

Analyzing Gender Difference in Leadership Styles and Behaviour of Heads of Schools in Tanzania

Ntide P. Dady (MA Ed.)

Department of Education, Kasulu Teachers College, P.O. Box 3, Kasulu, Tanzania

E-mail: faithdadii@yahoo.com

Theodora A.L. Bali (PhD)

College of Education, University of Dodoma, P.O. Box 523, Dodoma, Tanzania

Tel: +255765740030 E-mail: bali_theo1@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study made a comparative analysis of leadership styles and behavior of male and female heads of primary schools in Kasulu District, Tanzania. One hundred and ninety participants were sampled purposively and randomly from 22 public primary schools. A multi-method data collection strategy including interviews, questionnaire and documentary analysis, was deployed. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The descriptive statistics used included frequency tables, charts, mean scores, and t-test. Overall, results revealed that, participative, democratic, team management and authoritative leadership styles were deployed by both male and female heads of schools in running primary schools. Similarities and differences were observed in terms of frequency and manner in which those leadership styles were used by male and female school heads. Moreover, both male and female heads of schools were found with the same amount of task oriented leadership behavior. However, female heads of schools showed more task oriented leadership behavior than male heads. The study thus recommends addressing the situation of gender imbalance in schools leadership so as to utilize the revealed leadership talents and skills of female heads of schools as it has been done for male school heads.

Keywords: Gender and school leadership, leadership styles and behavior, primary school heads.

1. Introduction

Across the world, school leadership has been acknowledged as the foremost basis for successful organization and implementation of school programmes (Lam, 2001). Most research has demonstrated that the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools are managed, more than the abundance of available resources; and the overall capacity of schools to improve teaching and learning is strongly influenced by quality of leadership provided by the head of school (De Grauwe, 2000). In this regard, school leadership has sensitively been considered particularly in times of crisis and rapid changes by looking at heads of schools for hope, inspiration and a pathway to somewhere more desirable (Bolman & Deal, 1994 as cited in Smith & Piele, 1997).

While most of credit has been directed towards overall school leadership, studies related to school effectiveness have generated more specific findings on the role of head of schools in school advancement and their leadership styles which lead to effectiveness of the school (Smith & Tomlinson, 1990; Leithwood & Steinbach, 1990), to mention but a few. The presence or absence of effective school leadership style and behavior are said to directly and indirectly influence general school performance (Halinger & Heck, 1998). In this case, different working organizations especially educational organizations, are deeply concerned and looking for the right school leadership style because what happens in the school is always evaluated by society (Okugun, 2012).

Focusing on leadership style and behavior of male and female heads of schools, female heads of schools have been marginalized in accessing and exercising leadership. This is because there is a stereotype of hegemonic masculinity that consciously and unconsciously influences our expectations of what a leader 'should' be. Consequently, women and others who do not fit the masculine leader stereotype are perceived as outsiders in the leadership role (Coleman, 2010).

Shakeshaft (1987) observed that even though the majority of teachers in many countries are female, only a small percentage of these are head of schools. Even in a highly developed country like the U.S, 54% of secondary schools teachers are female, but only 26% of these females are high school principals

(Shakeshaft, 1999). As a response to gender imbalance in school leadership, the question of whether women lead differently from men has attracted several researchers including Dobbins & Platz (1986), Aburdene & Naisbett (1992) and Eagly et al. (1992), to mention but a few. With regard to their findings, Restine (1993) summarizes “the literature documenting little or no differences in the school administration of men and women” on the one hand, but on the other, acknowledging “other findings with markedly different ways in which men and women administer schools.”

Amidst the controversies on different leadership studies’ findings which were devoted to comparing male and female leadership styles and behavior, still there is a need to continue working on this topic especially in areas where the population of women is more but they are still underrepresented. Thus, this study addressed this problem in Tanzanian context by using Kasulu District as a case study. Typically, overwhelming majority of schools in Tanzania has male heads of schools. Kasulu District, for example, currently has only 26 female heads of primary schools while there are 198 male heads of primary schools. Although this District is located in Kigoma Region where there is a high population of women compared to men [52 women for every 48 men with a ration of 52:48 (URT, 1998)]. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of gender on educational leadership by comparing the leadership styles and behaviors of male and female heads of primary schools.

1.1 Methods and Goals

This study used a comparative research design to contrast leadership styles and behavior of male and female heads of primary schools in Kasulu (Hofstee, 2006). It adopted Gender schema theory (GST) with assumptions that mental pictures of femaleness and maleness developed in human life, might influence differences in behavior of male and female human beings (Papalia et al., 2001).

