# Education Inequalities: An Investigation of Gender Representation in Leadership Positions of Selected Secondary Schools of Gauteng Province

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*Abstract: Most countries, South Africa included, are still grappling with gross gender underrepresentation in the senior education management and leadership positions. This article highlights the plight of women and their struggle to access senior leadership positions in education and aims to challenge the long-standing adage that women must teach, and males must lead. This study does not ignore the fact that there have been changes in the recruitment of women in leadership positions. It recognizes that there is evidence that even the women who are already in leadership positions are not afforded the same treatment as their male counterparts. The research study made use of quantitative research methods, and data was analysed using mathematically based methods, statistics. A sample was drawn from three different schools within the Tshwane District and was handed prepared questionnaires to respond to. Findings in this study highlight the barriers contributing towards women being underrepresented in leadership positions, to include, among others; gender roles stereotypes tying women to household chores as well as childrearing responsibilities. Recommendations are made on the following aspects, namely, recruitment and selection committees, education policies, deconstructing gender roles stereotypes as well as providing strong mentorship for women in leadership positions.*

*Keywords: Gender-Underrepresentation, Equity, Equality, Gender, Gender-Perceptions, Gender Roles Stereotypes, Mentoring, Socialization, Social Justice*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Female educators in South Africa constitute a large number that far outweighs that of their male counterparts in the teaching fraternity; however, they remain underrepresented in the management positions. Most women are concentrated in lower ranks while most of the male educators occupy higher and senior management positions, such as principals, deputy principals, and Head of departments (HOD's). There seems to be no logical explanation as to why women are so underrepresented even though most of them are highly qualified, even better than their management personnel. While there have been significant changes in terms of women's increased representation, however, women continue to be positioned in the middle rather than senior management positions. Transformation is a long, slow, ongoing process (Wolpe, Quinlan, & Martinez, 1997).

Primary schools are flooded with female educators as compared to males; however, if there are any promotional positions, the latter are likely candidates for the posts. It seems as if men are forever geared and prepared for leadership positions as compared to women in the same league. Male educators are often entrusted with more significant responsibilities that prepare them for future roles in leadership, even though the posts are not available then. Males are often given tasks that equip them for leadership roles so that they are ready when the opportunity presents itself. Women predominate the foundation phase staff and constitute about half of the high school staff and hold almost 20 % of the elementary school posts (Millson, 1973).

Fullan (2000) maintains that governing bodies play a significant role in the underrepresentation of women in education leadership. They uphold gender stereotypes dictating that women be placed in elementary administration rather than advancing them to top management levels in education.

Stevens and Woods (1995) identify aspects of overlooking women management positions because of gender-related practices held by the school in reinforcing social norms, portraying women as less deserving, if not inferior to men. The root cause of gender underrepresentation in school leadership positions are societal beliefs and cultural norms. It should be clear that schools are an extension of social structure and the politics that brought them to be. Lack of support and mentorship to women are a significant barrier to growth and development of women in their leadership skills. Gender stereotypes leave women in the cold as they lack strong role models to look up to. The study aims at creating awareness to all in the decision-making bodies; that the inclusion of female skills, experiences, attitudes, abilities, and values will benefit all. Failure to include and acknowledge women as leaders do not only rob women of their opportunities to add value and provide sound leadership. It denies the education fraternity of benefitting from unique leadership styles associated with females in leadership, such as caring, transformative, and embracing others. Cultural and societal gender stereotypes continually put women at risk of facing social and structural inequalities. The scourges of gender discrimination expose women to different forms of injustices gender-based violence, lack of support or mentorship, loss of mentorship, loss of economic opportunities, all forms of marginalization.

## 2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The quantitative research method was used in this study to explain the phenomena; in this case, it was gender underrepresentation in education leadership. Numerical data were collected through questionnaires and were then analysed using mathematically based methods, statistics. A sample was drawn from three different schools within the Tshwane District from three different schools. The prepared questionnaires were 200, approximately one hundred and sixty were given to respondents, and only one hundred and thirty-six were retrieved for analysis. Before conducting research, permission was requested and granted, thus limiting the numbers of respondents to the allocated schools. The number of questionnaires was restricted by the fact that the research could only be conducted in three schools and the staff members in these were below the prepared questionnaires.

