Gendered constructions of school headship: Of Chivi district in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe

Clemence Dzingirai[a], Efiritha Chauraya [b]

[a,b] Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT

This article reports a study on gendered constructions of school leadership in Zimbabwean schools. Gendered constructions perpetuate inequality between females and males in educational leadership. The study uses an interpretive phenomenological analysis to establish the lived experiences of 15 senior women in Chivi district secondary schools. Of the 15 senior women leaders who participated in this research, ten were subjected to semi-structured interviews and five were subjected to a focus group discussion. Findings indicated that female teachers were hesitant to advance into school leadership because of gender stereotypes, female teachers perceived idealised leader, extrinsic normative constraints, and difficulties in managing women's bodies when performing leadership roles. To involve senior women to change and go for leadership in education, the researchers recommended procedures to counteract the female teachers' conscious and subconscious dispositions created by gendered constructions.

1. Introduction

Globally, states are supporting diversity in leadership, and as part of that endeavour, countries are pursuing policies and programmes on gender correlated initiatives (Arar & Oplatka, 2013; Fuller, 2010; Morland, 2016). Gender is one type of diversity which has taken centre stage in debates among scholars in educational leadership (Bicchie, 2017; Carli & Eagly, 2011; Chinyani, 2010). In this study, gendered constructions of school leadership are explored given that they perpetuate inequalities between females and males in education institutional leadership. The study is part of a larger project on marginality of female teachers in school leadership in Chivi district in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe.

The continued marginality of women is against a Zimbabwean policy agenda towards gender equality (Chinyani, 2010). In furthering understanding of gender equality, this paper interrogates why some women refrain from accessing leadership positions despite their apparent potential and relevant academic and professional qualifications.

This paper begins with this introduction followed by a section about women and leadership paradigm and the gender gap. The latter is presented to provide the contextual view of the study based on some literature. The paper then contextualises the study by examining selected studies carried out in Zimbabwe to illustrate some challenges faced by females in leadership positions in Zimbabwean schools. As its methodology, this study assumes a qualitative research approach, the case study research design and the interpretive phenomenological analysis. The findings and recommendations are presented in the last sections of this study.

2. Women and the leadership paradigm

An established view for underrepresentation of females in leadership positions has been referred to as a gender gap (Billsberry, 2009; Carli & Eagly, 2011). The worldview of women leadership has shifted as women are not only increasing in work but also in political leadership and in public institutions such as schools (Sugyanto, 2020). Notwithstanding this, in school organisations men still dominate leadership, even though women have shown their potential in leadership and that they are not inferior to men. Scholars continue to debate why this is so, and subsequently cite femininity and masculinity traits to justify this gap.

Women's leadership has been characterised by feminine traits and men's leadership by masculine traits (Carless, 1998; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly A., 1987). This view associates male leadership with masculine or transactional traits and female leadership with communal, nurturing and collaborative traits. For some scholars, feminine traits are regarded as incongruent to leadership (Gibson, 1995) with some noting that most people associate the word manger or leader with the word male (Schein, 2007; Braun, Stegmann, Hernandez Bark, Junker, & van Dick, 2017).

To other scholars, feminine traits epitomise feminine advantage over masculine leadership and such scholars claim that good school leadership is more in agreement with feminine than masculine approaches of leadership and behaviour (Eakle, 1995; Growe & Montgomery, 1999; Sperandio, 2007). Notwithstanding this claim, women still face difficulties, and have a slower mobility toward leadership of schools.

Some scholars do not support the view that there are various distinctions between female and male leadership but argue that there is a small difference between male and female leadership styles and behaviours (Eagly, Schimdt & Engen, 2003). For these researchers, what matters most are the gender stereotypes which significantly impede women's abilities to take up leadership positions. According to Catalyst (2007), women who undertake leadership positions are negatively judged by both males and females. If they display their leadership along the perceived female characteristics, they are regarded as being too nice and incapable. If they assume leadership along masculine attributes, they are regarded as being too tough and punitive. Thus, women who take up leadership roles confront a dilemma between adopting the perceived female leadership attributes and the perceived male leadership attributes. Additionally, it is generally perceived that woman who take up leadership have to work harder than men to prove themselves as worthy (Ely & Rhode, 2010). Such a perception dissuades women from pursuing leadership opportunities.