Data were gathered from 22 (10%) public primary out of 222 public primary schools which are found in Kasulu district. Natasha et al. (2005) recommends 10% as an adequate percentage of samples for that population. In all 22 primary schools, before administration of questionnaire and interview sessions, permission was sought from relevant authorities and the purpose of the study was thoroughly explained to the study participants. Each school in the sample was visited twice, both to improve the accuracy of the estimates on several variables (in particular teacher absence) and to gauge the similarity of the responses from the two visits. Participants were 22 heads of schools, 124 teachers and 44 pupils, making a total of 190 (95%) participants out 200 targeted participants. This percentage guaranteed statistical validity of results (Anastasi and Urbina, 1997)

A multi-method data collection strategy, which included interviews, questions and documentary analysis, was deployed. The data collected were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The descriptive statistics used included frequency tables, charts, mean scores, and t-test.

1.1.1 Results and Discussion

Presentation and analysis of findings are organized basing on research objectives and questions that guided this study. Findings are also discussed in the light of the existing related literature.

Comparison of Leadership Styles of Male and Female Head of schools

Responses of heads of schools revealed that participative, democratic, team management and authoritative are leadership styles were mainly deployed by male and female heads of schools in running primary schools, with participative leadership style being mostly mentioned to be used by most male and female primary school heads of heads than any other leadership style (see Figure 1). Gender wise, the differences and similarities were noted on the way this leadership style was used by heads of schools. Proportionally, the number of female heads of schools who used participative leadership style was larger than the number of male heads of schools who used it. Five out of nine heads of schools who said that they tended to use participative leadership style in their schools were women (55.6%), while four of them (44.4 %) were male. The findings in this regard concur with Nzimande and Sikhosana (1996) who reported that most female leaders in education institutions in South Africa tend to employ participative leadership style with emphasis on caring, collaborative, communicative and consensus orientation. However, when school heads were asked: *how do you apply participative leadership style in running this school?* To a large extent both male and female heads of schools tended to apply participative leadership style in ways which seemed to be

similar. Both male and female heads of schools claimed that they used this leadership style through delegating some of their responsibilities to their followers. They also involved different education stakeholders in making decisions concerning the school, and used different meetings so as to involve their followers in making different decisions related to their schools.

In order to triangulate the findings, the researcher reviewed documents in different schools and found minutes and committees/panel names in schools which were run by male and female heads of schools. Those documents confirmed that indeed, most male and female heads of schools used participative leadership styles especially by involving their followers and other stakeholders through different meetings.

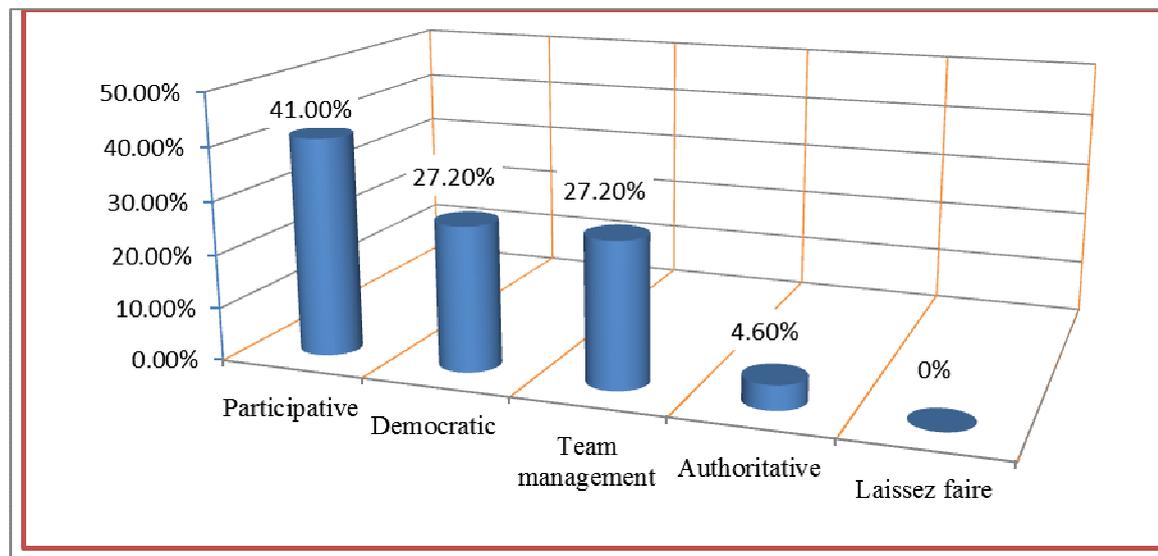
Democratic leadership style was another leadership style which was revealed to be used by heads of schools in Kasulu District. Gender wise, field data revealed that, this leadership style was equally used by both male and female heads of schools. Out of six heads of schools who said that they used democratic leadership style in their schools, three of them (50%) were female; the other three of them (50 %) were male heads of schools. Similarly, male and female heads of schools used democratic leadership style in the same ways as most of them explained that they implemented democratic leadership style by allowing their followers to speak out their concerns. In this regard, it can be established that male and female heads of schools equally employ democratic leadership style in running their schools just like adoption of participative leadership style which was widely adopted and applied by both female and male heads. This finding contradicts the findings by Nosike and Ogozur (2011) who reported that female heads of schools qualitatively employ the democratic style of leadership than the male heads of schools. Moreover, it was found out that most of male and female heads of schools that used democratic leadership styles in their schools had short leadership experience. It was evident that out all six heads schools that employed democratic leadership style in their schools, had less than three years since they were appointed to be heads of schools. This shows that democratic leadership style was applied by heads of schools that had short time in the head teacher position.