**Data collection techniques**
The study made use questionnaires, which were compiled making use of the subheadings in the literature review to inform the content and structure of the questions. The sub-headings are: The factors contributing to gender underrepresentation in leadership;
Gender stereotypes as contributing factors towards the underrepresentation of women in leadership; Gender equality policies and the underrepresentation of women in education leadership roles; The role of the recruitment and selection committees/SGBs in the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles.
    From the questionnaires, frequency tables were compiled. To interpret the frequency tables, bar graphs and pie charts were drawn based on the responses of how both genders responded on questions asked.

*Conceptual Framework Underpinning the Study*
The study made use of a social justice theory to underpin the scope of research on the underrepresentation of women in education leadership. The theoretical framework provides an orientation to the study, enabling the reader to follow and understand the argument made by the researcher on the subject. The theoretical framework helps to provide a structure and channels the researcher to confine the work within the boundaries of the frame as designed.

**Social Justice Theory**
The social justice theory promotes equity for women, advocating for gender inclusivity in all aspects of life. To achieve the goal of social justice, one must first define what social injustice is. In seeking justice, we anticipate what the ideal situation would be. We can only deal with injustice by questioning and acknowledging it. Research indicates that individuals for social justice seek to challenge political, economic, and social structures that privilege some and disadvantage others. Justice can be expressed as a commitment to fairness, ensuring that the voice of the marginalized is heard, that all groups in society are represented adequately and with equity in the research (Arthur and Warring, 2014).
    Those advocating for social justice challenge unequal power relationships based on gender, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, language, and other systems of oppression. Social justice is regarded as the same as equity in that they both stands for moral values to ensure that values underpinning interpersonal relationships, such as justice, fairness, respect, integrity, tolerance are served. Social justice should include gender equity issues in educational leadership (Kanpol, 1997).
    To seek justice means questioning all forms of injustice, to anticipate what an ideal situation should be. To take a stance in the face of injustice and discrimination by challenging it to ensure that people are made conscious of all those unacceptable acts. Social justice is more than disagreeing that certain behaviours in our communities and organizations are wrong. We need to make a conscious decision to confront all forms of injustices and discriminations that emerge from everyday interactions from such institutions (Irby, Brown and Yang (2009) and Normore (2008).
    According to Adams (1997), the goal of social justice education is the full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. To be agents of social change, students must first learn how to analyse postmodern approaches to knowing critically. To be agents of change in the classroom and practice, students must develop an awareness of daily aspects of oppression woven into the threads of modern society. Moreover,

students must understand the way such oppression affects their practice and interactions with others (Kline and Gardner, 2005).

Research indicates that women account for 51% of the population and 46% of the Economically Active Population (EAP), but their representation at senior management and decision-making levels are negligible by comparison. Tokenism and political correctness do not even begin to shade the picture of underrepresentation in senior corporate levels; women's presence in more powerful line positions is even lower. The key ingredient to achieving corporate success or rise to the more senior positions, one must be and seen as a leader. In preparation for senior leadership roles, one must have and be having the potential for leadership. The question of gender comes to mind, questioning the difference between the leadership styles of males and females as well as their effectiveness (Appelbaum, 2003).

To combat social injustice pictured by the underrepresentation of women in education senior management positions, there should be an emergence of education leaders committed to social change. Principles of social justice appeal to those in positions of power to ensure that the principle of fairness is maintained. Power is seen as serving to build an environment of mutual trust and respect, coupled with respect, fairness, and responsible behaviour towards others. Women are gradually achieving positions of influence and participate in policy decision; they, therefore, have opportunities to open access to knowledge and resources to those with less power. Women from all occupations, not just those with official status positions, have a role in social justice leadership, to work to change the undemocratic culture and structure of institutions and society, improving the lives of those who have been marginalized or oppressed (Normore, 2008) and (Reynolds and Collard, 2006)).

