

Revised Research Article

CAN GENDER AFFECT PRINCIPALSHIP? LESSONS FROM RESEARCH IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

ABSTRACT

Over the years, despite the fact that women constitute two-third of the teaching corps in Cameroon, there has existed gender bias in the appointment of secondary school principals. Today, there is awareness amongst politicians, women scholars and pressure groups alike, that the trend of anomie has to be reversed. The objectives of this paper were to determine if gender affects appointment into principalship; to examine if a significant difference exists in the management of personnel based on leaders' gender; to ascertain the performance of schools based on gender of the leader; and to find out if significant differences exist in supervision of instructions between male and female principals. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A sample of 252 respondents from twelve secondary schools in Bamenda Metropolis was chosen using the stratified, purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The chi-square(χ^2) goodness-of-fit test was used to verify the four (04) hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. Findings revealed that gender affected the appointment of principals; male principals manage personnel better than female principals; schools managed by male principals performed better in official examinations than schools managed by female principals and male principals performed better in supervision of instruction activities.

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Key Words: Gender, administration, principalship, leadership, research, Cameroon.

1. Problem And Setting

In 1988, precisely in Beijing, women delegated all over the world met to discuss their rights on gender particularly on gender equality and to define their leadership roles. The concept of leadership has been a perennial topic of concern and investigation in many fields. The leadership of the principal is a key factor in the success of any program in the school (Lipham&Hoeh, 1974)^{[9][1]}. Knowledge about leadership, therefore, is a prime factor if an individual is to fulfill effectively the principalship role. Principalship is simply the head of a post-primary institution. It can be a secondary school or college.

According to Lipham and Hoeh (1974)^[9], at least two productive alternative stances may be taken to perform effectively in the principalship. The first and most current view we have is termed 'the foundation of principalship'. It draws heavily on recent theories, constructs and models from the basic applied social, behavioural and administrative sciences to describe and deliberate the antecedents, correlates or predictors of the behaviour of the principal and those with whom he works. The second and most typical views termed the 'functions of the principalship' which focus on the tasks, jobs and activities that occupy the bulk of the principals' time and analyses them according to the major competencies that must be demonstrated by an effective school principal.

The tasks of the principal can be grouped into five categories: instructional program, staff personnel, student personnel, financial and physical resources, and school community relationships (Lipham and Hoeh, 1974^[9]; Ndu et al, 1997^[14]; Ogunu, 2001^[17]; Mgbodile, 2004^[12]; Nwankwo, 1982^[16]; Tamajong&Fonkeng, 2003^[21] and Olagboye, 2004^[19]). Ogunu (2001)^[17] summarizes the definition of leadership as a dynamic process in a group

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50 whereby one individual influences the other to contribute voluntarily to the
51 achievement of group tasks in a given situation.

52 Having seen **that** to be an effective leader depends on a mastery of the
53 theories and functions of the leader, it becomes worthwhile to assess the role of
54 gender in this practice **(if there is any)**. The trait or “Great Man” theory of
55 leadership has failed to gain universal acceptance because of its failure to
56 consider the foundational and functional roles of school administrators. The
57 main focus of an educational administrator is **to take** leadership in ensuring that
58 each student develops the qualities needed in order to preserve and strengthen
59 his way of living (Kartz, 1960)^[8].

60 In Cameroon, the Handbook for Heads of Secondary Schools (1995)^[13]
61 stipulated certain guidelines on the role of principals of which included
62 management, leadership, spirit of dialogue, creation of links, team spirit, good
63 relationships, educational planning and decision making. Okorie
64 (1998)^[18] summarizes the functions of principals into being a visionary, being
65 able to promote and protect values, being able to empower teachers, providing
66 instructional leadership and managing school climate. Similar **recaps were made**
67 by **Tamajong&Fonkeng(2003)**^[21] and Mbua (2003)^[11].

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68 Unfortunately, gender gap remains an impediment to potential
69 institutional improvements (Chliwnaik, 1997)^[3]. Even though effective
70 leadership is more behaviorally derived than gender based, gender remains an
71 obstacle to women seeking and obtaining leadership positions (Getskow, 1996)
72 ^[26]. Schmuck (1986)^[20] identified three sets of concepts that have been used to
73 understand women’s representation in senior posts such as principals: the
74 socialization of women; organizational constraints on women promotion and
75 theories relating to gender-based careers, especially in developing countries.