Team management leadership style was another leadership style which was revealed to be used by heads of schools in Kasulu District. In terms of gender, the findings show that the number of male heads of schools who exercised team management leadership style in their schools was larger than the number of female heads of schools who exercised team management leadership style in their schools. Out of six heads of schools who said that they exercised team management leadership style in their schools, four of them (66.7) were male and two of them (33.3%) were female head teachers.

Heads of schools that used team management leadership style in their schools were asked: *how do you apply team management leadership style in running this school?* Both male and female heads of schools responded to this question by expressing their views which appeared to be similar. In their responses, it was observed that male and female heads of schools tended to employ team management leadership styles by working together with all of their members of staff. The only difference found was in terms of the number of heads of schools whereby the number of male heads of schools who used team management leadership was greater than that of female heads. This finding implies that, both male and female heads of schools tend to treat all of their followers on equal basis. This finding contradicts the findings by Ijaiya (1998) who reported that in Nigeria, team management leadership style was not fully employed by male heads of schools. It was observed that male heads of schools tended to favour female teachers than male teachers.

Authoritative leadership was another leadership style used by heads of schools in running primary schools in Kasulu District. Surprisingly, only one (4.6%) female head of school, among the 22 male and female school heads that were interviewed reported to be using authoritative leadership style. These findings also concurs with Ijaiya's (1998) who maintains that female heads of schools unwillingly employed authoritative leadership style in their leadership as they tend to be firm and strict in their daily administration endeavours.

Figure 1: Responses of Heads of Schools on their Leadership Styles N=22



Source: Field data, 2012

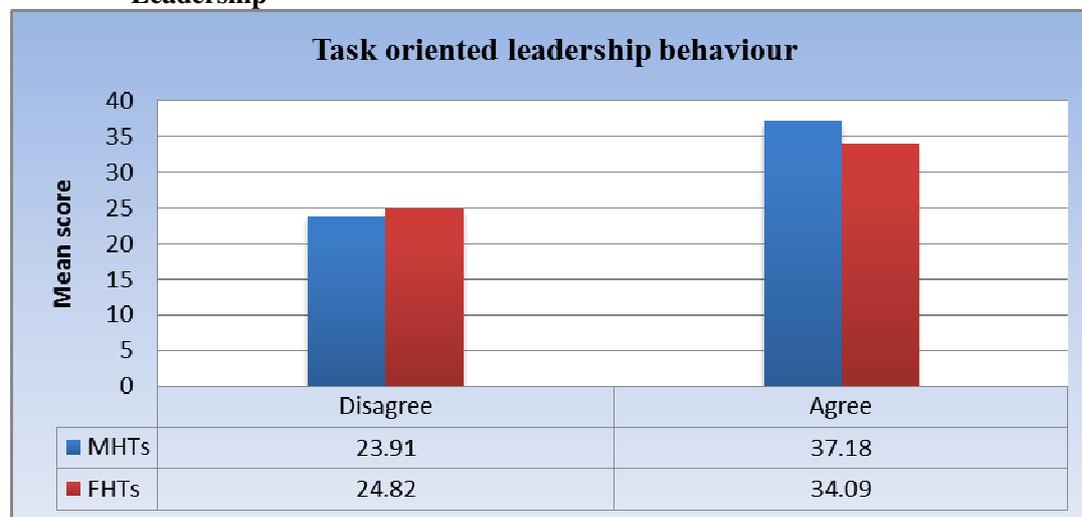
Gender Differences in Leadership Behavior of Primary School Heads in Kasulu District