Mentoring students for social justice and gender equity should be part of school education, and this can be achieved by integrating social justice concepts and practices into all aspects of their preparation programs. It is not enough for these programs to commit to social justice as part of their mission philosophy, but issues of equity and justice must infuse every course in the curriculum. Social justice can be achieved if more educationists could be involved in bringing about social change (Appelbaum, 2003).

Incorporating the social justice theory in this study helps to explore the barriers encountered by women in pursuit of leadership positions. When women go to interviews, they face selection panels flooded by males and very few females, if any. Challenges faced by women in educational leadership include, among other aspects, such as their marginalization because of gender. Concerns raised on issues of injustice should be addressed mainly in ensuring that women are shortlisted and assessed relatively, they are not discriminated because of gender whenever they go for interviews. On analysing the feminist theory on social justice, Mertens (2010)cites the fact that their views are not univocal, they differ according to regions of the world, and however, basic principles are underlying such research and evaluation. Firstly, social injustice is a form of discrimination emanating from gender inequities, which need to be reversed; the discrimination or inequities can be blamed on significant institutions that help shape norms of the society such as schools, religion, media, government, and corporations.

The underrepresentation of female educators in education leadership can be summed up in the light of the Marxist theory of master-servant relationship, where women were subjected to lower societal roles. They reinforced gender stereotypes held by societal structures as well as the cultural perspectives on women as being inferior to men. It was believed that the primary role of women was that of taking care of the household and childrearing, which are a

stereotypical mentality of a sexual division of labour. The idea of women joining the workforce was not a welcomed idea.

There is enough evidence showing that many female educators are found in the lower ranks of education in many nations, their failure to press into decision-making and leadership roles must result in a loss of talents and experience to their organizations, communities, and societies. The gender underrepresentation in education management raises issues of social injustice that need to be dealt with within the education sector. Despite the unjust gender underrepresentation and increased understanding of historical causes, among others, patriarchy, gender stereotypes, and socialization, progress towards gender equality in educational leadership, steering the advancement of women into the governing boards of the public and corporate organization remain slow (UNESCO, 2011).

The men's reluctance to have women in the workplace enforced their condemnation to seclusion into domestic life, thereby denying them any powers of collective bargaining. Their inclusion in the workplace would enable them to have a voice to challenge the injustices of the masters towards women. The exclusion of women in the workplace denied them any form of collective bargaining and having a voice to change their lives for the better. Marxism had very little to do with women in leadership but focused on the relationship between capitalists and the working class defined the contractual agreement of wage-labourer for the capitalist. They held theoretical analysis of finding solutions of the oppressed to be their emancipation through social justice (Sim, 2003).

In middle-class families, women were expected to serve their husbands as masters, to cater for all their essential needs without questioning anything. They needed to produce heirs who would inherit their wealth and take over their legacy to the next generation. The system was structured in a manner that enforced subordination, subjugation, and dependence of the woman towards the husband who could use wealth and property to exert power over her. The same ideology of master-servant relationship can be subtly observed in the face of leadership in the schools that are flooded by female educators, and yet of those in senior management positions are males. Female educators are perfect candidates for the foundation phase, which further perpetuates the stereotypes of women as primary caregivers and nurturers (Department of Basic Education, 2002).

Gendered notions of leadership are deeply engraved in most countries and need to be challenged and redefined by asking questions such what it means to be a good school leader since this is crucial in an age of greater accountability and increased globalization. Studies show that male principals who used traditional leadership styles characterized by sensitivity and support met with more resistance from their teachers. It was also found that both women and men could be hierarchical, autocratic leaders, or collaborative, supportive leaders; though women who used traditionally masculine leadership styles were more accepted (Reynolds and Collard, 2006).

### Research Findings

The findings of the research will be discussed based on the research questions formulated for the investigation of the gender representation in leadership positions of selected secondary schools of Gauteng Province.