76 Women in leadership confront barriers that men do not realize to exist.
 77 Some myths suggest that women cannot discipline older students, particularly
 78 males; females are too emotional; females are physically too weak; and males
 79 resist working with females (Whitaker & Lane, 1990)^[22]. The scarcity of women
 80 in the role of secondary school principals is a worldwide phenomenon. While
 81 women make up at least two-thirds of secondary school teachers, they are in the
 82 minority in secondary school administration.

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83 Nchindo (1997)^[28] notes that there is agender bias in the appointment of
 84 school heads. A survey of female principals in Cameroonian secondary schools
 85 shows that only one-fifth of the women are appointed principals. It seems the
 86 age long stereotypes role identity still remains in full as far as appointments
 87 are concerned. There is empirical evidence that very few females are appointed
 88 principals in Cameroon and world over (Njila, 2006)^[15]. This sluggish growth
 89 rate in the number of female secondary school principals and the concern
 90 expressed by gender equality activists, particularly by women, about the
 91 nonchalant attitude towards the appointment of female principals necessitated
 92 an investigation.

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93 Based upon this backdrop this research study aims at answering the
 94 question of whether or not there is gender bias in the appointment of principals
 95 in Cameroon.

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96 2. Objectives of the study

97 The research intended to:

- 98 1. Determine if appointment of principals is affected by gender.
- 99 2. Examine the differences in management of personnel between male and
 100 female principals.
- 101 3. Ascertain the performances in official examinations of schools managed
 102 by male and female principals.

4. Examine the difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals

3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses stated at a 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

Ho₁: Appointments into the post of secondary school principal are not significantly dependent on gender.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in management of personnel between male and female principals

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between gender of secondary school Principal and students' performance in official examinations

Ho₄: There is no significant difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals.

4. Research Model

The study is tailored around the Management by Objectives (MBO) model and Feminist Theory.

4.1. Management by Objectives (MBO)

MBO, also known as **management by results (MBR)**, is a planning technique of achieving results through a process by which superiors and their subordinates participate jointly: in setting objectives; in determining the activities that should be performed in order to **attain** the objectives; in setting **deadlines** for **attaining** the set objectives; and in establishing the procedure for the evaluation of the performance of the worker with respect to the set **of** objectives. The philosophy behind MBO is that the ability of an organization to achieve its goals is influenced by the degree to which the workers within the organization are

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motivated. An educational institution, like any other institution is out to achieve some objectives which are dove-tail into the national objectives. Management by objectives (MBO) is a process of defining objectives within the school milieu so that management (Principals) and employees (teachers) agree on the objectives and understand what they need to do in the school in order to achieve the objectives (Tamajong&Fonkeng, 2009)^[21].

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4.2. Feminist Theory

There are several views and theories of feminism. Our study is anchored on Legal theory, Communication theory and Feminist Theory of Design.

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Feminist Legal Theory: Feminist legal theory is based on the feminist view that law's treatment of women in relation to men has not been equal or fair. The goals of feminist legal theory, as defined by leading theorist Claire Dalton, consist of understanding and exploring the female experience, figuring out if law and institutions oppose females, and figuring out what changes can be made (Felman, —S. 1993)^[5]. This is to be accomplished through studying the connections between educational policies (as well as appointment policies) and gender.

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Communication Theory: This view of communication promoted a “deficiency model” asserting that characteristics of speech associated with women were negative and that men “set the standard for competent interpersonal communication”. Feminist communication theorists are concerned with methods used by those in power to prohibit women from achieving a voice in political discourse and consequently being driven from the public sphere (Griffin, 2009)^[7]. The theory also encompasses access to the public sphere, whose voices are heard in that sphere, and the ways in which the field of communication studies has limited what is regarded as essential to public discourse. This was instigated by women such as Christine de Pizan in the 15th century and Mary

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Wollstonecraft in the 18th century. The theory was historically dominated by the middle-class white women from Western Europe and Northern America, which aimed at understanding differences and gender inequality and **fixateson** gender, politics and sexuality. The theory focuses on providing women rights. They are liberal feminists and radical feminists all advocating workplace rights including equal pay and equal opportunities for careers. They have opposed domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault (Griffin, 2009)^[2]. They maintain that women are oppressed in organizations including the school set up. Thus, women should be given equal opportunities to hold the positions of principalship as male counterparts.

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Feminist Theory of Design: According to this feminist theory, men and women will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their thought processes may diverge in content and form(**Aiseberg and Harrington,1988**^[1];Griffin, 2009)^[2]. This division depends on the self-concept, which is an important regulator of thoughts, feelings and actions that governs one's perception of reality. This implies that female principals have some ingenuity in them which may enable them inject new ideas into the educational system(**Whitaker & Lane, 1980**)^[22].

