

Gendered Leadership Paradox: Female Headteachers' Challenges and Resilience in the Tamale Metropolis

Enock Yeng^{1*}, Samuel Tatsi², and Kingsley Afful³

School of Education, Liberty University, Virginia, USA¹ & School of Education and Life-Long Learning, University of Education, Winneba^{2,3}

Corresponding Author:- Enock Yeng^{1*}

Abstract:- This study explored the challenges faced by female headteachers in managing schools in the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region of Ghana, grounded in the role congruity theory (2002). The target population comprised all headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis, while the accessible population comprised all female headteachers in the district. A cross-sectional research design and quantitative approach were employed, with a census method used to recruit 67 female headteachers who participated in the study. Data collection involved a closed-ended questionnaire developed by the researchers. The findings revealed that sociocultural barriers, including gender bias, stereotyping, resistance from teachers, and the balancing act of familial and professional responsibilities, significantly hindered female leadership roles in schools. However, female headteachers exhibited resilience by employing coping strategies such as assertiveness, cultivating interpersonal relationships, and embracing diverse leadership styles. Given this, the following recommendations are made, female headteachers should adopt a participative leadership style that fosters inclusivity and collaboration, and educational stakeholders should organize empowerment programs, including seminars, workshops, and mentorship schemes, to bridge the gender equality leadership gap and support aspiring female leaders, ultimately creating a more equitable and inclusive educational environment.

Keywords:- Gendered Leadership, Paradox, Female Headteachers, Challenges and Resilience.

I. INTRODUCTION

In human development, Lerner (2018) emphasized that females have been as crucial as males in shaping history. Women's Higher status in employment, leadership, and societal contributions is a significant indicator of a nation's overall progress (Gocio & Kulkarni, 2016). The active participation of females in national activities, including managerial positions, is essential for the social, economic, and political advancement of a nation (Gocio & Kulkarni, 2016). However, global social structures often lead to the underrepresentation of females in managerial roles across both private and public sectors, including education (Okafor & Akokuwebe, 2015). This study underscores that, despite their potential and capabilities, females are frequently denied leadership opportunities, as leadership is often perceived as a

masculine domain. Mabokela and Mlambo (2017) note that this gender disparity in managerial positions is more pronounced in Africa due to entrenched social and cultural norms. Ryan et al. (2016) highlight that the underrepresentation of females in African managerial roles is concerning, though there has been some progress due to rising feminist ideologies. In Zimbabwe, the high number of females in education reflects a history of gender-based domination and exploitation (Shava & Ndebele, 2014). The presence of males as "gatekeepers" is a significant organizational barrier to females' advancement in educational management. Wills (2016), as cited in Moyo et al. (2020), reports that females hold only 9.3% of managerial positions in higher education institutions. Similarly, Moorosi (2008), as cited in Ndebele (2018), found that in South Africa, females constitute only 30% of school principals, despite making up 70% of the teaching workforce. These low percentages are attributed to factors such as misperceptions about females' leadership abilities (Ndebele & Shava, 2019; Ndebele, 2018).

In Ghana, the participation rate of females in senior management within the educational sector is also low (Atuahene & Owusu-Ansah, 2013). Zame et al. (2008) indicate that females occupy few managerial positions in the Ghana Education Sector, despite their significant presence in the workforce. Factors contributing to this underrepresentation include patriarchy, biased gender norms, negative gender power relations, discouragement from other females, historic under-training and under-education of females, and gender stereotypes (Amakye et al., 2021; Boateng, 2018; Brion & Ampah-Mensah, 2021; Segkulu & Gyimah, 2016). Boateng (2018) further notes that the reproductive roles of females in Ghanaian society hinder them from receiving the training and education necessary for leadership positions in institutions such as the Ghana Education Service (GES). Despite these challenges, some females have attained leadership positions, overcoming numerous barriers (Amakye et al., 2021). It is valuable to understand both how these females succeed and the challenges they face in their managerial roles. Female managers in the GES face significant difficulties, as the GES lacks management capacity programs to develop the skills needed for effective administration (Appiah, 2020). Additionally, patriarchal norms in Northern Ghana, including the Tamale Metropolis, complicate the exercise of authority by female managers, often undermining strategic decisions. This context motivates the researcher to investigate the

challenges faced by female headteachers in managing schools in the Tamale Metropolis of the Northern Region of Ghana.