Apparently, views about male and female leadership are culturally determined. Leadership notions, leadership values and leadership behaviour are endorsed by culture (Mwale & Dodo, 2017; Dodo, 2013). According to (Biri & Mutambwa, 2013) African women predominantly undertake three roles of being a mother, wife and woman. In addition, women are predominantly socialised as subordinates due to cultural practices and beliefs based on what societies consider as appropriate maleness and femaleness. Consequently, women may

find it difficult to perform leadership roles in school organisations due to socio-cultural practices and beliefs that deter them from participating in leadership and decision making. One line of thought supportive of the influence of culture is the Social Role Theory ascribed by Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt (2001) in which gender variances in leadership behaviour are typical to social context. According to this Social Role Theory, leadership behaviour and leadership styles appropriate for men and women may be influenced by different cultures.

From studies carried out in Africa, women are more than men culturally tied to domestic chores whether they are employed or not (Chigwata, 2014). It is African culture for employed women to perform domestic chores at home after work. This domestic burden may negate and frustrate the desire by women to pursue a leadership or management career and this contributes to gender inequality in organisations (Acker, 2006). Nevertheless, culture is dynamic and changes from time to time. In contemporary settings, gender constructions of leadership by females are analogous to new cultural beliefs and norms that promote equality.

Most cultures are now abandoning old social norms and adopting the beneficial ones including supporting the rise of women to leadership position (Bicchie, 2017). As societies transform, there is a corresponding change in gender construction of leadership. Despite contemporary cultural transformations in African societies, societal conventions pertaining to gender and leadership continue to exclude women and, top leadership of public institutions including schools is regarded as a masculine dominion.

3. Feminisation, Gender inequality and educational leadership in the teaching profession in Zimbabwe

Using the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Annual Statistical Reports of 2018, in the past decade, there has been a fair representation of female teachers in secondary schools and a feminised state of the teaching profession in primary schools in Zimbabwe (Schmude & Jackisch, 2019; Davids & Waghid, 2020). The feminised state emanates from the fact that females demographically dominate as teachers when compared to males. Even in primary teacher training colleges in Zimbabwe, females constitute larger proportions of the student teacher enrolment (Maware, 2013). The feminisation of the teaching profession has been attributed to the social constructions of nurturing- a role that women actively perform in families as mothers and care givers. This line of thinking is expounded by Eagly's (1987) social role theory which postulates

that commonly shared gender stereotypes develop from the gender division of labour that typifies the society.

Similarly, the teaching profession can be viewed as a continuation of the mother role at home, taken into a school set up (Rahanan, 2016; Whitehead, 2009). Additionally, according to United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (2010), feminisation of the teaching profession is partially attributed to desertion of the profession by males due to the low salaries and the safety and security matters perpetrated by the political instability in the country, especially towards election periods. If looked at closely, feminisation of the teaching provides women with an opportunity to take part in schools leadership positions such as deputy school head and school head.

This then would imply that, if women in a subtle way develop caring and managing skills at home and family level, equally these skills should be taken for use at school level. In fact, the invisible skills of leadership that women carry with them into school set ups should equally make them more fit for substantive leadership posts as deputy or school heads. Despite the feminisation of the teaching profession, there is dominance of males as leaders in educational institutions in Zimbabwe. A mere 8% of a total of 162 senior educational officials in the Ministry of Education headquarters, provinces, and districts were females in 2010 (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative, 2010). In secondary schools in Chivi Districts, our preliminary findings indicate that only 2 of a total of 44 school heads were females and 4 of the 44 deputy heads were substantive female deputies. We have developed interest to establish why this is the case.

