
Motivations for Women Leadership Positions in Higher Education Institutions: A case of Selected Universities in Zambia and Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Today's rapidly changing and diverse global society is well reflected in universities, and present challenges to how we prepare and educate students today to be the leaders of tomorrow. Despite the proliferation of women leadership research in the past, investigating the ways in which women leaders enact and experience leadership, as well as the trend continues to surface unanswered questions. The study focused on women in leadership positions in universities in Zambia and Zimbabwe. The aim was to demonstrate women representation in leadership roles as well as the motivations to attain a leadership position in a university environment. Through the framework of selection, development, leadership style, and performance, the study adopted an integrated mixed method research design by making use of a surveys and semi-structured interviews to unpack in-depth insights from respondents. The target population for the study included women in leadership positions. A total of 70 participants for the survey were selected using purposive sampling. All participants equally filled up the semi-structured questions that provided in-depth information and the five scale Likert scale provided opinions and attitudes of respondents. A total of 60 completely filled questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were returned. The conclusion for the study demonstrated that women are motivated into leadership positions because of their capability, experience gained and the qualifications they have attained. Women are capable of maximizing productivity as leaders just as their male counterparts.

Keywords: Senior leadership positions, leadership style, motivation, Higher Education Institutions, inequalities

Introduction

The growing literature on women leadership in higher education has continued to direct scholarly attention to women's overrepresentation in the teaching population, and their under-representation in educational leadership positions (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009). Besides, history has shown that women have been under-represented in leadership positions in Zambia and Zimbabwe higher education institutions for a long period. Encouragingly, it is noted that some universities in these two countries are

making progress in terms of women's empowerment as a number of women are steadily rising to the top structures of executive management (Parveen, 2021). In most African institutions of learning, the ratio between men and women in higher education leadership is still disproportionate (Kele & Pietersen, 2015). The under-representation of women in leadership positions in higher educational institutions continues to be a matter of concern (Priola, 2007). Despite the low proportion of women leaders in managerial posts, some research have revealed high levels of employee satisfaction where women are leaders in organisations (Yáñez & Moreno, 2008). Despite these positive research findings in other countries, there is still an under-representation of women in senior managerial positions in certain universities in Zambia and Zimbabwe. This trend is continuing despite legislative frameworks aimed at redressing these imbalances. In Zambia, according to the HEA (2020), out of a total of 1, 681 academic staff in public universities, only 428 are female and 1, 253 are male. In private institutions, out of a total of 2, 517 academic staff, only 585 are female with 1, 932 being male (HEA, 2020). Currently, there are only four (4) universities with female Vice-Chancellors in Zambia, two (2) in public universities and two (2) in private universities. Such a picture demonstrates gender inequalities in higher education institutions (HEI) given that there are only nine (9) public and 54 private universities (HEA, 2020).

At the center of this paper are the questions that the authors pursue to explore in examining the motivation of women leaders in HEI at the period when universities are transforming. Why are women marginalized in managerial positions in HEI?

The research questions for the study were as follows:

- What motivates women to take up leadership positions in the higher education sector?
- What are their greatest challenges and how do they face such challenges as leaders?
- What are the characteristics of these female leaders?
- What is their preferred leadership style?

Literature Review

The literature on women and educational leadership in global contexts demonstrates the significance of socio-cultural, historical, economic, and political contexts concerning women's leadership. Historically, leadership in higher education has been organised in hierarchical structures that have continued to be reinforced by social formations of bureaucracies informed by liberal political theories premised upon individual merit (Blackmore, 2005; Fletcher, 2007). These structures have frequently favored male academics in senior educational leadership positions (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). For example male counterparts dominate leadership as Faculty and Academic Deans, Pro-vice Chancellors, Departmental Chairpersons, chairperson positions chairing university-wide committees. Historic debates

around gender focus on the numerical figures of women's representation in formal leadership roles and the differing rates of female academics' promotion compared to their male colleagues. The under-representation of women in the managerial positions in HEI remains an issue of exploration to understand the why question.