It was established that some heads of schools tended to invest in their subordinates by striving to make things pleasant for them and maintaining mutual relationship with subordinates so as to accomplish school goals. This kind of leadership focus is referred to as interpersonal leadership behavior (Kingman, 1999). In this aspect, teachers whose schools were run by male heads of schools and teachers whose schools were run by female heads of schools rated their heads of schools regarding their interpersonal leadership behavior; and the responses were calculated and mean scores were used to present and summarize these responses as shown in Figure 2.

Greater mean score- $M=31.2$ was observed on responses which disagreed that male heads of schools had interpersonal leadership behavior compared to responses which disagreed that female heads of schools had interpersonal leadership behavior- mean score $M=24.6$. These mean scores were assessed using t-test so as to find out if the difference was statistically significant between responses which disagreed that female and male heads of schools had interpersonal leadership behavior. At the specified $\alpha = 0.05$, the difference was statistically significant— $t=3.941$, at degree of freedom $df=9$, the value of probability was $sig=0.003$ or $(t(9) = 3.941; p < 0.05)$. Indeed, there was a significant difference in the mean score of responses, which disagreed that female heads of primary schools had interpersonal leadership behavior compared to male heads of primary schools. This implies that male heads of primary schools had little amount of interpersonal leadership behavior- mean score $M=24.6$ compared to female heads of primary schools- mean score $M=31.2$. In line with this, greater mean score- $M=37.8$ was obtained on responses, which agreed that female heads of primary schools had interpersonal leadership behavior compared to male heads of schools- mean score $M=30.8$. Using t-test, these mean scores were compared to assess statistical significance of the difference on responses agreeing that female heads of schools had interpersonal leadership behavior and responses which agreed that male heads of primary schools have interpersonal leadership behavior compared to male school heads. At $\alpha = 0.05$, the difference was statistically significant— $t=-3.886$, at degree of freedom $df=9$ or $(t(9) = 3.886; p < 0.05)$. From these findings, it is safe to say again that female heads of primary schools had more interpersonal leadership behavior- mean scores $M=37.8$ compared to male primary school heads- mean scores $M=30.8$. These finding implies that female heads of schools have a focus on their followers than male heads of schools. These findings concur with Eagly and Johnson (1990) and Wolmarans (1992) who compared male and female leader's task and interpersonal behavior. They noted the tendency of women being more interpersonally oriented than men. Wolmarans (1992) argues that it is easy for women leaders to have interpersonal leadership behavior than men leaders, because men find it hard to communicate their feelings and engage people on emotional level; the characteristics often

associated with women.

Figure 3: Mean Scores of Teachers' Responses on Statement which Indicates Task-oriented Leadership



Key: MHTs- Male heads of schools FHTs- Female heads of schools

Source: Field data 2012

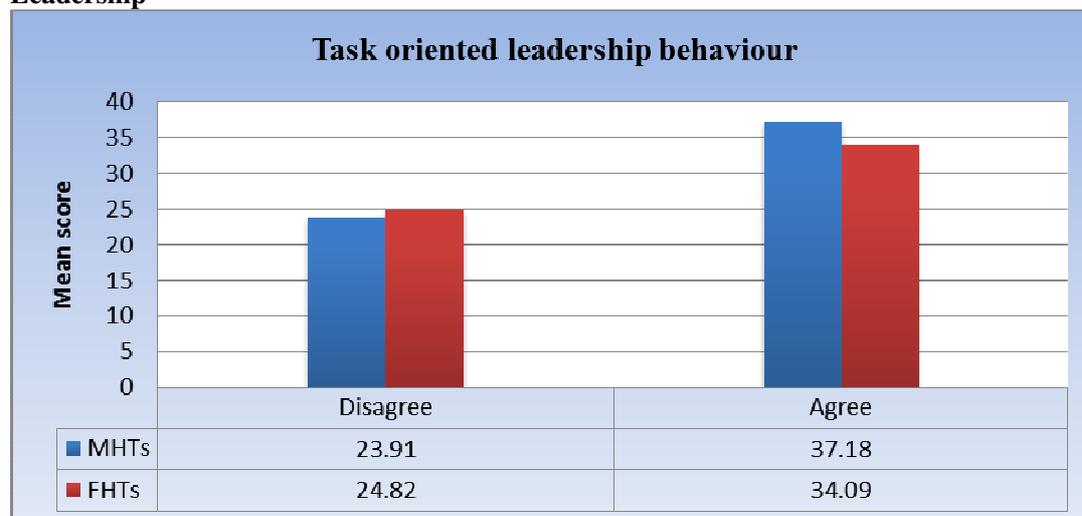
4.2.2 Gender Difference in Task Oriented Leadership Behavior of Primary School Heads