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5. Methodology

The study was carried out in Bamenda metropolis of the North West Region of **Cameroon**with the highest number of secondary schools in the Region. It adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of all secondary school principals and teachers found within the Bamenda Metropolis distributed among government, mission and lay private schools. **The purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve (12) secondary schools. That is, two secondary schoolsfrom each Division. Theselectedschools**wereincluded seven (07) public, three (03) Mission and two (02) private schools. All the twelve (12) principals were chosen for the study. Equally, 20 teachers were selected convenientlyfrom each of the secondary schools. **That is, those who**

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184 were readily available to fill the questionnaire. This gave a total sample size of
 185 252 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a 39-item
 186 questionnaire. It focused on male and female practice of principalship in terms of
 187 appointment policies, personnel management, students' performance in official
 188 examinations and supervision of instruction. This instrument was validated by an
 189 expert in measurement and evaluation. A test-re-test on another sample of 20
 190 respondents gave a correlation value of 0.99 between the two tests, indicating
 191 that the questionnaire was reliable. The Chi-Square (χ^2) goodness of fit test was
 192 used to verify the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance (alpha level). SPSS
 193 version 20.0 was used in computing the data.

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194 **Decision rule:** When the χ^2 calculated is greater than the χ^2 critical value, we
 195 retain the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and reject the null (H_o).

196 6. Findings

197 **Hypothesis One (H_{o1}):** Appointments into the post of secondary school
 198 principal is not significantly dependent on gender.

199 **Table 1: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender influence on appointment of**
 200 **secondary school principals**

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	87.1	63	24.1	580.8	9.2
A	26.9	63	-13.6	1303.2	20.7
D	49.8	63	-13.2	174.2	2.8
SD	88.2	63	25.2	635.0	10.1
Total	252	252	0	2693.2	42.8

201 Degree of freedom (df) = 3

χ^2 Calculated = 42.8

203 Level of significance = 0.05 =

Critical χ^2 value = 7.82

204 Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.6

205

Decision: We retain the alternative (H_{a1}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{o1}), meaning that the appointment into the posts of principalship significantly depends on gender. The contingency coefficient of 0.6 indicates a strong positive relationship between gender and appointment into posts of principalship. That is, more men are appointed into this post than females. This indicates that appointment is greatly dependent on gender (by about 100%).

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Hypothesis Two (H_{o2}): There is no significant difference in management of personnel between male and female principals

Table 2: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender effects on secondary school personnel management

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	91.7	63	28.7	823.7	13.1
A	35.1	63	-27.9	778.4	12.4
D	44.1	63	-18.9	357.2	5.7
SD	81.1	63	18.1	327.6	52
Total	252	252	0	2286.9	36.4

Degree of freedom (df) = 3 χ^2 Calculated = 36.4
 Level of significance = 0.05 = Critical χ^2 value = 7.82
 Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.4

Decision: According to the decision rule, we retain the alternative (H_{a2}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{o2}) since the calculated χ^2 is far above the Critical χ^2 value (7.82), meaning that a significant difference exists in the personnel management styles of male and female principals. Again, a contingency coefficient of 0.6 indicates a strong positive relationship between personnel management styles of male and female principals. That is, men manage their institutions better than their female counterparts. This shows that the management of personnel is greatly dependent on gender (by

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about 100%). We conclude that there is a significant difference ~~existing~~ between gender and school personnel management.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): There is no significant relationship between gender of secondary **school Principals** and students' performance in official examinations.

Table 3: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender effects on performance in official examinations

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	92.8	63	29.8	888.1	14.1
A	70.9	63	-7.9	62.4	0.9
D	49.5	63	-13.5	182.3	2.9
SD	38.8	63	-24.2	585.6	9.3
Total	252	252	0	1718.4	27.3

Degree of freedom (df) = 3

χ^2 Calculated = 27.3

Level of significance = 0.05 =

Critical χ^2 value = 7.82

Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.1

Decision: We retain the alternative (H_{a3}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{03}) since the calculated χ^2 (27.3) is far above the Critical χ^2 value (7.82). Thus, there is a significant relationship between gender of principal and students' performance in official examinations. The C.C value of 0.1 is low, indicating a weak positive relationship between the gender of principal and students' academic performance. ~~That is, schools managed by male principals performed better in official examinations than those managed by female counterparts.~~

Hypothesis Four (H_{04}): There is no significant difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals.

Table 4: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender effects on supervision of instruction.