In a study carried out in Zimbabwe, women were established to be left out of leadership because they suffered inferiority complex emanating from the society's negative sexist perceptions towards them (Mudau & Ncube, 2017). The findings by Mudau and Ncube (2017) are in keeping with Eagly and Johannesen- Schmidt's (2001) view that attribute female underrepresentation in leadership to society's gender and leadership constructions which favour males as leaders and women as unfit to lead public institutions.

In a similar research, Muzvidziwa (2014) investigated the gendered nature of educational leadership in a background of historical relegation of women. The study used data obtained from women school heads that formed the first appointed female heads in post independent Zimbabwe in the 1980s. The empirical findings indicated that such female school heads confronted resistance

related to societal culture which in turn impacts on organizational leadership structures (Muzvidziwa, 2014).

Hlatywayo, Hlatywayo and Muranda (2014) used semi-structured interviews and engaged questionnaires to gather data from women leaders and from both male and female lecturers to explore the magnitude of female progression into leadership positions in teacher training colleges, in the background of cultural and traditional beliefs. The study established that a female leader occupied supportive management positions (middle level) whereas their male counterparts occupied higher level management positions. Women's entrance to higher level management positions remained marginal regardless of the intentions to promote them (Hlatywayo, Hlatywayo, & Muranda, 2014). The researchers upheld that though government policy upholds prioritisation of women, patriarchy systems ostracised them subsequently promoting male hegemony.

In Zimbabwe, further inspiration is drawn on the myriad of legislations and policies crafted and put in place by the Zimbabwean government in an endeavour to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women in all sectors of economic, social and political life. On the contrary, in education, there is an apparent reluctance by women to utilise the opportunity provided by these legal instruments. The vexing idea is that female teachers already occupy posts of senior women in secondary schools while refraining from taking up leadership positions as school heads. It is against this background that this paper interrogates the perceived views of senior women in secondary schools to establish, firstly, their gendered construction of school leadership showing how this perpetuates the underrepresentation of women in school leadership. Secondly, we explored women's perceived views of how their underrepresentation in headship of secondary schools can be tackled to bridge the gender gap in school leadership.

4.   Methodology

The study used the qualitative research paradigm. Any educational research guided by the qualitative research paradigm, recognises the significance of context and the values of comprehending the lived experiences of the participants consequently producing knowledge that is inaccessible through use of positivistic, quantitative frameworks (Tilley, 2019). This view guided the study in interrogating the experiences of female teachers in Zimbabwe.

The focus of this study was to explore the lived accounts of the senior women teachers in secondary schools in Chivi district, hence, the suitability of the qualitative research framework. Additionally, the use of the qualitative research approach proffered the researchers of this study as observers to be located in the real realm of female teachers "…studying things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011 p. 3).

Finally, the perspective used allowed exploitation and situating of this work where our location in the district (study site) enabled drawing from our own experiences unlike alien researchers or researchers using google techniques. The study used the exploratory case study research design since it mainly targeted to produce findings of 'HOW' (Tilley, 2019) lived experiences for the senior women teachers contributed to their hesitancy to advance up the ladder of school leadership by taking up deputy headship or headship posts in secondary schools.

To explore and account for the hesitancy of senior women in advancing into leadership positions, 15 senior women from 15 secondary schools were purposively sampled to participate in this study. Critical sampling was the purposive sampling used for it fitted very well in exploratory qualitative research in which a single case (small number of the senior women teachers) was deemed decisive in explaining the phenomenon of inequality between females and males in educational leadership (Etikan, 2016). The purpose of critical sampling was to concentrate on the senior women teachers who were already a step towards promotion due to their posts as senior women, hence had particular knowledge and experience to assist with the relevant ideas for this study.

Of the 15 senior women who participated in this research, ten responded to the semi-structured interviews (SSI) and five (5) were subjected to a focus group discussion (FGD). In keeping with the ethical obligation to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of informants, all the names used in this study are pseudonyms (Shawa, 2017).