**Question 1: What are the factors contributing to gender representation in selected Secondary schools of Gauteng province?**
**Factors Contributing to Gender Under-Representation in Educational Leadership.**
Most of the findings are in line with the current literature. The outcomes will be reported while highlighting what other researchers on the same subjects have reported.

o   The study records a significantly high 57 % of females and 53 % males in the study affirming the notion that despite the large numbers of females in the education sector, yet male educators are likely candidates for promotional posts. Literature states that women's access to top leadership positions is still severely restricted though they match or exceed their male counterparts in terms of formal qualifications (Reynolds and Collard (2006) and Growe and Montgomery (2010)).

o   An overwhelming majority of respondents who participated in the study disputed the notion that women are good as educators but fail as principals. Almost 46 % of females and 42 % of male respondents, respectively, strongly disagreed with the research statement. The response proved the adage that women must teach, and men must lead to be something based on gender stereotypes and unfounded on any truth. Gender role stereotypes holding men as heads of the families afford them much influence in decision-making. Even in education, men typically occupy positions of power within the job economy.

o   Literature maintains that barriers limiting women to participate in decision-making positions include among others discriminatory appointment and promotion practices, cultural stereotyping and the male culture's continued resistance to women in management positions (Barmao and Mukhwana, 1992). The study proves that gender role stereotypes play a significant role in the appointment of candidates into leadership positions with overwhelming majority of both male and female respondents affirming the statement that men are preferred candidates for managerial roles as compared to women with similar academic qualifications, with significant 44 % of male respondents strongly agreeing and 46 % of female respondents, respectively, agreeing with the given statement.

o   Most women are and remain in lower levels of education regardless of their qualifications. The study indicates that the highest responses of 35 % females and 44 % males, respectively, strongly agreed to the statement that men are preferred for managerial roles as compared to women with similar academic qualifications. Similarly, 46 % of females and 42 % of males in the study significantly agreed to the statement. Studies indicate that women are not being identified and prepared for leadership roles. In cases where they aspire for leadership, they are rejected from the senior positions (Morley and Crossouard, 2016).

o   The literature review indicates that more females enrol and graduate from our universities, and yet male candidates dominate the senior leadership positions. Males are the likely candidates for leadership positions as compared to females. Globally, women's access to top leadership positions is still severally restricted, though they match or exceed their male counterparts in terms of formal qualifications and technical knowledge (Barmao, 2013).

**Question 2 How are tasks at school level delegated to both male and female educators? / How are educators equipped for managerial roles by their superiors?**
**The Delegation of Tasks to Both Male and Female Educators at School Level**
o   The study indicates that male educators are preferred candidates for managerial roles as compared to their female counterparts. Gender underrepresentation is perpetuated by some form of injustice resulting from gender role stereotypes, with 41 % of females and

33 % of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that women are treated less favourably for leadership positions due to gender stereotypes. Similarly, 41 % of females and 35 % of male respondents agreed to the given statement. The findings are consistent with the literature that men seem to advance to higher levels of education because they are favoured in promotional practices, and women find it hard even if they choose to do so (Growe and Montgomery (2010) and Barmao and Mukhwana (1992)).

o Cultural perceptions held by those selecting and promoting candidates for leadership positions, that males are perfect for leadership positions, are bound to influence their actions in terms of training and developing educators. Perceptions that men are better disciplinarians than women contribute immensely to gender underrepresentation.

o The study indicates that women felt strongly with 41 % females and 33 % male respondents, emphatically agreeing with the statement given; similarly, 41% of females and 35 % of male respondents agreed, as well.

o The educational system continues to be structured as a traditional home, men manage the schools, and women nurture the learners. The study aligns itself with the literature that women are and continue to be underrepresented in education, and with such perception the gender gap is inevitable (Whitaker and Lane (1990) and Growe and Montgomery (2010)).

o Some of the findings were inconsistent with gender role stereotypes held by people about women being weak, emotional, unstable, and talkative, spending less time in being productive and being inconsistent because they put more emphasis on personal than on systems governing the institution. The study proved that women are capable of leading but are based on cultural perception and gender stereotypes that females are not as capable leaders as their male counterparts are.

o On the aspect of women being a bundle of emotional wrecks and unstable, the respondents were distinctly divided. The study indicates that a distinct 33 % of male respondents agreed that women could not separate personal issues from formal work-related issues, on the other hand, 33 % of female respondents disagreed with the statement given.