Zimbabwe Contextual Situation

Zimbabwe has strived to achieve gender equality since its political independence in 1980. Over the years, the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) has subscribed and guided by a number of national and international gender declarations and conventions in its quest for gender transformative national development. These efforts were in the century's continued commitment to the removal of all forms of sex discrimination in the country. Among these declarations and conventions are the 1965 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination; and the "1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)" (National Gender Policy, 2004, p. 1). In the process, many policies were put in place to advance gender equality. The gender affirmative action policy of 1992, the 1999 Nziramasanga Commission, and the National Gender Policy of 2004 are quite good examples. "In 1999, the Nziramasanga Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training in Zimbabwe presented its findings noting that gender disparities persisted at all levels of education" (Nziramasanga Commission, 1999, p. 173). As a follow-up, the Zimbabwean government launched the National Gender Policy in March 2004 whose goal, *inter alia*, was "to eliminate all negative economic, social and political policies, cultural and religious practices that impede equality and equity of sexes" (National Gender Policy, 2004, p. 3). One of the objectives of the policy is "to promote equal opportunities for women and men in decision making in all areas and all levels" (National Gender Policy, 2004, p. 3). In response to the above policy, the Public Service Commission sent a circular, referenced G/46/200 dated 30 April 2004, to all government ministries requesting input as to how best gender balance could be attained in their respective ministries. However, despite these measures, there appears to be little impact in practice. For example, in the education sector, there are far fewer women heads than men in Zimbabwean primary schools. This is despite the fact that the declarations and conventions have been put in place to promote gender equality and protect women's rights given the historical and traditional social imbalance between women and men. The government of Zimbabwe created the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, and Community Development (MWAGCD) in 1995 to oversee the coordination of all gender programmes and to facilitate gender mainstreaming in all sector ministries (UNFPA, 2011).

Zambian Contextual Situation

Zambia is not any different from Zimbabwe when it comes to efforts limited progress in the area of gender equality in the country. Women in Zambia constitute 51% of its population and yet they are under-represented in top management positions (Gender Statistics Report, 2010). Commitments to agreements have been signed by Zambia, which includes the Dakar and Beijing platforms of action, which were followed by the Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (SPAW). The strategy detailed the priority actions that both the government and non-state actors were to undertake (Barsh, 2015). The National Gender Policy (NGP), despite having been in existence since March 2000, its implementation remains a daunting challenge and Zambia has failed to achieve the 50 percent threshold required by the SADC Protocol on gender and development in both private and public sectors. The SADC Protocol equally provides for women empowerment, elimination of discrimination, and the promotion of gender equality and equity through gender-responsive legislation, policies, programmes, and projects (Bandura, 2013).

Noteworthy, Zambia failed to meet its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of 30 percent women in parliament by 2016 emerging as the poorest performers regarding affirmative action in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, a body that comprises 22 member countries. The growing number of institutions offering tertiary education in Zambia seem not to respond to affirmative action for the inclusion of women in decision-making positions. Currently, Zambia has a total of nine (9) public and 54 private registered universities by the end of 2019 (Mwiya et al., 2017). HEA (2020) reported this glaring disparity as demonstrated in the following statistics. As at 2019, of the nine public universities, there were two (2) female professors out of 44, eight (8) associate professors out of 64, 21 Senior lecturers out of 170 and 397 lecturers out of a total of 1,006 lecturers (HEA, 2020). Of the 54 private universities; there were nine (9) professors out of 78, 12 associate professors out of 91, 478 senior lecturers out of 325 and 478 lecturers out of 1, 913 (Ibid, 2020). The HEIs in Zambia are male dominated. Positions such as that of Head of Department to VC are held by individuals who are highly ranked such as those at senior lecturer to professors . It is hence easy to conclude that these decision making positions are dominated by the male staff.

The Concept of Leadership

Leadership is a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal (Kruse, 2013). According to Zeitchik (2012), leadership is defined as a process of inspiring others to pursue organisational vision within the parameters set, to the extent that it becomes a shared effort, a shared vision, and a shared success. A leader be it a man or woman must be able to

leverage more than their capabilities and must be capable of inspiring other people to prescribe tasks. A leader usually in educational institutions refers to anyone with administrative duties as well as powers to influence others to attain educational goals and objectives of the institution as well as national thrust. At universities, leadership occurs at different levels of the organizational structure. This indicates that even the roles and responsibilities of the leader differ according to the level of leadership.