The semi-structured interviews were the 'conversation with a purpose' (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) which allowed the senior women participants to freely and openly voice out their opinions. Additionally, the SSI were appropriate in this study where the assumption was that reality of female teachers' narratives

of their inequality with male teachers in educational leadership was multiple and socially constructed through interpretations.

The FGD was conducted with five senior female teachers who had served for more than ten years in the capacity of Senior Woman. The size of the focus group ensured that each female teacher's voice was heard (Prasad, 2017). More importantly, both the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions allowed the researchers to observe the non-verbal expressions of the participants, such as the emphatic gestures and shaking of the head by senior female teachers to show their rejection of advancement into deputy head posts. Two methods of data collection allowed triangulation of data and elucidation of findings. The section that follows is a presentation of findings from the study.

5. Results

Throughout reporting of findings, pseudonyms are used for both the research sites and research participants to protect the privacy of those who participated in the study.The study found four reasons why senior women did not take up school leadership positions in an upward movement in career advancement in Chivi district secondary schools. These female teachers chose to remain in the office of the senior women. The four reasons advanced were (i) gender stereotypes, (ii) female teachers perceived idealised leader (ii) extrinsic normative constraints, (iv) difficulties in managing women's bodies when performing leadership roles. In the study, the researchers call these reasons the gendered constructions of leadership. In the section below, these findings are sequentially presented.

Gender stereotypes

The notion of gender brings with it the stereotypical assumptions about the differences between men and women in leadership behaviour and styles. The findings indicate that senior women teachers reflected deeply engrained stereotypical beliefs that male teachers make better leaders as deputy heads or school heads. The senior women in the study narrated how they grappled with culturally held perceptions of traditional roles of women which impeded them from advancing into deputy headship and school headship positions. Accordingly, the senior women remarked that women should avoid leadership posts in public institutions because they should reserve their energy and mind to work as subordinates and as mothers at home. This was reflected in the narration given by one senior woman as expressed below

Am of the view that school deputy head post is for a male in as much as the head post is for a male. This is because in our society, women are regarded as emotionally weak, and narrowly connected to various school stake holders. A head is expected to run around from place to place in order to make the school run smoothly. In the absence of the school head, the deputy head has to do this. I don't want to take up this jacket as a deputy head…am a woman and lead at home and not at school (Interview, Respondent B, 19 February, 2020).

The study further revealed that senior women teachers were stereotyped in caring roles that were fit for them to carry out duties of the senior woman which largely dealt with the girl child welfare. These female teachers believed that they found pleasure and comfort in the office of senior woman and shun taking up deputy headship posts and later on school head posts. The narration by long time serving senior woman at Chitinha High School explains it as follows:

I have comfort in handling girl child matters at school. This is because, as a mother, I am naturally and socially able to work with the girl child. I don't want to be a deputy head or school head because such an office obliges me to deal with diverse matters such as school finances, examinations, teacher discipline issues and even policy matters governing the running of the school. I do not want to be so occupied. I can work well with school children (Interview, Respondents B, 19 February, 2020).

Such views were similarly voiced by another senior woman at one school under study she remarked:

Naturally, we have been socialised to be care takers of children and not leaders. This is because of our social role and biological role as mothers who breast feed and nurture children from births. Therefore, I find the office of the senior woman easier and befitting for me to hold…I don't want to take up deputy headship post (Interview, Respondent C 19 February, 2020).

The study findings therefore indicated that senior women teachers had deeply ingrained gender roles which contributed to their perception of leadership and their reneging from taking up leadership posts as deputy heads. This corroborated findings by Sandra Bem's Gender Schema Theory which postulates that adolescents (as they grow up) conform and abide by what is culturally defined and prescribed as male or female (Eklund & Grunberg, 2017). Chivi communities are largely, and deeply traditional and cultural, hence senior women teachers have assimilated their society's gender stereotypically congruent values and norms. The senior women teachers, just like their community viewed leadership (deputy headship and school headship) as a prerogative of male teachers. The gender stereotypes about senior women teachers created negative perceptions about how they can lead or if they can lead at all. This has created negative self-perceptions that erode leadership identity and eventually women's disengagement from the leadership pipeline

altogether. They are eventually subdued to sitting on the fence and dismissing their opportunities to rise as deputy school heads.