Teachers whose schools were run by male and female heads of schools rated their respective school heads regarding the extent to which task oriented leadership behavior was employed. Participants' responses were calculated and mean scores were summarized in Figure 3. Slightly more frequencies were observed on responses which disagreed that female heads of schools have task oriented leadership behavior- mean score $M= 24.82$ compared to male heads of schools- mean score $M=23.91$. Comparing these mean scores using t-test, it was found that the difference between task oriented leadership behavior of female heads of schools and those of male heads was not statistically significant— $t=-0.470$; at degree of freedom $df= 10$, the value of probability was $sig=0.648$, which is greater than specified alpha 0.05 or $(t(10) = -0.470; p > 0.05)$. Similarly, the t-test comparison of mean scores on responses agreeing that female heads schools have task oriented leadership behavior ($M=37.18$ for female and $M=34.09$ for male school heads) the difference was not statistically significant— $t= 1.623$; at degree of freedom $df= 10$, the value of probability was $sig=0.136$; the value which is greater than specified alpha 0.05 or $(t(10) = 1.623; p > 0.05)$. These results imply that female and male school heads have no significant difference in task oriented leadership behavior.

In order to cross check the information obtained through questionnaires, the researcher also reviewed some of school documents so as to find out indicators of interpersonal leadership behavior and task oriented leadership behavior among male and female heads of schools. Different school documents were reviewed, which included minutes of meetings and different reports showing daily school activities. Review of those documents revealed indicators of task oriented leadership behavior in most visited schools. The researcher saw posters captioned; *mgawanyo wa kazi kwa walimu, kamati mbalimbali za shule, ratiba ya shule*-meaning, division of roles/duties among teachers, school committees, school timetable. Also, in school documents the researcher found different schools' visions and mottos, which guided daily activities in those schools. Such documents were found in all schools regardless whether they were run by female or male heads of schools.

By definition, school heads with task oriented leadership behavior tend to establish well-defined task patterns and clarify task completion procedures, focusing mainly on task completion in their schools (Adams & Yoder, 1985). So it became evident that, both male and female heads of schools had task oriented leadership behavior as they scheduled works to be done by their fellow teachers and other stakeholders. Also, by having school visions and mottos, it means that they are likely to see that their followers are working with the same spirit. These findings are contrary to earlier findings reviewed by Eagly and Johnson (1990), which reported male leaders are generally more autocratic and directive in leadership style as well as more task-oriented than female leaders.

Figure 3: Mean Scores of Teachers’ Responses on Statement which Indicates Task-oriented Leadership



Key: MHTs- Male heads of schools FHTs- Female heads of schools

Source: Field data 2012

4.3.1 Teachers’ Perceptions on the Effectiveness of Leadership Styles and Behavior of Male and Female Heads of Schools

Teachers were asked to provide their responses on leadership styles which they perceived to be effective in running schools. Table 1 shows that, 22 (17.8%) out of 124 teachers whose schools were run by female heads of schools reported that leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools were effective, while 26 (20.8%) of teachers whose schools were run by female heads of schools responded that leadership styles and behavior of both male and female school heads were effective. Only 14 (11.3%) teachers whose schools were run by female heads of schools reported that, leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools were effective.

On the other hand, 27 (21.8%) out of 124 teachers whose schools were run by male heads of schools said that leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools were effective in running primary schools, while 20 (16.2%) teachers whose schools were run by male heads of schools pointed that leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools were effective in running schools. Only 15 (12.1%) teachers whose schools were run by male heads of schools reported that leadership styles and behavior of both male and female heads of schools were effective in running schools.

From these findings it was noted that, the majority of teachers perceived leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools as effective in running schools even though some of them maintained neutral stand by stating that leadership styles and behavior of both male and female school heads were effective in running schools. Few teachers claimed that leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools were effective in running schools. These findings imply that teachers perceived leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools as more effective than the leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools. These findings are in line with those by Abu-Tineh (2012) who did a comparative study on effectiveness of leadership styles and behavior of male and female leaders in Jordanian education institutions and found that the leadership styles and behavior of male leaders were perceived to be effective than leadership styles and behavior of female leaders.