➤ *Statement of the Problem*

The challenges faced by females in managerial positions, including headteachers in the Ghana Education Service remain a significant concern. Despite being underrepresented due to gender inequality, the few females who overcome barriers to reach managerial positions face numerous challenges in fulfilling their duties. In Northern Ghana, particularly in the Tamale Metropolis, patriarchal moralistic laws exacerbate these challenges, making it difficult for female managers in the Ghana Education Service to exercise their authority effectively. Amakye et al. (2021) and Segkulu and Gyimah (2016) highlight that the patriarchal nature of institutions like GES perpetuates traditions that hinder the advancement of females into managerial roles. These traditions reinforce the notion that males are superior to females, leading to a tendency to undermine and disrespect female leaders, including headteachers (Segkulu & Gyimah, 2016). This widespread issue in Ghana affects females in head positions across various institutions, including the Ghana Education Service, and presents significant obstacles to their performance and leadership effectiveness (Nave, 2021). Zame et al. (2008) further point out that the lack of necessary resources and support for female leaders in GES discourages them and hampers their leadership roles. Additionally, the unfair meddling in the affairs of female leaders, which strips them of their autonomy, dampens their morale and effectiveness. This situation poses a threat to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all females and girls by 2030 in Ghana.

There is limited data specifically on the challenges faced by female headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis. However, existing literature on similar issues in other parts of Ghana suggests that the situation in Tamale may be equally if not more, challenging due to the traditional patrimonial inheritance culture of the Dagombas. This cultural backdrop likely puts female school heads at a disadvantage, as males may undermine their authority and disobey their directives. While Segkulu and Gyimah (2016) examined factors preventing females from attaining educational leadership within the Tamale Metropolis, they did not focus on the challenges faced by female headteachers in performing their duties. This study seeks to fill that gap by investigating the specific problems confronting female headteachers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis of the Northern Region of Ghana. The findings and recommendations from this study will provide a basis for effective policymaking in Ghana, particularly within the Ghana Education Service. Understanding the challenges faced by female managers in the Tamale Metropolis Education Directorate will help policymakers develop management capacity programs to support female leaders in handling administrative challenges. Additionally, insights into the coping strategies adopted by female headteachers to overcome cultural and social barriers will be valuable for policymakers aiming to empower female leaders.

➤ *Purpose of the Study*

The study aimed to explore the myriads of challenges that female headteachers encounter in their managerial roles, with a specific focus on the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region of Ghana.

➤ *Study Objectives*

The study sought to:

- Find out the cultural and social barriers that interfere with the management of schools by female headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis.
- Examine the coping strategies adopted by female headteachers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis.

➤ *Research Questions*

This study was directed by the following questions:

- What are the cultural and social barriers that interfere with the management of schools by female headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis?
- What are the coping strategies adopted by female headteachers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis?

➤ *Significance of the Study*

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the challenges faced by female headteachers in managing schools, particularly in the Tamale Metropolis. The findings would shed light on the sociocultural barriers that hinder female leadership roles in schools, including gender bias, stereotyping, and resistance from teachers. This study would have significant implications for educational policy and practice, informing policies and practices that would promote gender equity in educational leadership and address the challenges faced by female headteachers. Additionally, the study's findings would provide insights into leadership development programs that would empower female educators and promote inclusive leadership styles. Furthermore, this study would contribute to the understanding of gender dynamics in educational leadership and the impact of socio-cultural barriers on female leadership roles. By exploring female headteachers' challenges, this research would provide valuable insights into how gender influences leadership experiences and opportunities. Finally, this study's findings and recommendations would have the potential to promote gender equity in educational leadership, enhance the effectiveness of female headteachers, and contribute to the improvement of education in the Tamale Metropolis and beyond. By addressing the challenges female headteachers face, this study would help create a more inclusive and equitable educational leadership landscape, ultimately benefiting students, teachers, and communities.

➤ *Theoretical Framework*

To better understand and appreciate the challenges faced by female headteachers in managing schools in the Tamale Metropolis, this study utilized the role congruity theory by Eagly and Karau (2002). Social role theory suggests that

people's beliefs about social groups are formed by associating specific behaviors with their normal social roles (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Eagly and Karau (2002) expanded on social role theory with role congruity theory, which examines the congruity between leadership roles and gender roles, highlighting the form of prejudice faced by women. They argued that female leaders encounter two types of prejudice due to the mismatch between expected leadership roles and gender roles. The first type is the perception that potential female leaders are less promising than their male counterparts due to stereotypical gender roles, which are typically associated with masculine traits. The second type is the evaluation of actual female leaders as less successful due to the incongruity between their leadership roles and expected gender roles. These prejudices result in fewer leadership opportunities and more obstacles for women in leadership positions.

