

**EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN  
SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA.**

**By**

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the requirements for the Award of the degree of Master of Education in  
Education Administration and Management**

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**DECLARATION**

I, Dorothy Chibvembe, hereby declare that this dissertation on experiences of women in management positions in the education system is entirely my own work and has not previously been presented by any person for a degree to this university or any other higher institution for any similar academic award.

Signed: ..... Date .....

**APPROVAL**

This dissertation by Dorothy Chibvembe has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Education Management by the University of Zambia.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study sought to explore the experiences of women in management positions, and to examine the hindrances that these women leaders encounter. Using a qualitative strategy and an interpretive case study research design, 35 women in school management positions were purposefully sampled from the research field comprising of 7 secondary schools located in Lusaka District. The Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were utilized as tools to gather data. Findings revealed that women administrators have hidden talents and competencies, as they perform in an ethical manner using different leadership styles. Yet, as shown in the results, women administrators experienced a number of challenges and hurdles that stood in their pathways or occurred when performing their leadership roles. The current study advocates getting rid of unnecessary and harmful prejudices that prevent women from moving up in order to allow them to express their inner potential. Besides, this study suggests a critical way of thinking with a view to promoting women in educational management positions. There is need to empower women not only by bridging the gap that exists between men and women, but also for the welfare of students because every schoolchild, regardless his or her family background has the right to succeed in his or her learning process according to the principle of equity, universally recognized.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this study to my dearest husband, Dr John Musonda and my children, William Johnson Musonda and Asher Musonda for being supportive throughout my study. I also want to dedicate it to my parents for their blessings and support. Above all, I dedicate this document to the almighty God for giving me the inspiration to complete the study.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

This chapter presents a brief background of the study, statement of the problem, aim of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, and significance of the study, theoretical framework and conceptual framework. In addition, key terms will be defined and some of the key issues from a global perspective will be highlighted to give a wider context to the topic under investigation.

### 1.2 Background to the Study

Luinby (2010) as well as Ongaki. Omwoyo and Musa (2015) revealed that women have leadership inspiration, determination and abilities. But their aspirations are dampened by discrimination and the lack of availability of management positions. However, considering patriarchal beliefs and prejudice that women face, their management success is still not well understood. Although numerous women studies have been offered on the importance of women's appointment to decision making, a huge gap continues to be experienced in this field, with the majority of women visibly placed in the lower echelons in the broader (Bahiru, 2018). In Africa, for example, women have made considerable gains in the political, economic and social development of the continent but, despite their efforts, they are still widely marginalized within the corridors of power and decision making (Amina and Ibrahim, 2019).

Bush (2007) states that there is now a steadily growing pool of female administrators in educational leadership positions. This is despite persistent under-representation of females in education as in many other occupations. It is this growing pool of females who have managed to advance into leadership positions whose experiences and perceptions of leadership may be vital to the understanding of leadership from a female perspective. The more school administrators appreciate and value women administrators, the more women may want to lead. Bronars (2015) argued that women are hesitant to move to leadership roles due to competing obligations of family and a pervasive culture of sexism that makes an already difficult and somewhat unappealing role even less desirable for teachers considering an administrative or principal

leadership role. In order for more women to embrace principal opportunities, researchers must produce more scholarship to help women lead more effectively and educate others about the context in which women leaders thrive.

Most recently, the *Zambian Government* recognized the need to promote equitable gender representation at all levels of decision making through affirmative action such as developing criteria for recruitment, appointment and promotion of more women to advisory and decision making positions. In order to address the problem of gender imbalance in decision making positions, the Government adopted the National Gender Policy on 6th March, 2000. One of the goals of the National Gender Policy was to achieve equity in access to decision making positions between females and males at all levels with at least a 30% target share of women representation by the year 2005. This was in line with the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, (Gender in Development Division, 2000). Because of this affirmative action by the *Zambian government* to enhance equity and equality by increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in all sectors including education, women are now found in highly skilled technical, managerial and decision-making positions that were previously meant for men.

Furthermore, despite women holding administrative positions, there is still a large portion of society that believes that women cannot be leaders because they believe their presence in an organization's work force lowers professionalism and performance standards (Banda, 2002). Globally, researchers have focused on the topic of women in educational leadership and barriers to their potential achievement of effective leadership at various levels (Shepard, 1999; Celikten, 2005; Sperandio & Kagonda, 2010; United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2011). Managers are faced with challenges ranging from gender discrimination to discipline issues amongst pupils and staff among others in the execution of their administrative duties, (Sperandio & Kagonda, 2010). Both males and female managers may face these challenges. However, there are some challenges that are unique to the women folk. For instance, Celikten (2005) in a study in Turkey on principal leadership and gender found out that those female leaders often faced with societal demands and traditions that men do not; these include discrimination, stereotyping, family demands and prejudice among other challenges. Similarly, Shepard (1999) in Lincoln in the US at the Annual Meeting of Women in Educational Leadership presented a paper, which outlined the barriers to effective management and continued

enhancement for females. The barriers included negative attitudes, socialization patterns, levels of aspiration, lack of support and mobility.

Negative stereotypes about women make people judge female school administrators lowly as compared to their male counterparts in terms of school management effectiveness. Chonya (2012) in her comparative study of effectiveness of female school head teachers with their male counterparts in case of Lusaka province of Zambia found out that stakeholders such as teachers, pupils and parents perceive male head teachers more favorably than female head teachers. Among the reasons for favoring males were that male administrators were believed to be cool and level headed; had less domestic complaints/excuses and were understanding.

A study by Brian, Ryan and Haslan (2007) done in South Africa also revealed that gender dynamics when it comes to the reference of male and female principals established that male principals are rated higher than females when it comes to effectiveness. Similarly, in his study Carson (2001) found out that male principals were readily accepted, given respect and believed to be intellectually credible while female principals had to work extra hard to prove their credibility before being accepted by the society. On the contrary, in reality, some studies done in Zambia revealed that female head teachers were more effective in management of schools as compared to their male counterparts (Muchelemba, 2004; Mwanza, 2004; Chonya, 2006; Halyoonda, 2008).

Crawford (2009) reports that almost all educational reform reports have come to the conclusion that no nation can attain excellence in education without effective school leadership but this does not mean that only males make effective leaders, as Gupton and Slick (1996:134) state:

In any school environment, there should be an appreciation and respect for the qualities, skills and expertise that the individual, be it male or female leader brings. They further state that masculine characteristics, female characteristics and neutral characteristics combined with effective leadership interaction give a new perspective, one of androgyny, where performance is judged according to its rightness for that situation and not judged according to gender.

Nevertheless, the full participation of women in management of education institutions is critical both for wise decision-making and for numerous other financial, organizational culture, and

relational reasons, as articulated by Madsen in a synthesis of the literature titled: “Why Do We Need More women in Leadership of Higher Education?” (Madsen, 2015). Interestingly, a key finding of the international research project of Gerzema and D’Antonio that involved 64,000 participants was the significant level of agreement by adult respondents (66%) and by male respondents (65%) with the statement: “The world would be a better place if men thought more like women” (Gerzema and D’Antonio 2013, p. 8). While working toward that goal, increasing the visibility and engagement of women in education leadership and management also merits urgent focused attention and energy.

Furthermore, gender issues, stereotypical perceptions and discrimination bring about problematic situations in educational spheres and remain a controversial subject along with women administration. Despite a number of efforts made by the authorities in recent years to empower women, men are still largely privileged to lead most educational institutions. Indeed, in Zambian societies, women are generally confined to the lower positions in educational work settings. Sociocultural heritage and organizational barriers are some of the factors that maintain women in inferior steps and affect their management potential (Moreau, 2014). This is obviously not conducive to gender equality. In the Zambian context, the dominant traditional ideology related to patriarchal culture, which is profoundly entrenched amongst the individuals, presupposes subordination of women, often together with the exclusion of the public sphere and in particular, the educational settings. The stereotyping perceptions often led many women to lack confidence. However, women themselves are building a perception that they sometimes are afraid to engage in public or private activities because of the social norms and cultural beliefs (Andela, Escandon, Garlo & Kamungi (2008). Yet, academic studies have found that women would be worthy administrators, which may help to address in some persistent issues in Zambian secondary schools, and indirectly contribute to schools’ advancement. Thus, the researcher intended to investigate the experiences of women in management position in selected secondary schools of Lusaka district.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the stride taken by the Zambian Government towards appointing more women into leadership positions through the National Gender Policy (NGP), women continue to experience challenges in dispensing their management responsibilities (Davidson and Burke, 2016). For

instance, considering the patriarchal nature of most societies and households most women experience double workload (being responsible for domestic duties despite joining the formal work force (Bush & Coleman, 2009).

Women's participation in management may likely have an impact on their social and personal lives and in turn may affect how they perform. If these challenges are not addressed the management performance of female administrators may be negatively affected. This may in turn affect the performance of the stakeholders in the school. Although more females in secondary schools are being promoted to senior management positions, they are still proportionately fewer than males and their progression through the ranks is not an easy one (Bush & Coleman, 2009). Eagly and Carli (2007) points out that despite expanding opportunities, it is rare to find females in very high positions and those that have managed to get into leadership positions receive a huge amount of media attention.

However, despite this under-representation, it is noteworthy that some females have managed to break the so-called “glass ceiling” and “attain educational leadership” (Shakeshaft, 1987:21). However, very few studies have documented the experiences of these females holding leadership and management positions in schools. Hence, this study seeks to investigate the experiences of women in management positions in selected secondary schools of Lusaka district. This may provide knowledge to upcoming females who might be appointed in such positions as learning points.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The aim of this study was to establish the experiences of women in school administrative positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district and to suggest ways of maximizing women's potential in their leadership abilities.

## **1.5 Research Objectives**

- i. To identify organizational factors that affect women in management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district.
- ii. To determine personal factors that affect women in management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.
- iii. To investigate strategies and mechanism the school has employed to support women to participate in management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.
- iv. To propose strategies that can be put in place to promote female teachers' participation in school management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

- i. What are the organizational factors that affect women in management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district?
- ii. What personal factors affect women in management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District?
- iii. How effective are the strategies and mechanisms the school employed to support women to participate in management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District?
- iv. What strategies can be put in place to promote female teacher's participation in school management positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District?

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The study is significant in that its findings may be useful to all school managers, administrators, human resource managers and the teaching service commission in Zambia as it brings to their attention the experiences of women in management positions. It is hoped that the Ministry of Education would use this study to improve opportunities for more women to become school administrators.

## **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

A theoretical framework is an outline of concepts and information that one desires to bear in mind to make sense of what one perceives considerable (Thomas, Serenje-Chipindi, & Chipindi, 2020). On the other hand, a theoretical framework is a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships (Eisenhart, 1991). Sorensen & Razavieh, (2010), defines a theory as “a set of interrelated statements, principles and propositions that specify the relationships among variables” (p.45). A theory explains the relationship between variables in the quantitative study while serving as a lens for qualitative researches (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, this study focused on two theories related to the data that were collected namely; liberal feminism and Gender Organization System (GOS) approach. These theories are presented below.

### **1.8.1 Liberal Feminism**

Liberal feminism can be traced back to the struggles over job and wage differences between women and men in the USA in the 19th and 20th centuries (Lorber, 2001). The theory questions the viewpoint’s damaging and discriminating issues concerning women and hence demands equal opportunities through legal reforms and more women in decision making (Enyew and Mihrete, 2018). The theory aims to involve women in leadership, overcome the glass ceiling to senior leadership positions and demonstrate how much society discriminates against women (Lorber, 2010). That is to say, the theory demands equal opportunities for both men and women (Baehr, 2017). The theory maintains that women are oppressed because of their sex (Baehr, 2007). Liberal feminism claims that biological differences should be ignored in order to achieve gender equality. People should be treated in accordance with their talents and determination, rather than based on their biological differences (Mascarenhas, 2007). The theory holds that women’s mental ability is equal to that of men, and hence they should have the same rights in the political, economic and social sphere (Lorber, 2001). It points out that the socialization of women and men supports patriarchy and keeps men in power, which leads to oppression, discrimination and inequality in society (Lorber, 2001).

Sharing this view, Lorber (2001) asserts that women are limited by the organizational glass ceiling, as appointment and promotion systems still produce workplaces where men hold most of

the top positions. Enyew and Mihrete, (2018), adds that women are under-represented in educational leadership because of the bias against them in recruitment and promotion. Similarly, leadership positions with better pay, command and authority are given to men (Lorber, 2001). Lorber (2001, p. 27) further reports that liberal feminism also explains the persistence of the gender separation of jobs (“females work with females and males work with males”) and the gender stratification of organizational hierarchies (at the top are males). Patriarchy is a worldwide system of male control demonstrated through sexual exploitation and violence and, as a consequence, women are in a subordinate position in all societies (Lorber, 2001).

Liberal feminism originated in the USA but it is still applicable in Africa. According to Mannathoko (1992, p. 72), “it is a misconception to view feminism as a western ideology which reflects western culture simply, because feminists theories, just like other theories, have been influenced by external pressure resulting from colonization and imperialism”. She argues that feminism has its roots in the African condition, as women in Africa have been aware of their prevailing oppressive gender relations and have challenged this situation throughout history. Therefore, the assumptions of feminist theory, like liberal feminist theory, are still applicable in Zambian society today.

Liberal feminist theory was adopted in this study because it helped to explain the issues that damage women and discriminate against them in terms of their participation in management positions, resulting in the demand for gender equality in CSSs so that they may be involved in leadership roles, thereby discouraging discrimination on the basis of biological differences. Different studies conducted in different countries show that men dominate leadership positions and that there is cultural dominance at school, which has resulted in the exclusion of women from the decision-making arena (Bhalalusesa & Mboya, 2003). The theory was used to analyze gender equality in leadership positions in Zambia. The study assumes that, among other factors, women are discriminated against in terms of obtaining senior management posts because of their sex rather than their ability and determination. Based on the theory, the study examined how society’s perception based on sex leads to the unequal acquisition of headship by men and women in the targeted schools, and how women are treated in schools.

Nevertheless, liberal feminism “has been less successful in fighting the informal processes of discrimination and exclusion that have produced the glass-ceiling that so many women face in their career advancement” (Lorber, 2010, p. 35). That is, the theory fails to address the invisible or hidden gender discrimination emanating from societal values, norms, beliefs, attitudes and stereotypes, and those that are within the women themselves that discriminate against them in terms of their participation in different opportunities; this is not formally stated.

On the other hand, liberal feminist theory “does not challenge patriarchy or any other fundamental structures of society, but rather looks for the removal of barriers that prevent women operating effectively in the public sphere on equal terms with men” (Welch, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, liberal feminist theory lacks the internal (personal) and patriarchy-oriented factors that hinder women from reaching the top, and thus the GOS approach fills this gap. Despite these weaknesses inherent in liberal feminist theory, its strengths identified above are vital for gaining an understanding of female experience in school administration in secondary school senior management. This study therefore combines the strengths of liberal feminist theory with the GOS approach to gain a full understanding of the experiences of women in management positions, thereby complementing its weaknesses.

### **1.8.2 Gender Organization System (GOS) Approach**

The GOS approach presents a holistic approach to the study’s issues concerning women’s management experience (Fagenson, 1990b). This approach proposes that women’s actions and capacity to be involved in top management are influenced by the interaction of individuals, society and the institutional system in which the organization operates. Rowley and Yukongdi (2009), hold that this interaction may lead to the under-representation of women in management positions in organizations. That is, it assumes that the presence of a few women in management is caused by both organizational and individual factors.

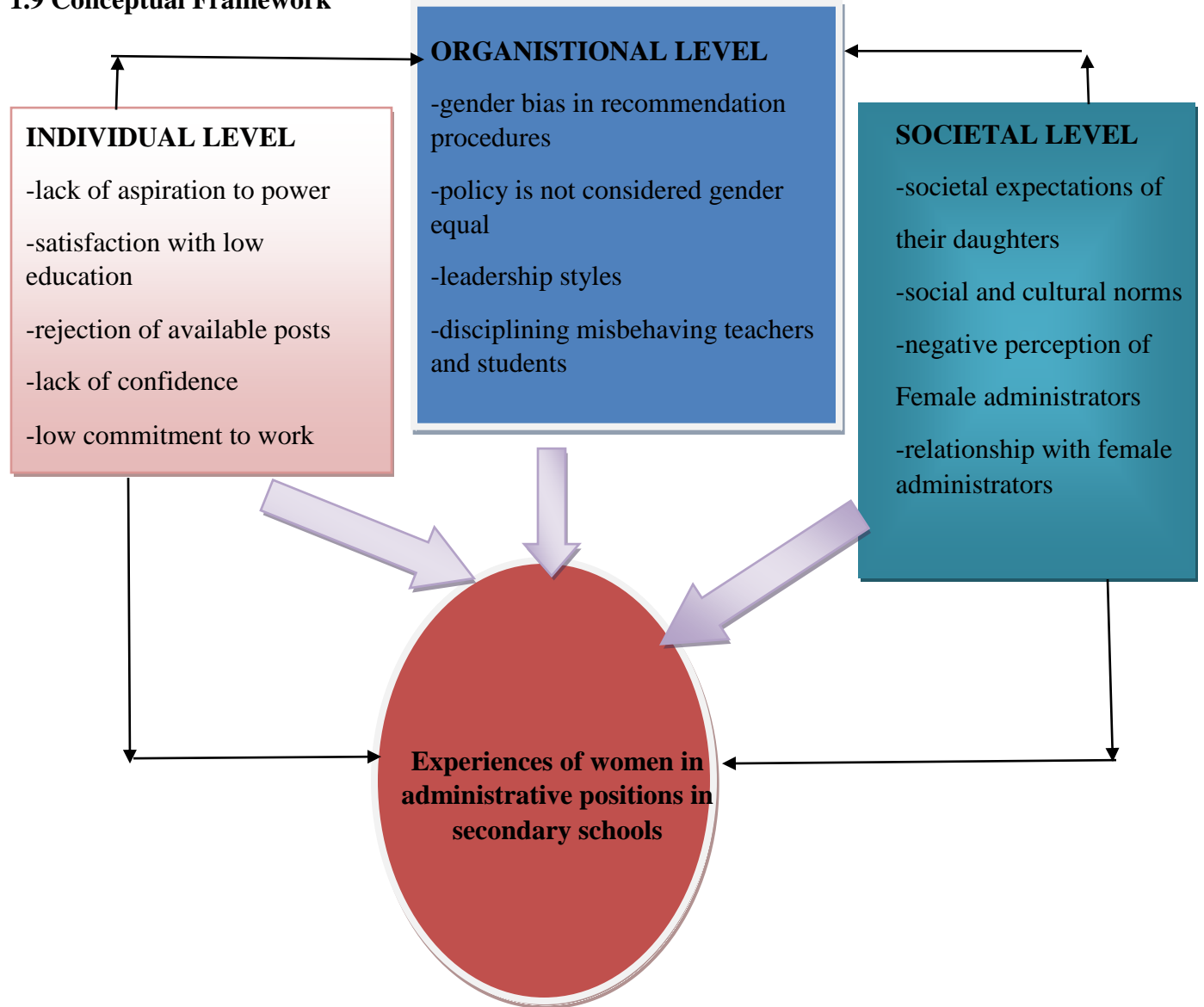
This approach integrates the assumptions and arguments of the gender-centred and organizational structure perspectives (Richard, Triana, and Zhang, 2022). It also argues that “an individual and his or her organization cannot be understood separate from the society (culture) in which he or she works. When the individual, the organization and the system in which they are embedded change, the other components change as well” (Martin and Ruble, 2010).

Furthermore, in order to understand inequality in an organization, it is important to discover how men and women differ in their experience, how women are discriminated against in organizations, and how the system/society discriminates against and treats women (Fagenson, 1990a). That is to say, women's behavior in an organization is a result of both gender and organizational structure. The GOS approach is the most useful theoretical framework for women in leadership research (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013).

Another line of thought shows that societies describe the appropriate roles and behaviors expected of men and women (Martin and Ruble, 2010). These beliefs, gender role expectations and stereotypes concerning the role of men and women, as well as cultural values, may affect structures, institutional practice, and women's behavior at work (Richard, 2022). That is, some societies either encourage or discourage women from entering certain careers and developing aspirations relevant to management. Moreover, based on this study, most staff and leaders who make recommendations for management positions may be socialized to give females subordinate ranks and to make them obedient listeners. With these attitudes and perceptions at work, there might be a greater probability of promoting more men than women to management positions. This perspective believes that women experience in top management positions in secondary schools because of individual and societal stereotypes and expectations, as well as cultural and organizational practices (Rowley &Yukongdi, 2009).

Generally, the GOS approach assumes that the interaction between gender, organizations and social systems is a continuous process (Martin, 2010). With regard to the application of the GOS approach to the present study, it informs the study on how individual, organizational and societal factors affect women from participating in management in secondary schools in Zambia. In this way it helps the study to examine, among other things how the socialization of women affects their career advancement and leadership aspirations. The approach helps to explain and understand female teachers' behavior at work, their level of confidence and commitment to work, and their priorities with regard to work and family. It helps to assess how the expectations and perceptions of society, individuals and organizations influence female teachers' participation in management. At the organizational level it helps to explain the policies used in promotion and organizational procedures for recommending and appointing heads of school

## 1.9 Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Experiences of Women in Management Positions**

Focusing on the concept of power relations, Brunner (2005) presents theorists' binary interpretations highly influenced by the strong indicator of gender. Weber (1924) conceptualizes power as dominance, authority and control over things or people while Harstock (1987) pinpoints that power in social-control or else "power-over" is a male preoccupation falling within the gender construction of man. Connell (2002) lately analyses power as being held by male "gatekeepers" who exert their power favoring other men and undermining women (Coleman, 2011). However, post-structuralist feminists view power in the discourse or as the

modern philosopher Hannah Arendt (1972) mentions it as “power-with”, i.e. the capacity to communicate and interact with people. This type of power is gendered as feminine and is applied in a different way than the one from men. Miller (1993) argues that women implement their power not competitively but they focus on solving problems, benefiting others and empowering them through the role of mothers and teachers (Brunner, 2005). In other words, the nature of the concept of power is gendered; power-over appears inseparably interrelated with male’s identity, whereas power-with a feminine characteristic.

However, a review of the empirical literature and literature based on theories of women and educational management informed the study in developing a conceptual framework to guide the tracing of the issues influencing women’s participation and experience in secondary school senior management in Zambia. That is, from the insights of the theories and the literature review, the researcher developed a framework for the phenomenon, as summarized in Figure 1 above.

The conceptual framework summarizes the assumed issues of female experiences in secondary school senior management positions. The framework shows that there is a causal interaction between individual, organizational and societal levels influencing women’s experiences in leadership positions. It is conceptualized that these levels are interdependent and may influence female in management, as indicated in Figure 1. Therefore, this framework informs the present study by scrutinizing these general tenets of the theory to determine which ones (among them) are applicable as far as women experiences in secondary school senior management in Zambia is concerned.

### **1.10 Delimitation of the Study**

This study on experiences of women in management positions in the education system was conducted in Lusaka district a subset of districts in Zambia and this may limit the inferences that can be drawn from this study as they might apply to all public schools. The study sampled female head teachers, female deputy head teachers, and female heads of department as well as female guidance teachers in the aforementioned district of Lusaka province.

### **1.11 Operation Definitions.**

**Gender roles:** are duties and responsibilities which are considered by the society to be appropriate for men and women.

**Gender gap:** Disparity in attainment of senior administrative positions in educational management.

**Gender:** socially accepted attributes of an individual related to his or her sex. It is differentiation in any context and treated as such. In this study it refers to social relationship between men and women, allocation of roles, responsibilities, rights and women obligations in the education system.

**Administration:** is the process of creating conditions which people perform work and achieve set objectives.

**Practitioner career:** these are middle level jobs where one can work comfortable and combine paid and unpaid family work and avoid promotions.

**Public schools:** these are government established schools that are open to all citizens who meet certain requirements.

