondents were of the view that women are supposed to take care of family and domestic responsibilities alone. This finding supports Addo-Adeku (2002) observation that some employers discriminate against women when appointing officials for leadership roles for the fear that they might become pregnant and go for maternity leave. The finding is also in line with Coleman's (2002) observation that pregnancy poses problems like payment of maternity leave, absence on maternity leave and the fear that the work could be affected by the woman's new family commitments after childbirth. Addo-Adeku believes this sex stereotyping affects women in leadership participation.

Finally, when the respondents were asked to indicate their views on whether men are supposed to protect women in society, 34 (57%) of the respondents agreed while 26 (43%) disagreed to the statement. This finding confirms Van Vianen and Fischer, (2002) observation that women are naturally perceived to be subordinates to men in all aspects of human endeavors.

Divergent opinions were expressed on the statement that a woman is not a breadwinner of the family and are not supposed to be in leadership positions. Thirty representing 50% of the respondents agreed while the remaining 30 (50%) also disagreed. The finding reveals that it is not only men who are bread winners of the family. Thus either a man or woman can be the breadwinner of the family. Contrarily majority 35 (58%) of the respondents disagreed that female heads are inferior to male heads while 25 (42%) of the respondents agreed. Again majority 45 (75%) of the respondents disagreed that women are not expected to hold leadership position while 15 (25%) of the respondents agreed. This finding supports the popular adage that "what men can do, women can do better". Thus women should be given equal opportunities as men to participate in leadership roles (Bass, 2008).

Barriers that impede women participation in leadership roles of NVTIs in the Eastern Region of Ghana

The responses revealed that majority 41 (68) of the respondents' perceived family responsibilities as the number one barrier that impedes women participation in educational leadership. This finding is coherent with Morris (2004) opinion that family responsibilities have notable hamper women's professions as leaders. She stressed that women play multiple home and work roles – a leader and a wife and that behavior will impede their progress in leadership roles regardless of their potentials leadership qualities.

Women's domestic tasks and childcare limits their participation in educational leadership attainment. Forty (66%) of the respondents agreed while 20 (34%) of the respondents disagreed to the statement. This finding confirms Coleman's (2002) observation that gender perception affect women's involvement in leadership roles. This discrimination is often experienced during the selection process. Many employers consider women not to be strong as men to supervise effectively. This finding also confirms Addo-Adeku's (2002) observation that some employers do not like appointing women in some jobs for the fear

that they might become pregnant and go on maternity leave. These discriminatory attitudes are often brings about inaccurate facts about women's capacity for leadership.

Moreover, 39 (65%) of the respondents agreed that unwillingness of women to avail themselves for leadership roles also limit their participation in leadership. Twenty-one (35%) of the respondents however disagreed. Gupton (1998) noted that there are many women who have expert knowledge, skills and charisma to lead but will not simply avail themselves for leadership roles.

Furthermore, 38 (64%) of the respondents agreed that gender bias was a factor that impedes women participation in leadership roles in NVTIs, while 22(36%) of the respondents disagreed. This finding supports Morris' (2004) claim that women are perceived by most society as not forceful unlike their male counterparts and lacks self-confidence required for leadership roles.

Additionally, on the list are negative stereotypes about women in educational leadership. Thirty-six representing (60%) of the respondents endorsed the statement while 24 (40%) of the respondents disagreed. The finding confirms Ayikue's believe that the long standing-history of cultural practices, beliefs and attitudes about females' workplaces their homes hinder their managerial practices of leadership attainment (2018). These stereotypical perceptions affect women participation in most organizations such as the NVTIs in the Eastern region. The respondents also disagreed that occupational segregation was a barrier in women participation in NVTIs leadership roles. Forty-two (70%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement as compared to 18 (30%) of the respondents. This finding also contradicts that of Envick (2008) that occupational segregation impedes women participation in educational leadership.

Lack of self-confidence, competitiveness and fear of failure by women was also identified as a barrier affecting women participation in leadership roles in the NVTIs. This statement was endorsed by 33 respondents representing (55%) as against 27 (45%) of respondents who disagreed with the statement making it seventh on the list. Cubillo and Brown (2003), argue that lack of confidence by women is linked to the fact that women have been influenced by the environment where leaders are expected to be male. Many female heads are convinced that they are not taken seriously by their male colleagues. The few that are in executive positions are often been mistaken for secretaries at business meetings (Morris, 2004). The issue of competitiveness and the fear of failure by some of the participants (women) also limit them from participating in leadership roles. Thirty-five (35) of the respondents representing (58%) agreed to the statement while 25 (42%) disagreed. This confirms Eagly and Carl (2003) findings that many females rarely see themselves as administrators and experts and often show no interest in aspiring for topmost managerial positions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the respondents perceived that a woman is expected to care for the family and perform domestic duties. The findings however, criticized the stereotypical perception that female managers are inferior to that of their male counterparts. The barriers that affected women participation in leadership roles in the NVTIs, were family responsibilities, discrimination against promotion and appointment of women in leadership, negative stereotypes about women in educational leadership, unwillingness of women to avail themselves for leadership roles, lack of competitiveness and fear of failure, gender bias and lack of self-confidence on the part of women.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were suggested to increase women participation in NVTIs' leadership roles in the Eastern Region of Ghana.

1. Traditional beliefs and practices that adversely affect women participation in leadership should at NVTI should be discarded.
2. Females in leadership should support other females to enable them, attain higher success in leadership by providing modeling and mentorship training to the younger generation of women.
3. Female managers of NVTI should also be encouraged to upgrade their knowledge in leadership to enhance their performances.
4. Ghana Education Service should provide in-service exercise and education for women managers of NVTI in order to build their confidence level to enable them to always avail themselves for leadership roles.
5. Gender consciousness initiatives should be provided for the predominant attitudes toward women managers in NVTI.

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