**Question 3 How are the selected and recruitment panels elected at the school level?**
**The Role of Recruitment and Selection Committees/ (SGB) in Gender Differentiation**
When the selection panels associate leadership with masculinity, women are likely to be ignored for such roles. The study indicates that a significant 56 % of females and 50 % of male respondents agreed with the statement that the selection and recruitment committees associate leadership with masculinity. These stereotypes have the potential to show favouritism to the male candidate. Composition of panels that are gender-sensitive would help female candidates to identify with some role models. Literature holds that some of the primary causes of the gender gap in education include the continuation of long-held societal attitudes that assume women make weak leaders. Furthermore, the direct exclusion of women in workplaces dominated by males and seemingly gender-neutral policies that nevertheless prevent women who must balance work and family commitments from accessing leadership positions(UNESCO, 2011).

o The study findings indicate that gender role stereotypes and socialization play a considerable role among selection committees. Literature states that men become preferred

candidates because of gender role stereotypes. Gender roles develop through internalization and identification during childhood. From birth parents interact differently with children depending on their sex, and through this interaction, parents can instil different values or traits to their children because of what is normative to their sex (Barmao, 2013).

**Question 4: How do gender roles influence the mentoring of educators in leadership roles?**

**The Influence of Gender Roles in the Underrepresentation of Women Leadership Roles**
The study indicates that respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the statement that learners are better disciplined by males rather than females; It is interesting to note that females recorded high %ages (31% females against 21% males who strongly agreed; and 46% of female against 40% of male the respondents agreed). The statement has its basis on gender role stereotypes since women have always been primary caregivers who instil a sense of discipline in children, showing them what is wrong and right. The responses, however, supported the existing stereotypes about women and discipline. This stereotypical message is in line with the statement depicting women as weak and unable to enforce discipline among learners. The study indicates that most responses were not based on facts, but gender perceptions held by some of the respondents.

Findings from the study showed a whopping 53 % of males, as well as 43 % of female respondents, agreed with the statement that leadership is seen as the male domain. The responses indicate that patriarchy plays a significant role in the formation of the leadership structures within the education sector. When women are judged because of gender and not on merit, an element of injustice is inevitable since men are heads of families, that same concept if filtered through to the school system, with boy learners likely to be socialized as superior to girls.

The study aligns itself with literature, maintaining that gender stereotypes form an intrinsic part of society, which affects and determine women's position. These stereotypes continue to consider women as weak, passive, emotionally dependent, fearful, unsure of themselves, manipulative, and talking too much. When the society has determined that only males make good leaders, it, therefore, continues to deny easy access for females aspiring and seeking leadership roles because they do not fit the norm (Barmao and Mukhwana, 1992).

**The Gender Equality Policies and the Underrepresentation**
Despite policies to ensure that gender equity is maintained, there is evidence that they are not adhered to as indicated by the findings exploring the aspect of gender underrepresentation concerning policies and acts on the workplace. The study found out that a massive majority of 53 % of females and 47 % of male respondents felt that the selection committees often disregarded EEA no.55 of 1998.

The study indicates that the highest response of participants believe that gender underrepresentation is the result of overlooking legislation governing the workplace. The responses indicate that gender stereotypes play a huge role in the selection and promotion of personnel in senior education management positions.

Despite the legislation enshrined in the Bill of rights, gender underrepresentation in senior education leadership persist, and the situation might lead to respondents believing less in policies and acts in place. The study found that 55 % of female respondents and 47 % of males,

respectively, indicated that gender policies often lacked an official programme of action to regulate its implementation.

When responding on the statement that there are policies and systems in place to ensure equality in the selection and promotion of candidates for leadership positions, participants showed a lack of faith in the systems involved therein. The level of response from the participants indicated a whopping 52 % of females and 58 % of males indicating that the participants are either not aware of the gender equity policies in place or they blatantly implied that these policies are ignored, ruling them as non-existent. The problem of gender underrepresentation is not the result of lack of equity policies but the reluctance of the power that be, to implement them.