**Promotion:** been elevated or appointed to a higher position.

**Teacher:** anyone with a teaching background who has a contract of employment with Ministry of general education.

**Self-perception:** this is ones' view of self in terms of strengths and weaknesses.

**Sex role stereotypes:** behavior classification along sexual lines where they are considered acceptable to men and women.

**Gender mainstreaming:** Involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goals of gender equality are central to all activities.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter reviews the relevant literature relating to the research topic. It focuses on empirical studies on experiences of women in management positions in the education system. The chapter presents what is already known about female experiences in school management in order to identify the existing research gap that gave rise to the need for this study. The rationale for focusing on this literature is because it addresses the issue of women experiences in leadership in different contexts, as well as ascertains the participation of females in decision making in different countries. Therefore, the knowledge obtained from this literature sheds light on this study, which is on experiences of women in management positions in the education system in selected secondary schools in Zambia.

#### **2.2 Organizational Factors that Affect Female School Administrators**

The organizational factors discussed in this section are gender bias in appointments and promotion, policy factors, stereotypes at the organizational level, the lack of school management role models and mentors, the lack of support and encouragement, and sexual harassment.

##### **2.2.1 Gender Bias in Appointments and Promotion**

Since its inception in the late 20th century, research on women in educational management has evolved. In the beginning, researchers, notably female researchers, examined the challenges particular to female leaders (Smulyan, 2000). The challenges women must overcome or mediate in order to achieve positions of management have been a thread running throughout scholarly research and they remain as relevant today as they did in the 1970s. Researchers notes the under-representation of women in leadership, power, and decision- making positions in the education system. Despite gains made regarding the inclusion of women in management, they continue to be under-represented, particularly in senior management positions in African education institutions (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017; Moodly and Toni 2017; Odhiambo 2011). Cultural norms and the persistent nature of gender inequalities within institutions exacerbate the problem of under-representation (Johnson 2014 and Odhiambo 2011). Despite the fact that at the end of

colonial rule, African schools continue to be plagued by colonial vestiges, neo-colonialism, and patriarchal norms, the effect of which is perhaps most evident in the biasness in the appointments and promotion of women in management positions (Odhiambo 2011 and Okeke- Ihejirika 2017).

Subtle discrimination, bias, and stereotyping of women affect the inclusion of women in management positions in all sectors of society, including the teaching fraternity (Kele and Pietersen 2015; Odhiambo 2011). This results in women having to work twice as hard to prove themselves and to be recognized and respected (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017). Participants in Johnson's (2014) study, for instance, noted the role that hard work and diligence played in becoming successful and earning respect and recognition from both male and female colleagues as leaders (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017).

To gain insight into the disparate number of women top educational leaders, Kim and Brunner (2009) researched the career paths to top school leadership. Using the Glass et al. (2000) American Association of School Administrators (AASA) data in addition to the Brunner and Grogan (2007) data, Kim and Brunner (2009) confirmed that the pathways to the superintendence were very different for men and women. Men tended to move up the leadership ladder vertically and quickly, while women tended to hold secondary support staff roles, took longer to rise in leadership, and followed a lateral path through central office staff positions. These researchers described the typical superintendent a male, former secondary school principal, who held a vice principal position, coached an athletic sport, taught for an average of seven years, and began his administrative career when he was thirty years old or younger.

Lee et al. (1993) studied power structures in secondary schools and observed that the infrequency of women leaders created female motivational problems. As a result, even highly qualified women had less confidence and believed that pursuing positions in leadership was futile. According to researchers, elementary teachers have the least chance to rise into top educational leadership (Glass, 2000, Kim & Brunner, 2009), and Feistritz et al. (2011) found that fewer elementary teachers aspired to leadership. Mabokela's (2003, p. 129) study of six female administrators at universities in South Africa also highlighted "donkeys of the university"

as a common theme in the women's experiences, as they often expected to work hard but were not recognized; rather their effort is met with resistance (Mabokela and Mawila 2004).

The problem of gender bias and stereotyping provides one explanation for the lack of women's participation in decision-making roles and ensures the exclusion and under-representation of women in leadership both within and outside education. In these settings, it is very difficult for a woman to recover from a mistake as bias and stereotypes often lead to criticism and resistance from male and female colleagues (Johnson and Thomas 2012). This is because they internalize the normalization of male power and readily accept men in management positions and is linked to the Pull Her Down (PHD) syndrome highlighted in the literature, where there is a general lack of support from female and male colleagues (Shober 2014).

Cuberes and Teignier (2012) suggest that companies with gender imbalance are lack of innovations, from their employees. That is because having a majority of gender at a company is like promoting the same kind of thinking at the company. For instance, if the majority of the employees at a company are men, then the majority of the ideas will be originating from men. Consequently, the ideas from females will be overshadowed a situation which results in the limited kind of thinking or solving problems. Besides, Tzannatos (2016) argues that this is worsened by the principles of democracy where only the ideas of the majority are being considered. For instance, if the majority of the men do not recognize the need to give a bed rest to females who are experiencing menstrual pains and other problems, then such initiatives cannot come into existence.

However, the World Bank (2015) claims that this situation, can be avoided if the females are given the same level of empowerment in many organizations. That is because females would be able to continue providing the basic needs of the family without resorting to street vending or other illicit activities that disturb the peace of most family members.

In addition, Davidson and Burke (2016) stated that structural barriers to female advancement in organizations have their roots in the fact that most organizations have been created by and for males and are based on male experiences of management, which leads to the existence of a

particular form of masculinity in organizational management. Amondi (2011) declares that management values in society have been formulated by males to favor males over females. A case in point is that many organizations still define the competence of an administrator in terms of traits that are associated with males, such as the availability to work all the time, strength and firmness (Davidson and Burke, 2016). Mulkeen, Chapman, DeJaeghere and Leu (2007), in their study in five African countries, found that there is favoritism in the appointment of heads of schools at both district and regional level. This is supported by Gaus (2011), who reported that female under-representation in leadership is due to recruitment procedures dictated by corruption, ethnicity, nepotism and discrimination. In relation to this, Onsongo (2004) observed that qualified women were not appointed to top management positions in Kenya due to gender bias, nepotism, ethnicity and political affiliation, among others.

### **2.2.2 Policy Obstacles**

Recruitment policies and promotion policies which appear to be neutral are inherently raced and gendered (Odhiambo 2011). For example, recruitment calls which often request that applicants have degrees and in, severe cases, degrees obtained no more than 5 years before the application do not take into consideration the effect of educational access, sociocultural factors, and family responsibilities in preventing women from attaining their degrees (Odhiambo 2011). Mabokela and Mlambo (2017) argue that within these contexts, the inability of schools to recognize and acknowledge diversity and difference, instead of forcing their acculturation, may affect the retention of women academics and administrations.

Marginalization, tokenism, and isolation are some of the highlighted as commonalities in the experiences of women administrators in education within and outside Africa. These studies note that, because women are usually the first to enter into management positions, they are often isolated, hyper-visible, and subject to gendered stereotypes (Shober 2014). While some studies (see for instance Johnson 2014; Johnson and Thomas 2012; Odejide 2003) support the assertion of isolation and pressure to prove, only a few discuss the issue of tokenism (Mabokela 2003; Moultrie and De La Rey 2003).

This may be because some African women in management positions do not see themselves as tokens (Alakija 2010; Mabokela and Mlambo 2017). Mabokela and Mlambo (2017), however,

argue that while this may be the case, the fact that they are the first and sometimes only women in that position puts them in the spotlight and makes it difficult for them to have private lives. Isolation may also reveal itself in the area of research where emerging female researchers and academics do not have colleagues who share their research interests and can provide mentoring and support (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017). Such support and mentorship, Mabokela and Mlambo (2017) note, is critical to the inclusion of women in management positions. The problem of isolation results in women missing critical opportunities in their career development (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017; Shober 2014).

Gender disparities within education systems and management are a policy concern in most countries (Shober 2014). Coleman (1994) argues that, despite extensive research having been done on gender disparity in education in various countries, education policies in those countries still do not adequately reflect gender concerns. In relation to policy, organizational barriers to female progression to senior positions take the form of rules, laws and practice (Morley, 2006). In other words, informal rules and regulations give men a better chance of promotion than their female counterparts (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017).

Bond (1996) maintains that structural factors in the inclusion of women in management include, among others, discriminatory appointment and promotion practices, male resistance to women in management positions, the absence of policies and legislation to ensure the participation of women, and limited opportunities for women to acquire leadership training and demonstrate competence. Bond, therefore, calls for fundamental changes to eliminate inappropriate discrimination in institutional policies and practice. Furthermore, Kamau (2001) found that female teachers are few in management because of the lack of policy and practice to encourage females to aspire for the posts. Ruijs (1993, p. 571) reported that “rules and regulations are made by men, for men: promotion and selection procedures are geared to the stereotypical male image of a leader”.

The Zambian Educational Policy lacks a gender policy that insists on equality in the promotion of teachers to headship in secondary schools (MOE, 1996). The lack of a gender policy in the educational system as in Zambia may put women at a disadvantage in terms of being promoted to management positions because of the male-dominated culture. In her study in Kenya,

Onsongo (2004) suggests the need for having equal opportunity policies to ensure equality that will be gender responsive.

While institutions have put policies in place to attain equality, they are unable to implement these policies. Schools' policy commitments to gender equality and the expectation of adhering to socio-cultural, reproductive, academic, and administrative duties undermines the realization of equity and equality policies within schools in Africa. This is a significant issue and explains the persistence of difficult experiences highlighted in the literature.

The process of implementation is essential to ensuring equitable institutional cultures and climates (Moodly and Toni 2017). While some studies have shown that women have agency even in oppressive contexts and have also highlighted some of the individual strategies women employ to foster inclusion of, support for, and promotion of other women into management (Johnson 2014; Johnson and Thomas 2012; Okeke- Ihejirika 2017), little is said about the institutional and structural strategies being employed by institutions to ensure that women are not only included in management but that a favorable climate and culture is created for marginalized groups within these institutions.

The literature on institutional strategies has been prescriptive, detailing measures that institutions can implement to ensure equality. There seems to be a problem with transference and dissemination of the findings and strategies to key stakeholders within African education institutions and countries. While this is important, what is needed now is for academics and researchers to develop means through which research findings can be distilled, made accessible, and disseminated to stakeholders (such as equity officials), government officials, and nonacademic individuals. This can be done by making short videos summarizing the research findings and publishing them on nonacademic platforms, for easy access and understanding. This can create a lever for change both within and outside schools.

### **2.2.3 Stereotypes at the Organizational Level**

The institutionalized sexism in **African** schools remains the major barrier to women rising in educational management. It need not be expressed in ugly words; sexist cultures need simply to be sustained in daily practice. Those invisible beliefs and understandings of what women can and cannot do in educational management are what really hold us back. Selection or promotion

meetings are reasonably decent, formal procedures are followed, and there is the profession of faith in the printed rule. However, in reality, a complex of practices works together to exclude women in favour of men, even when the latter group is mediocre in terms of scholarly achievement or managerial standing (Jansen 2014).

There is a plethora of empirical evidence, both nationally and internationally that suggests that women face a myriad of challenges in educational institutions (Coleman, et al, 2006; Mnisi, 2015; Moorosi, 2010). These studies demonstrate that women who ascend to positions of management face a number of challenges (Sperandio & Kagoda 2010; Coleman, 2012; & Robinson et al, 2017). Amongst others, these stereotypes include the following: men are meant to lead and women to follow, men work well under pressure and are stronger, men are more reliable and more intelligent than women, men work harder than women, men should always be respected by women, that women who assert themselves do not get married, that women's special place is in the kitchen, that to be assertive is to be unfeminine, that successful women end up in divorce and that the family suffers if the women concentrate on their careers (Chen et al, 2012; Chisholm, 2017; Mnisi, 2015).

As proposed by Ljungholm (2016, p.270) “organizations are gender-blind, being intrinsically and culturally masculine.” This statement is linked to explanations of the Gender Diagnosticity Approach formulated by Lippa (2001), who argues that masculinity is a characteristic preferred in organizations. Thus, it appears that stereotypes surrounding women and their capacity to perform in an organizational setting are not changing over time, as society maintains a preference for male leaders. Some of the ways in which power inequality can be maintained include; the use of violence against women; restrictions on women's activities and gender stereotyping that presents women's unequal place in society as ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ (Mboni & Gruru, 2021).

According to Sandison (2008) observed that appointing committees mostly rely on organizational and stereotypical management images). Senior positions and appointment committees are dominated by men (Gaus, 2011). Likewise, Ruijs (1993) disclosed that interview and selection panels for headship consisted mainly of men, who ask females irrelevant questions

like the number of children they have and about their husbands. This implies that fewer females get promoted to top management positions or they are promoted at a slower speed than men at all levels due to gender stereotyping (Obura, Wamahiu, Kariuki, Bunyi, Chenge, Njoka, & Ruto, 2011). Catalyst further reported that gender stereotyping is a significant problem, as men outnumber women because men's voices dominate and male managers regard females as poor problem solvers. These managers tend to evaluate women leaders more harshly and undermine their interpersonal influence (Catalyst, 2007).

Similarly, revisiting the earlier theme of how organizational culture and/or socio-cultural influences shape the leadership aspirations and experiences of women in various settings, the perspective of Chinese academics is represented in the article entitled "Women and Leadership in Higher Education in China: Discourse and the Discursive Construction of Identity" (Zhao and Jones 2017). Noting that only 4.5% of the higher education senior-level management roles in that country have been held by women, the authors present the findings of qualitative interviews with nine women from two Chinese universities to examine "how women construct multiple identities, the interplay of identities, and the influence of broader societal Discourses of gender and leadership."

The findings revealed the extent to which the participants viewed the interplay of various identities (e.g., mothers, teachers, managers) in ways that were consistent with Confucian thought and societal norms (e.g., being supportive of the husband, tending to household chores, fulfilling duties); notably, all nine participants distanced themselves from leadership as a professional identity.

The concluding article in this special issue, titled "An Overview of the Current State of Women's Leadership in Higher Education in Saudi Arabia and a Proposal for Future Research Directions" (Alsubaie and Jones 2017), turns the reader's attention to an area of the world where relatively little is known about women's leadership. Similar to several other articles that preceded it, these authors address the concern expressed by Eagly (2015) that much of the literature related to leadership has been written from a Western orientation, reflecting assumptions that are inaccurate for other cultural contexts. The authors note that despite stereotypical images of Saudi

women and culture, the status of women in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been modified and improved in social, political, and economic life over the past two decades. Describing the methodology that led to this article as a “desk-based study,” the work of these authors represents a helpful contribution to the literature both by synthesizing the available literature on women and leadership in higher education in Saudi Arabia and in proposing specific directions that future related research might take.

Furthermore, the full participation of women in management of postsecondary institutions is critical both for wise decision-making and for numerous other financial, organizational culture, and relational reasons, as articulated by Madsen in a synthesis of the literature titled: “Why Do We Need More Women in Leadership of Higher Education?” (Madsen 2015). Interestingly, a key finding of the international research project of Gerzema and D’Antonio that involved 64,000 participants was the significant level of agreement by adult respondents (66%) and by male respondents (65%) with the statement: “The world would be a better place if men thought more like women” (Gerzema and D’Antonio 2013, p. 8). While working toward that goal, increasing the visibility and engagement of women in higher education leadership also merits urgent focused attention and energy.

#### **2.2.4 Role Models and Mentors at Organizational Level**

The study by Coleman (2002), shows that mentoring is very important for a new person in a post (Coleman, 2002). Mentoring may provide the inspiration to aspire for headship. Mulkeen (2006) reports that the availability of females in school, whether as normal teachers or administrators of schools, is a crucial aspect in generating gender role models and mentors. Morley (2006) adds that females feel happy in the presence of female role models.

Nevertheless, Otieno (2001) observes that female teachers and students lack role models and mentors. It has also been observed that there are few female teachers and administrators in rural schools who could be positive role models for female students in those areas. For instance, the United Republic of Tanzania (2012b) found that in some districts in Tanzania, like Meatu, only 28% of teachers were women 40% of the 110 surveyed schools in Meatu did not have even one female teacher.

This implies that female students lack role models and mentors, which affects their future careers and professions. Mulkeen (2006) added that the lack of role models is one of the reasons why fewer girls than boys enroll in primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the European Commission (2010) reported that women in them to work hard towards acquiring the same positions as their male counterparts. It is difficult for women to learn about leadership because according to Sperandio (2011), males surround females surround females who obtain power.

Apart from lacking role models and mentors, Shakeshaft (1993) says that women's lack of formal and informal networks at the institutional level locks them out of getting a job and obtaining promotional information compared to males. Furthermore, if women network with and are mentored by male leaders, it can be less productive and more difficult for junior women, who may be suspected of engaging sexually with their mentors (Bell, Andy and Francis, 2002).

Also highlighted is the role of organizational cultures and the need for schools to acknowledge, recognize, and support the contribution of women administrators and their style of leadership, to actively promote women into management positions and to accommodate women's cultural roles outside the school (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017; Moodly and Toni 2017). This can be done by acknowledging how promotion structures may disadvantage women who have family, child-care, and teaching responsibilities (Mabokela 2003). The implementation of policy is integral to the inclusion of women in management positions (Moodly and Toni 2017) and indeed institutional transformation.

Thus, to attain social justice and change, there needs to be a "visible shift" in the implementation and accountability process, the recruitment process of women into management positions, the provision of access to opportunities, and the developmental support provided by institutions (Moodly 2015; Moodly and Toni 2017), as women in these positions may act as role models and mentors for the next generation of academics (Moodly and Toni 2017, p. 148; Moodly 2015; Phakeng 2015). This can be done by creating structures and bodies to monitor the progress of these processes within institutions (Mabokela 2003). As Moodly and Toni (2015, p. 50) argue, "a healthy, functioning society requires that all of its citizens contribute equally to issues, including environmental and socioeconomic matters."

The existing literature on women in school management highlights ways in which some women were able to use both structural and cultural limitations to their advantage and deploy their agency. Educational leadership has been socially and historically constructed as a characterization attributed to successful male leaders and this conventional masculinist perspective seems to be prevalent through years. Hearn and Parkin (1983) assert that leadership has been conventionally comprised of certain characteristics that are more frequently displayed by men rather than women, i.e. this of aggressiveness, competitiveness, forcefulness and independence (Blackmore, 1989). Additionally, Davies (2017) support that educational administration and decision-making hold the normative view of being masculine occupations in many countries worldwide while Hall (2019) and other analysts confirm that this numerical male dominance in senior posts is taken for granted at all educational levels except for the nursery schools (Bush, 2011).

Additionally, Lumby and Coleman (2007) prove that leadership especially in Western democratic countries is based on ‘a white, middle class male’ pattern and this underrepresentation of female in senior posts has been expanded in the majority of countries across the globe (p. 5). Coleman (2001) also identifies this hegemony of masculine nature as a driving factor that marginalizes females and refrains them from seeking leadership positions (Sanchez & Thornton, 2010). The field of EML, all in all, appears to be stereotypically gendered and strongly labeled as a male oriented profession since it displays certain traits that are defined as masculine rather than feminine.

On the other hand, women were historically considered to be more eligible in handling teaching jobs more effectively than men. The European Journal of Education (vol 31, no. 4) in the middle of 1990s documented that in most European countries women prevail in teaching occupations while the majority of school managers are men (Shakeshaft, 2006). Cushman (2005) supports that this disproportion could be explained by the fact that teaching is conventionally considered by the societies a low pay and status profession (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Additionally, Eurydice study discloses that women in all European countries account for the large majority of teachers in both primary and secondary education. More specifically, the proportions for women at the primary level vary between 65% in Greece and 98% in Slovenia when men to comprise

approximately 5%, while at the secondary level the former vary between 52% in Lichtenstein and 86% in Latvia (European Commission, 2016).

Despite the patriarchal nature of African states, which remains one of the leading barriers to the inclusion of women in management as well as other sectors of the state (Bush 2014), women are able to transcend oppressive tendencies either by resisting them, performing them, or using them to their advantage and by sometimes “being assertive, proactive and innovative” (Johnson 2014; Okeke-Ihejirika 2017). Sader et al. (2005), note that some women do learn to work within the system by developing their research and academic careers, developing networks, and sometimes gaining recognition internationally. Such approaches may contribute to reproducing existing structures and leave the system unchanged (Sader et al. 2005). Most women emphasized a commitment to change and providing support and mentoring to other women (Mabokela 2003; Mabokela and Mawila 2004).

However, in spite of the equity gains that have been recently noticed across the globe, women still appear to be under-represented and thus under-utilized in those positions. Findings from the surveys conducted by Coleman (2011) show that the number of women as leaders in education is gradually growing; however, males hold the most leadership positions in both developed and developing countries with the females to be seen as exceptions to the rules and subjects to stereotyping.” Shakeshaft (2006) affirms that this devaluation exists even worldwide and women are treated differently than men across cultures receiving unequal expectations and rewards.”

Johnson’s (2014) study also found that having a sense of agency, hard work, and competency was a powerful resource for women’s career development in the study as it enabled them to overcome oppressive cultural and gendered conditions (Mabokela 2003). While this is significant, it highlights the inequality between men and women, where women have to be exceptional to excel and avoid exclusion from management positions. The assertion of agency may moreover lead to resistance in the form of name calling (Johnson 2014; Shober 2014). Moultrie and De La Rey (2003, p. 413), note that women who resist oppressive discourses and assert themselves are “in a metaphorical sense speaking in a second tongue” and have to deal with conflicts when implementing change.

### **2.2.5 Lack of Support and Encouragement**

Sperandio (2011) reports that women would rarely get family support if they opt to seek management positions. Members of society or organizations believe that women may not be able to lead. As a consequence, they may be reluctant to support women who seek leadership roles. That is, following the socialization of males that they should strive for power, women are encouraged less. Institutional systems are also blamed for denying support to women seeking management positions. At the organizational level, men tend to undermine women and deny them the support they deserve (Bhalalusesa&Mboya, 2003). This is supported by Chabaya (2009), who say that the education system does not prepare women for leadership by giving them different responsibilities, like being deputy or departmental head. Meyerson and Fletcher (1999) add that women lack organizational support to be involved in management. Furthermore, even those women who are leaders get less support from institutions and the leaders above them, which in turn could discourage other women from aspiring to be leaders.

This is supported by Peters (2012), who discovered that female administrators lack support from top management in terms of mentoring, human resources, pecuniary resources and time for implementation, which left them feeling inadequate and frustrated. Chisholm (2001) also found that the majority of black women felt unsupported by political heads in South Africa – the women spoke about being avoided by the political heads and being consistently undermined by the South African authorities.

Surprisingly, Gupton and Slick (1996) found that female teachers not only expect a lack of support and discouragement from males, but also from fellow females. Adding to this, Akuamoah-Boateng (2003), in a study on psychological barriers to female leadership, motivation and gravity in Kenya and Tanzania, found that female leaders and colleagues discouraged female teachers who aspire to become leaders. They reported that female leaders did not support fellow hardworking females and did not like to see their friends flourishing. They reported further that female leaders would set much higher standards for female subordinates (and this may be perceived as a lack of support for them).

In addition, some researchers indicate that male leaders help and support female teachers, unlike female heads. For instance, Valerio (2009) notes that some males are very supportive of the development of talented females. Similarly, Akuamoah-Boateng et al. (2003) observes that female teachers get more support from male leaders than from fellow females. This is in line with Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009), who also observes that support for female teachers and the encouragement of colleagues and institutions to get into leadership had increased. Coleman (2002) found that the head teachers interviewed were reported to more likely support and encourage their female subordinates than males to develop their careers based on their gender-specific needs.

On another hand, Cubillo and Brown (2003) found women to be lacking peer support, specifically from the men, and this was observed to be due to patriarchy in the studied areas. Apart from the support female teachers get at the organizational level, women have been observed to get support from their families and partners. For example, in her study done in South Africa, Moorosi (2007) found that older married women living without children had the support of their husbands. Furthermore, Raburu (2011) reported that those female teachers who progressed in their career smoothly were single, did not have children, or they had supportive husbands. Smith (2011) in her study discovered that the female head teachers interviewed reported to be supported by their partners.