Eagly and Sczesny (2009) further explained that the challenges and advantages women leaders face stem from the differences and similarities between cultural stereotypes of men, women, and leaders. Cultural stereotypes create two forms of expectations: descriptive beliefs about the actual traits of each group and prescriptive beliefs about what group members should be like. These stereotypical expectations significantly influence society, as individuals behave according to them, regardless of the organizational or social context. Consequently, female leaders experience a double bind due to the contradiction between prevalent stereotypes about leaders and gender stereotypes, impacting their access to leadership positions, promotion prospects, and evaluations as effective leaders. Social and cultural factors can hinder female headteachers from effectively fulfilling their management roles. Sex role stereotypes often portray female headteachers as less capable managers, leading them to underperform in management roles. Female headteachers also face the dual responsibility of managing schools and caring for their families, resulting in role conflict due to time constraints. Additionally, school demands may conflict with the headteacher's values, posing further challenges. Today's environments often require female leaders to adopt a masculine style of leadership to prove their accountability. Many studies emphasize the 'think manager-think male' syndrome, where both men and women believe that for women to advance in leadership roles, they must act and think like men (Schein et al., 1996). Consequently, women suppress their typical behaviors to fit into top management positions (Boulgarides, 1984). When female leaders display assertive and directive behaviors, they are often disliked for not conforming to stereotypical images, yet they are also considered unqualified if they lack these traits (Eagly & Carli,

2007). This results in a double standard where neither choice is valued nor appreciated.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed the cross-sectional research design to examine problems confronting female headteachers' in the management of schools in the Tamale metropolis, Northern Region. The cross-sectional study is a design that is normally carried out within a short period (Creswell, 2014; MacDonald et al., 2011; Morgan, 2013). The census method was adopted by the study in selecting sixty-seven (67) female headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis. This method according to Sahu (2016) is a statistical investigation in which the data are collected for every element/unit of the population. This technique is also known as complete enumeration' or '100% enumeration' or 'complete survey' (Sahu, 2016). The method is useful when case intensive study is required, or the area is limited. The techniques employed in the study were useful because they provided intensive and in-depth information covering many facets of the problems facing female headteachers in the performance of their duties and their coping strategies. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to female headteachers of public pre-tertiary schools in the Tamale Metropolis. The questionnaire, designed with closed-ended questions related to the study objectives, underwent thorough scrutiny, modification, and pre-testing for validity and reliability. The process ensured clarity, appropriateness, and reliability, with a reliability coefficient of 0.79. Data gathered through the field survey was reviewed and updated to ensure the accuracy of responses. After the data collection, the quantitative data was coded and entered into the Statistical Product for Service Solution (SPSS, version 26) software, and subsequently analyzed based on descriptive statistics. The statistical analysis consisted mainly of the determination of frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations for the major variables. The results of these analyses were presented in the form of pie charts, bar graphs, frequency distribution tables, means, and standard deviations.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

➤ Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the results of the demographic characteristics of respondents. These include age, academic qualification, years of teaching experience, years of headship, level of school, and assessment of education management training. The general characteristics of the respondents of this study are presented below.

Table 1 Age of Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21 -30 years	4	6.0
31 -40 years	15	22.4
41-50 years	37	55.2
51-60 years	10	14.9
Above 60 years	1	1.5
Total	67	100

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

The results in Table 1 show that 4 (6%) of the respondents were within the age range of 21-30 years while the respondents within the age range of 31-40 years were 15 (22.4%). Also, 37 (55%) of the respondents were within the age range of 41 to 50 years, 10 (14.9%) were in the age range of 51-60 years and 1 (1.5%) of them were over 60 years. This

implies that the majority of teachers were between 41-50 years. Since a greater number of the respondents belong to almost aged section of the teaching profession, it is expected that they provide their rich experiences in line with their duty to contribute immensely to the problems they are confronted with in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis.