Leadership and Gender

“Gender is a multidimensional [social] construct that refers to different roles, responsibilities, limitations, and experiences of individuals based on their presenting sex and/or gender” (Johnson, & Repta, 2013, p. 67). OCHA (2012p. 1) further defined gender as the the “social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, and the relations between women and between men”. Gender is concerned with how individuals interact with each other. Recent changes in self-identity, views, and acceptance of varied gender roles make consideration of gender and leadership a topic worthy of discussion. Who the leader remains highly relevant to, is the present discussion of gender and leadership in universities. The focus on relationships, influence, and outcomes allows for substantial individual differences and characteristics of effective leaders provided that they are aware of how to accomplish effective leadership. Gender stereotypes describe stereotypic beliefs about the attributes of women and men and prescribe how men and women should behave (Glick & Fiske, 1999). Men are stereotyped with agentic characteristics such as confidence, assertiveness, independence, rationality, and decisiveness; whereas women are stereotyped with communal characteristics such as concern for others, sensitivity, warmth, helpfulness, and nurturance (Sng et al., 2020). These gender stereotypes of women as warm, nurturing and caring and the corresponding stereotypes of men as cold, competitive, and authoritarian may have contributed to the perception by some that women may be less effective than men in leadership positions although they can be, in fact, equally effective (Engen, 2001). All such stereotypes are gender associative and tend to limit the capabilities of female leaders to non-effective characteristics. While men have the agentic characteristics, they are not the reason for being an effective leader. On another hand, the current debates on humanity in work places seem to be encouraging the female stereotype communal characteristics (Hyacinth, 2017).

It is noteworthy that any generalizations about men versus women as effective leaders based on sex or gender reveal an emphasis on the character domain of leadership. Interestingly, Eagly et al. (1995) found that men and women are equally effective leaders unless the leadership role is gendered, that is, when it is expected that the leader to be a man or a woman in a given situation. In that case, leaders of the

expected gender and sex are more effective. Most African societies have determined that only male members of society make good leaders; therefore they continue to have various attitudes towards female leaders because they do not fit the norm. The male bias is reflected in the false conception of leadership as the mere command (Burns, 1998). Historically, leadership has carried the notion of masculinity, and the belief that men make better leaders than women is still common today. Although the number of female leaders has increased, they are often named as an afterthought. In the study carried out by Hojgaard (2002), in Kenya, the societal conventions regarding gender and leadership traditionally exclude women, and top leadership is viewed as a masculine domain. The same author further argues that the cultural construction of leadership in itself instigates difference and this is only now being transformed as women gain access to leadership positions. In African societies, it is believed that men lead and women follow (Sabnis, 2019; Grant, 2005).

Challenges Often Faced By Female Leaders

It is believed that women in leadership face challenges more than men. Many of these challenges emanate from society as well as from the leadership traits women leaders portray (Outland, 2010). Society's attitude toward appropriate male and female roles is another obstacle that identifies women as not task-oriented enough, too dependent on feedback and evaluations of others and lacking independence (Sabnis, 2019; Cullen & Lane, 1993). Some myths suggest women cannot discipline older students, particularly male learners; female members of society are too emotional; too weak physically; and male employees resent working with female counterparts (Whitaker & Lane, 1990). Obviously, these myths present a challenge in how female leaders perform their duties (Sabnis, 2019).

Kiamba (2006) states that women face many challenges in taking up leadership positions. The challenges include the barriers related to culture and cultural expectations; the choice and balance between work and family; and the stress that accompanies' positions of leadership as experienced. Panigrahi (2013) adds that in many families, women are expected to maintain traditional family roles independent of existing or new job responsibilities and when women obtain or seek positions as educational leaders, it is not easy to balance their work and family obligation. As a result, women give priority to their families and might be less committed to jobs that require more time investments because of their combined work and family roles.

The working environment is male-dominated, women have to prove themselves over and over again so that they are recognized and so great psychological strength, confidence, and commitment are required to cope with that pressure (Mitroussi & Mitroussi, 2009). Therefore, these obligations often lead others to question whether women are capable of being effective educational leaders. Administration

involves hard work, long hours, and lots of in-house politics which provoke stress when child care and home responsibilities are added. A woman can work more hours per week but that may conflict with family responsibilities. Thus, this affects how women lead in recognition of the double roles they play at home and at work. Zulu (2007) in her thesis adds that women leaders and managers are likely to experience adjustment problems as well as the challenges of surviving and excelling in a more demanding work environment. They will need to adopt new leadership styles better suited to the changing culture.

Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) distinguish three pitfalls that female leaders can encounter which are visibility, exaggeration of differences, and stereotyping which can lead to increasing levels of performance pressure and stress, which in their turn lead to decreased motivation for women to participate in the workplace. High visibility can lead to increased performance pressure as women may experience stress from constantly having the feeling that they should perform better than their male colleagues. This may be because they feel that they being constantly observed. As a result, women may change their style accordingly, adopting a more 'masculine style' (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). The exaggeration of differences can lead to the isolation of female leaders and a lack of support (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999). The stereotyping leads to a double bind and increases the level of performance pressure and stress. These possible challenges that females may encounter in leadership may hinder them from being effective in their leadership position (Sabnis, 2019).