Coleman and Glover (2010) noted that there have been some changes, as a few married female leaders in education now share some family responsibilities with their partners. Some male partners play a crucial role in helping their wives to meet the demands of leadership. Visser (2011, p. 42) adds, “Young women who are successful in changing their inner beliefs to ‘we are partners in raising our children’ and ‘we share the right to self-development and career development’ no longer suffer from feelings of guilt and lead more balanced and happy lives”.

However, other scholars argue that female administrators have only minimal or no support from their male partners regarding home chores, while female teachers married to male heads of schools support their husbands in headship positions (Coleman, 2011). Moreover, the study on forms of spousal support for 29 female managers through interviews and written text in Finland

observed that female leaders mostly need psychological support from their spouses, although they acknowledge the need of career assistance (Valimaki, Lamsa&Hiillos, 2010).

On an individual level, the literature highlights the need for women to support and mentor younger academics and other women in administrative positions, to market themselves rather than adhere to socializations which emphasize diminishing one's accomplishment, to emphasize the feminine, and to create networks of support within and beyond the institutions (Mabokela 2003). Overall, these scholars argue for the need for a concerted effort from all members and sectors of the school to implement inclusive practices within institutes (Kele and Pietersen 2015; Mabokela and Mlambo 2017; Mama 2003). This implies also contributing to building women's agency and development of African women. This can be done by creating institutional measures to support women through funding and providing networks of support, such as mentoring programs for women in management. At the moment, the literature reveals that developmental support, mentoring, and networking for women are mainly provided at an individual level. To attain social justice, equity, and transformation, there needs to be recognition of women's developmental needs at an institutional level.

### **2.3 Societal Factors that Hinder Women from Becoming Leaders**

Research on women in management positions identifies several factors that act as barriers to women's promotion into, and success within, management positions. Some of these include the tension between women's sexual and reproductive responsibilities and their managerial and academic responsibilities. The others are the influence of socio-cultural norms and institutional policies and practices which claim to be gender neutral (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017; White et al. 2012; Mazibuko, 2006). These factors work to hinder women from being promoted into management roles and succeeding in such roles once, they break the glass ceiling.

Additionally, studies reveal that being an African woman in school management means working twice as hard. The women need to negotiate resistance from colleagues and masculine notions of leadership as well balancing managerial and academic life with family life (Guramatunhumu-mudiwa 2010; Johnson 2014; Mabokela and Mlambo 2017; Okeke-Ihejirika 2017). In most African countries, cultural and societal expectations have sometimes meant that for women,

being in management requires having the support of one's family and husband to be successful in that position (Johnson 2014; Ohene 2010; Okeke-Ihejirika 2017). For example, Okeke-Ihejirika (2017) notes that in Nigeria, women who go into school management without children face a severe problem if their husbands do not support them.

Further, those who make it into management positions are often put in positions deemed to be feminine, such as student welfare and human resources, and are often made to carry out the formal and invisible work of development, maintenance, and interpersonal duties within schools (Johnson 2014). This is linked to the gendered societal expectation of women in subservient rather than management positions (Johnson 2014). For women in these positions, they become more successful. However, women need to find ways to overcome such barriers, taking on the role of changing structural and institutional barriers to inclusion and providing support and mentoring to younger colleagues, and sometimes drawing on religion, faith, and spirituality in negotiating difficult terrains within academic management (Johnson 2014; Johnson and Thomas 2012; Mabokela and Shoher 2014).

The experiences of women in management has a strong relationship with gender, leadership and society, because leadership is a culturally bound practice (Dimmock & Walker, 2006). That is, the behavior of males and females is shaped by the culture within a society that ascribes roles for men and women. This implies that society categorizes male and female roles, which in turn creates opportunities for men and women to have access to different opportunities (Dimmock & Walker, 2006), such as involvement in leadership. These roles ascribed by society control females, while males are less controlled (Dimmock & Walker, 2006). In society, females are regarded as home and family careers, while males are perceived and trained to be office workers.

Women are discouraged from being leaders and so obstacles are placed in their way by society because of the culture that hinders women from becoming leaders. These hurdles are the consequence of outdated beliefs about women's roles (Onsongo, 2004). Society stereotypes females from a cultural perspective and assumes that the highest decision-making positions are for males (Onsongo, 2004). Cubillo and Brown (2003) add that stereotype, social and cultural

expectations devalue women. Society tends to classify females as inferior and being supposed to take low posts, implying that they are incapable of being heads (Amondi, 2011).

This perception affects the minds of people in organizations. Onsongo (2004, p. 49) reports that: *“The gendered-based roles even though irrelevant to the workplace are carried into the workplace.”* That is, society’s perceptions are also present in organizations. Society may play a major role in women experience in school management if it does not value their roles and achievements. To confirm this, Sperandio (2011) conducted a study in an Islamic society in Bangladesh and discovered that society discourages women from gaining higher education qualifications or participating in employment. She claims that women with degrees who have a desire to work face problems obtaining management positions in government schools. This is supported by Onsongo (2004) who argues that religion has a major effect on the placement of females in inferior roles.

Women also suffer from the scourge of sexual harassment. The implications of sexual harassment have far-reaching effects on the organizational outcomes and particularly, the negative implications on the performance of victims (Thakur & Paul, 2017, p. 35). It threatens the victims and impacts on their behavior and their general productivity; it is also a hostile and unwanted practice and it threatens the target's well-being (Xin et al, 2018). These views are consistent with those of Mclaughlin et al. (2017) who posited that the majority of women experience sexual harassment at some point in their careers. The rationale for this study was to explore the experiences of women in management positions. This research is significant because even though women in leadership is a widely and internationally researched area, there is little empirical work on the challenges, issues and complexities that women administrators face, particularly in public secondary schools (Meryl, 2016; Celikten, 2007).

### **2.3.1 Societal Perception of Female Administrators in Schools**

In African schools, a combination of cultural norms and gendered institutional cultures work to negatively affect women in management (Kele and Pietersen 2015). The education of women is valued less; high premiums are placed on marriage, motherhood, and the family; and women are expected to defer from men in decision-making and are treated as wives when they enter into

management positions (Odhiambo 2011). Schools have historically been sites of exclusionary practices, mirroring the norms, discourses, and practices of the society. For example, in South Africa, schools reproduced apartheid ideologies which were inherently raced, gendered, and classed and were an instrument for control by the apartheid government (Wolpe, 2014).

However, AL-Mahrouqi (2010) observed in a study that the majority of the respondents perceived female leaders in the same way as males. From what has been discussed, it is clear that different societies have different perceptions of female administrators but females may be perceived negatively because of culture and the patriarchal system, especially in African countries like Zambia. Guramatunhu-mudiwa (2010), for instance, notes that women who violate the gender stereotype must be prepared to face societal consequences. Similarly, Johnson (2014) notes that while women who take on roles like being a wife, mother, and caregiver are honored and respected, they are criticized and punished for these same identities when they take up management positions within the schools.

Further, women in management face a unique difficulty in balancing their personal lives and families with academic and managerial duties. This is a challenge for women as they have to conform to the patriarchal norms in the school and the cultural expectations about female roles and responsibilities, while simultaneously performing their managerial duties (Odhiambo 2011). Taking on the responsibility of childcare and cooking for the family along with the pressures to publish and attain grants within the individualistic and competitive nature of academia is a source of stress, particularly for women in management positions.

Mothering roles and responsibilities which are not recognized or rewarded by school structures sometimes lead to the expectation of “leniency and/or partiality” in tandem with the expectation of a “real mother,” but those who refuse to take on such roles are often vilified (Johnson 2014, p. 844; Mabokela and Mlambo 2017). What is highlighted here is an intersection between the public and the private where gendered expectations for female leaders to play a motherly role to their colleagues is often put in tension with performing their managerial and academic duties (Johnson 2014; Moodly and Toni 2015; Okeke-Ihejirika 2017; Shober, 2014).

Regarding the problem of isolation, a key challenge identified is the “lack of critical mass” of individuals in senior management positions that is essential to changing an institution’s structures and culture (Sader et al. 2005, p. 66). Mabokela and Mlambo (2017) further note that the problem of isolation may be exacerbated by the tendency to view women in these positions as special, unique, or different rather than acknowledging them as intellectual equals who can contribute to institutional development. This tendency emphasizes the cultural notion dominant in some African countries like Zambia that women are intellectually inferior and those who succeed are special (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017). Furthermore, the hyper visibility of African women in management roles leads to colleagues enforcing stereotypes on them, and in cases where these women do not match or conform to the stereotypes, they are not seen as true representatives of their race (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017). Thus, African women in management positions are often caught within the bind of reinforcing stereotypes or challenging them, which sometimes means embracing Eurocentric identities (Mabokela and Mlambo 2017).

Arar (2013) examines the attitudes of teachers towards the appointment of women administrators. The findings indicate that women administrators were perceived as creating a good atmosphere at school, yet all teachers agreed that women had inferior abilities to conduct relations with external bodies. He also declares that male teachers significantly expressed more patriarchal attitudes than female teachers. In addition, the teachers with a higher level of education expressed more resistance to female leadership than those without academic degrees. Arar (2013) emphasizes that women find it difficult undertaking school leadership in rural remote schools because parents and the community members still view this role through the stereotype of an authoritarian married male. It is revealed that even though the number of female secondary administrators is increasing, the underlying attitudes towards women as senior managers are slow to change (Dawn, 2005 & Amondi, 2011).

To overcome these stereotypes, women have to become conscious of these assumptions and gendered expectations. Namdeo and Puspha (2017) studied the impact of education on decision making ability of women. They found in their work that decision making ability of educated women is more than uneducated women: decision making ability of working women is more than educated non-working women. It shows that the decision-making ability of the women is

largely affected by education, which plays a major role in women as it makes them to make decisions in an effective way.

### **2.3.2 Societal Perception of the Rapport Between Female Administrators and the School Community**

The relationship between school administrators and the society around is crucial for achieving school goals. Sowell (2001) argues that members of society, like parents, are important for the success of the school. In this context, building a friendly relationship with them is required for the smooth implementation of school programs and the acceptability of their leadership. The head of school as a member of the school community and professional educator has to build a good relationship with all members of the community for her/his leadership to be acceptable (Raubinger et al., 1974). Allen (2010) asserts that a country like the UK recognizes the importance of this relationship, to the extent that it has a national policy on the relationship between the community and schools.

Furthermore, Lundholm (2003) argues that the involvement of the school community in the education process enables the creation of a climate that increases the motivation of members, leading to an improvement in academic achievement. Moreover, the school is an important agent for change. Thus, the head of school is supposed to relate the school to the external world, which includes parents, non-governmental and governmental organizations, community-based organizations and the whole society. Green (1968) suggests that the head of the school should create a friendly and welcoming environment for the parents.

For example, he argues that a friendly school is depicted by notices that read: “Welcome parents, this is your school” (Green, 1968, p. 67). Therefore, the heads of schools and the school community as a whole are responsible for receiving parents positively and resolving their problems to avoid losing their respect. In this respect, Collings (1991) suggests that, for a good relationship, parents should be informed of any major changes in the school thorough a monthly newsletter and occasional formal letters.

In line with the relationship between female administrators and school communities, Makura (2009) found that parents in Zimbabwe did not have a good relationship with female administrators and so they failed to cooperate with them, sometimes by refusing to attend meetings and transferring their children to male-headed schools. Cheruto and Kyalo (2010) reported that head teachers had conflicts with parents, as some parents refused to contribute funds to supplement the government budget because they thought that education was free. In addition, in his study in Turkey, Celikten (2009) discovered through interviews that female leaders are not favoured by parents and are less respected and valued by them. The poor relationship with female heads was also observed by staff with female heads. For instance, Makura (2009) reported that female heads of schools were short-tempered, less tolerant and acted on rumours that caused subordinates to have a cold relationship with their leaders. Some female heads of schools would experience friction with some of their subordinates because of being keen to maintain the school routine and watching teachers to see what they were doing (Makura, 2009).

On the other hand, Ouston (1993) argues that parents are more favorably disposed to schools run by women and thus more involved in school life than in schools run by men. Becker, Ayman and Korabic (2002) agree that female administrators of schools have a good relationship with the school community and staff. Women are stronger, hard-working and cooperate with parents, particularly today when, schools are facing a multitude of social problems like HIV/AIDS (Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009). Furthermore, Addi-Racah (2006) revealed that women administrators of schools are friendlier and create a school environment that is welcoming. Mero's (2009) study in Tanzania discovered that there was a very close relationship between teachers and female head teachers, who considered individual needs, were encouraging and offered opportunities for personal growth. This has an impact on the relationship between female leaders and their subordinates, and hence may lead them to accept their leadership or not (Mero, 2009).

The way in which females lead, build a relationship with the community or delegate power may affect other people in a positive or negative way in terms of participating in leadership. However, due to the lack of education and exposure, some members of the community surrounding rural

schools may perceive an effective leader to be the one who knows all the answers and runs the school alone, without seeking advice or involving parents, which is contrary to the stipulated nature of female headship. Therefore, a good relationship with the school's community may put women in a position where their leadership is accepted.

Globally, nearly 7 out of 10 primary and 5 out of 10 secondary school teachers are female. At the primary school level, the proportion of qualified female teachers is higher than that of men, even in low-income countries. However, in many countries the situation is reversed at the secondary level, where women are less represented than men. Analysis of 27 African countries with available data consistently reveals that the proportion of female teachers in secondary education is notably lower than in primary education (UNESCO, 2021). Similarly, a study of Ghanaian primary schools shows bias against female teachers in relation to how their performance is assessed: school leaders are 11 percentage points less likely to rate a female teacher as 'more effective' even when female teachers produce higher student learning outcomes (Beg et al., 2021).

Other research has uncovered similar gender disparities in school management. On average, across the 14 Francophone African countries participating in the 2019 PASEC assessment, only 22 per cent of students attended a female-led school (see Figure 2). In Latin America and the Caribbean, women's representation in leadership has also not kept pace with their representation in the teaching workforce. In eight countries, there is a gap of 20 percentage points or more between the share of female school leaders and the share of female teachers, with the largest gaps in Mexico, Chile and Colombia, where fewer than 40 per cent of school leaders are women (Adelman & Lemos, 2021).

Data from the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (Teaching and Learning International Survey) reveals that only 48 per cent of lower secondary school leaders are female versus 68 per cent of teachers (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). A similar trend is observed in the 2020 Global School Leaders survey for India, Indonesia, Kenya and Malaysia, in which only 50 per cent of school leaders identified

themselves as women compared to more than 70 per cent of teachers (Global School Leaders, 2021b).

## **2.4 School Achievement under Female Leadership**

To be successful as leaders, women have to be strategic in their approach to leadership by becoming strategic thinkers, having knowledge of the rules of the game and invisible rules, knowing how to get resources and support, involving subordinates in decision-making, establishing support networks, and having cultural intelligences (Kele and Pietersen 2015; Zulu 2011). Of significance is the fact that these experiences and strategies deployed by women in management positions were not similar to those encountered by their male counterparts. This can be attributed to the normalization of the White and/or male body as the embodiment of knowledge, intelligence, and leadership qualities. Hence, women entering these positions do so as the “other.” For Black women in a white-dominated context, double othering is experienced by virtue of their race and gender. Women in these spaces, however, tend to develop a commitment to social justice and see themselves as agents of change (Okeke-Ihejirika 2017).

School achievement depends a lot, on how administrators enhance the relationship between the school and the school community. Gelsthorpe and West-Burnham (2003) state that school achievement depends greatly on the social capital around the school. Drake and Owen (1998) maintain that the head of school, who has agreed to more equitable participation by the school community members in decision making, enables his/her school to achieve well. Correspondingly, Eagly, (2007) argues that academic achievement is higher in female-led schools than in male-led ones. She argues that female administrators are likely to introduce and support strong staff development programs, to encourage innovation and to experiment with instructional approaches.

Moreover, women are likely to stress the importance of instructional competence to teachers, and are attentive to completing instructional programs through the involvement of school members (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Hence, through cooperation and involvement, the probability of developing a good relationship with the school community is high because the involvement of members of the school community leads to a common understanding for accomplishing school

goals; eventually leading to a greater possibility of achieving school goals. Lumby (2006b) maintains that the participatory approach leads to effectiveness in the performance of female administrators.

Moreover, Addi-Racah (2006) and Rodd (2006) emphasizes that women in management positions focus on pedagogical issues and promote educational innovations. In their view, these qualities make female educational administrators more effective in managing human resources and the curriculum than males. With regard to gender, women have the mental capacity to build a good relationship with staff, and the ability to perform effectively (Bhalalusesa&Mboya, 2003). However, Kabaka (2002) argues that there are no major differences in performance between male and female administrators in Zambia. Therefore, the differences may be because of the differences in the context of the study done, which means that, even in the same country, findings can differ from one locality to another.

Mestrv and Schmidt (2012) also discovered that female school administrators were subjected to stereotyping and were regarded as unfit to be leaders by the staff parents and departmental officials, resulting from cultural beliefs. Despite the discrimination and prejudices, women managed to keep their schools effective and functional. These women were able to responsibly and productively negotiate these differences by using peaceful and challenging measures. Their strategies relied on waiting and working together.

Furthermore, the administrator studied by Smith (2013) was in charge of all the efforts of their school including curriculum, development of people, financial management, learners, infrastructure as well as parents. She served as the link between school and the community, and represented the image of the school as the good one. Relational leadership was evident in her potential to lead the school in a caring manner. The administrator has conducted her work with a moral code of conduct, has empowered others to achieve, and has led by example in and out of the school (Smith, 2013).

Early analysis suggests that female school administrators may adopt a range of effective practices and behaviors that could be contributing to these improved outcomes. For instance, in Lao People's Democratic Republic, women school administrators create positive teaching and

learning environments where teachers and pupils report being more actively engaged. Compared to pupils attending male-led schools, pupils in female-led schools indicate their teachers are significantly more likely to assign homework, check their work, and teach concepts until all pupils achieve mastery (United Nations Children’s Fund, 2020).

Across the 48 countries participating in the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), female school administrators were more likely than males to report higher levels of instructional leadership, measured through actions such as supporting teachers to collaborate, motivating teachers to improve their skills, and making teachers feel responsible for pupils’ learning (OECD, 2020). A study of 381 urban primary schools in Chile showed that female school administrators were rated higher than their male counterparts in 9 out of 14 teacher management practices evaluated, including giving personalized support to improve pedagogical practices and taking actions to retain quality teachers (Weinstein et al., 2021). Analysis of World Management Survey data from eight countries<sup>10</sup> also indicates that female school leaders are associated with higher-quality management (Martínez et al., 2020).

UNICEF Innocenti’s Time to teach research on teacher attendance in West and Central Africa also suggests that female school leaders are more likely than male school leaders to actively encourage teacher attendance and use sensitization strategies to make teachers aware of how their attendance affects student outcomes. The same research suggests that in female-led schools, parents tend to be more engaged in discussions about their children’s behavior and academic progress (Jativa et al., forthcoming). Previous research has demonstrated that greater parental involvement with the school has a positive association with children’s academic outcomes (Brossard et al., 2020; Castro et al., 2015).

Beyond learning, women in school management may also have a positive association with pupil wellbeing. Previous findings show female school administrators reported higher ability to support the well-being of their school community during the COVID-19 pandemic (Global School Leaders, 2021a).

## **2.5 Criteria and Procedures for Appointing/Selecting Secondary School Heads**

In various countries, including several in Africa, ministries of education appoint or promote administrators of schools on the basis of qualifications, experience and a broad age range (Bush, 2010). In India, Sperandio (2011) observed that the only criterion used for promoting heads of schools to department head, deputy and head of school was only seniority. When there is a vacancy a teacher who is top in terms of number of years of working was promoted. There is no competition for vacancies. However, a list of those teachers proposed to be promoted is published for transparency purposes (Sperandio, 2011).

In Botswana in 1994, the Ministry of Education (Pheko, 2008, p. 74) said “the criteria for appointing teachers to school management positions are: degree or diploma, and 3 years or more as deputy head teacher or head of department”. In Taiwan, Chen (2002) reported that a head’s maximum age was 55, and that he or she must have one of the following qualifications: PhD with a minimum of one year’s experience, a Master’s in education degree with a minimum of three years, or a bachelor’s degree in education with a minimum of six years. The selection of heads in Taiwan starts with applications for the post, followed by shortlisting and concluded by interviews and a written examination.

Meanwhile, in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and South Africa, someone qualifies for being appointed as the head of a secondary school if s/he is professionally qualified. The person must have over three years’ teaching experience and once served at the level of deputy head of an institution or head of department (Department of Education, 2006; Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009; TSC, 2007; United Republic of Tanzania, 1995a). In addition, personal characteristics such as being responsible, hard-working, independent and committed are an added advantage. In the case of Zambia, age is not considered as a criterion for the appointment of administrators of schools.

However, it is worth noting the idiosyncrasies in the appointment procedures across countries. In Kenya, Uganda, the UK, South Africa and Taiwan, the process of identifying a candidate for recruitment and appointment as school head starts with advertising such vacancies, for which qualifying candidates can apply. After the applications are received, they are shortlisted on the basis of the academic and professional qualifications and experience of the applicants (past

responsibilities in various aspects of institutional life and their level of training). The next step is the appointment of heads of schools by Provincial Staffing Committees, which are chaired by the Provincial Directors of Education. The persons who qualify during these interviews are thus given appointment letters by the Teachers Service Commission to become heads of schools (Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009). However, in Zambia the process involves identifying the candidates for recruitment and appointment by the school management team (head of school, deputy head, school accountant and head of department).

Despite the remarkable equity gains that have been recently noticed in the field of education management, the women still appear to be under-represented and thus under-utilized in those positions. Findings from the surveys conducted by Coleman (2003) show that the number of women as leaders in education is gradually growing; however, males hold the most leadership positions in both developed and developing countries with the females to be seen as exceptions to the rules and subjects to stereotyping. Shakeshaft (2006) affirms that this devaluation exists even worldwide and women are treated differently than men across cultures receiving unequal expectations and rewards. He characterizes infeasible his attempt to document the total number of women in school administration universally since there is no actual study that provides a comprehensive global “snapshot” of it.

The educational researcher interestingly explains that this non-availability of data could be attributed to the purposeful avoidance of comparisons among nation states, weakness to report the changes over time as well as governmental bodies’ resistance in modifying those proportions in leadership positions. Laufer (2009) lately confirms that while there has been some increase in the number of women occupying senior management positions in education, still this is not sufficient enough to “eliminate gender inequalities in terms of the women’s accessibility to the top ranks in business hierarchies”.

Most recently, the Zambian government recognized the need to promote equitable gender representation at all levels of decision making through affirmative action such as developing criteria for recruitment, appointment and promotion of more women to advisory and decision making positions (Kalumba, Daka, Kalimaposo, Phiri, Mulenga-Hagane and Mugala, 2023). In order to address the problem of gender imbalance in decision making positions, the government

adopted the National Gender Policy on 6th March, 2000. One of the goals of the National Gender Policy was to achieve equity in access to decision making positions between females and males at all levels with at least a 30% target share of women representation by the year 2005. This was in line with the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development, (Gender in Development Division, 2000). Because of this affirmative action by the Zambian government to enhance equity and equality by increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in all sectors including education, women are now found in highly skilled technical, managerial and decision-making positions that were previously meant for men.

Nevertheless, despite the existence of these appointment criteria and procedures, it is possible that issues like favoritism and corruption (other than qualifications and merit) sometimes apply in Zambia, due to the nature of the recruitment and appointment process followed. Mathibe (2007) observes that, because of favoritism, candidates without qualifications for management still get the highest posts in schools and other educational institutions. This does not happen in Kenya, Uganda, the UK and Taiwan, where the system of appointing heads of schools is explicit (open advertisements and interviews) (Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009), which is likely to minimize favoritism and bias. It is more explicit in Uganda, which has specific policies stipulating that a head and deputy cannot be of the same gender (Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009). That is, in Uganda there is affirmative action that, in coeducation, both men and women should be administrators. For example, if the head of a school is male the deputy must be a female and vice versa (Kagoda & Sperandio, 2009), which does not apply in Zambia.