The study indicates that both males and female respondents (35% of each) affirmed the statement that the selection and promotion panels often disregard the economic advancement and social justice aspect of women. Again, there were counter-responses of significant (30% and 21%, females and males, respectively). When women are denied access to senior leadership positions, they are also affected in terms of financial stability, therefore, remaining in lower levels of the education sector, is a huge disadvantage not only to women but to the whole education fraternity. Literature states that even though societal mandates have been utilized to increase the number of women in leadership positions, the gender stereotypes still exert a powerful influence and are at least partially to blame for both women's difficulty in securing leadership positions and for society's struggle to accept them (Moran, 1992).

### Recommendations

Recommendations are given based on the research findings in the study. The status of women must be improved to enhance their socio-economic benefits that may come with the full participation of women in senior leadership positions where they will be useful in decision-making bodies. Equal gender representation provides role models and mentors for young girls; this can be achieved by ensuring that women are equally represented in secondary schools to encourage young women to pursue career paths in education leadership.

### *Recruitment and Selection Committees*

o   Governing bodies should use the policies governing recruitment and selection to ensure that there are equality and diversity. They must ensure that job applicants are not subjected to discrimination because of gender, marital status, civil partnership status, sexual orientation, race, disability, and age.

o   Marginalization should be eradicated from all forms of advertising, shortlisting, job selection, and the interview itself, by avoiding the use of words that reinforces gender stereotypes. Words used insensitively, and marginalizing women discourage people and make them think that the job is suitable for a certain group of people.

o   The use of media to advertise the job positions must be user-friendly and should not cater to a specific selection of the community and exclude or limit others. In short, listing, the focus should be on the criteria set out on the job description and job specification. The panel residing in the interviews should be gender-sensitive, and not flooded by males, only thereby sending the wrong message that leadership positions are not for women.

o   Questions should be prepared in advance and be common to all candidates. They should revolve around work-related issues and not zoom in on marital, family, domestic, and

age-related matters that may lead to unfair discrimination of candidates. When the panel focuses on personal matters that may have nothing or little interest in the job advertised, a female candidate may not be employed because of concerns that she may want to start a family.

o   The recruitment and selection committees (or members of the School governing body – SGB's) should be gender-sensitive, having a visible representation of both males and females. The committee should avoid gender stereotypes in their selection, like judging candidates applying for management posts on the basis masculine characteristics deemed as suitable for leadership roles.

**Education Policies and Gender Representation in Education Leadership**

o   The institutions should put employment policy initiatives in place to improve gender equality in the workplace. It must be ensured that those policies are implemented effectively, such as the Employment Equity Act no.55 of 1995 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) and other labour related acts.

o   There should be bodies that will ensure the implementation of these policies with every placement within the employment sector, establishing gender equality programmes, and monitoring them.

o   The policy document should be easily accessible to all employees to know what they entail and be able to lodge disputes if these policies are violated.

o   Programs ensuring equity should consider economic advancement and social justice for women in all spheres.

*Deconstructing Gender Roles Stereotypes in Education Leadership*

o   Those in the decision-making bodies should start asking real questions about gender underrepresentation and ensure that there is representation at all levels.

o   Reconstruct ways in which women can be afforded preferential treatment and not judged as weak. Women to be judged on individual performance, just like men and not as group representatives. (Avoid concluding females because of few individuals to represent many women)

o   Strict measures need to be taken to ensure that women are assigned meaningful tasks where their decision-making counts. (Avoid making them chairpersons of the debating committee, bereavement committee, cleaning committee, and so on)

o   Educators should avoid sending sub-conscious messages to learners in the way they allocate tasks, (girls being responsible for all the cleaning of the classroom and boys assigned traditionally masculine duties)

o   Deconstruct the gender stereotypes of associating leadership with masculinity, by assigning young committed girls leadership roles.

o   It is difficult to associate women with leadership, since femininity has been dependent, conforming, submissive, and lacking in decision-making skills. The gender stereotyping seems to explain why women are so largely underrepresented even though they have become an ever-increasing large proportionate share of the central portion (Morgan, 1999).

o   Changes in perception are difficult to achieve because they are deeply entrenched within our societies, families, and organizations. Seeing women as leaders should start within the family, the school, and society.