Table 2 Academic Qualification of Teachers

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diploma	3	4.5
Degree	17	25.4
M. Ed.	31	46.2
PGDE	16	23.9
Total	67	100

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

Table 2 presents results on the academic qualifications of respondents. The results revealed that 3(4.5%) were Diploma certificate holders, 17 (25.4%) were degree holders, 31 (46.2%) were Master of Education (M. Ed.) certificates and 16 (23.9%) were Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) degree holders. This means that the academic

qualification of the majority of respondents is a degree. This suggests that the majority of Female headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis were Master of Education certificate holders followed by those who hold Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE).

Table 3 Years of Teaching Experience of Respondents

Year	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 6 years	4	6.0
6-10 years	14	20.9
11-15 years	17	25.4
16-20 years	21	31.3
Above 20 years	11	16.4
Total	67	100

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

Table 3 displays the distribution of teachers based on their years of teaching experience. It reveals that 4 (6%) teachers had below 6 years of experience, while 14 (20.9%) had 6-10 years, and 17 (25.4%) had 11-15 years. Additionally, 21 (31.3%) respondents had 16-20 years of experience, and 11 (16.4%) had over 20 years. The data suggests that the majority of respondents had 16-20 years of teaching experience, which bodes well for their effectiveness in school leadership roles. This experience is likely to significantly contribute to their capacity to lead effectively.

➤ The Results are Presented in the pie Chart below.

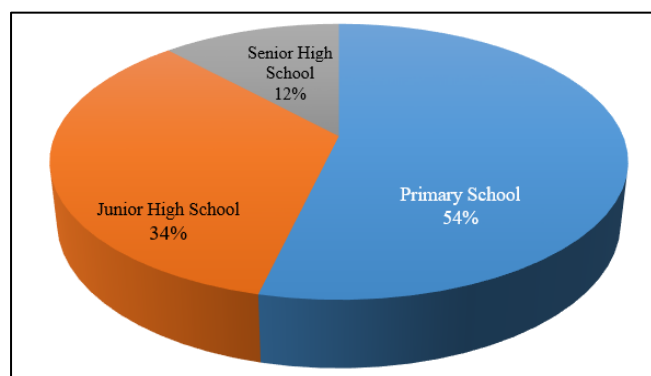
Fig 1 School-level Distribution of Respondents
Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

Figure 1 below shows the level of school the respondents serve as headteachers. The results show that 36(54%) of the respondents were Primary school headteachers, 23(34%) were Junior High School Headteachers and 8(12%) of them were Senior High School headteachers. The pie chart below provides a clear pictorial view of the level of the school system where the respondents serve as headteachers. It is evident from the results that majority of the respondents were headteachers at the Primary School level.

Figure 2 below shows the results of the respondents' years of service as headteachers. The result shows that 19 (28.4%) of the respondents had served as a headteacher for 1-3 years, 24 (35.8%) of them had served as headteacher for 4-6 years, 13 (19.4%) of them were headteachers for 7-9 years and 11 (16.4%) of them were headteachers for 10 and above years. This implies that the majority of respondents were headteachers for 4-6 years and their experience over these years will contribute tremendously towards the success of this study.