## **2.6 Individual Level**

At individual level, women's lack of confidence to aspire for leadership and reject the available leadership posts, satisfaction with their teaching, low commitment to work and the lack of incentives to become a leader due to the poor working environment.

### **2.6.1 Lack of Confidence**

This has been observed to be among the individual factors experienced by women in senior school management positions. In Zimbabwe this was observed by Chabaya et al. (2009) as they held interviews and focus group discussions with 13 female heads of schools. They found that

the factors that prevent female teachers from being promoted to management positions are within themselves as they lack confidence and see themselves as unsuitable for promotion. In Uganda, Kagoda and Sperandio's (2009) study on Ugandan women moved beyond a historical and cultural understanding of education leadership using documentary data from qualitative research, and observed that female teachers were restrained from becoming school leaders because they lacked the confidence to deal with student riots. Lack of confidence was also observed by Moorosi (2010). Smulyan (2000) also found out that female heads were indecisive about assuming leadership roles because they lacked confidence.

Other scholars add that internal barriers to female involvement in management include perceiving that they lack career advancement opportunities and having a poor self-image (Bubshait, 2012). Researchers further have reported that gender-based socialization, lack of confidence, which leads to fear of failure, limited mobility and not being competitive, and interrupted career development due to child bearing and rearing, are internal barriers hindering women from becoming leaders (Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006).

Mukanga (2020) opines that less confidence is a barrier to women advancement to positions of leadership in that through confidence driven performances, society can succeed in demystifying those restrictive traditional perceptions which still apply to women, despite the fact that they are based on unfounded scientific grounds. Thus, only through performance can society be in a position to debunk stereotypes, biases and prejudices that still regard women as less confident to assume leadership positions.

Linked to the issue of spirituality and faith, which women site as a support structure in their leadership careers. The leadership style of women, which appealed to emotions and spirituality in their leadership and decision-making process, was highlighted by several studies (Ngunjiri 2016; Zulu 2011; Kele and Pietersen 2015; Mayer 2017). Spirituality, often interwoven with religion, influences their work and helps them to manage life and work difficulties experienced as leaders (Mayer et al. 2015, 2017b). Tisa (2015:33) recommends that "women should be exposed to more meaningful tasks and furthermore, be placed in positions that demand accountability." Confidence, it should be understood, is not the thing believed in, but it is rather

the belief in one's own mind, which has the power if unhindered, to bring about the desired result.

Further, Lawless and Fox (2013), Schneider et al. (2016), Greyling and Steyn (2015), and Greenlee, (2014) revealed that among numerous other factors that prevented women to seize opportunities to stand for nomination into leadership positions were that women were not encouraged to run for office and are not politically persuaded. In addition, the political ambition of women was outweighed by men's political ambition. The experience of women in the competitive political debate was seen as weak whilst men had a strong desire to win and were more competitive in politics. Similarly, Gwirayi (2010) looked at the influence of gender on access to leadership positions. The study was conducted in the SRC among final year students at a Zimbabwean college. Among other factors, it aimed to understand students' criteria to elect their SRC. The study findings demonstrated that women were still marginalized, perpetuating women's leadership gap, and gender inequality. The study also highlighted institutional role in perpetuating inequality and institutional authorities need to ensure female representation in every SRC.

### **2.6.2 Satisfaction with their Teaching and Career**

Researchers have further noted that female teachers have a higher level of satisfaction with their teaching than males, and that their priority is to put extra energy into their work, but they are not interested in leadership (Watson, Hatton, Squires & Soliman, 1991). Similarly, Iqbal, Ali, Akhtar and Ahmed (2013) observed that graduate female teachers are more satisfied with being normal teachers than non-graduate teachers. This may be because they have a degree and can obtain a management position at any time if they meet the requirements. The non-graduates are dissatisfied, maybe because they want to obtain a degree to stand a better chance of acquiring a leadership post.

Studies have also found that women are contented with their career and are unwilling to apply for management posts (Gaus, 2011), which can be attributed to the socialization of women from childhood. Gupton and Slick (1996) put it that women are more satisfied with their academic qualifications.

Moreover, The Reporter (2013a) adds that women are more satisfied with their academic qualifications and long teaching service than men, so that most females neither plan to climb to top positions nor work hard to develop their career.

Furthermore, Young and McLeod (2001) found in their study in the USA that some female teachers were satisfied with the leadership of their heads and thus did not wish to replace them. Due to this, female teachers were reported to be less active and unable to lead a school (Young & McLeod, 2001). This is possibly because women have been socialized to have lower expectations than men. This is supported by Dorsey, who argues that girls are groomed for their role as wives and taking care of males from an early age (Dorsey, 1996, p. 30). The tendency of female teachers to be satisfied and not to apply for leadership posts may lead them to be under-represented in leadership. However, in the context of this study, heads are appointed without them applying for the post.

In contrast, male teachers were found to always be striving to be heads, as they were unhappy being classroom teachers (Abdullah, Jegak, & Balakrishnan, 2009). Similarly, they were reported to put more effort into their careers than their female counterparts (Kremer-Hayon & Goldstein, 1990). Al-Mashaan (2003) revealed that men were only satisfied when they had a high-level qualification, were paid well and were in a better position for promotion. Satisfaction with work has a close relationship with commitment to work.

### **2.6.3 Female Teachers' Commitment to Work**

Women are under-represented in management positions across multiple sectors, including politics, healthcare and business (United Nations Women, 2021; Krivkovich, 2018; ILO, 2020; Stone, 2019). The positive impacts of having women in leadership positions have been well documented. For instance, in rural India, having women at the head of the municipal council is associated with an improvement in the provision of public goods such as drinking water and roads (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). Municipalities under female leadership in Brazil had lower death and hospitalization rates during COVID-19 (Bruce, 2021). However, in the education sector, while there is growing literature on the benefits of female teachers on girls'

educational outcomes (Sperling et al., 2015), the challenges and opportunities of female leadership in schools have not been sufficiently studied.

Bhalalusesa (2003) reported that women in organizations have been observed to put less effort into work than men. Other researchers, such as Stevens, Beyer and Trice (1978) women were less committed to their work, and Iqbal et al. (2013) added that young employees were less devoted to work than older ones. Older teachers in this case seemed to have a higher level of organizational commitment, possibly because they have grown up children, are more experienced and are established in their profession. This view is supported by Sekaran (1983), namely that married young women were less committed to their work and put more energy into their family. In her study on stress and distress in teaching, Jensen (1989) found that female teachers allocated less time to teaching in order to meet the needs of their families. Therefore, less commitment to work may affect them in terms of lacking the qualification to be appointed to a management post, as they may be perceived to be less effective. Women's lack of commitment to work and interest in being administrators is also associated with the benefits associated with the posts.

However, incentives for being a leader increase the morale and aspirations of leaders. In contrast, the lack of good pay, rewards and incentives may discourage employees from working hard and participating in management. Different countries have different mechanisms for motivating head teachers in terms of responsibility or hardship allowances. For instance, the UK has a policy that states that:

“The governing body should have oversight of a head teacher's entire role and any paid responsibilities attached to this role. This would ensure that the governing body can take a fully informed decision about the appropriate remuneration for the head and any consequential implications for the pay of other staff who may be taking on additional responsibilities in the absence of the head” (Department for Education, 2012, p. 134).

Furthermore, in New Zealand, the Ministry of Education stipulates that principals be entitled to allowances that reflect their career progression<sup>4</sup>. In Zambia, the government has a policy that aims at providing allowances for newly appointed teachers in remote and difficult working

environments and responsibility allowances for those in leadership (Ministry of Education, 2012b). However, despite the policy, government (GRZ), (2013b) reports that teachers lack motivation because of poor salaries and incentives, which lead to poor quality education as teachers, skip classes. Gaynor (1998) reports that incentives can be in the form of special study leave or better training chances, not necessarily financial.

The lack of incentives and low salaries paid to teachers and heads of schools can be demotivating factors for women to aspire for headship. Alzaidi (2008) observed that the heads of schools in Saudi Arabia were dissatisfied with being paid a similar salary to classroom teachers, regardless of the huge responsibilities heads of schools have. Likewise, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) (2002) reported that teachers' salaries were significantly below the level necessary to ensure their satisfactory motivation in most developing countries. Thus, the dissatisfaction of teachers with their pay may de-motivate them from devoting their time to working towards achieving school goals and hence they may not qualify for senior headship. For instance, in Zambia, the slight difference in salaries between diploma holders and graduates may be a discouraging factor for women to develop their career by acquiring a degree, which is also a qualification for secondary school headship.

However, some developing countries Zambia inclusive provide teachers and heads of schools working in a rural environment with incentives in the form of hardship, travel and housing allowances (Mulkeen, 2005). Mulkeen (2005) reports that teachers posted to rural areas in Mozambique are paid a bonus according to the location of the schools: the greater the distance, the higher the bonus. In Lesotho, a hardship allowance is paid as a flat fee each month. This is equivalent to 20% of the salary of an unqualified teacher, but only 10% of the salary of a teacher with a diploma (Mulkeen, 2005; p37). Therefore, the lack of incentives for teachers to become leaders may have an impact on women's participation in leadership in poor rural areas, as explained below.

#### **2.6.4 Women Reject the Post when Appointed**

Studies show that female teachers reject posts in rural areas due to their low risk-taking propensity. For instance, some researchers attributed women's rejection of management posts to the many family tasks that deprive them of management experience (Bubshait, 2012). A study on

the career progression of female teachers in England found that they preferred taking care of children at home than being leaders, which restricted their career development (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2005). Gaus (2011) writes that family issues in Indonesia are given first priority by female teachers, rather than their career. Moreover, because of patriarchy in Turkey, Celikten (2009, p. 173) observes that:

Women prefer the teaching profession, which they see as the continuation of motherhood and name it as an ‘easy and feminine profession’ and therefore do not prefer administrative positions

Other researchers such as Chabaya et al. (2009), noted that some female teachers were not taking leadership posts, not only because of socialization, culture and family responsibilities, but also because of the fear of exposing their husbands and themselves to sexually transmitted diseases like HIV/AIDS, as their partners would be involved in love affairs with other women in their absence. This indicates that women are more concerned about their own health and marriages more than their profession. This has a positive impact on their families, but not on their profession. Furthermore, Limerick and Anderson (1999) hold the view that women have no interest in being departmental heads, which would have given them the necessary credentials for promotion. Other researchers report that women do not equip themselves for promotion to headship positions (Moorosi, 2010).

Maphosa (2015) and Kasomo (2012) argued that the underrepresentation of women in politics is not accidental, but is an intentional and seriously calculated move that is systematically and deeply interwoven in societal beliefs. Francis (2009) and Chizema (2015) agreed that women own negative perception of their role in leadership compounds their lack of representation. Furthermore, lack of representation of women in the political sector is ascribed to various factors such as gender stereotyping, lack of empowerment, and lack of information and proper counselling for women (Lawless & Fox, 2013 and Schneider, 2016). Moor, (2015) argue that the male-orientated organizational culture delivers additional barriers for women. Consequently, women have to work harder or even double the effort to prove themselves as capable to hold such positions.

### **2.6.5 Reject the Post Due to Poor Working Environment in Rural Secondary Schools**

Mulkeen's (2006) study in five countries in Africa (Mozambique, Lesotho, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania) found that poor working conditions were one of the reasons why there are few female teachers in rural schools. He reported that almost 80% of female teachers in Mozambique and Lesotho were reluctant to accept a posting to rural schools, and added that 82% of teachers in Malawi lived in towns, with only 31% of female teachers in rural schools. Similarly, it is reported that retaining female teachers in rural schools in Uganda is very difficult, the same applies to Zambia (Mulkeen, 2006: p48).

The reasons are the poor housing, water and transport, and regarding the poor or lack of housing, the statistics show that the number of teachers' houses in Zambia is insignificant, with a nationwide shortage of 46 250 (76.8%) teachers' house in secondary schools in 2012 (GRZ, 2012a; p23). The situation is worse in rural areas, which may discourage female teachers and heads of schools from taking posts in rural schools (Mwansa, 2006). This observation is supported by the findings of Akyeamong and Stephens (2002) in their study in Ghana, namely that teachers were anxious about the quality of housing in rural schools compared with urban schools. In my opinion, the lack of school resources, houses, medical services and access to leisure influences teachers' commitment to work in rural schools.

Teachers in rural schools not only lack houses, but also running water and toilets (Cheruto&Kyalo, 2010). The research by USAID (2010) revealed that there was the problem of water in three villages in Samfya district and people were walking up to five Kilometres to fetch water from wells and surface water, which sometimes took them more than an hour. The Children's Dignity Forum (2013) adds that, in rural areas, people fetch water very far away from where they live. This is threatening the lives of women and girls; women have reported being assaulted, and some impregnated, on their way to fetch water. They therefore drop out of school, thereby losing women teachers and future decision makers.

The transport problem has also been observed to affect many women in rural schools (Cheruto & Kyalo, 2010). In his study in five countries in Africa, Mulkeen (2005) found that teachers in rural schools spent a lot of time going to town (for health services, salary, and visiting their

family) because of the poor infrastructure. In addition, Mulkeen (2006) observed that most female teachers in rural schools were living far from their families and home areas. Thus they have to travel frequently between their families and workstations due to the absence of housing at the school. In this regard, headship constrains mobility, because the head has to be available at the workstation all the time, which in turn limits married women from aspiring to be heads (Obura, Wamahiu, Kariuki, Bunyi, Chenge, Njoka, & Ruto, 2011). It is true that travelling can be time consuming and risky in some areas. This idea was earlier stated by Sumra (2006) that the work of female heads is affected by travelling.

Due to the poor or lack of these social services, Mulkeen (2005) reported that female teachers were more unwilling to accept a rural appointment than their male colleagues, and rural areas have fewer female teachers than urban areas. This may also lead to the absence of female heads in rural schools. Moreover, Rust and Dalin (1990) add that posting females to a rural area and unfamiliar surroundings cannot be safe for them due to cultural difficulties. According to Hedges (2002), single female teachers, for instance, would feel less safe in rural areas than their male counterparts. This may cause few female teachers to aspire to or accept rural school headship positions. Chisikwa (2010) carried out his study in Kenya and found that remote schools in Vihiga District had few female heads of schools, because most female teachers refused to take headship posts in the area due to its inaccessibility. He concluded, therefore, that school location influences gender balance.

## **2.7 Summary**

It is important to point out that the literature review is global, drawn from developed countries, and developing countries like Zambia. The review was drawn from published and unpublished sources like journals, newspapers, books, unpublished thesis and dissertations done by researchers globally and the internet. From this review, it is clear that there is global gender gap in school administrative positions among teachers at all levels. The impeding factors range from prescription of gender roles, socialization and sex stereotypes, education qualification to lack of mentors and role models. The researcher shall critically assess the experiences of women in management positions in the education system. This shall be aimed at making some positive contribution to knowledge and practice in education.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Overview**

Research is based on some underlying philosophical assumptions about what constitutes 'valid' research and which research method(s) is/are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given study. In order to conduct and evaluate any research, it is, therefore, important to know what these assumptions are. This chapter discusses the philosophical assumptions and also the design strategies underpinning this research study on the experiences of women in school management positions. Common philosophical assumptions were reviewed and presented; the interpretive paradigm was identified for the framework of the study. In addition, the chapter discusses the research methodologies, and design used in the study including strategies, instruments, and data collection and analysis methods, while explaining the processes involved in the study.

The research design for this study is an interpretive case study that is analyzed through qualitative methods. Face-to-face interviews, focus-group interviews and member checking were used as data collection methods. Furthermore, the justification for each of the data collection methods used in the study was discussed. Finally, in order to ensure trustworthiness of the research, appropriate criteria for qualitative research were discussed, and several methods that include member checks, crystallization and triangulation were suggested and later employed.

#### **3.2 Research Paradigm**

According to Khaldi, (2017), the research process has three major dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. A research paradigm is an all-encompassing system of interrelated practice and thinking that define the nature of enquiry along these three dimensions. Göktürk, (2005) defines a paradigm as: “an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools”. According to him, the term paradigm refers to a research culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research

(Rahi, 2017). A paradigm hence implies a pattern, structure and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions (Kivunja, and Kuyini, (2017).

Ontological and epistemological aspects concern what is commonly referred to as a person's *worldview* which has significant influence on the perceived relative importance of the aspects of reality. Two possible worldviews are: objectivistic and constructivist. These different ways of seeing the world have repercussions in most academic areas; yet, none of these views is considered to be superior to the other. Both may be appropriate for some purposes and insufficient or overly complex for other purposes. Also a person may change his/her view depending on the situation. For example, this study makes use of elements from both views and considers them as complementary.

According to Rahi (2017), research paradigms inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in. Based on this belief, Guba and Lincoln (1994) distinguish between positivist, post-positivist and postmodernist enquiry, grouping postmodernism and post-structuralism within 'critical theory'. The nature of reality assumed by positivism is realism, whereby a reality is assumed to exist; in contrast, post-positivism assumes that this 'reality' is only 'imperfectly and probabilistically apprehend able' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109). Post-positivism is viewed as a variant of the former positivism, but they are both objectivist.

Critical theory adopts a more transactional and subjectivist epistemology where 'the investigator and the investigated object are assumed to be interactively linked, with the values of the investigator inevitably influencing the inquiry' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 110). Whereas the aim of positivist and post-positivist enquiry is explanation, prediction and control, the aim of critical theory is critique and emancipation (Pierre, 2012).

Nuryatno (2003), classified research paradigms into three philosophically distinct categories as positivism, interpretive and critical postmodernism. This three-fold classification is considered ideal for this study because these three categories can be used to conveniently place the more specific psychological and sociological theories used in education management.

Further, these three philosophical perspectives are the popular paradigms in contemporary social, organizational, and management research. The key features of these three perspectives that include the worldview, the nature of knowledge pursued, and the different means by which knowledge is produced and assessed within each paradigm or worldview are discussed below. However, there is no consensus, as to whether these research paradigms are necessarily opposed or whether they can be seen as contributing a different role in the same study.

### **3.2.1 Positivism**

The positivist paradigm of exploring social reality is based on the philosophical ideas of the French Philosopher August Comte. According to him, observation and reason are the best means of understanding human behavior; true knowledge is based on experience of senses and can be obtained by observation and experiment. At the ontological level, positivists assume that the reality is objectively given and is measurable using properties which are independent of the researcher and his or her instruments; in other words, knowledge is objective and quantifiable. Positivistic thinkers adopt scientific methods and systematize the knowledge generation process with the help of quantification to enhance precision in the description of parameters and the relationship among them. Positivism is concerned with uncovering truth and presenting it by empirical means (Henning, Van Rensburg and Smit, 2004, p. 17).

According to Aliyu, Bello, Kasim, and Martin (2014), the positivist position maintains that scientific knowledge consists of facts while its ontology considers the reality as independent of social construction. If the research study consists of a stable and unchanging reality, then the researcher can adopt an 'objectivist' perspective. Positivism regards human behavior as passive, controlled and determined by external environment. Generally, the pedagogical basis for 'traditional' styles of management is underpinned by this realist and objectivist views of knowledge. This was reflected in the instructional approaches in this study because it employs instructivist strategies also along with constructivist approaches in a complementary manner.

### **3.2.2 Interpretivism**

Interpretive researchers believe that the reality to consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world; thus, they may adopt an inter-subjective epistemology and the ontological

belief that reality is socially constructed. According to Potrac, Jones and Nelson, (2014), interpretivists are anti-foundationalists, who believe there is no single correct route or particular method to knowledge. Williams (2000), argues that in the interpretive tradition there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories. Instead, they should be judged according to how 'interesting' they are to the researcher as well as those involved in the same areas. They attempt to derive their constructs from the field by an in-depth examination of the phenomenon of interest.

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) argues that interpretivists assume that knowledge and meaning are acts of interpretation, hence there is no objective knowledge which is independent of thinking, reasoning humans. Myers (2009) argues that the premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. Interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation, thus to observe is to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern (Potrac, et al, 2014).

Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p. 32) note that the "interpretivist" paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context. The interpretive paradigm is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals. They use meaning (versus measurement) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. Interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Walsham, 2006). This is the interpretive approach that aims to explain the subjective meanings that lie behind social action. Andrade (2009) presents three different uses of theory in interpretive case studies: theory guiding the design and collection of data; theory as an iterative process of data collection and analysis; and theory as an outcome of a case study. The use of theory as an iterative process between data collection and analysis has been applied in this research study.

This study is situated in the interpretivist paradigm. The characteristics of interpretivism, as used in this study, categorized into the purpose of the research, the nature of reality (ontology), nature of knowledge and the relationship between the inquirer and the inquired-into (epistemology) and the methodology used (Cantrell, 2001).

**Table 1: Characteristics of Interpretivism.**

Feature	Description
Purpose of Research	Understand and interpret female school administrator’s experiences on school management
Ontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are multiple realities.</li> <li>• Reality can be explored, and constructed through human interactions, and meaningful actions.</li> <li>• Discover how people make sense of their social worlds in the natural setting by means of daily routines, conversations and writings while interacting with others around them. These writings could be text and visual pictures.</li> <li>• Many social realities exist due to varying human experience, including people’s knowledge, views, interpretations and experiences.</li> </ul>
Epistemology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events are understood through the mental processes of interpretation that is influenced by interaction with social contexts.</li> <li>• Those active in the research process socially construct knowledge by experiencing the real life or natural settings.</li> <li>• Inquirer and the inquired-into are interlocked in an interactive process of talking and listening, reading and writing.</li> <li>• More personal, interactive mode of data collection</li> </ul>
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processes of data collected by text messages, interviews, and reflective sessions;</li> <li>• Research is a product of the values of the researcher.</li> </ul>

Source: Field data, 2023

### **3.2.3 Critical Postmodernism**

The critical postmodernism is a combination of two somewhat different worldviews; critical theory and postmodern scholarship (Mumby, 2014). Critical Theory is a tradition developed by the Frankfurt School in Germany, based on the German tradition of philosophical and political thought of Marx, Kant, Hegel and Max Weber. Postmodernism is a form of scholarship which emerged in part through the work of French intellectuals such as Lyotard, Derrida and Foucault (Mumby, 2014).

Though they are derived from different views, they are broad rubrics for intellectual movements rather than specific theories, yet they are essential parts of social semiotic analysis. Critical Postmodernism is less radical in its approach and is a growing field of study that is moving beyond the supposedly radical postmodernism. This paradigm is a force of liberation that engages an on-going conflict with the powers of oppression and seeks to bring about educational reform (Reeves and Hedberg, 2003, p. 33).

Critical researchers assume that social reality is historically constituted and reproduced by people (Myers, 2009). Although people can consciously act to change their social and economic circumstances, critical researchers recognize that their ability to do so is constrained by various forms of social, cultural and political domination. Therefore, critical scholarship seeks to transcend taken-for granted beliefs, values and social structures by making these structures and the problems they produce visible, by encouraging self-conscious criticism, and by developing emancipator consciousness in scholars and social members in general (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, pp. 138-157).

The aim is to openly critique the status quo, focus on the conflicts and constraints in contemporary society, and seek to bring about cultural, political and social change that would eliminate the causes of alienation and domination. Thus, the paradigm of critical theory encourages evaluators and instructional designers to question and also to evaluate the cultural, political, and gender assumptions underlying the effectiveness of the instructional product or programme (Reeves and Hedberg, 2003). The critical theory seeks to deconstruct the "hidden curriculum" or "text" and search for the "truth" and "understanding within the social context" (Reeves and Hedberg, 2003, p.33).