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Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	65.3	63	2.3	5.3	0.1
A	37.3	63	-25.7	660.5	10.5
D	59	63	-4	16	0.3
SD	90.4	63	27.4	750.8	11.9
Total	252	252	0	1432.6	22.8

Degree of freedom (df) = 3

χ^2 Calculated = 22.8

Level of significance = 0.05 =

Critical χ^2 value = 7.82

Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.3

Decision: We retain the alternative (H_{a4}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{04}) since the calculated χ^2 (22.8) is far above the Critical χ^2 value (7.82). Thus, there is a significant relationship between gender of principal and supervision of instruction. The C.C value of 0.3 is low, indicating a weak positive relationship between the gender of principal and supervision of instruction. Thus, the practice of supervision of instruction is better handled by male principals than female principals.

7. Discussion

Findings based on hypothesis one revealed that appointment into the post of secondary school principal is significantly dependent on gender, meaning that men are preferred to women in the running of secondary schools. The million dollar question is 'why is there this disparity when women have the same skills, experience, competence and qualification as their male counterparts'? Aspects like women instability, non-authoritative voice, opposition to posts of responsibilities, lack of self-esteem and domestic responsibilities were identified. These findings are in congruent with the legal

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270 feminist theory which reveals that law's treatment of women in relation to men
 271 has not been equal or fair. Besides, Aiseberg and Harrington(1988)^[1] had earlier
 272 noted that women lack confidence in their management skills.

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273 Secondly, findings based on hypothesis two (Ho₂) revealed that gender
 274 seriously affected personnel management strategies. Male principals were found
 275 to manage personnel better than theirfemale counterparts. This again, ties with
 276 the Feminist communication theory which stipulates thatmen and women will
 277 construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their
 278 thought processes may diverge in content and form. It is equally matches with the
 279 findings of Schmuck (1986)^[20] and Cornner (1992)^[4]. However, Mbua (2003)^[1]
 280 did not show any effect of gender on personnel management of schools as both
 281 men and women understood the functional values and theories beneath.

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282 Hypothesis three (Ho₃) wanted to know whether gender of principals
 283 affected students' performance in official examinations. Findings revealed that
 284 schools managed by male principals performed better than those managed by
 285 female counterparts. This is in line withMarshall (2009)^[28] whohad earlier
 286 stressed the fact that women are always occupied with domestic
 287 affairs. However, Mbua(2003)^[11] had noted thatselection, orientation, placement
 288 and counseling of students constitute an important function of school principals
 289 not depending on gender.

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290 Finally, findings from hypothesis four (Ho₄) revealed that male principals
 291 supervised instruction better than female principals. Supervision of instruction
 292 is very important for teacher effectiveness (Glickman, 1985)^[6]. Again, this is in
 293 line with the Feminist communication theory which says that men and women
 294 will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently,
 295 their thought processes may diverge in content and form. Thus, according to
 296 (Olagboye, 2004)^[19], effective supervision, requires good working relationship

297 between supervisor and supervisee. This implies that female principals seldom
 298 build such relationships with their personnel that could
 299 favoureffectivesupervision of instruction.

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300 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

301 In conclusion, even though empirical findings revealed that male
 302 principals perform better than female principals in personnel management,
 303 supervision of instruction and that students managed by male principals may
 304 perform better in official examinations. Statisticallysignificant differences were
 305 found between teachers' perceptions on male and female principals'
 306 competences to carry those types of tasks. These perceptions of teachers were
 307 expected based on the theories that inform this research but they may be
 308 stereotyped perceptions. Besides,itis important to note that one of the most
 309 important functions of educational leaders or administrators or principals is that
 310 of financial management (Mbua, 2003)where women have been found to be
 311 reliable, trustworthy and excellent (Njila, 2006).

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312 Based on the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are
 313 made:

- 314 1. The government and other educational stakeholders should appoint
 315 principals based on qualification, hard work, experience, capability and
 316 moral rectitude. Again, gender equality should be ensured and competent
 317 and qualified women should be given this responsibility.
- 318 2. In-service training should be given to female teachers to ensure gender
 319 balance in administration. Equally, tertiary education should be opened to
 320 both genders to ensure similarrepresentationespecially at post graduate
 321 levels. Professional school counseling should also be intensified to
 322 encourage female teachers to take positions of leadership.

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3. The self-defeatist attitude of women should be discouraged in staff meetings. Equally, female principals should work in collegiality with their male counterparts and be ready to adopt participatory decision-making approaches. This would develop potential female principals and build team spirit.

4. Teachers should be advised to give equal support and cooperation to their principals irrespective of gender, feminist ideology and stereotype attitudes.

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