More importantly, women teachers are commonly addressed as 'mothers' and when they are above fifty years addressed as grandmothers. This has made some female teachers concentrate on these social identities and avoid taking up other titles related to leadership that is, to be identified as school deputy head or school head. This view was discerned from one Mrs Chitsoka as follows:

> *At this age, above fifty years, I am the grandmother to the learners and other fellow teachers. I have pride in this more than I can be identified as a school head or school deputy head.* (Interview, Respondent E, 19 February).

Echoing the same view, Respondent F commented as follows:

> *Being a class teacher is considered a female job and school leadership is considered a male job. Our society largely respects a male school head. More, taking breaks from work to attend to children and grand children is regarded as normal for female teachers…so it is unfitting for a female teacher to be a school head because she must be at school* (Interview, Respondent 19 February, 2020).

From such remarks, it was concluded that female teachers perceived progression to the role of school head as having negative impact upon their family responsibilities. For some female teachers, it was easier for male teachers to take up leadership positions as school heads or school deputy heads as they would receive support from the society. We further concluded that teaching in rural areas in Chivi district (Zimbabwe) is regarded as a gendered occupation which disproportionally attracts more women than men to remain in the classroom avoiding leadership positions.

Female teachers perceived idealised leader

Women, as minority leaders, are gendered in the sense that their reasons not to take up leadership positions are associated with issues of commitment and a view of the ideal leader being masculine. One senior woman at Soso High School referred to this gendered ideal leader as she remarked:

> *A deputy head should be a person who is visible who can be committed to use his extra time for the school organization. He must have fewer social obligations at home. Perhaps a woman who has a small family with two children who are grown-ups and at university or tertiary institution* (Interview, Ms Cuo 20 February, 2020 at Soso High School- pseudonyms*)*

The senior women teachers rejected advancement to headship because their idealised incumbent to the post is a man. School leadership as perceived by interviewed female teachers has been socially constructed as a depiction

attributed to effective male leaders and this masculinist perspective seems to be related to gender stereotypes about men and women's behaviour. This reasoning perpetuates male dominance in school leadership.

From another senior woman came the idea that a leader should be fair minded, personally positioned and separated from colleagues. This was problematic to some senior women teachers as exemplified in the following remark:

> *I don't think that when appointed as a deputy head, I will be able to separate myself from my colleagues and team mates…If given this position I can't be strict as male leader* (Interview, Mrs Honda 19 February, 2020 at Chitinha Secondary School- pseudonyms)

This explains the double bind situation which is a dilemma restricting senior women from advancing into school headship. This idea has been established by Eagly and Carli (2013) who opine that societal expectations of leader behaviour are biased against women. Senior women teachers have accepted and internalised that males form good deputy heads or school heads. This typically reflects the notion of the maleness of leadership and the feminisation of the teaching profession.

Extrinsic normative constraints

Extrinsic influences in the form of parents, community members, female deputy head mentors and female teachers work mates contributed to female teachers rejecting advancement into deputy headship or school headship. Female elders within the community influenced one of the senior women (Mrs Dhimba) to refrain from applying for promotion to deputy headship. Mrs Dhimba shared the following views:

> *I was born into a community in the south western part of this district where people (female elders) were clearly discouraging female teachers from taking up leadership positions such as deputy headship. They cited that those female teachers in leadership positions are either single, or divorced, and are treated with indifference by the community. Intuitively, I concurred to this external influence and feel I don't want to be a deputy heads nor a school head* (Interview, Mrs Dhimba 20 February, 2020.at Zai Secondary School- pseudonyms).

The above view reflects how some other female teachers discouraged their counter parts from ascending to deputy headship or school headship. This was the pull her down syndrome commonly inherent in female teachers who generally feel that they cannot support another female into leadership (Hryniew & Vianna, 2018).