According to Mumby, (2014) the goal of critical postmodernism is social transformation to displace the existing structures of power and domination by opening opportunities for social participation among persons previously excluded and dominated. The task in critical postmodern analysis has been to deconstruct discourse to reveal hidden structures of domination, particularly dichotomies (e.g., male/female) and then reconstruct or offer alternative, less exploitive social arrangements (Boje, 2001).

### **3.3 Research Strategy**

The researcher chose qualitative strategy due to the fact that, qualitative research is naturalistic; it attempts to study the everyday life of different groups of people and communities in their natural setting; it is particularly useful to study educational settings and processes. Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter; it attempts to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). According to Domegan and Fleming (2007), “Qualitative research aims to explore and to discover issues about the problem on hand, because very little is known about the problem. According to Myers (2009), qualitative research is designed to help researchers understand people, and the social and cultural contexts within which they live, such studies allow the complexities and differences of worlds-under-study to be explored and represented.

In qualitative research, different knowledge claims, enquiry strategies, and data collection methods and analysis are employed (Creswell, 2003). Qualitative data sources include observation and participant observation (fieldwork), interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, and the researcher's impressions and reactions (Myers, 2009). Data is derived from direct observation of behaviors, from interviews, from written opinions, or from public documents (Sprinthall, Schmutte, and Surois, 1991, p. 101). Written descriptions of people, events, opinions, attitudes and environments, or combinations of these can also be sources of data.

In qualitative studies, the researcher is considered the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. The researcher engages the situation, makes sense of the multiple interpretations, as

multiple realities exist in any given context as both the researcher and the participants construct their own realities. She/he strives to collect data in a non-interfering manner, thus attempting to study real-world situations as they unfold naturally without predetermined constraints or conditions that control the study or its outcomes (Merriam, 1998).

### **3.4 Research Design**

Research design can be thought of as the logic or master plan of a research that throws light on how the study is to be conducted. It shows how all of the major parts of the research study, the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programs and work together in an attempt to address the research questions (Abbott and McKinney, 2013). Research design is similar to an architectural outline. The research design can be seen as actualization of logic in a set of procedures that optimizes the validity of data for a given research problem. According to Salkind, (2010) the research design serves to "plan, structure and execute" the research to maximize the "validity of the findings". It gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design, and data collection. Yin (2003) adds further that "colloquially a research design is an action plan for getting from here to there, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered and 'there' is some set of (conclusions) answers".

The research design for this study is an interpretive case study. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. In an interpretive case study, the researcher analyses, interprets and theorizes about the phenomenon against the backdrop of a theoretical framework (Walsham, 2006). Stake, (2008) states that qualitative case studies in education are often framed with concepts, models and theories. An inductive method is then used to support or challenge theoretical assumptions. Since "meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach (Bogdan and Biklen, 2003), the participant's perspectives on their own conceptions of practice will be the focus. Hence, the framework developed in this thesis supports evaluating participant perspectives. Findings were discussed in relation to existing knowledge with the aim of demonstrating how the present study has contributed to expanding the knowledge base.

### 3.5 The Case study design

A case study is one of several ways of doing research whether it is social science related or even socially related because its aim is to understand human beings in a social context by interpreting their actions as a single group, community or a single event: a case. Gillham (2000a, p.1) defines a case study as an investigation to answer specific research questions which seek a range of different evidences from the case settings. Yin (2003) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly defined. The case study approach is especially useful in situations where contextual conditions of the event being studied are critical and where the researcher has no control over the events as they unfold.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) see the primary defining features of a case study as being “multiplicity of perspectives which are rooted in a specific context”. The case may also be a program, an event, or an activity bounded in time and place. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001), a case study examines a bounded system or a case over time in detail, employing multiple sources of data found in the setting. All the collected evidences are collated to arrive at the best possible responses to the research question(s). As a result the researcher may gain a sharpened understanding of why the instance happened as it did, and what might become important to look at more extensively in future research. Gustafsson, (2017) emphasizes the single case study’s appeal in the fields of education and psychology, especially its effectiveness when used to test a “specific instructional strategy”.

Merriam (1998) identifies four essential characteristics of a case study: *particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive*. Particularistic refers to one event, process or situation that is the focus of a study. Descriptive refers to the rich and extensive set of details relating to the phenomena. Each of these two is heuristic because they advance understanding of the phenomena, while inductive refers to the form of reasoning used to determine generalizations or concepts that emerge from the data.

Case studies do not claim to be representative, but the emphasis is on what can be learned from a single case (Mariotto, Zanni and Moraes, 2014). Case studies have value in advancing

fundamental knowledge in the relevant knowledge domains. The underlying philosophy of single case study is “not to prove but to improve” (Stufflebeam, Madaus, and Kellaghan, 2000, p. 283). Indeed, this study seeks to improve the integration of women in school management positions, which might then be applicable to other institutions operating under similar situations.

It has to be noted that research methodology and paradigm are independent though they can be used by researchers to complement their researches; thus, it has to be noted that “qualitative” methodology is not a synonym for the “interpretivist” philosophical stance adopted in this study. Qualitative research may or may not be interpretive, depending upon the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher. Qualitative research can be positivist, interpretive, or critical. It follows from this that the choice of a specific qualitative research method (such as a case study or action research) is independent of the underlying philosophical position adopted.

Given the interpretive stance adopted in this research and the nature of the research question, the Researcher believes that the case study approach is the most appropriate research strategy for this study because of its advantages in revealing in detail the unique perceptions and concerns of individual participants in a real-world situation which would have been lost in quantitative or experimental strategies. The case study design is particularly well suited to situations where it is very difficult to separate a phenomenon’s variables from its context (Yin, 2003).

### **3.6 Selection of the Case**

Stake (2005) argues that understanding the case requires three key components: (1) extensive examination of how things get done; (2) detailed account of ordinary activities; and (3) scrutinizing the context to gain an understanding of the issues of interest to the researcher. This aligns with Seawright, and Gerring (2008) contention that case study focuses on many, if not all, the variables present in a single unit presenting findings in a rich description that uses words and pictures rather than numbers. This idea is complemented by Yin (2009) who suggested that case study “allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events”.

The design for the present research aimed to take advantage of the qualitative case study to understand how all the parts work together to form a whole in the schools in this study (Seawright, and Gerring, 2008). Lusaka district was selected for this study. Lusaka district was selected as the most appropriate as it enabled the researcher to focus on “discovery, insight and understanding about the experiences of the female school administrators in secondary schools. Yin (2009) declares that case study arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena. This view is expanded by Stake (2005), who contends that the case study approach concentrates in understanding the complexities of the case, searching for patterns, coherence and sequence. Moreover, Stake argues that case study in itself is not a method, but a research strategy, which is focused on understanding “issues” which are “complex, situated, problematic relationships” (p. 448).

### **3.6.1 Selection of Sites**

For this qualitative study, purposeful sampling was used. The seven secondary schools were chosen because they were identified as schools in which they were a number of females in management. The schools chosen were located in the urban area setup of the district. The urban schools served a blue-collar community, which predominantly was a mixture of all ethnicities. The schools selected had a history of implementing numerous initiatives across the district. These schools had a recorded higher rating compared to other similar schools in the district. The district was known for implementing innovative initiatives that have increased the performance levels of the schools. The DEBs office was contacted regarding this qualitative case study and the process of selecting the participating schools.

The criteria for site selection of schools included the number of women in management, socioeconomic status of the school, and average academic performance. Moreover, the selection of school sites reflected both urban and rural populations of teachers and the surrounding communities. The DEBs office facilitated the selection of the schools that included the following criteria: the school received consistent school performance scores within the last three years, the school’s mission was to increase management opportunities for all female teachers as aligned with the gender policy to promote women in decision making positions, and the head teacher had

a record of providing quality professional development that aligned with the needs of the teachers so that they were effective in their lesson designs and instruction in the classroom.

### **3.6.2 Selection of Participants**

This study interviewed the following participants: female head teachers, female deputy head teachers, female Head of Departments and female guidance teachers. Participants for interviews were chosen by purposeful sampling (Stake, 1995) to gather information and experiences that were important to understanding the focus of the research. These interview participants represented different levels of the female school administrators, and their experiences and opinions added to the information gathered on the experiences of women in management.

Qualitative research uses non-probability samples for selecting the participants for the study. In a non-probability sample, units are deliberately selected to reflect certain features of or groups within the sampled population. The sample is not intended to be statistically representative: the chances of selection for each element are unknown. Instead, the characteristics of the population are used as a basis for selection. It is this feature that makes this kind of sampling suited to small-scale, in-depth studies (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). A non-probability sampling strategy was appropriate for the current study, given the purpose of the study.

The participants in this research were female school administrators in selected public secondary schools of Lusaka District. More details about participants are provided in table1. This is a purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling is a non-random method of sampling where the researcher selects “information-rich” cases for study in depth (Patton, 2002). It is the most common sampling strategy in qualitative research and seeks cases rich in information that can be studied in great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. The benefit [of purposeful sampling] is that, as Patton (2002) puts it that common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experience and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon.

### **3.6.3 Sample Size**

According to Cohen et al. (2007) a sample is a small section of the total set of the set of objects, events or persons and it constitutes the subject of the study. Dunning (2008) also explains that

the sample population includes the subset of elements which are, ideally, representative of the whole population of which the target groups are the sample. For the purpose of this study, a total sample of 35 participants was involved from the selected schools, comprising 3 female head teachers, 4 female deputy head teachers, 11 female guidance teachers, and 17 female heads of departments who were selected according to their responsibilities. In this study the researcher chose female school administrator because she wanted to find out their experiences as school administrators. Therefore, they would be able to articulate their thoughts, feelings and views about the phenomenon being studied.

**Table 2: Participants from Schools**

	<b>Head teacher</b>	<b>Deputy head teacher</b>	<b>Head of department</b>	<b>Guidance teacher</b>
<b>School A.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>School B.</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>School C.</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>School D.</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>School E.</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>School F.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>School G.</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>

**Source: Field data, 2023**

### **3.7 Instruments for Data Collection**

Interviews and focus group discussion were used to gather information in this study.

#### **3.7.1 Semi- structured interview guide**

Interviews are methods of gathering information through oral quiz using a set of preplanned core questions. According to (Plaisant, 2005), interviews can be very productive since the interviewer can pursue specific issues of concern that may lead to focused and constructive suggestions. The semi-structured interview methodology is increasingly widely used in recent social research discourses Lindlof & Taylor (2002), mainly for its flexibility in asking the exploratory leading questions in order to clarify questions and probe for answers from individual participants.

These techniques being participatory in nature, they provide platforms to generate more complete first-hand primary data and datasets than would be available from secondary data sources in the written form. Semi-structured interview schedule was advantageous because it was flexible in nature as it accorded the interviewer chance to ask further questions that could arise from the replies given by the participants (Burino, Awan&Lanjwani, 2017).

Semi-structured interviews were also used to elicit information on experiences of women in school management positions because interviews helped to collect a broad view on the issue under investigation. Semi-structured interview according to Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson and Kangasniemi (2016) provides a method for collecting rich and detailed information about how individuals experience, understand and explain events in their lives. Interviews provide greater detail and depth than the standard survey, allowing insight into how individuals understand and narrate aspects of their lives. Additionally, interviews can be tailored specifically to the knowledge and experience of the interviewee. The researcher used the noted book and a phone to record information from the participants.

#### **3.7.2 Focus-group Interviews**

Focus group interview is less structured compared to the other types of interviews. This is because of the difficulty in bringing structure in a group; however, rich data can emerge through interaction within the group, for example, sensitive issues that could have been missed in

individual interviews, may be revealed. In a group, people develop and express ideas they would not have thought about on their own (Preece, 2005).

This type of interview is conducted after a series of individual interviews, to further explore the general nature of the comments from different individuals (Shneiderman and Plaisant, 2005). In this study a representative sample was drawn from the subjects who were interviewed by the Researcher by asking simple questions and further, moderating the responses from the group. Maughan (2003) recommends the membership of an ideal focus group to range from six to twelve subjects. In this study three focus-group discussions were conducted comprising of a female teacher, deputy head, two HoDs and guidance teacher. Those who took part in the focus group discussion did not participate in the individual interviews.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

Interpretive researchers attempt to derive their data through direct interaction with the phenomenon being studied. An important aspect of data analysis in qualitative case study is the search for meaning through direct interpretation of what is observed by themselves as well as what is experienced and reported by the subjects. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as “working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns”. The aim of analysis of qualitative data is to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. In this study, after collecting the data, the researcher checked the data for “patterns” which may explain or identify causal links in the data base and grouped the data according to themes. In the process, the researcher concentrated on the whole data first, then attempted to take it apart and re-constructed it again more meaningfully. Categorization helped the researcher to make comparisons and contrasts between patterns, to reflect on certain patterns and complex threads of the data deeply and make sense of them.

The researcher analyzed the data starting with the categorization and organization of data in search of patterns, critical themes and meanings that emerge from the data. A process sometimes referred to as “open coding” (Wickham, 2016) was employed by the researcher. The researcher identified and tentatively named the conceptual categories into which the phenomena observed

was grouped. The goal was to create descriptive, multi-dimensional categories that provided a preliminary framework for analysis.

In a case study like this one, data collection and analysis can also go hand in hand in an iterative manner in that the results of the analysis will help guide the subsequent collection of data. Data collection and analysis inform or drive each other, with the result that the analysis becomes a higher level synthesis of the information. The iterative cycle is repeated and course design and development checked and revised as the process continues. Thus, the researcher used interviews, both individual and focus group to collect data and the data collected was recorded and transcribed. A couple of open-ended questions were posed to which administrators responded verbally. In these processes useful information that may be closely linked to their experiences can emerge. The individual responses were analyzed, compared and categorized with the results of transcription of the focus group interview, and subsequently triangulated and interpreted to draw conclusions.

### **3.9 Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, assessing the accuracy of findings is not easy. However, there are several possible strategies and criteria that can be used to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. Trustworthiness is the corresponding term used in qualitative research as a measure of the quality of research. It is the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy. Shufutinsky, (2020) suggest that the trustworthiness of qualitative research can be established by using four strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability, and are constructed parallel to the analogous quantitative criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and neutrality. Each strategy in turn uses criteria like reflexivity, triangulation and dense descriptions. The Researcher takes cognizance of this argument and prefers to use the term trustworthiness as it is used by several others to cover all these.

#### **3.9.1 Credibility**

Credibility in qualitative research is defined as the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy. Credibility is analogous to internal validity, that is, how research

findings match reality. However, according to the philosophy underlying qualitative research, reality is relative to meaning that people construct within social contexts, (Maxwell, 2002).

Qualitative research is valid to the researcher and not necessarily to others due to the possibility of multiple realities. It is upon the reader to judge the extent of its credibility based on his/her on understanding of the study. Most rationalists would propose that there is not a single reality to be discovered, but that each individual constructs a personal reality (Smith and Ragan, 2005). Thus, from an interpretive perspective, understanding is co-created and there is no objective truth or reality to which the results of a study can be compared. Therefore, the inclusion of member checking into the findings, that is, gaining feedback on the data, interpretations and conclusions from the participants themselves, is one method of increasing credibility. Although it has its own disadvantages, Shufutinsky (2020) consider member checking into the findings as “the most critical technique for establishing credibility”.

### **3.9.2 Transferability**

Research findings are transferable or generalizable only if they fit into new contexts outside the actual study context. Transferability is analogous to external validity, that is, the extent to which findings can be generalized. Generalizability refers to the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times or setting than those directly studied (Maxwell, 2002).

Transferability is considered a major challenge in qualitative research due to the subjectivity from the researcher as the key instrument, and is a threat to valid inferences in its traditional thinking about research data. However, a qualitative researcher can enhance transferability by detailing the research methods, contexts, and assumptions underlying the study. Finfgeld (2010) advocates that transferability is achieved by providing a detailed, rich description of the settings studied to provide the reader with sufficient information to be able to judge the applicability of the findings to other settings that they know.

Since this study adopts a case study approach, the process of generalization that aptly matches it is “inferential generalization” which is best explained as generalizing from the context of the research study itself to other settings or contexts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Therefore, it is a requirement that the researcher documents and justifies the methodological approach, and

describes, in detail, the critical processes and procedures that have helped her to construct, shape and connect meanings associated with those phenomena. Further, throughout the process of this study, the Researcher was sensitive to possible biases by being conscious of the possibilities for multiple interpretations of reality.

In qualitative research, generalizability is sometimes simply ignored in favor of enriching the local understanding of a situation. However, the Researcher has provided a rich, thick description of the study such that data and description speak for themselves to enable readers to appraise the significance of the meanings attached to the findings and make their own judgment regarding the transferability of the research outcomes. Therefore, the generalizability issue has to be resolved by the reader of the research report based on how close the Researcher's and the reader's contexts are. It is a matter of judgment of the context and phenomena found which allows others to assess the transferability of the findings to another setting (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 268).

### **3.9.3 Dependability**

Dependability is analogous to reliability, that is, the consistency of observing the same finding under similar circumstances. According to Laprie (2008), it refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated with similar subjects in a similar context. It emphasizes the importance of the researcher accounting for or describing the changing contexts and circumstances that are fundamental to consistency of the research outcome.

Reliability is problematic and is practically impossible as human behavior is not static, is highly contextual and changes continuously depending on various influencing factors. It is further compounded by the possibility of multiple interpretations of reality by the study subjects; a similar study with different subjects or in a different institution with different organizational culture and context or by a different researcher may not necessarily yield the same results. The quality of inferences also depends on the personal construction of meanings based on individual experience of the researcher and how skilled the researcher is at gathering the data and interpreting them. As a result of all these, reliability in the traditional sense is not practical in a qualitative case study.

### **3.9.4 Conformability of the findings**

Conformability is the degree to which the research findings can be confirmed or corroborated by others. It is analogous to objectivity, that is, the extent to which a researcher is aware of or accounts for individual subjectivity or bias. Hadi and José Closs (2016) argues that auditing could also be used to establish conformability in which the researcher makes the provision of a methodological self-critical account of how the research was done (p. 45). In order to make auditing possible by other researchers, it is a good idea that the researcher archives all collected data in a well-organized, retrievable form so that it can be made available to them if the findings are challenged.

### **3.9.5 Triangulation**

In social research, the term triangulation is used in a less literal sense it involves the use of multiple methods and measures of an empirical phenomenon in order to overcome problems of bias and validity' (Blaikie, 2000; Scandura and Williams, 2000).

Triangulation in this study was done in that two different instruments for data collection was used that is, interview guide and focus group discussion. Focus group discussions and individual interviews were conducted with 35 female school administrators based on the evaluation instruments. The outcomes or responses of the focus group interviews were similar with individual interviews, hence the conclusion that the data collected was factual.

Triangulation arose from an ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes and, in case studies, it can be achieved by using multiple sources of data (Yin, 2003). It is an approach that utilizes multiple data sources, multiple informants, and multiple methods (e.g., participant observation, focus groups, member checking, and so on), in order to gather multiple perspectives on the same issue so as to gain a more complete understanding of the phenomena. Triangulation is used to compare data to decide if it corroborates (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002), and thus, to validate research findings. It is one of the most important ways to improve the trustworthiness of qualitative research findings.

Triangulation being a way of mutual validation of results, it can uncover biases when there is only one researcher investigating a phenomenon. Triangulation may incorporate multiple data

sources, investigators, and theoretical perspectives in order to increase confidence in research findings (Painter and Rigsby, 2005: [online]). The use of results from one set of data to corroborate those from another type of data is also known as triangulation (Brannen, 2004, p. 314).

Since any method can have weaknesses and strengths, triangulation is also a method to increase reliability by reducing systematic (method) error, through a strategy in which the researcher employs multiple methods or sources. If the alternative methods do not share the same source of systematic error, examination of data from the alternative methods gives insight into how individual scores may be adjusted to come closer to reflecting true scores, thereby maximizing the richness and validity of the data, and thus, increasing reliability.

Triangulation is also often cited as one of the main ways of ‘validating’ qualitative research evidence. Yet much debate exists as to whether triangulation offers qualitative researchers a satisfactory method of verifying their findings. Many viewpoints have been expressed, resulting in the argument that the worth of triangulation is the provision of broader insights. For example, Richie and Lewis (2003) state that “the ‘security’ that triangulation provides is through giving a fuller picture of phenomena, not necessarily a more certain one”.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

This being a qualitative study, the researcher had to interact deeply with the participants, thus entering their personal domains of values, weaknesses, individual disabilities and the like to collect data. Silverman (2000, p. 201) reminds researchers that they should always remember that while they are doing their research, they are in actual fact entering the private spaces of their participants. Understandably, this raises several ethical issues that should be addressed during, and after the research had been conducted. Creswell (2003) states that the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informants. Wickham, (2016) list several issues that researchers should consider when analyzing data. They caution researchers to be aware of these and other issues before, during, and after the research had been conducted. Some of the issues involve the following: informed consent (do participants have full knowledge of what is involved?), harm and risk (can the study hurt participants?), honesty and trust (is the researcher being truthful in presenting data?), privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (will the

study intrude too much into group behaviors?) and intervention and advocacy (what should researchers do if participants display harmful or illegal behavior?).

One of the normally unexpected concerns relating to ethical issues is the cultural sensitivity. Silverman (2000) argues that the relationship between the researcher and the subject during an interview needs to be considered in terms of the values of the researcher and cultural aspects.

Therefore, appropriate steps should be taken to adhere to strict ethical guidelines in order to uphold participants' privacy, confidentiality, dignity, rights, and anonymity. In view of the forgoing discussions, the following section describes how ethical issues in the conduct of the research have been addressed:

#### **i) Informed Consent**

The Researcher informed the participants – the school administrators - of the purpose, nature, data collection methods, and extent of the research prior to commencement. Further, the Researcher explained to them their typical roles; this was very critical as the approach was altogether different from the traditional face to face approaches. In line with this, the Researcher obtained their informed consent in writing in the format given in Appendix.

#### **ii) Harm and Risk**

In this research study the Researcher guaranteed that no participants were put in a situation where they might be harmed as a result of their participation, physical or psychological as stated by Trochim (2000).

#### **iii) Honesty and Trust**

Adhering strictly to all the ethical guidelines serves as standards about the honesty and trustworthiness of the data collected and the accompanying data analysis.

#### **iv) Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity**

As the study included a test-retest reliability check, total anonymity was not possible. However, the Researcher ensured that the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants would be maintained through the removal of any identifying characteristics before widespread

dissemination of information. The Researcher made it clear that the participants' names would not be used for any other purposes, nor will information be shared that reveals their identity in any way.

**v) Voluntary Participation**

Despite all the above mentioned precautions, it was made clear to the participants that the research was only for academic purpose and their participation in it was absolutely voluntary. No one was forced to participate.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The purpose of the study was to examine the experiences of women in management position in the education system in Lusaka district in Lusaka Province of Zambia. The data were gathered by means of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The interview schedule can be found in appendix 1. The experiences shared by the thirty-five (35) research participants are meant to contribute to the understanding of the nature of their experiences as female school administrators. The data were analyzed through the process of thematic analysis in order to elicit recurring themes that appeared as relating to the lived experiences of the women in management positions. The themes that were significant to this study include; becoming a school administrator, the administrator's work experience and personal challenges, as well as strategies for enhancing the participation of women in school management, and the participant's future aspirations. The findings are presented according to these research questions:

- i. What are the major organizational factors that affect female school administrators in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district?
- ii. What are the personal factors that affect participation of women in school administration in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District?
- iii. How effective are the strategies and mechanisms employed by schools to promote female participation in school administration?
- iv. What strategies can be put in place to promote female teachers' participation in school administrative positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District?

## **4.2 Presentation of the findings**

This section presents views or responses of the female administrators interviewed by the researcher relating to the experiences regarding their management positions. Below is how they responded. Head teachers “ responses are indicated by the letter “(HT)”; Deputy Head teacher’s “ responses are indicated by the letter “(DHT)”; Heads of department “ responses are indicated by the letter “(HoD)” and the guidance teachers “ responses are indicated by the letter “(GT)”.