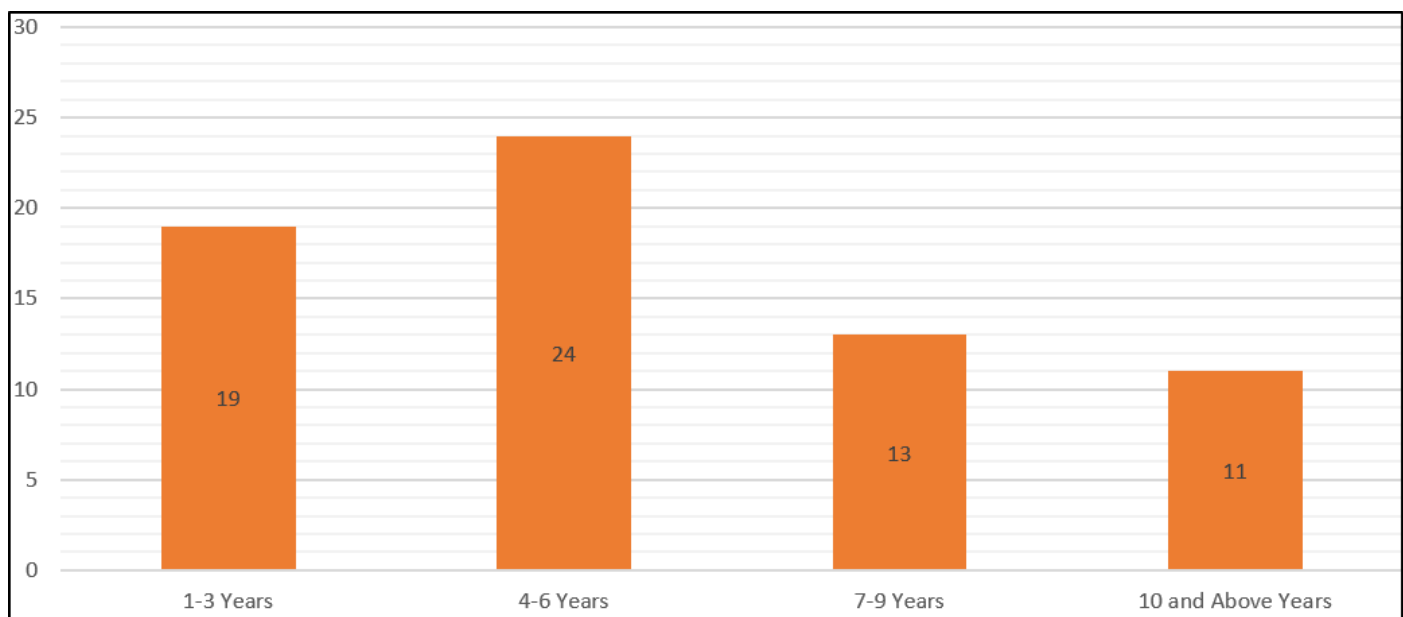


Fig 2 Respondents' Years of Service as Headteacher
Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

Research Question 1: What are the cultural and social barriers that interfere with the management of schools by female headteachers in the Tamale Metropolis?

Table 4 Cultural Barriers that affect Female Headteachers' Leadership Roles in Schools

ITEM	M	SD
The tradition that I am inferior to men and thus, cannot manage over men is what I am facing in managing the school	4.6	0.58
The community does not trust my ability to manage the school due to the belief that females are weak and do not fit to be in management positions	3.2	0.67
I am facing stereotyping in the management of the school	4.1	0.36
I am not getting maximum support from the community to manage the school due to the belief that females are not good leaders	3.4	0.34
I am not getting support from the community to manage the school due to the tradition that it is only males who can make decisions, while females are not allowed to make decisions over males	3.1	0.61
Mean of means/Standard deviation	3.7	0.5

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

Table 4 shows the results of cultural barriers that affect female headteachers' leadership roles in schools in the Tamale Metropolis. The results show that majority of the respondents agreed ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.58$) that the tradition that they are inferior to men and thus, cannot manage over men is a barrier they are facing to manage the school. The standard deviation of 0.58 shows that the responses were homogeneous. Similarly, majority of the respondents agreed ($M = 3.2$, $SD = 0.67$) that the community does not trust their ability to manage the school due to the belief that females are weak and do not fit to be in management positions. The standard deviation of 0.67 shows that the responses were similar. Furthermore, the majority of respondents strongly agreed ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 0.36$) that they are facing stereotyping in the management of the school. The standard deviation of 0.36 indicates that the responses were similar. The mean and standard deviation of the statement, "I am not getting maximum support from the community to manage the school due to the belief that females are not good leaders" were 3.4 and 0.34 respectively. This means the respondents agreed to

the statement. The homogeneity of responses was evident in the standard deviation of 0.34. Concluding their responses on cultural barriers, the majority of respondents strongly agreed ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 0.84$) that they are not getting support from the community to manage the school due to the tradition that it is only males that can make decisions, while females are not allowed to decide males. The standard deviation of 0.84 shows that the responses were similar. The mean of means and mean standard deviations were 3.7 and 0.5 respectively. The high mean of means value suggests the high agreement with the sociocultural issues or barriers that affect female headteachers' leadership roles in schools in the Tamale Metropolis. The mean standard deviation which is less than 1.0 is an indication of similarity or homogeneity of the responses.

The next section presents the results of the views of the respondents on social barriers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis.