Ms Mapapu of Riva High School referring to an external influence she experienced:

> *I remember as a child observing male teachers as deputy heads and school Heads. In all the schools in our zones, deputies were males. I therefore was taught to believe that schools were deputised by male teachers* (Interview, Ms Mapapu 20 February, 2020 at Riva High School-pseudonyms).

Therefore, such remarks indicated that gender inequality and gender stereotypes about leadership were unintentionally reinforced in schools when senior women (during their early primary school going age) developed assumptions that deputy or school heads were meant to be males. Besides, the observations made by the girl child (as revealed in the above snippet), family and community influences led senior women to reject deputy head posts and school head post.

Family and community influences discouraged Mrs Hondo from taking up deputy head post. Her narration reflected how her female relative was demoted from a headship post due to flouting of examination rules. She remarked:

> *I have learnt from the experience from my female relative who ascended into deputy head post some years ago. She was responsible for registration of candidates with ZIMSEC…she by mistake omitted one candidate from the final entry list. This case back fired on her and she was demoted. This lesson made me to shun being a school deputy head…I would rather remain a senior woman* (Interview, Mrs Hondo 2020 at Shasha Secondary School- pseudonyms).

From her unintentional mentor, Mrs Hondo was discouraged (by her mistakes) from taking up deputy headship fearing that if she committed a serious error in undertaking some duties for a deputy head, she could be demoted and humiliated.

Perhaps the most common external reason for rejection of deputy headship and school headship by all the participants was the demands of family life. Mrs Vunye of Shato High School summarised it all as she commented:

> *When the child gets ill, the husbands call the mum, when the clothes are dirty, ask mum to look for clean clothes for you, when I dismiss from work, I must rush to take care of the house but when the husband dismisses, he may first pass through a beer hall to see friends…With this pressure, I can't take up school headship or deputy headship* (Interview, Mrs Vunye 20 February, 2020 at Shato Secondary School - pseudonyms)

According to the participants, it was not only the men who believed that women were responsible for caring for the family and domesticity issues, society also expected women to take care of the children and household chores.

This burden on the shoulders of senior women teachers made them to reject school leadership posts.

Difficulties in managing women's bodies when performing leadership roles

As presented in (i), senior women teachers' professional identities in school leadership were gendered because of deep stereotypes emanating from masculine-feminine social and cultural norms and this consequently led them to view school leadership as sex role stereotyped. In this context, bodies as personified selves, were considered as locations of power, control and command, women therefore rejected taking up school leadership posts such as school deputy head or school head. Mrs Woga at Damba Secondary School reflected this view in her comments:

> *As female teachers, our physical postures are generally not appealing for leadership… our soft voices, our weights, our heights and self-presentation in skirts and blouses as compared to male suits make us less suitable to take up deputy headship positions* (Interview, Mrs Woga 20 February, 2020 at Damba Secondary School- pseudonyms).

The body image was viewed as one factor which made senior women teachers reject leadership positions beyond 'senior woman office'. Echoing Mrs Woga's view, Ms Chizizi of Rukweza High School remarked:

> *You can't wear your flashy facial make ups, nor dress in a mini skirt of your favourite nor a tight fit dress because you will face reproach from the society…you are compelled to appear a leader. For this reason, I feel I must remain a senior woman and face less scrutiny…when you become a deputy head you labour to up keep your body appearance* (Interview, Ms Chizizi 20 February, 2020 at Rukweza High School- pseudonyms).

From the above views, bodies and appearance were considered constraining conditions for senior women advancement into deputy head positions. It is the author's view that men were not scrutinized to that level, in fact, women bring gendered bodies to leadership more than men do. Referring to this uncomfortable scrutiny by the public, Mrs Chitatu at Vuyai High School commented as follows:

> *I have observed how a female leader is scrutinised from head to toes…People will even whisper to another person close by making some comments (positive or negative) about body appearance of a woman who will be before them to present an announcement…I am irritated by this and I feel I can't be a deputy head for this will make me more vulnerable to this kind of scrutiny* (Interview, Mrs Chitatu 20 February 2020 at Vuyai High School- pseudonyms).