### **4.2.1 Findings on research question one (1)**

With reference to research question one, five themes emerged. These themes were: Sources of Motivation, the preparation received for administration, society’s perception of female administrators, the advantages experienced as an administrator, as well as the perceived barriers to women’s participation in school management.

#### **4.2.1.1 Sources of Motivation**

Although none of the women reported facing any obstacles at the point of their entry into administration, a lack of motivation to participate in school leadership was evident, according to most of their responses. It emerged that none of the women had started their careers dreaming of a future in which they would be school head teachers. One administrator asserted:

I found myself in this position after my head teacher had passed away’. ‘The DEBs (who was a woman) encouraged me to take up the position saying women were so few in school leadership and she thought I was capable. (HT2, 2022)

Another administrator elaborated:

I did not apply for this post. My former deputy head teacher went on transfer and I naturally took over the position of deputy head teacher, having worked as a HoD in the school for nine years. When I was offered his position, my family and close friends encouraged me to take it up. Looking back, I think all I needed was a slight push, (DHT4 2022).

Five participants got the opportunities for management at new schools that were being upgraded in the district, in an attempt to take services closer to the people and to ease the congestion in the existing secondary schools. For these women it was an opportunity to start their management in a totally new place. One participant clearly stated:

I would never have taken the position in my school. The teachers were too familiar with me to take me seriously (HoD7, 2022).

Three of the participants had applied for their administrative positions. These women seemed to have gained confidence and started believing in their leadership capabilities during the years they had worked as deputy head teachers. A common motivation among them was their knowledge of administrative duties at a higher level. Two of them said their head teachers were away from school most of the time. They found themselves handling the head teacher's duties, and this motivated them to showcase their capabilities.

Participants GT2, HoD4 and GT5 indicated that the position fell vacant while HoD1 indicated that she was approached by the Head teacher to fill the position as she was already acting in the same position. HT3 indicated that she was redeployed to head a new school because of her good track record. Three of the participants (HoD11, DHT2 & GT6) also indicated that they never really aspired to become administrators, while two participants (HoD14 & HoD5) indicated that they applied and did indeed have aspirations of being the administrators. All the participants also indicated that their families were supportive of them to get the leadership position.

From the responses of the participants, it is clear that most females are not motivated to enter leadership positions. Reasons for entering leadership positions emerged like family and friends encouraging them. Colleagues also play a part when they see one is capable of making a contribution and a difference in the running of the school. Here are some selected excerpts from the motivating factors expressed by the participants:

I aspired to be an administrator, by encouragement from staff and other people who thought I was suitable". "The position alienates me from the classroom." "My parents encouraged me (DHT1, 2022).

It is obvious or apparent from the accounts shared by the participants regarding their motivation and what influenced them to attain leadership positions that it was based on intrinsic and extrinsic factors. While for some females motivation to attain a leadership position is triggered by a need for personal growth and to make a difference in the education system, for others it arises from the external force. They would not deliberately go for the leadership position but eventually take the position for the sake of the learners, friends or the school.

#### **4.2.1.2 Teacher's Preparation for Administrative Positions**

Most of the administrators in this study had no leadership training related directly to the position of their position. Although five of the participants had attended a school management course earlier in their careers, they admitted it was not a conscious effort on their part to prepare them for management at the time.

It would appear that the only preparation for management the head teachers and deputy head teachers received was working either as deputy head teacher or head of department. The administrative duties delegated to them acquainted them with headship, so they did not feel like they were 'groping in the dark' when they got into their current positions. HT2 credits her former head teacher with her mentoring and modeling a responsibility in headship. She commented:

My former boss was a person who took his work seriously and would sometimes say to me jokingly, 'Maggie, you know you may find yourself heading this school someday'. Then he would guide me through some of the duties required of a head teacher and explain to me how to deal with various official duties. Sometimes he would even call me into his office to listen in and comment when he was handling parents' and teachers' issues. That helped me a lot when I took over the school. I used to consult him a lot in the initial days (HT2, 2022).

Similarly, HT1 gained experience from having to do administrative duties delegated to her by her former head teacher.

My head teacher always depended on me. He gave me a lot of responsibility because I did not mind taking it - sometimes I was literally 'the one in the office'. There is not much I am doing now that I am doing for the first time. The only difference was that then, if I got stuck with something, I would keep it aside for the head teacher to come and handle. Now everything is on my shoulders (HT1, 2022).

All the participants had attended various seminars and workshops during the course of their work. These workshops addressed specific aspects of their work, especially if it was something new the Ministry of Education or another stakeholder was introducing in the school system. The participants were, however, in agreement that some form of training, specifically directed at the duties they were going to take up as administrators, would have helped them in performing their duties more efficiently.

DT3 sums it up as follows,

The nature and the scope of the work change as you get into administration, and I feel that some form of training beyond the orientation given by my former head teacher would have been necessary (DT3, 2022).

#### **4.2.1.3 Perceptions and Attitudes towards Female Managers**

Although these female administrators did not experience obstacles at the time of their appointment, most of them felt that once in their schools, they were received into administration with some skepticism. They, nonetheless, acknowledged that with time the society accepted and respected female administrators after they had proved themselves. Indeed, some of the schools that the researcher visited were of the best-performing schools in the vicinity. The female administrators attributed the good performance to their working hard to try and prove themselves. HoD7 comments:

You set out knowing every step you take is being watched. You cannot afford to prove the skeptics right so you put your all into it. In the end, results begin to show and the people begin looking at you differently (HoD7, 2022).

DHT4 was of the opinion that the way women led also had something to do with the improved performance, and hence improved acceptance. She said,

You know women are motherly, and they tend to nurture their subjects. Teachers and learners who are treated well tend to work hard because they would not want to disappoint their 'mother' (DHT4, 2022).

#### **4.2.1.4 The Barriers Encountered in the Process of Management**

Time-commitment, poor remuneration, fear of geographical mobility and fear of responsibilities associated with management, were the most recurring hindrances noted during the interviews. They thought that these were the major factors putting other women teachers off management. The remuneration offered to school administrators for their added responsibilities was said to be too little compared to the amount of work to be done. This was another factor keeping women off management. Most of them said that one had to look at the cumulative benefits of being an administrator, as the pay was not enough to attract one to the position. HoD9 (and others agreed with her sentiments) lamented that some of the teachers under her earned a much higher salary than she did because they were on a higher grade. She commented:

The responsibility allowance is too little. One needs to see a significant difference on the administrator's pay slip. Unless you appreciate the cumulative advantages of headship, you can get very discouraged. The pay is not attractive (HoD9, 2022).

Another recurring hindrance, as noted by the participants, was the fear of geographical mobility. They said women feared applying for administrative positions because most of the time the promotion meant movement from one school to another, usually away from home. This could explain the fact that some of these women had worked as deputy head teachers without applying for headship. They had waited to be noticed and perhaps to be assured that they would be promoted at the same schools, or to schools that were nearby. Indeed, almost all the participants interviewed worked at schools where they commuted or walked from their homes, while some were housed in the school compounds. Some of them said that they would consider stepping down from their current positions if they were transferred to areas far away from their homes.

There existed a general feeling that some women feared the responsibilities associated with heading a school or department. They preferred to remain in their safe zones where they were not exposed to too many challenges and too many responsibilities. Some of the women interviewed lived in the areas where they had interacted with people in the vicinity for most of their lives. Dealing with the same people in a different capacity (as a leader) posed a challenge. The participants thought the fear of dealing with such people was a factor deterring women from applying for leadership positions. HT1 elaborated,

When you work in an area where you grew up, it means that some of the people you serve are your relatives and neighbours. It is not unusual to find some issues of domesticity creeping into the leadership role. Like a relative accusing a head teacher of punishing her child because they do not get along on the home front. I guess some people would like to avoid this (HT1, 2022).

#### **4.2.1.5 Benefits of Being in Administration**

This was another finding on research question one; most of the administrators interviewed had not planned their path to administration. In the words of DHT3, it seemed that most of them had '*found themselves in the position*'. They, however, acknowledged that working as administrators had numerous positive effects on their lives. These include the following:

### **a) Self-development**

As they continued their work as administrators, most of the participants reported discovering new capabilities within themselves. Knowing that they were able to deal effectively with the duties of a school administrator confirmed their capability. HoD16 reported having a feeling of '*I can do it!*' after a few weeks in office. Similarly, GT4 said that she '*gained confidence with each passing day*', while HT2 remembers her initial days as '*each day being better than the previous*'.

Dealing with different kinds of people made some of these administrators' better problem-solvers. Every eventuality in the school either started or finally landed in the office of the administrators. They were not prepared for some of the issues, but they had to find a way of solving them. HT1, (2022) put it metaphorically,

It's like being a valley surrounded by hills. When it rains, all the water comes down into the valley carrying all in its path. In this position, the problems of the teachers, learners, parents and other workers all land in your office. You have to be quite sober to deal with all of them. I find myself more tolerant and discerning than I used to be and I think that is a good thing.

DHT3, (2022) reported about her first days as a deputy head teacher as follows,

My office window overlooks the school gate. Every time I saw a person come in, I got nervous and started wiping surfaces that were not even dusty. With time that has gone. These days I sit calmly and wait to hear what the person has to say.

### **b) Networking with Peers and other Stakeholders**

The women in the study had improved their interaction in the education circle and beyond as stated by HT1 and HT2 (2022). This happened when the administrators were doing consultations and were raising funds for various school projects. The fact that networking had taken place was evident in various schools, as was observed during the visits to the school, and as confirmed by the head teachers. At HT1's school there were computers, a borehole, and food for the school feeding programme - all donations from people and organizations she referred to as 'friends of the school'. On the importance of networking, she explains,

One has to go out there and talk to people. All these things were donated by people I can call 'friends of the school'. I believe that makes them my friends too because I have been

communicating with them on behalf of the school. Some people are eager to help but you have to knock on their door first (HT1, 2022).

Other people the participating administrators got to network with were their fellow administrators and officers in the education sector. They learnt what was happening in other schools, consulted on issues they were not familiar with, and gained information on what was taking place in the education sector. HoD 2, GT6 and HoD17 said that they used to consult, what they termed as '*experienced head teachers*', many times when they started working, and that they still consult from time to time.

### **c) Gaining Recognition from the Community**

According to the participants, their status as administrators had increased their recognition and respect in the community. In this regard, HT3 noticed that her name came up every time people needed to hand out responsibilities in activities happening in the community and in her church. She commented, '*I guess they assume that if I can handle a whole school, then I can also lead smaller committees*'. This was also reported by GT3, HT1, DHT4 and HoD11. HT1 and DHT 2 are leaders in their respective churches, while HT3 sits in a committee that raises funds for the girl-child education in her Zone.

For other administrators recognition came with the offices they visit and the people they meet. DHT1 said that through her position she had '*shaken hands with politicians, senior education officers and other high-ranking people*'. This concurred with an experience HT2 had at the DEBs office where he recognized her from a group of six people who were waiting to see him.

I am the only one he called by title (head teacher). He requested the others to allow me in first so that I could go back to my duties of attending to the learners, and they did. It is an honor to be recognized by a high-ranking officer (HT2, 2022).

### **d) Opening for Further Leadership Opportunities**

Gaining experience and confidence in leadership was seen as an opening for the participants to venture into other areas of leadership. The responses from the interviewees revealed that most of the participants appreciated the fact that working in the position of administrator had 'added an item' on their curriculum vitae, which gave them an added advantage if they were to look for a job elsewhere. Two examples are HoD7 and HoD10, who felt that with their experience they

were in a position to handle bigger challenges. HoD8 pointed out many senior leaders who were formerly school leaders, including politicians and even the current vice president, concluding that,

School leadership prepares one for any kind of leadership and I believe that I can also be like one of them.

#### **4.2.2 Findings on Research Question two (2)**

Two themes from the second research question emerged. The first theme examines the administrators' perceptions of their reception by various stakeholders once they reported to their workstations. The second theme explores the administrative challenges they had to face in the course of their work.

##### **4.2.2.1 Reception into Administration**

This part of the interview intended to discover the administrators' first experiences in office in terms of how they interpreted their reception by the learners, the teachers, parents and other stakeholders. The reception they received from the learners and teachers seemed to differ from the reception from the parents. HT1 was promoted within her school and she confirmed a fairly smooth transition.

We had always worked as a team in our school. I think that was one of the things that encouraged me to accept this position. I was familiar with the environment. I just stepped from one office into another. People took time, though, to take to anything new I tried introducing, but I still think it's easier that way as opposed to moving to a new school (HT1, 2022).

Only one participant among those promoted in their own schools, DTH2, had a totally different experience, and considered herself a very strong lady, having withstood the treatment she received as a new deputy head teacher. She had got the promotion after her deputy head teacher was transferred. The DEBs office asked her to take over as acting deputy head teacher. The environment in the school she had taught for four years, once as an HoD, suddenly became hostile. The learners were rude, and once they even attacked her physically.

The experiences of the administrators who started new schools were slightly different. Everything was new for them – a new environment, new teachers, new parents, and a new school culture to be set. HoD5 considered this a challenge on the one hand, but an advantage on the

other hand, because there was nothing and no one to be compared to. All the stakeholders were eager to develop the new school, so they worked closely together. HoD5 appreciated the wealth of knowledge the teachers brought from their former schools. Together they started to shape a school culture.

I told the teachers in my department that the new school was for each of us to build from the experiences we had gathered from elsewhere. They were eager to cooperate (HoD5, 2022).

The participants reported a cooler reception from the parents, especially in their first days. Most of them felt that the parents, although they did not reject them outright, seemed skeptical at first, but accepted them with time. The skeptics were more pronounced in schools which had never had a female head teacher before, and where a former female head teacher was thought to have failed in the job. HT3 said that initially she continuously received parents in her office who came to *'greet the new head'*, and who had all kinds of advice on how they thought the school should be run. HT3, (2022) said;

One of them actually told me to my face that although he did not doubt my leadership, he thought that what the school needed was a strong male teacher to control the many lady teachers (the school had only two male teachers) in the school.

In another instance, the patriarchal factor was evident in a parent's reference to a female administrator, as reported to the head teacher by another parent. 'On my way to school, I was asked by another parent where I was going, and I replied that I was going to the school to see these 'women'. He used a derogatory term used for women in the local language to refer to the head teacher and her deputy, who is also a woman. This may imply that the parent perceived them as women first, before seeing them as school leaders. Another Administrator reported that:

The area councilor kept approaching the DEBs office demanding for a male head teacher to replace me, but the officer refused that he knew what he was doing by sending me there as the head teacher.

#### **4.2.2.2 Administrative Challenges**

The challenging nature of the female administrators' jobs was compounded by some particular factors that emerged from the data, which include accountability issues, parents' grievances and expectations, time away from school, limited resources and dealing with difficult teachers.

### **a) Accountability issues**

School administrators are the managers of the curriculum, of the people and of the resources in their respective schools. Issues of being accountable for these responsibilities kept recurring in the interviews. Most of these administrators, as noted earlier, had not attended school management courses to prepare them for management, and thus for their leadership roles, as a result, they found themselves feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities. HT2, 2022 indicated,

Whatever happens in this school, all the questions land in my office first. If exams results are bad, they will wave placards and chant 'Eunice must go!' If money is misappropriated, they will come for me first. If a child gets hurt, I will be the one to answer. Don't you think this is too much for one person.

HT1, 2022 concurred. She said that sometimes people even referred to the school as the *head teacher's* school, instead of calling it by its name.

One is expected to have answers all the time. I only feel comfortable when I leave the school after all the teachers and pupils have left. These people rarely see my back.

What HT1 meant by this was that she always got to school before everyone else and left after everybody else has left. That, she said, reduced the chances of her being taken by surprise by things that happen in the school.

### **b) The parents' grievances and expectations**

Another common theme among the participants was the dilemma they sometimes faced when handling the grievances of parents, and the high expectations these parents had from the school. All the administrators interviewed had, at one time or another, to handle parent's grievances, some of which created a great deal of stress. It is simply not possible for the administrators to keep all the stakeholders happy all of the time, and there were times when the parents left the school dissatisfied because the administrators did not respond as they had expected.

In some cases, the grievances were directed against the teachers. The teachers are guided by a code of conduct, and the administrators first has to ascertain if an offense was committed. Some parents could not understand that the administrators needed to listen to both sides before she could take any action, and that she was limited in her reactions by protocol. HT2, 2022 explains,

Some of them expect me to call in the teacher and give her or him a tongue lashing before them. Sometimes it is the parent who is in the wrong, usually because of not knowing the school rule.

In other cases, the grievances were against other parents. Certain disagreements that happen in the community end up in school. Sometimes the parents involved their children too much in their personal affairs. Children from such homes sometimes got involved in a fight at school, and after investigation it was found that the fight had actually started at home, necessitating the head teacher to summon the parents. This is what happened at HT3's school. The parents traded insults in her office before she even had time to talk to them.

And yet, at times the grievances were against the parents' own children. The participants felt that sometimes the parents expected too much from them, bringing to school issues that they actually had to resolve at home. DHT4 said that it was not unusual for a parent to come to her office with the child, expecting the deputy head teacher to punish the child for things that the child did at home. On one occasion a parent brought her teenage daughter to school to report to the deputy head teacher that the child had not slept at home. Although she later took time to counsel the girl, DHT4 was of the opinion that some parents needed to exercise their authority where their children were concerned. She said,

I find some of these parents ridiculous. Some of them do not want to take responsibility. They think all the discipline lies with the teacher (DHT4, 2022).

DHT1, 2022 said that some of these experiences really weighed her down.

I have to listen to all their stories. I am human. These stories affect me. Sometimes I spend quite some time trying to calm down a parent who finally seems to have found a person with whom to share her grief. I am not trained in counseling but I do the best I can.

Children who come from dysfunctional homes often demonstrate emotional problems that interfered with their performance at school. Each of the GT had these kinds of children in their schools. As one of the GT5, 2022 commented,

The first gauge for the success of a school is performance, yet the social and emotional status of a child is also a great determinant of performance. Some people do not understand this. They expect us to perform miracles.

The grievances of parents are common in schools, contributing to the stress of the administrator who has to work through the grievance process to reach a solution.

### **c) Time away from School**

Some administrators are also classroom teachers, and the number of lessons they take depends on the status of staffing at their schools. Several of the participants had quite a number of classes to teach, as their schools were under-staffed. Some HoDs, like HoD16, GT7, HoD12, HoD13 and HoD17 had almost the same teaching load as the other teachers. Their absence from school to attend meetings at the education office, or networking with other stakeholders to solicit funds for their schools, meant that quite an amount of their teaching time was being used. This forced them to take extra time to cover their lessons which, at times, interfered with the children's and their own schedules. Yet, the classes had to be taught because the syllabus had to be covered, and the administrators also knew that the other teachers were looking up to them to produce excellent results.

HoD16 said she missed the days when she could attend to all her classes as scheduled. It gave her confidence for the exams because she knew she had done her work well. If her pupils did not perform well (which, ironically, rarely happened, even with her frequent absence) it always left her feeling that she had failed the learners.

### **d) Limited Resources**

Six of the participants had started new schools, and they were the ones who complained most about limited resources. The phrase 'lack of money' was repeated several times during their conversations with the researcher. Indeed, the lack of resources was also confirmed during the researcher's observations when she visited the schools for the interviews. In HT1's, DTH3's, DHT4's and HoD7's school, there were no offices for the heads of department. In DHT3's and HoD7's case, the interviews were conducted in a classroom during the lunch break, while in DHT4's school the interview was conducted after the children had left the school, while in HT1's case, the interview was conducted under a tree in the compound. These administrators did their work making use of cabinets placed in other teachers' classes, limiting the administrator's interaction with parents and others who visited the school. In one school there were not enough

classrooms. The pupils came to the classrooms in shifts - half of the pupils occupied the classrooms in the morning, and the other half during the afternoon.

Some of the participants who did not have a problem with buildings, complained about the money they were expected to produce to finance various activities. HT3, 2022 commented,

Sometimes you are asked to send several teachers to a workshop and provide for their transport and lunch. The money is not always available.

### **e) Dealing with Difficult Teachers**

Whether the administrator was promoted in the school she had taught, or was transferred to another school, each of the participants experienced difficult teachers on the staff, and this posed a great challenge. The participants made mention of teachers who always came to school late, who were absent without permission, and who *'were not a good example to the pupils'*, according to DHT2. Probed further, she said she was referring to teachers who sometimes come to school intoxicated, or who smoked in the school compound, knowing too well that it was against the rules. The dilemma of dealing with some of these teachers presented itself especially if the pupils performed well in that particular teacher's subject, which was sometimes the case. The dilemma arose on whether to report the teacher to the authorities and risk having him transferred which might result in lowering the school's mean score in the subject he teaches, or simply to let him be. HT3 explained her dilemma as follows,

In administration I believe there is a code of conduct, and then there is the human face. When one is faced with a difficult teacher, you want to hope that he will change with time after being talked to. If he is a good performer, you really do not want to lose him. It is a tricky situation because, on the other hand, you also fear that he may be a bad influence on others (HT3, 2022).

A specific category of teachers who were thought to be difficult by the participants were those who had stepped down from administration as they kept undermining the school leadership, and who were reminiscing about their days as administrators. Those who went back to teaching after going through interdiction were also considered to be problematic.

### **4.2.3 Findings on Research question three which is: How effective are the strategies and mechanisms employed by schools to promote female participation in school administration?**

Three themes from the third research question emerged. These were; Self-confidence, balancing work and social life and home-work conflict.

#### **4.2.3.1 Self-Confidence**

From the accounts of these administrators it was apparent that from time to time they experienced a lack of confidence in their work. For most of them this was their first time to be in management. Only three of the women worked in schools which had been headed by a female head teacher before. These three reported feeling uncomfortable during the first days, and even thereafter, when they had to deal with issues that posed a dilemma. DHT2, 2022 put it this way,

The first time I addressed the school assembly as deputy head of a new school I felt uneasy. I had prepared a very short speech because I felt my confidence failing. I asked for feedback from one of the teachers whom I had worked with in another school and she said that I need not have worried.

Their responsibilities were sometimes overwhelming, and they did not always feel sure that what they were doing was the right thing. HT1, 2022 commented,

I find myself scrutinizing my reaction to situations all the time and wondering whether I handled them in the right way. I usually take time before making a decision as I pondered the best route to take. The moments just before a major decision has to be made are the most trying for me. It is as if I am carrying my work with me in my mind and heart all the time.

The women in the study, however, acknowledged gaining confidence and adopting coping mechanisms as time went by. They did not, though, elaborate on the coping mechanisms. Each of them said they had a higher level of confidence than when they had started working in their positions.

#### **4.2.3.2 Effects of Management Process on Private Life**

The female administrators spoke of how their social lives had been affected by their entry into leadership. Spending many hours at school meant that part of their private lives needed

adjustment. DHT1, 2022, who worked in the same neighborhood where she lived, explained how her religious activities have been affected,

I used to attend lunch time prayers in my local church but I rarely do so these days. Time does not allow for it. Being a leader of the women's group at church, most of the people I lead are parents of my school. The leadership face I put on in school is different from the one I put on in church. Sometimes they do not understand me. I am considering relinquishing my post as the leader of the church's women's group.

The way the society perceived them also had an effect on their lives, and they had to be extra careful of how they behaved themselves socially. HoD10, 2022 shares the following,

Being an administrator has put me in the limelight and now more people recognize me wherever I go. I have to be mindful of the way I dress, whom I associate with and even the places I visit.

The time-commitment of these female administrators was incredible. They spent so much time juggling school-work and responsibilities at home that they had no time left they could call their own. Some of them said they had sacrificed of their friends as they did not have time to interact with them. GT6 reported on her relationship with an elderly friend as follows,

The other day an old lady I used to visit complained that she sees very little of me these days. Her children have left home and my visits really cheer her up. She tries to, but I wonder if she understands that it is the added responsibility that keeps me away (GT6,2022).