Table 5 Social Barriers that affect Female Headteachers' Leadership Roles in Schools

ITEM	N	M	SD
My gender role in performing household choices does not favor me in carrying out my responsibilities as the headteacher	67	4.7	0.43
I am facing domestic violence/conflict due to my position as the headteacher, and as such it is affecting my management ability	67	2.5	0.51
Society does not always value or appreciate my efforts due to their prejudice about females being leaders	67	4.4	0.56
I don't get any support from my family and the society that could help me put all my best in my leadership position	67	2.6	0.63
Society does not respect me like the way they respect my colleagues' male headteachers (discrimination)	67	3.3	0.70
Mean of means/Standard deviation		3.5	0.6

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

Table 5 shows the results of social barriers that affect female headteachers' leadership roles in schools in the Tamale Metropolis. The results show that majority of the respondents strongly agreed ($M = 4.7$, $SD = 0.43$) that their gender role in performing household choices does not favor them in carrying out their responsibilities as the headteacher. The standard deviation of 0.43 shows that the responses were homogeneous. The majority of respondents disagreed ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 0.51$) that they are facing domestic violence/conflict due to their position as the headteacher, and as such it is affecting their management ability. The standard deviation of .51 shows that the responses were similar. Furthermore, the majority of respondents strongly agreed ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 0.56$) that society does not always value or appreciate their efforts due to their prejudice about females being leaders. The standard deviation of 0.56 indicates that the responses were

similar. The mean and standard deviation of the statement, "I don't get any support or encouragement from my family and the society that could help me put all my best in my leadership position" were 2.6 and 0.63 respectively. This means the respondents disagreed to the statement. The homogeneity of responses was evident in the standard deviation of 0.34. Finally, the majority of respondents agreed ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 0.70$) that society does not respect them like the way they respect their colleagues' male headteachers. The standard deviation of 0.70 shows that the responses were similar. The mean of means and mean standard deviations were 3.5 and 0.6 respectively.

The next section presents the results of the views of the respondents on institutional barriers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis.

Table 6 Institutional Barriers that affect Female Headteachers' Leadership Roles in Schools

S/N	ITEM	N	M	SD
1	My strategic decisions intended to manage the school are most of the time not accepted due to me being a female	67	2.7	0.19
2	The school board members had unfavorable attitudes toward me in the management of the school	67	4.5	0.63
3	My teachers and support staff do not obey my rules and regulations due to my gender	67	4.4	0.22
4	There are unfair distributions of resources to headteachers in the metropolis with female headteachers being disadvantaged	67	2.6	0.63
5	Students do not always obey my rules and regulations due to my gender	67	2.3	0.27
	Mean of means/Standard deviation		3.3	0.4

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

The analysis of institutional barriers affecting female headteachers' leadership roles in schools, as detailed in Table 6, highlights several significant challenges. The data show that female headteachers often find their strategic decisions are not accepted due to their gender (Statement 1), with a mean (M) of 2.7 and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.19, indicating a consistent issue across respondents. The most significant barrier identified is the unfavorable attitudes of school board members towards female headteachers (Statement 2), reflected by a high mean ($M = 4.5$) and a standard deviation ($SD = 0.63$), suggesting considerable variability in experiences. Similarly, a high mean ($M = 4.4$) and low variability ($SD = 0.22$) indicate that teachers and support staff frequently disobey the rules set by female headteachers due to gender bias (Statement 3). Additionally,

the unfair distribution of resources, disadvantaging female headteachers, is evident (Statement 4) with a mean ($M = 2.6$) and a standard deviation ($SD = 0.63$). Furthermore, students' disobedience of female headteachers' rules due to gender (Statement 5) is noted with a mean ($M = 2.3$) and a standard deviation ($SD = 0.27$). Overall, the mean of means is 3.3, with an overall standard deviation of 0.4, highlighting a moderate level of institutional barriers with some variability across different issues. Research question one underscores the predominant influence of cultural factors among the myriads of challenges encountered by female headteachers. Gender bias, stereotyping, negative perceptions regarding female leadership, and resistance from various stakeholders within the school community were identified as significant barriers. These findings corroborate existing literature, aligning with

previous studies by Bush (2020), Djan and Gordon (2020), and Sipemba (2015), which emphasize the pervasive impact of discrimination, stereotypes, and family obligations on female leaders' ability to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. Moreover, the absence of tailored management capacity programs for female heads of schools, as highlighted by Sipemba (2015), underscores systemic deficiencies contributing to the challenges faced by female leaders.

Research Question 2: What are the coping strategies adopted by female headteachers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis?