Possible Ways to Improve Tolerance and Acceptance of Female Leaders

The Conference Board of Canada of May (2013) suggested that given the importance of leadership attitudes and priorities in setting the strategic philosophy and tone for organizations, one should believe that a shift in attitudes at the very top level is the most crucial enabler of women's advancement. A concerted effort beginning with senior leaders in government is necessary to make significant and lasting changes in the way women enter, develop, and advance in organizations. Their involvement is crucial as they are the ones who champion, monitor, and measure organizational progress. Though this study was conducted in Canada, it is applicable in Zimbabwe where the government has put measures to improve on female leadership starting with the female vice president, but on the part of the monitoring and evaluation, attention is needed. Kiamba (2012) highlights that women felt they succeeded when they had the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities, received meaningful professional development or overcame challenges that gave them the experience they needed to advance. This brings the issue of support from their colleagues, both male, and female, to realize the full potential in leadership.

Panigrahi (2013) suggests that there is a need to sensitize society to accept women's leadership and to encourage women to be assertive (confidential). This comes when people feel that some women leaders are not confidential in dealing with especially social issues of the team members. Another suggestion is that training can help female leaders in their positions (Eagly, 2005). This can help towards understanding and solving why subordinates are resistant toward the female leader. Earlier, Eagly (2005) noted that leadership training should focus on exploring the legitimacy deficit which female leaders experience and can help women achieve identification and trust from their subordinates. This is an important aspect since people often dislike women leaders who adapt to masculine leadership styles. This way, female leaders can achieve relation identification, by knowing themselves and acting upon their beliefs.

There is a need to change gender-based cultural norms, improving screening policies in favor of women, and improving their working environment (Eshete, 2003). This could help to address the root cause of stereotyping which influences the attitudes and perceptions of society towards female leadership. Some authors suggest that improvements should be made on the individual, institutional and societal levels. Coman (2016) further notes that gender socialization process cuts across four key social institutions: family, church, school and mass-media. The noted four social institutions are crucial in the socialization process of women and hence are important in taking up the major role of improving the stereotype of perceptions on women. Coman (2016) further notes the different perceptions attributed to women, despite their educational and professional achievements. For example, women's successes tend to be based on "circumstantial, or external factors rather than intellectual abilities". Asserting that their success is "unnatural and attributed to circumstances" of an external factor that has nothing to do with their personal effort. Their "failure however is connected with poor intellectual skills" (Ibid, 2016).

They explain that neither employers and unions nor women themselves with their determination can improve the attitudes but the actions of the government can make a difference. This can be done through legislation such as the Affirmative Action and campaigns for female

The lack of diversity at the senior-most levels of higher education institutions limits the success of individuals, institutions, and the sector as a whole (Hart, 2006). Many compelling arguments about the benefits of higher numbers of women in senior leadership roles have been presented (Dezso & Ross, 2011; Joy, Carter, Wagner, & Narayanan, 2007). It is clear that advancing women in leadership roles is not something to be done solely to benefit women; it is in the best interest of institutions as well as society overall.

As the baby boomer generation vacates leadership positions, there is a need for talented replacements. Failing to recognize and cultivate talented women leaders for these positions reduces the pool from which replacements can be made. Increasing the number of women leaders in higher education would also increase the number of and variety of role models for a wide range of professions (Patton, 2009).

Feminism Theory

This study is grounded in the liberal strand of the feminist movement. The feminist theoretical framework provides a clear explanation of gender inequalities and the subjugation of women in various settings and environments. The liberal feminist theory seeks to achieve the emancipation and empowerment of women by challenging all forms of prejudice, be it patriarchy or capitalism through the existing systems hence, bringing about reforms in a gradual and sometimes radical way. The recognition of women as humans equal to men is sought for as well as the consequent abolition of privileges and prejudices against women as advanced by Oakley (1981). Korda (1974) confirms how societies continue to underestimate and undermine women. Mushibwe (2014) equally argues at how our modern society that is more democratic, humanistic, and technologically advanced continues to sideline. Further still, women are viewed as weak human beings with limited ambitions. Such a predisposition is strong enough to elbow women out of decision-making positions and keep them persistently in subordinate positions to men. This theory is going to guide this study in explaining the reasons why the motivation for leadership positions in higher education remains male-dominated. It is a theory that seeks to establish liberal ways of enabling women to equally and rightly emerge to leadership positions without discrimination. The education sector should be a pioneer in advocating for women's emancipation by practically demonstrating this.