HoD9, 2022 added,

I don't have enough time left to groom myself. Sometimes I wear the same hairstyle for days. I look at the other lady teachers with their smart hairstyles and I envy them. These days you mostly find me in the salon at night.

The added responsibilities kept the women so busy that it affected their relationships with their friends, their religious obligations, and even the time meant for themselves.

Perhaps the one area that all the participants felt that suffered the most was their family life. The ascribed roles of women on the domestic front created a challenge where they had to balance work and home. Each of them had something to share on how their administrative duties affected

their time and their relationships with their families. Although most of them reported receiving support from their family members, they felt guilty, as they felt they did not fulfill their duties as mothers and wives (for those who were married) the way they wished to. They had to make sacrifices, especially in respect of their families. This was confirmed by HoD2 and HoD7, who said they had to send their youngest children to boarding school, as they felt they were not giving them enough quality time. HoD2, 2022 indicated,

My son would get home before me, and since I am tired most of the time when I get home, I was not able to share his enthusiasm. I decided to send him to boarding school with the hope that I would be in a position to give him better quality time when we are both at home during the school holiday.

HoD7 mentioned how her daughter was once sent home from school because her mother had failed to attend a parents' meeting. Administrators meeting coincided with the parents' meeting. She had chosen to attend the administrators meeting and visit the school the following day. *'I was left feeling like an 'anti-mum'.*

#### **4.2.4 Findings on Research question four which is: What strategies can be put in place to promote female teachers' participation in school administrative positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka District?**

Two themes emerged from the fourth research question. These were, enhancing the participation of women in leadership and the future aspirations of the female administrator.

##### **4.2.4.1 Measures about Increasing Effectiveness of Female Administrators**

The participants made several suggestions on what they thought would attract women to school management. The lack of mentoring was a concern raised by the majority of them, in terms of grooming and preparing them for school leadership. Several of them felt that the presence of very few women in school management at the time they had started their careers made it a very foreign idea to them then. HoD9, 2022, who works in the same area where she grew up and started her career, says she always imagined that school management was a man's job. She elaborated,

During the time I went to school as well as the time I started my career, I had only known of one woman primary school head teacher. She headed a town school and she came from another district. Even most of the lady teachers in my primary school taught the lower classes. There was no role-model for us girls. When I went to secondary school, I found a woman head teacher but then I thought that, because it was a girl's school, it had to have a woman as head teacher.

The existence of role-models and mentors were specifically mentioned as a factor that would help other women to have interest in school management. HoD5 and DHT3 felt that if the women who were already heading schools, and those found at all levels of the education leadership ladder, mentored aspiring women leaders well, the increase in women in school management would be realized.

HT1 noted that most of the times when women school heads talked about their work, they tended to concentrate on the negative aspects, thus discouraging those who would have liked to join. HT1 implored the women school heads to talk about both the positive and negative aspects of the job, so that aspirants may make an informed choice. She insisted that there were positive things about being a head that aspirants should know of. HT1, 2022 indicated,

It's not all doom in this job. Yes, the pay is not good but money is not all. There are good and bad days. Let us talk about them all. As we talk about the difficulties we are facing, let us also mention the satisfaction one gets when your school performs well or when an otherwise naughty child has reformed. Negative talk can be discouraging.

The importance of management courses in relation to beginning management, was also mentioned, and to on-going continuous professional development. The participants felt that there should be specific courses for women who aspire for school management, as well as further courses where women receive training and get to share school management experiences that are unique to women.

The participants felt that their participation in school management would also be enhanced if women were promoted while taking into account limited geographical movement, in order to ensure that their promotion did not affect their family set-up.

#### **4.2.4.2 The future Aspirations of the Female Administrator**

Their future aspirations differed greatly among the participants, but it was apparent that none of them wanted to head their current schools up to their retirement age. Seven of them indicated

that they would look for further promotion in education, hoping to retire at the highest level possible. It also emerged that a number of them were hoping to use their positions to build their *curriculum vitae*, in order to secure 'better' jobs outside of teaching. Two of the administrators actually said that the job was not worth the stress, and that they would consider stepping down and going back to classroom teaching, as that was their passion.

One of the participants expressed the hope to go back to teaching. She said that if that was not possible and she continued being a HoD, she would opt for early retirement. Another one was hoping to save money to enable her to start up a business, so that she could leave the teaching profession. Four of the participants had enrolled for master's degree courses, in the hope of securing themselves lecturing positions in colleges. The participants who wanted to opt out of school management cited the lack of an attractive pay package as a reason.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Overview**

This chapter seeks to interpret and explain the meaning of the findings for this research. Therefore, it relates its research finding to other findings and views, which were conducted elsewhere. This is because, in discussing these findings, it would be essential to relate the findings with other scholars so that it would be possible to identify the areas where the results are the same and also the areas where the result are in sharp contrast, or even the areas where this research will fill up the information gaps which exists in the literature. The data were analyzed through the process of thematic analysis in order to elicit recurring themes that appeared as relating to the lived experiences of the women in management positions. The themes that were significant to this study include becoming a school administrator, the administrator's work experience and personal challenges, as well as strategies for enhancing the participation of women in school management, and the participant's future aspirations. Hence, findings of this research study were discussed based on these themes.

#### **5.2 Becoming a School Administrator**

This first theme focused on teacher's motivation, preparation received for administration, society's perception, advantages experienced as administrators, as well as the perceived barriers to women's participation in school leadership. Although none of the women reported facing any organizational obstacle at the point of their entry into management, a lack of motivation to participate in school management was evident, according to most of their responses. It emerged that none of the women had started their careers dreaming of a future in which they would be school head teachers. This was confirmed by the fact that twelve of the women in the study had not applied for the position of head teacher. They did not follow the procedure set out in the education act 2011 subsection (1) on the Appointment and Deployment of Administrators of secondary schools which states that one has to indicate interest by applying for the position. They waited for the positions to be offered to them. It is important, however, to note that some of the administrators were appointed before the act was put in place. On the contrary, Luinby et al.

(2010) as well as Ongaki. Omwoyo and Musa (2015) revealed that women have leadership inspiration, determination and abilities. But their aspirations are dampened by discrimination and the lack of availability of management positions.

Most of the participants were aware of the advertised posts but did not apply. Ironically, several of them had applied for the post of deputy head teacher earlier in their careers, but they found themselves taking up their positions of head teacher for various reasons. For most of these women, the suggestion for their promotion had come from other people, mostly officers in the education leadership hierarchy. This finding corresponds with an observation made in a study by Eddy (2008:52) that some women may not consider upper level positions on their own, and thus there existed the increased importance of well-placed suggestions by mentors.

Three of the participants had applied for headship. These women seemed to have gained confidence and started believing in their leadership capabilities during the years they had worked as deputy head teachers. A common motivation among them was their knowledge of administrative duties at a higher level. Two of them said their head teachers were away from school most of the time. They found themselves handling the head teacher's duties, and this motivated them to showcase their capabilities. Amondi (2011) declares that management values in society have been formulated by males to favor males over females. A case in point is that many organizations still define the competence of an administrator in terms of traits that are associated with males, such as the availability to work all the time, strength and firmness.

The most striking similarity among all the women in their entry into leadership was their perception of themselves as the unofficial leaders, yet most of them did not apply for leadership positions. Several of the women had shown leadership qualities elsewhere, mostly in church. They also believed in their leadership capabilities as deputy head teachers or head of department. It is no wonder then that none of them had resisted when someone else pointed them out as being suitable for the position of school administrators. Another similarity is the relative degree of ease with which they had entered school leadership, as none of the women reported having experienced obstacles on their path to leadership.

This data revealed that in most cases the women's path to leadership was, in a way, unplanned. The majority of the participants in this study did not declare any intent to lead in the early years of their career. It can be concluded that the women did not make themselves visible for consideration of promotion by applying for leadership positions. Their visibility was accidental (head teacher being transferred, head teacher passing away, a new school being opened). This indicates how the women perceived themselves as leaders. Personal factors such as beliefs, self-perception and expectations, referred to in the Social Cognitive Theory (Wolfolk 2007:330, and Santrock (2000:8) may explain the reason why most of the women in this study took a relatively long time in their careers before entering leadership. They did not see themselves as leaders; hence they did not strive for leadership positions. The social environment triggered their interest (they waited to be noticed by others). They also accepted the leadership positions where the physical settings were convenient for them.

Various studies, for example by Oplatka (2006:210), Kyrioukous and Saiti 2006:1-2), Adams & Hambright (2004:211), and Eddy (2008:52), referred to in the literature review (section 2.4.2), which attribute the under-representation in leadership positions to women's own decision not to apply for promotion, hold true in this study. Even when presented with an opportunity, most of them did not declare any interest. They waited for someone else to notice them and give them '*a slight push*', as one of the participant put it.

Most of the female school administrators in this study had no leadership training related directly to the position of school administrators. Although three of the women had attended a school management course earlier in their careers, they admitted it was not a conscious effort on their part to prepare them for headship at the time. For them it was just another course that had been introduced by the ministry of education that their head teachers had nominated them to attend. They had all worked as senior teachers in their schools at that stage. Notably, these were the same women who later applied for the post of head teacher.

The study revealed that all the school administrators had attended various seminars and workshops during the course of their work. These workshops addressed specific aspects of their work, especially if it was something new the Ministry of Education or another stakeholder was

introducing in the school system. The examples they gave included seminars on the school feeding programme, gender and inclusive education, and health issues. They acknowledged that this kind of training helped them to integrate new programmes into their school systems.

This finding illustrated that their responsibility for school duties in their work as administrators, and by means of other duties delegated to them by their superiors, helped them in their work. Though the majority of them had not attended school management courses, they learned on the job. The participants were, however, in agreement that some form of training, specifically directed at the duties they were going to take up as head teachers, would have helped them in performing their duties more efficiently.

The findings concurred with studies in the literature review (section 2.4.3) which indicated access to leadership programmes as one of the factors that attracts women to leadership. The studies include the comments by Mitroussi and Mitroussi (2009:517), who noted that women need to feel well-prepared before they applied for a leadership position, and Cowie and Crawford (2008:689) who observed that preparation for leadership can help to develop the professional identity of aspiring head teachers, broaden their outlook and develop confidence and self-belief. Other studies, referred to in section 1.1 Pont, et al. 2008:2, Priola & Brannan (2009:386), associate women's hesitance to apply for promotion with insufficient preparation and a lack of training to support the promotion to a leadership position.

It can be assumed that the women in the study would have felt more confident and may have done their work more efficiently if they had been exposed to leadership programmes. The women who had attended a leadership course said that the knowledge helped them in their work. Although these female administrators did not experience obstacles at the time of their appointment, most of them felt that once in their schools, they were received into administration with some skepticism. They, nonetheless, acknowledged that with time the society accepted and respected female administrators after they had proved themselves. Indeed, some of the schools that the researcher visited were of the best-performing schools in the vicinity. This data led to the supposition that the society usually started off with a negative perception, *albeit* subtle, of women leaders.

This notion finds support in Kiamba's (2008:8) work where he observed that historically, leadership has carried the notion of masculinity, and that public perception tended to favor men as being better able than women to handle discipline, work with predominantly male boards of education, and deal with political influence. In line with the findings of this study, liberal feminism claims that biological differences should be ignored in order to achieve gender equality. People should be treated in accordance with their talents and determination, rather than based on their biological differences (Mascarenhas, 2007).

The theory holds that women's mental ability is equal to that of men, and hence they should have the same rights in the political, economic and social sphere (Lorber, 2001). It points out that the socialization of women and men supports patriarchy and keeps men in power, which leads to oppression, discrimination and inequality in society (Lorber, 2001).

Additionally, the gender organization system (GOS) approach presents a holistic approach to the study's findings concerning women's management experience. This approach proposes that women's actions and capacity to be involved in top management are influenced by the interaction of individuals, society and the institutional system in which the organization operates, (Fagenson, 1990b).

Women's own issues, as opposed to organisational factors, seem to be hindering women from participating in management. The fact that most of the participants reported having been encouraged by their education officers to apply for administrative positions, while others were appointed directly, indicates that the authorities would like to encourage more women to enter school management. It would be assumed that it was women themselves who did not apply for the top jobs. Time-commitment, poor remuneration, fear of geographical mobility and fear of responsibilities associated with headship, were the most recurring hindrances noted during the interviews.

Most of the participants admitted having a problem with the time they have to put into their work as it left very little time for their own personal interests. They thought that this was one of the major factors putting other women teachers off school management, especially if they were

married and had young children. One administrator confirmed that the reason why she was able to get to school early in the morning and leave later than everybody else was because her children were grown-up and had already left home. Her husband travelled a lot, so most of the time she was at home all by herself. She said that sometimes she stayed at the school until eight o'clock in the evening, doing paper-work. She did not think that would have been possible when her children were younger.

The remuneration offered to administrators for their added responsibilities was said to be too little compared to the amount of work to be done. This was another factor keeping women off management. Most of them said that one had to look at the cumulative benefits of being a head teacher, as the pay was not enough to attract one to the position. This view agrees with Bennel's (2011:4) comment that in most countries head teachers receive little or no additional pay for their duties. He suggested that, in addition to having reduced workloads, head teachers should be paid substantially higher salaries than classroom teachers.

Another recurring hindrance, as noted by the participants, was the fear of geographical mobility. They said women feared applying for headship because most of the time the promotion meant movement from one school to another, usually away from home. This could explain the fact that some of these women had worked as deputy head teachers without applying for headship. They had waited to be noticed and perhaps to be assured that they would be promoted at the same schools, or to schools that were nearby. Indeed, almost all the head teachers interviewed worked at schools where they commuted or walked from their homes, while some were housed in the school compounds. Some of them said that they would consider stepping down from their current positions if they were transferred to areas far away from their homes.

There existed a general feeling that some women feared the responsibilities associated with heading a school. They preferred to remain in their safe zones where they were not exposed to too many challenges and too many responsibilities. Some of the women interviewed lived in the areas where they had interacted with people in the vicinity for most of their lives. Dealing with the same people in a different capacity (as a leader) posed a challenge. The participants thought the fear of dealing with such people was a factor deterring women from applying for leadership

positions. Most of the grievances revealed by this study in regard to women's reluctance to apply for leadership posts correspond with those mentioned by other researchers, such as Kellerman and Rhode (2007:3-6), Kiamba 2008:12-13), Kyriakoussis and Saiti (2006:1-2) Omukaga, et al. (2007: abstract), Pont, et al (2008:2), Adams and Hambright (2004:209), and Chege and Sifuna 2006:126), as indicated in the literature.

In agreement with the study findings, the GOS theory assumes that the interaction between gender, organizations and social systems is a continuous process (Martin et al., 1983). Rowley and Yukongdi (2009), hold that this interaction may lead to the under-representation of women in management positions in organizations. That is, it assumes that the presence of a few women in management is caused by both organizational and individual factors. This approach integrates the assumptions and arguments of the gender-centered and organizational structure perspectives (Fagenson, 1990a).

Most of the female school administrators interviewed had not planned their path to leadership. In the words of one administrator, it seemed that most of them had '*found themselves in the position*'. They, however, acknowledged that working as leaders had numerous positive effects on their lives. As they continued their work as administrators, most of the participants reported discovering new capabilities within themselves. Knowing that they were able to deal effectively with the duties of a school administrator confirmed their capability. Woolfolk's (2007:333) sources of self-efficacy which she identified as mastery experience, vicarious experiences and social persuasion, correspond with the experiences of the participants.

As they gained mastery of their work, their self-efficacy increased. Women as school administrators need to develop an attitude that is able to withstand any form of challenges in the workplace. They need to have a positive self-esteem and believe in themselves that they are capable of managing and leading, despite the challenges they face. Believing in oneself is fundamental, particularly in leadership and ample evidence in the form of literature indicates that high self-esteem correlates with desirable outcomes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2018).

Dealing with different kinds of people made some of these administrators' better problem-solvers. Every eventuality in the school either started or finally landed in their office. These

problem-solving skills reflected in their other relationships at home and in the community, which made it another component of their self-development. Being in the highest office in the institution, these women met different kinds of people. Some of them reported being nervous in their first days in office, but their interaction with others improved as they met more and more people.

It would seem that exposure to management made these women discover a side of themselves that had not been explored before, and which may otherwise not have been known if they had not participated in school management. The cognitive perspective (Nevid, 2003:12), as explained in section 1.6, holds true in this respect. It is associated with the mental processes by which people gain knowledge about themselves, and how this knowledge is internalized and usually determines future actions. As the participants engaged in their work as administrators they discovered their potential in problem-solving, and also in public relations. Their self-doubt diminished, as is seen in the case of Rosaina, and their self-efficacy was enhanced.

### **5.3 Work Experience**

In this section the women's views on the experiences they had as female administrators in their schools are discussed. According to the results of the study, factors encouraging females to become managers are collected under personal and organizational factors. When the literature is reviewed, it is observed that the personal characteristics are emphasized in the studies about the reasons why women are preferred for senior management positions. For instance, Özmutaf, Aktekin, Ergani and Çıta, (2015) points out that women's distinctive characteristics, innovative ideas and insights are known to facilitate the management process.

According to Eagli and Carli (2007), women's personal characteristics such as being democratic and giving importance to participation are among the reasons why they are preferred (as cited: Rincon, Gonzalez, Barrero, 2017). Besides, regulations about leadership practices are assessed as an effective factor for women to become managers (Eagly Carli, 2003). There are also some researches claiming that women are more advantageous for academic leadership positions. Effective factors for women to become managers can be attributed as their success in organizing and motivating, their effectiveness in thinking and observation process and thus having a

powerful creativity, being more reliable and developing (Zulu, 2007). However, their success in the process to increase their level of performance to a greater degree (Adams and Funk, 2012) being more liable to meet others' needs (Eagly and Carli, 2007) can be regarded as two of the reasons why they are preferred as managers. Sally Helgesen (1995) studied women during the process of decision taking, collecting information and dissemination, decentralization, restructuring the organizations and motivating staff. In her study, she concluded they put more emphasis on relations and share in leadership process.

While female managers are talking about the factors motivating them, they emphasized mostly on individual factors, but they do not mention about the supports taken from family, colleagues and environment. When the factors motivating or supporting female managers are reviewed in literature, it is encountered with some emphasis on inter-personal relationships and support groups.

As noted earlier, the administrators fell into various categories. There were those who were promoted in the schools where they had worked as teachers, others started new schools, and some were transferred to other existing schools. Some of the schools were experiencing their first female head teacher, while others had had previous female head teachers.

The transition seemed to have been smoother for those who were promoted within the same schools where they had worked as teachers, as they did not have to deal with the physical movement, as well as the change in official duties. They worked in familiar surroundings where they knew the teachers, the learners, the school management committee and the parents. The major challenge they experienced was resistance to new routines. Their styles of leadership were also compared to those of the previous head teachers.

Another head teacher reported that the area councilor kept approaching the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) demanding a male head teacher, but the officer was adamant that he knew what he was doing when he sent the female head teacher to the school. Although this initial seemingly negative response by parents was subtle, it negatively influenced the start of these administrators' work. Several of them admitted to having had the feeling that they needed to prove themselves in their work in order for them to be fully accepted. Most of them reported

slowly feeling accepted as they continued interacting with the parents, and mastered their administrative duties. Kiamba's (2008:8) assertion that traditionally public perception tended to favor men as better able than women to handle school leadership holds true where the experiences of the participants in this study are concerned. This notion also reflects the Social Role Theory (Gage, *et al.* 2004:36) which explains how each gender becomes focused on whatever roles are available to them, based on the expectation of the society, thus influencing the society's attitude and reception of women into leadership role.

The challenging nature of the female administrators' jobs was compounded by some particular factors that emerged from the data, which include accountability issues, parents' grievances and expectations, time away from school, limited resources, dealing with school management committees, and dealing with difficult teachers. Secondary school administrators are the managers of the curriculum, of the people and of the resources in their respective schools. Issues of being accountable for these responsibilities kept recurring in the interviews. Most of these administrators, as noted earlier, had not attended school management courses to prepare them for management, and thus for their leadership roles, as a result, they found themselves feeling overwhelmed by the responsibilities.

Although these female administrators made use of delegation and consultation to ease their workload, they still felt overwhelmed by the fact that they were held accountable for everything that happened in the school. This research study confirms the findings in Kocabas and Karakose's (2009:129) study where they noted that school heads have a key role to play in managing their schools because they are the main decision-makers. The success of the school and the degree to which they reach their educational aims depend on the school head and his or her governance. On the same point, Aketch and Simatwa (2010:486) noted that in Kenya the government and all the other stakeholders look upon the head teacher for the effective implementation of any programme introduced at primary level.

Another common theme among the participants was the dilemma they sometimes faced when handling the grievances of parents, and the high expectations these parents had from the school. All the female school administrators interviewed had, at one time or another, to handle parent's

grievances, some of which created a great deal of stress. It is simply not possible for the female school administrators to keep all the stakeholders happy all of the time, and there were times when the parents left the school dissatisfied because the head teacher did not respond as they had expected.

In some cases, the grievances were directed against the teachers. The teachers are guided by a code of regulations, and the administrator first has to ascertain if an offense was committed. Some parents could not understand that the administrator needed to listen to both sides before she could take any action, and that she was limited in her reactions by protocol. The grievances of parents are common in schools, contributing to the stress of the administrator who has to work through the grievance process to reach a solution. When an offended parent comes to school, the first person who has to respond to her or his grievance is the administrator. This takes the school administrator away from her other duties and responsibilities, and which may sometimes even have an effect on her emotions. The experiences of these administrators concur with Slater, et al.'s (2008:704) observation that school administrators act as 'buffers', absorbing the pressure and responsibilities stemming from problems among teachers, students, parents, supervisors and the community.

Secondary school administrators are also subject teachers, and the number of lessons they take depends on the status of staffing at their schools. Several of the participants had quite a number of classes to teach, as their schools were under-staffed. Some HoDs, like HoD1, HoD3, and GT2 had almost the same teaching load as the other teachers. HoD2 and GT4 were also subject teachers, in charge of classes four and six respectively. Their absence from school to attend meetings at the education office, or networking with other stakeholders to solicit funds for their schools, meant that quite an amount of their teaching time was being used.

This forced them to take extra time to cover their lessons which, at times, interfered with the children's and their own schedules. Yet, the classes had to be taught because the syllabus had to be covered, and the head teachers also knew that the other teachers were looking up to them to produce excellent results. Although this was not a common challenge among participants in other studies reviewed, in this study, this was found more frequently among the participants.

Six of the participants had started new schools, and they were the ones who complained most about limited resources. The phrase 'lack of money' was repeated several times during their conversations with the researcher. Indeed, the lack of resources was also confirmed during the researcher's observations when she visited the schools for the interviews. These school administrators did their work making use of cabinets placed in other teachers' classes, limiting the head teacher's interaction with parents and others who visited the school.

In one school there were not enough classrooms. The pupils came to the classrooms in shifts - half of the pupils occupied the classrooms in the morning, and the other half during the afternoon. Some of the participants who did not have a problem with buildings, complained about the money they were expected to produce to finance various activities. The head teachers in this study identified with those in Cheruto and Kyalo's (2010:73) and Aketch and Simatwa's (2010:487) studies. The head teachers in their studies cited accountability issues of free education funds, the shortage of funds, and the general financial management of their schools as some of their greatest challenges.

Each public secondary school has a school PTA Committee which runs the development issues of the school in liaison with the head teacher, who is the committee secretary. The committee members, who work on a voluntary basis, are elected by the parents. Although the participants appreciated the contribution of the members of the committee, they commented that sometimes there was a drag in the way things were carried out, because the committee takes time before it meets.

For example, when there are rains, a meeting can be postponed several times because of the lack of a quorum, because the members are unable to attend the meeting due to rains. Such a case was witnessed by the researcher in one of the schools. A meeting with the head teacher was scheduled for two o'clock because she had indicated that she had a meeting with the school PTA committee members at ten o'clock in the morning. By the time the researcher reached the school at half past one, the meeting had not taken place, so the head teacher decided to finish her meeting with the researcher first. At the end of the day the meeting with the committee members was called off as only four members had turned up.