**Mentorship and Gender Representation**

o   Mentoring can meet the needs of both women and the institution; assisting in attracting and retaining women and minority professional in the academic work environment. Monitoring of newcomers in the system reduces turn over, help mentees deal with organizational issues, and accelerates their assimilation into the culture. The mentees benefit because someone cares enough to support them, advise them, and help interpret inside information (Growe and Montgomery, 2010).

o   There is a body of literature which holds that women as leaders are focusing more on interpersonal relationships and the accomplishment of tasks as opposed to traditional views that they are concerned with relationships than with task accomplishment as well (Moran, 1992).

o   If social justice is to be achieved in a workplace, a mechanism is to be identified that matches the research results to social action, allowing those who are least powerful to be at the forefront of the transformation initiatives. It is not about counting numbers but making those numbers count. There is evidence that there is an increasing number of women who enter the workforce, and an increasing number of managerial positions, women's access to leadership positions remains limited (Weyer, 2007).

## 3.   SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This study was conducted on gender underrepresentation in secondary schools established that gender roles account much for women being placed in lower levels of the education sector. Even though most women in secondary schools are highly qualified and experienced in their field of work, they continue to be ignored for senior management positions.

Much emphasis has been made from the literature on the factors that fuel the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles as follows; Lack of support and mentorship to women is a significant barrier to their growth in leadership. Gender stereotypes leave women in the cold as they lack strong role models to look up to. Cultural and societal gender stereotypes continually perpetuate social and structural inequalities. The inequalities increase injustice and gender-based violence, lack of support or mentorship, loss of economic opportunities, and all forms of marginalization.

There are many barriers to women recognition and promotion to leadership roles, but there are also means to ensure that they are considered for these leadership positions through training and development, support, and mentorship.

Women are disadvantaged by stereotypes assigned on both genders and expectations on them as determined by society. Gender stereotypes are an intrinsic part of society's heritage and paradigm; it affects and determines women's position. Historically, women are considered weak, passive, emotional, dependent, fearful, unsure about themselves, manipulative, and taking too much of being marginalized (Barmao, 2013).

Cultural perceptions about leadership dictate how individuals should behave and act in those positions. There are specific characteristics and qualities associated with someone who has the potential to lead, such as assertiveness, decisiveness, courageous, resilient, and so on. Women, on the other hand, are expected to be warm, humble, poised, and soft-spoken. These qualities do not qualify women for leadership roles, which is defined in a masculine form; with qualities explained before and among others, being arrogant, aggressive, and shrewd.

The underrepresentation of qualified women in leadership positions has created a gender gap that exists not only in education but also in many areas of the workplace. Failure to bridge these gaps leads to demoralization to young women still carving their career paths to see that there are no role models, coaches, and mentors in education management. Mentorship plays a considerable role in the assimilation of women in their new roles. Despite the shortage of female role models, women can seek and identify people who possess the kind of leadership qualities one aspires and learn from them. If possible, they can shadow them and allow the process of mentorship to take place.

The study has established what literature states about gender role perceptions. Society has determined that only males make good leaders. Therefore it continues to deny easy access for women seeking leadership roles because they do not fit the norm. Men and women who are aware and concerned about gender underrepresentation should continue highlighting the importance of roping in women in leadership positions and utilize their unique qualities to build and strengthen organizations.

The recruitment and selection committees need to take into consideration the gender equality policies to avoid gender-differentiation and close the gaps. Policy maintenance programs need to be established to ensure that gender equality is exercised in the workplace.

The glass ceiling needs to be acknowledged and dealt with; pretending that it does not exist, gives it the power to manipulate the system and rob it of the possibility of growth if women were brought in. Conscious decisions are to be taken by educators that they model gender-appropriate behaviours.

The shortage of females in senior management positions continually perpetuates gender underrepresentation because men's domination of the decision-making process enables them to recruit other males to fill the management positions. Research indicates that gender, more than experience, competence, background, race, or age, determines a person's possibility of assuming a leadership position in education. Gender stereotypes are culturally constructed to mean different thing to both men and women. Males are likely candidates in senior management positions because of engraved cultural beliefs and gender roles stereotypes. Behaviour is learned; therefore, education can be used as a vehicle to address all injustices resulting from actions influenced by gender stereotypes.

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