Therefore, senior women teachers felt that the public space associated with deputy headship exposed them by making them more visible as women and less visible as leaders. They therefore felt comfortable as senior women and rejected advancing neither into deputy headship nor beyond to school headship.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The main finding of the study was that females are underrepresented in school leadership emanating from gendered constructions. In light of this finding, this study recommends a model of gender construction change (see Figure 1). The model can be used by the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and the Public Service Commission.

The suggested model emphasises the reconstruction of gender and leadership through cultural changes. This is because the pillars of culture form the determinants of change. As depicted in Figure 1, families, churches, schools and media form key pillars to change the attitudes, values and aspirations of both males and females and the society at large towards school leadership. There is need to change the behavioural norm and deconstruct the male hegemony.

From the suggested model, female teachers need to be enlightened through behavioural drivers such as *enabling* them through training programmes. Enabling processes support the realisation of skills for the core duties of school leader. Examples of such skills which training programmes should focus on include financial management, conflict management, and human resources management among others. With these skills, female teachers may consent to take up leadership positions thereby contributing to deconstructing the male hegemony.

Further, the model suggests that female teachers need to be *encouraged* to shed off some norms and beliefs about females being subordinates and males as suitable leaders of public institutions. Through provision of incentives such as increased salaries for women school leaders, female teachers may dispel the beliefs that men are leaders and females are subordinates. *Exemplifying* female leadership through mentors is another way to reconstruct leadership and gender. Female teachers can be mentored by other mature and experienced female school leaders and *be engaged* in headship of schools in the country.

Engaging them embraces the idea that school headship positions in the country should be equally allocated between qualified and capable males

and females. It is incumbent on women to be actively involved in fighting gender inequality rather than perpetuate underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. The behavioural drivers referred to herein are labelled the e-Behavioural drivers in figure 1 below. They form part of the model behaviour change that these researchers recommend among other important cultural pillars that must be considered for a change in gender constructions aimed at closing the gap of women representation in school leadership. Such pillars include families, schools and churches to mention a few. Gender constructions in these social institutions are obliged to recognize that human practices, (that is, the ways of undertaking, routinised behaviour, habits, and norms) are arrangements of systemic and inter-related components which drive peoples' actions or behaviour as part of their everyday lives. The major goal is to engage social institutions to change gender perceptions of school leadership in order to promote the participation of females in school leadership.
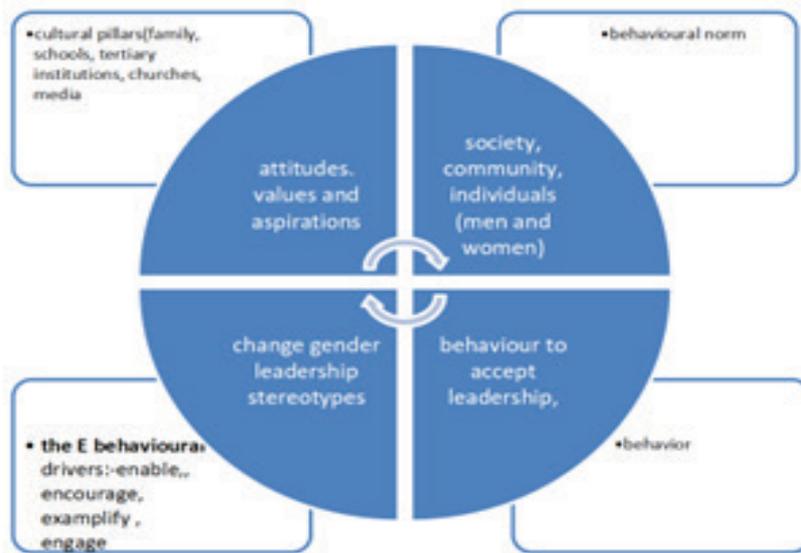

Figure 1: Model of gender construction change

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