By the use of questionnaires, teachers were asked to provide the reasons which influenced their thought on leadership styles and behavior which they viewed as effective in running primary schools. In their responses, some claimed that male heads of schools had effective leadership styles and behavior because of their tendencies of directing teachers through practical demonstration on how to accomplish several tasks. Others justified their views that leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools were effective in running primary schools because male heads of schools tended to dare making important decisions that were critical in the development of their schools. It was explained further that male heads of schools were confident in decisions they made and treated all of their followers with fairness. These findings contradict Ijaiya’s (1998) who reported that in most cases, male heads of schools lack accuracy and firmness in

decision-making compared to female heads of schools.

Teachers who viewed leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools as effective in running primary schools provided explanations to justify their preferences. In their explanation, it was noted that some viewed leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools as effective in running schools because most of female heads of schools tended to care and show concerns to their followers. In the same line, others explained that female heads of schools cared for their followers and they strived to make sure that all of their followers are satisfied in their work. Also, some other teachers perceived leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools as effective in running schools because most of female heads of schools tended to involve their followers in different issues which went on in their schools. In relation to involvement of followers, other teachers endorsed that female heads of schools highly involved their followers in making decisions concerning their schools. These findings are consistent with those of Apfelbaum and Hadley (1986) who reported that female leaders tend to involve others in their leadership, are aware of personal values of subordinates; and they are good listeners. Moreover, other respondents considered leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools to be ideal in running primary schools as they praised them for being faithful in handling different resources especially money which was allocated to their schools. This aspect of findings is in line with the findings by Ijaiya (1998) who noted that female heads of schools were more carefully in handling school funds than their male counterparts. Nevertheless, there were teachers who took neutral position by reporting that leadership styles and behavior of both male and female heads of school were effective in running primary schools and substantiated their claims. From their responses it was noted that leadership styles and behavior of both male and female heads of schools were suitable in running primary schools because each of the leadership styles and behavior had unique strengths and limitations. Some teachers perceived leadership styles and behavior of both male and female heads of schools as effective in running schools as effectiveness was determined by their organizational cultures of schools which allow any among leadership styles and behavior of male or female heads of schools to be effective as long as it meets some basic pre-requisites in running primary schools. These findings concur with Karunanayake (2012) who argues that the adoption and effectiveness of heads of schools' leadership style is according to the leadership situation and not their gender.

Table 1: Responses of Teachers on Effective Leadership Styles and Behavior (N=124)

Respondents	Effective leadership	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Teachers under female heads of schools	Leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools	22	17.8	17.8
	Leadership style and behavior of both male and female heads of schools	26	20.8	36.6
	Leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools	14	11.3	49.9
Teachers under male heads of schools	Leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools	27	21	71.8
	Leadership style and behavior of both male and female heads of schools	15	12.1	83.8
	Leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools	20	16.2	100.0
Total		124	100.0	

Source: Field data, 2013

1.1.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

On the whole, the findings have revealed that, male and female heads of schools deploy participative, democratic, team management and authoritative leadership styles in running primary schools. However, female heads of schools tended to use more participative leadership styles, while male heads of schools often used team management leadership styles in running their schools. Overall, male and female heads of schools were found with almost the same amount of task oriented leadership behavior, even though female heads of schools were high in interpersonal leadership behavior than male heads of schools. Nonetheless,

leadership styles and behavior of male heads of schools were viewed as effective by most of the respondents than leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools. Based on these findings, it was established that, although most male and female heads of schools displayed pleasing leadership styles and behavior, leadership styles and behavior of female heads of schools were not fully appreciated.

The study thus recommends addressing the situation of gender imbalance in school leadership, in order to utilize the revealed leadership talents and skills of female heads of schools. Since the current study was limited to Kasulu District (western Tanzania), similar studies may be conducted in other parts of the country so that the emergent results could contribute to furthering our knowledge and obtaining generalizable information regarding leadership styles and behavior of male and female heads of schools in Tanzania.

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About the authors

Ntide P. Dady (MA Education) is a tutor at Kasulu Teachers College in Kigoma Region, Tanzania.

Theodora A.L. Bali (PhD Anthropology) is a lecturer in guidance and counselling, gender and social-cultural studies at the University of Dodoma, Tanzania.

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