Whether the administrator was promoted in the school she had taught, or was transferred to another school, each of the participants experienced difficult teachers on the staff, and this posed a great challenge. The school administrators made mention of teachers who always came to school late, who were absent without permission, and who '*were not a good example to the pupils*', according to HT1. Probed further, she said she was referring to teachers who sometimes come to school intoxicated, or who smoked in the school compound, knowing too well that it was against the rules. The dilemma of dealing with some of these teachers presented itself especially if the pupils performed well in that particular teacher's subject, which was sometimes the case. The dilemma arose on whether to report the teacher to the authorities and risk having him transferred which might result in lowering the school's mean score in the subject he teaches, or simply to let him be.

A specific category of teachers who were thought to be difficult by the participants were those who had stepped down from headship as they kept undermining the school leadership, and who were reminiscing about their days as heads. Those who went back to teaching after going through interdiction were also considered to be problematic. All the above challenges were indicated in studies discussed in the literature. Adams and Hambright (2004:209) identified the challenge of dealing with difficult parents, students and staff members, while Cheruto and Kyalo (2010:75) also confirmed that conflicts with parents were a challenge. Having examined the administrative challenges of the women head teachers, the researcher now examines their personal challenges.

#### **5.4 Personal Challenges**

This theme focused on self-confidence, homework conflict and balancing work with social life. From the accounts of these school administrators it was apparent that from time to time they experienced a lack of confidence in their work. For most of them this was their first time to head a school or department. Only three of the women worked in schools which had been headed by a female head teacher before. These three reported feeling uncomfortable during the first days, and even thereafter, when they had to deal with issues that posed a dilemma.

Their responsibilities were sometimes overwhelming, and they did not always feel sure that what they were doing was the right thing. The women in the study, however, acknowledged gaining

confidence and adopting coping mechanisms as time went by. They did not, though, elaborate on the coping mechanisms. Each of them said they had a higher level of confidence than when they had started working in their positions.

The female administrators spoke of how their social lives had been affected by their entry into leadership. Spending many hours at school meant that part of their private lives needed adjustment.

The way the society perceived them also had an effect on their lives, and they had to be extra careful of how they behaved themselves socially. The time-commitment of these female head teachers was incredible. They spent so much time juggling school-work and responsibilities at home that they had no time left they could call their own. Some of them said they had sacrificed of their friends as they did not have time to interact with them. The added responsibilities kept the women so busy that it affected their relationships with their friends, their religious obligations, and even the time meant for themselves.

Perhaps the one area that all the participants felt that suffered the most was their family life. The ascribed roles of women on the domestic front created a challenge where they had to balance work and home. Each of them had something to share on how their administrative duties affected their time and their relationships with their families. Although most of them reported receiving support from their family members, they felt guilty, as they felt they did not fulfill their duties as mothers and wives (for those who were married) the way they wished to. They had to make sacrifices, especially in respect of their families.

In this study, it was revealed that though women attended to their leadership roles, they still valued the roles they played at home. They felt as if they were not adequately performing their duties as mothers, wives and home-makers. This left them with a sense of guilt. These findings concur with the information in studies by Kiamba (2008:12-13), Chege and Sifuna (2006:126), and Archer (2003:1), as discussed in section 1.1, who all recognized child-care and family responsibilities as challenges unique to women. Other studies, (discussed in section 2.4.3) by Seelinger (2000:77), Eagly, *et al.* (2009:12), Derrington and Sharratt (2009:21), and Cornwall and Legerski (2010:462), indicate the suffering women leaders go through as they try to integrate

work and home duties. Knowles, *et al.* (2009:333) particularly noted that many mothers felt exhausted and overwhelmed, trying to balance paid work commitments with parenting commitments. Thus, they were psychologically, intellectually and emotionally drained.

The findings in this study are contradicted by the conceptions of some of the participants in Derrington and Sharratt's (2009:21-22) and Seelinger's (2000:78) studies (chapter 2.4.3), who maintain that educational leadership is manageable with support and timing. Liberal feminism agrees with the findings of the study as it explains the persistence of the gender separation of jobs ("females work with females and males work with males") and the gender stratification of organizational hierarchies (at the top are males). Patriarchy is a worldwide system of male control demonstrated through sexual exploitation and violence and, consequently, women are in a subordinate position in all societies (Lorber, 2001).

### **5.5 Future Aspirations**

The theme focused on enhancing participation of women in management positions and their future aspirations. The participants made several suggestions on what they thought would attract women to school leadership. The lack of mentoring was a concern raised by the majority of them, in terms of grooming and preparing them for school management. Several of them felt that the presence of very few women in school management at the time they had started their careers made it a very foreign idea to them then. This notion finds support in the work by Lockwood (2006:39) (chapter 2.3.3), who asserted that the visibility of female role-models is particularly effective for those who are attempting to determine their potential for future achievement, and also because females are more inspired by female role-models. Studies by Lange (2006:17), Sherman (2005:711), Kellerman and Rhode (2007:14), and Sherman (2005:712) also support the importance of role-models and mentors for women aspiring for leadership positions (Chapter 2.3.3).

Findings in this study, have shown that most of the times when women school heads talked about their work, they tended to concentrate on the negative aspects, thus discouraging those who would have liked to join. This was also noted by Sperandio and Kagonda (2010:24) (section 2.5.7), who said that some women heads may be so beset with problems created by resentful

teachers who are unwilling to accept a woman 'boss', that the example they provide is unable to mentor and encourage other women. Ann implored the women school heads to talk about both the positive and negative aspects of the job, so that aspirants may make an informed choice.

The importance of management courses in relation to beginning administrators, was also mentioned, and to on-going professional development. The participants felt that there should be specific courses for women who aspire for school management, as well as further courses where women receive training and get to share school leadership experiences that are unique to women. This notion is in line with Sherman's (2005:712) (section 2.3.3) observation that women who participate in aspiring leadership programmes advance to administrative positions more readily than women who do not.

The participants felt that their participation in school management would also be enhanced if women were promoted while taking into account limited geographical movement, in order to ensure that their promotion did not affect their family set-up. A woman's culture demands from her that she should stay at home and mind her husband, her children and her home. A husband who allows his wife to leave home, even on promotion, would be frowned upon by the community. The majority of the women administrators thought moving away from home was likely to cause conflict at home, and this makes many women shy away from applying for school leadership. The observation that geographical mobility mattered when women considered entering leadership positions, tallied with the studies discussed in chapter 2.4.5, by Wickham (2007:29), Eddy (2008:56), Mitroussi and Mitroussi (2009:511), and Wanyama (2002:49).

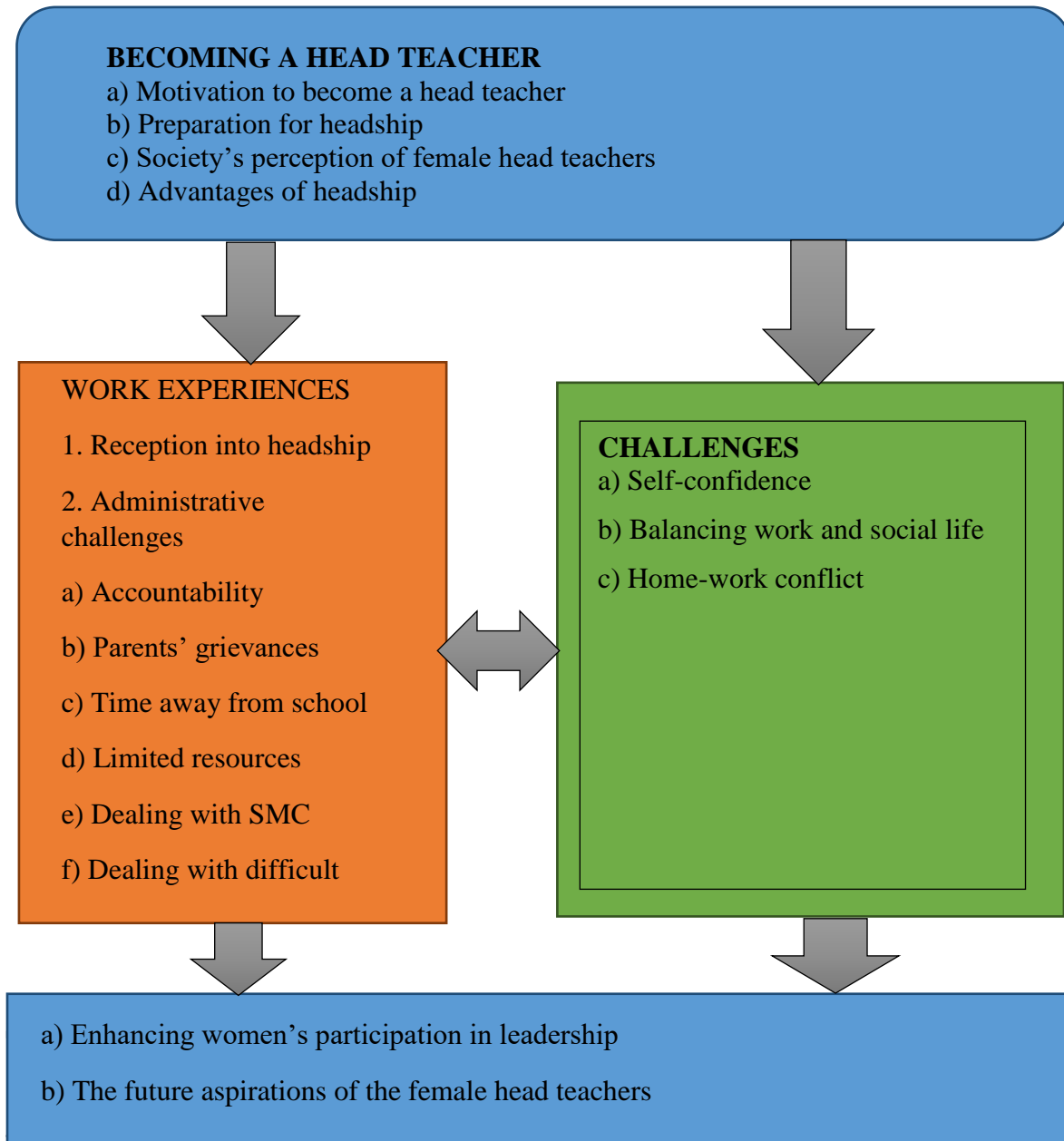
However, their future aspirations differed greatly among the participants, but it was apparent that none of them wanted to head their current schools up to their retirement age. Seven of them indicated that they would look for further promotion in education, hoping to retire at the highest level possible. It also emerged that a number of them were hoping to use their positions to build their curriculum vitae, in order to secure 'better' jobs outside of teaching. Two of the head teachers actually said that the job was not worth the stress, and that they would consider stepping down and going back to classroom teaching, as that was their passion.

One of the participants expressed the hope to go back to teaching. She said that if that was not possible and she continued being a head teacher, she would opt for early retirement. Another one was hoping to save money to enable her to start up a business, so that she could leave the teaching profession. Four of the participants had enrolled for degree courses, in the hope of securing themselves teaching positions in secondary schools. The participants who wanted to opt out of headship cited the lack of an attractive pay package as a reason.

As revealed from the data collected by means of the interviews, the field-notes and focus group discussion, the women administrators had a variety of different experiences in their work.

These experiences are represented in a diagram below. The first heading, which forms the first theme, represents their motivation to become head teachers, and their preparation for administration. It also represents their thoughts on society's perception of female head teachers, and the advantages they had experienced since taking up their headship positions. Their various experiences are joined by double-edged arrows because they affect one another. The experiences at the work-place, for example the time spent at work, affect their personal duties and responsibilities. Both administrative and personal challenges determine the head teachers' future aspirations, and hence the participation of women in educational leadership.

**Figure 2 Diagrammatical representation of the women’s lived experiences**



In summary, this chapter has discussed the findings based on the data collected from the participants according to their experiences in management positions and all their experiences have been represented in the figure above.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the conclusions from the findings and the recommendations. It will also include the suggestions for further research.

#### **6.2 Conclusions of the Study**

From the findings of the study the following emerged as the experiences of women in management positions: lack of motivation, self-confidence, reception into management positions, inadequate preparation for leadership and skepticism from the society. However, suggestions for role-models, mentors and adequate preparation (training) play a major role in triggering the women's interest and decision to participate in leadership. Prior knowledge of administrative duties plays a role in preparing head teachers for their administrative work. Skepticism from the society was also observed at the start of a female administrator's work.

Furthermore, from the findings it was noted that when the participants talked about their work, they tended to concentrate on the negative aspects, thus discouraging those who would have liked to join. The study found that some challenges faced by women in management positions embraced structural and socio-cultural entrenchments in the Zambian society and schools in particular. The study revealed that cultural perceptions and other barriers these female administrators faced adversely affect their management and influence negatively their work in some ways.

#### **6.3 Recommendations**

The study presents the following recommendations.

From the research study and the experiences shared by the women in school management, several recommendations became apparent that could be beneficial to educational administration and female leadership in schools. They include an awareness of and the implementation of the gender policy set up by the ministry of education, the inclusion of preparation programs for educational administrators, and also developing a mentoring network for female school leaders.

### **6.3.1 Preparation programs by the Government through the Ministry of Education**

There is need for the ministry of education to implement/reinforce affirmative action programs such as sponsoring female administrators to upgrade their qualifications and acquire leadership to provide them with skills to enhance their inferiority complex and self-perception.

### **6.3.2 Implementation of the gender policy set up by the ministry of education**

Gender issues should be taught in the school to reduce gender stereotypes and empower teachers and pupils on gender matters. This may indirectly contribute to the education system improvement in Zambia.

### **6.3.3 Mentoring network**

The district education board should design effective forms of networking and mentor opportunities for women administrators.

Concerning the work-family balance, complementarity should be an option that husband and wife privilege in the couple, which would sustain the stability of their marriage.

Lastly, the educational policymakers and stakeholders must promote women in leadership positions for bridging the gap that existed between both genders. As such, women would get the opportunity to help upgrade the overall students' academic achievement, because any student regardless of his/her origin or background has the right to succeed according to the principle of equity, universally recognized.

## **6.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

There is need to do a quantitative research on the experiences of women in management positions in primary and private schools.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1

#### Interview schedules for heads of schools

1. How many teachers by gender are in your school?
2. What are the aspirations of female teachers to developing their career?
3. In your experience, do you think female teachers have aspirations to be school administrators? If yes, how? If no, why?
4. How do female teachers respond when appointed to management? Give reasons.
5. What are the benefits emanating from management? Does it encourage or discourage female teachers from being involved in management? Why?
6. How do you appoint or select school administrators? What criteria are used?
7. What are your comments on the appointment process?
8. Do you have any suggestions for improving the appointment process?
9. Is there any gender policy which guides you in recommending/appointing school administrators? If no, why and how do you appoint school administrators without a gender policy? If yes, how does it work?
10. In your experience, can you tell me the commitment of female teachers to their daily school work?
11. To what extent do you support and help female teachers to achieve their goals (like career development and others)?
12. Statistics show that there are many more male school administrators of secondary schools than female; why is it so? What is your opinion on this?
13. Are there any other factors that impede females in management? What are they?
14. How do you lead the schools? Are members satisfied with your administration?
15. What are the aspirations and expectations of parents of their daughters' education?
16. How does society perceive female school administrators? How does this affect females who want to be involved in management? How does it discourage or encourage females' participation in management?
17. What is the perceived relationship between female administrators and members of school society? How does this affect female teachers' participation in school management?

18. How do female school administrators show concern for the needs, expectations and problems of the followers? Do you strive to assist in solving them?
19. What other challenges face female heads of schools that deter female teachers from participating in management?
20. Have you found anything particularly difficult on your way to the top position?
21. Do you have any additional information or explanations?

## **Appendix 2**

### **Focus group discussion guiding questions for HODs and Guidance teachers**

1. What are the aspirations of female teachers to developing their career and profession?
2. In your experience, do you think female teachers have aspirations to be administrators? If yes, how? If no, why?
3. How do female teachers respond when appointed to management? Give reasons.
4. What are the benefits emanating from management? Do they encourage or discourage female teachers from being involved in management? Why?
5. How are heads of schools selected? What criteria are used?
6. What are your comments on the appointment process?
7. Do you have any suggestions for improving the appointment process?
8. According to your experiences, can you tell me the commitment of female teachers to their daily school work?
9. To what extent do heads of schools support and help female teachers to achieve their goals (like career development and others)?
10. Statistics show that there are many more male heads of secondary schools than female; why is it so? What is your opinion on this?
11. Are there any other factors that impede/favour females in management? What are they?
12. How do female administrators lead the schools? Are you satisfied with their management?
13. What are the aspirations and expectations of parents of their daughters' education? Why?
14. How do you perceive female heads of schools? How does this affect females who want to be involved in management? How does it discourage or encourage females' participation in management?
15. What is the perceived relationship between female heads and members of the school society? How does this affect female teachers' participation in school leadership?
16. What challenges face female heads of schools that deter female teachers from participating in leadership?
17. Are you involved in school decision making? If yes, are your opinions valued?
18. How do female heads show concern for your needs, expectations and problems? Does she strive to assist in solving them?

## Appendix 3: Approval of Study



# THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

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### APPROVAL OF STUDY

**IORG No. 0005376**  
**HSSREC IRB No. 00006464**  
**REF NO. HSSREC-2023-FEB-003**

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The University of Zambia  
P.O. Box 32379  
**LUSAKA**

Dear Ms. Chibvembe

**RE: "EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LUSAKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA".**

Reference is made to your submission of the protocol captioned above. The HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

REVIEW TYPE	ORDINARY REVIEW	APPROVAL NO.- HSSREC:- 2023- MAR - 017
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 8 <sup>th</sup> April, 2023	Expiry Date: 7 <sup>th</sup> April, 2024
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil	7 <sup>th</sup> April, 2024
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	<input type="checkbox"/> English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire.	
Number of Participants Approved for Study		

*Towards Improving Service and Excellence in High Education Beyond Fifty Years*

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

#### CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL

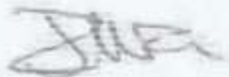
- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.
- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.
- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.
- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.
- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.
- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled "late submissions" and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.
- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.

- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



**DR. J. I. Ziwa**  
**CHAIRPERSON**  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND**  
**SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB**

cc: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies  
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies  
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

## Appendix 4: Participant Information sheet



HSSREC FORM 1B

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA  
DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES  
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Telephone: +260-211-290258/353080  
Fax: +260-211-290258/293937  
Zambia  
E-mail: [director.drsg@unza.zm](mailto:director.drsg@unza.zm)

P O Box 32379  
Lusaka,

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

[Informed Consent Form for MUKUVA MARY ]

This informed consent form is for women in management positions in the education system in selected public secondary schools of Lusaka district. And these include the headteachers, deputy head teachers, head of departments and guidance teachers.

**[Name of Principle Investigator]**  
Dorothy Chibvembe

**[Name of Organization]**  
The University of Zambia (UNZA)

**[Name of Sponsor]**  
University of Zambia (UNZA).

#### Part I: Information Sheet

##### Introduction

I am a student in the School of Education at the University of Zambia pursuing a Master's degree in Education Administration and Management. I am conducting a research as one of the requirements for me to complete the programme. The focus of my study is to explore the experiences of women in management positions in the Education system. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the

research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. In addition, this consent form may contain words that you do not understand, please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain.

#### **Purpose of the research**

The aim of this study is to establish the experiences of women in school administrative positions in selected secondary schools in Lusaka district and to suggest ways of maximizing women's potential in their leadership abilities. The data to be collected from this research will be treated with confidentiality and will only be used for the academic purpose of this study. You are assured of total confidentiality and anonymity in this study. However, during the course of this study you are free to withdraw from it if you feel like doing so.

#### **Type of Research Intervention**

This research will involve your participation as about an one hour interview and a focus group discussion.

#### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this research because we feel that your experiences as an administrator can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge on women in the management positions.

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary, it is your choice whether to participate or not. The choice that you make will have no bearing on your job or on any work-related evaluations or reports. You may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

#### **Procedures**

- A. We are asking you to help us learn more about the experiences of women in management positions in the education system. We are inviting you to take part in this research project and if you accept, you will be asked some questions.
- B. You will participate in an interview with myself. During the interview, i will sit down with you in a comfortable place at the Centre. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and the interviewer will move on to the next question. No one else but the interviewer will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential, and no one else will have access to the information documented during your interview. The entire interview will be recorded using a cell phone and the information recorded is confidential, and no one else will have access to the phone. The information recorded

will be deleted after some days or weeks.

### **Duration**

The research takes place over six months in total, during this time, we will visit you once for interviews and the interview will last for about one hour.

### **Uses of information**

The information we shall get from you will be used and help making decisions by the Ministry of Education on how to improve opportunities for more women to become school administrators.

### **Risks**

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if you feel the questions are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the experiences of women in the management positions.

### **Reimbursements**

You will not be provided with any incentive to take part in the research.

### **Confidentiality**

We will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that we collect from this research project will be kept private. Any information about you will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researchers will know what your number is and we will lock that information up with a lock and key.

### The following applies to focus groups:

We will ask you and others in the group not to talk to people outside the group about what was said in the group. We will, in other words, ask each of you to keep what was said in the group confidential. You should know, however, that we cannot stop or prevent participants who were in the group from sharing things that should be confidential.

### **Sharing the Results**

Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside the research team and nothing will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Each participant will receive a summary of the results.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and choosing to participate will not affect your job or job-related evaluations in any way. You may stop participating in the interview at any time that you wish without your job being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview/discussion to review your remarks, and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you do not agree with my notes or if I did not understand you correctly.

### **Who to Contact**

If you have any questions, you can ask Harrison Daka Phd my supervisor now or later on 0974765442. This proposal has been reviewed and approved by Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm.

This proposal or protocol has been reviewed and approved by HSSREC which is a committee whose task it is to make sure that research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to find about more about the IRB, contact:

Chairperson, Humanities and Social Sciences, Research Ethics Committee,  
University of Zambia  
P O Box 32379  
LUSAKA  
OR  
Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies  
University of Zambia  
P O Box 32379  
LUSAKA

**Part II: Certificate of Informed Consent**

This section must be written in the first person. It should include a few brief statements about the research and be followed by a statement similar the one in bold below. If the participant is illiterate but gives oral consent, a witness must sign. A researcher or the person going over the informed consent must sign each consent. Because the certificate is an integral part of the informed consent and not a stand-alone document, the layout or design of the form should reflect this. The certificate of consent should avoid statements that have "I understand...." phrases. The understanding should perhaps be better tested through targeted questions during the reading of the information sheet (some examples of questions are given above), or through the questions being asked at the end of the reading of the information sheet, if the potential participant is reading the information sheet him/herself.

I have been invited to participate in research about experiences of women in management positions in the education system.

**(This section is mandatory)**

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant MUKUKA MARY  
Signature of Participant [Signature]  
Date 15/11/2022  
Day/month/year

**If illiterate <sup>1</sup>**

**I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.**

Print name of witness \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

**Thumb print of participant**



<sup>1</sup> A literate witness must sign (if possible, this person should be selected by the participant and should have no connection to the research team). Participants who are illiterate should include their thumb print as well.

*If vulnerable or incapacitated like pregnant women, children, people with mental illness, people with disabilities, prisoners and minority groups for instance, the investigator must ensure that there is a well-educated and motivated surrogate or proxy decision maker. When comprehension is an issue the research plan should include means of testing the participants' understanding of the important information prior to enrollment.*

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent Mary

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent MUKUKA MARY

Date 15th November, 2022  
Day/month/year

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS (Names, addresses and phone numbers of the following):

**1. Principal Investigator (Must be a local person and a Zambian).**

Names: Dorothy Chibvembe

Phone: 0973292183

E mail: dorothychibvembe@gmail.com

Physical address: flat A6 roan road, kabulonga Lusaka.