This research question sought to ascertain coping strategies adopted by female headteachers in the management of schools in the Tamale Metropolis. The analysis was done using frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 7 Coping Strategies Adopted in Dealing with the Socio-Cultural Challenges Headteachers Face

S/N	Strategy	Frequency	
	Coping Strategies	Agreed	Disagreed
1	Being bold	67 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
2	Following the professional code of ethics	67 (100%)	0 (0.0%)
3	Delegating duties	23 (34.3%)	44 (65.2%)
4	Being assertive	52 (77.6%)	15 (22.4%)
5	Maintaining interpersonal relationships with the community	62 (92.5%)	5 (7.5%)
6	Involving local community	46 (68.7%)	21 (31.3%)
7	Using guidance and counseling	19 (28.4%)	48 (71.6%)
8	Application of different leadership styles	49 (73.1%)	18 (26.9%)
9	Respecting others and their opinion	65 (97.1%)	2 (2.9%)
10	Being transformative	50(74.6%)	17 (25.4%)

Source: Fieldwork Data, (2023)

The analysis of coping strategies adopted by female headteachers in dealing with socio-cultural challenges, as detailed in Table 7, reveals several effective approaches. All respondents unanimously agreed on being bold, with a frequency of 67(100%), and following the professional code of ethics, also with a frequency of 67(100%), indicating these as universal strategies. A significant majority of headteachers also agreed on maintaining interpersonal relationships with the community, with a frequency of 62(92.5%), and respecting others and their opinions, with a frequency of 65(97.1%), highlighting the importance of community engagement and mutual respect. Additionally, being assertive was widely adopted, with a frequency of 52(77.6%). However, some strategies were less commonly used. Delegating duties had a lower agreement rate, with a frequency of 23(34.3%), while a larger proportion, with a frequency of 44(65.2%), disagreed, indicating potential reluctance or difficulty in delegation. Using guidance and counseling was the least favored strategy, with a frequency of 19(28.4%) agreement and 48(71.6%) disagreement, suggesting it may be perceived as less effective or practical in their context. Similarly, while 50(74.6%) respondents agreed on being transformative, 17(25.4%) disagreed, showing some variation in the acceptance of transformative leadership approaches. In response to research question two, the study reveals a range of coping strategies adopted by female headteachers to address socio-cultural challenges within their roles. These strategies encompass proactive, community-oriented, and adaptive approaches, emphasizing the importance of creating supportive environments conducive to effective leadership. Notably, strategies such as boldness, adherence to professional ethics, assertiveness, and maintaining interpersonal relationships with the community emerged as prevalent coping mechanisms. These findings resonate with the insights of Mpezeni (2022) and Lomotey

(2019), who advocate for a transformative leadership style and emphasize the significance of mentorship in navigating socio-cultural barriers. The recognition of mentorship as a valuable tool for enhancing job performance aligns with the recommendations of Bonifacino et al. (2021), highlighting the potential benefits of mentorship programs tailored to the specific needs of female headteachers.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

➤ The Findings of the Study Revealed:

- A complex array of sociocultural obstacles that significantly impede female headteachers' leadership efficacy in educational settings, including entrenched gender bias and stereotyping, pervasive negative perceptions regarding female leadership, entrenched resistance from teachers, support staff, and learners, and the burdensome dual responsibilities of family and professional roles, all of which coalesce to hinder the full realization of female leadership potential in schools.
- Female headteachers employ adaptive strategies to cope with sociocultural challenges, including bold leadership, ethical professionalism, community engagement, flexible leadership styles, and transformative practices, to excel in their roles.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study reveals that sociocultural factors significantly shape leadership dynamics in schools, perpetuating gender biases and stereotypes that hinder female leadership in the Tamale Metropolis. Despite these obstacles, female headteachers demonstrate remarkable resilience, employing adaptive strategies such as flexible leadership,

community engagement, and adversity tolerance to overcome these barriers and excel in their roles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proffered for deliberation and implementation, to address the socio-cultural barriers hindering female leadership in educational settings;

- Female headteachers should embrace a participative leadership style that encourages delegation of duties, facilitates decision-making processes, and involves stakeholders in the school's daily operations. By fostering inclusivity and collaboration through staff and stakeholder involvement, female headteachers can cultivate a more conducive school environment.
- Educational stakeholders should organize seminars, workshops, or programs aimed at bridging the gender equality leadership gap and empowering female headteachers. Additionally, implementing female mentorship schemes can provide invaluable support and guidance to aspiring female leaders, thereby contributing to the creation of a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

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