Methodology

Guided by Kalaian (2008), the research design acted as the study's structure for fulfilling the research objectives as well as addressing the research questions. For this study, the researcher utilized an integrative mixed-research method. The survey approach was used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data that provided rich and holistic information about the position of women in leadership. Data was collected concurrently using a five-scale Likert format and one semi-structured interview (Cohen et al., 2000; Lofland et al., 2006). The Likert scale was used to measure beliefs, attitudes, and/or opinions of respondents on their level of agreement on the scale and provide a greater degree of distinction in comparison to a question that would provide a mere yes or no response. The target

population for the study included women in leadership positions. A total of 100 participants (50 Zambia, 50 Zimbabwe) for the survey were selected using purposive sampling for both countries. A total of two (2) private universities and three (3) public universities in both Zambia and Zimbabwe were included making a total of 10 purposively selected universities. A total of 60 questionnaires were returned. This did not affect the findings at all as the information collected was rich as it was buttressed by the qualitative data from the interviews.

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews was narrative and hence analyzed thematically to derive themes used to document the perspectives of the participants regarding the motivation for leadership positions. The codes, categories, and patterns enabled the researchers to develop a comprehensible set of themes based on the recommendation of Creswell (2007) and Saldana (2009). The researchers also made use of IBM SPSS *Text Analytics* to sort, code, and analyze the qualitative data collected from face-to-face interviews as well as for qualitative data that emerged from the questionnaires. The qualitative data were sorted into themes and relevant subsets of the data were located according to the specific themes.

Discussion Of Results

The researches were guided by the research questions that were in turn the bedrock of the questionnaire and the interview schedule. Together with the statement of the problem that sought to understand the continued misrepresentation of women in senior managerial positions in HEI in both Zimbabwe and Zambia. The results from the data gathering procedures reviewed a number of concerns and hence the results are presented under the themes that emerged from the participants. The voices were equally captured to provide the in-depth of data collected. The identity and names of the Universities remain incognito in line with the wishes of the participants and to uphold research ethics.

Table 1 below outlines the number of years the female leaders had served before promotion or consideration for a senior managerial position.

Table 1

Number of Years Worked Before Appointed for a Leadership Post

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	6-10yrs	11	35.5	35.5	35.5
		11-15yrs	18	58.1	58.1	93.5
		Over 15 yrs	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	0-5yrs	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
		6-10yrs	7	23.3	23.3	33.3
		11-15yrs	13	43.3	43.3	76.7
		Over 15 yrs	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Data demonstrates that consideration for promotion was between 11 to 15 years. This was an interesting finding as it showed that in both countries the number of years a woman had worked was important for promotion consideration. When the women were probed as to why they applied for the position, the responses indicated that they were appointed. The reasons given included the below:

I had the qualifications and experience to enable me to do the job, so I was given the job (UniPriv 2 Zim.).

I applied for the job because I had the qualifications for the role (UniPub 1 Zam.).

Leadership Positions

Table 2

Leadership Posts of Respondents

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Deans	3	9.7	9.7	9.7
		Bursar	1	3.2	3.2	12.9
		Registrar	2	6.5	6.5	19.4
		Head of department	25	80.6	80.6	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Vice Chancellor	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
		Deans	6	20.0	20.0	30.0
		Registrar	3	10.0	10.0	40.0
		Head of department	18	60.0	60.0	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The most common position women tend to occupy includes that of the Head of Department. Zimbabwe had 25 female HODs while Zambia had 18. The highest position of Vice Chancellor had the least female. This demonstrates how the highest positions are considered for men and not women. Hojgaard (2002) confirmed that a few women are considered for top leadership roles. If there can be more women as HODs why would the top role be occupied by men. If there are more women at the HOD level then it is clear that women are capable leaders. One participant indicated that the position of the HOD seem to be synonymous with women.

There are only two men who are HODs in this university. If you want female leaders, they are HODs. So we do the donkey work. When it comes to positions of Dean, they employ from outside, a clear indication that they do not consider us capable [UniPriv. 29 Zam.].

I have been an HOD for the past 7 years. I have seen men come and appointed as Deans. (UniPriv. 8 Zim.).

Table 3

Would You Define Yourself as a Leader

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Strongly Agree	31	100.0	100.0	100.0
Zambia	Valid	Agree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
		Strongly Agree	27	90.0	90.0	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Women strongly agreed that they are leaders. There was not question to it. This is important because it revealed that women know their capability as leaders unlike the popular assumption that they are not leaders. The social cultural undertones expects men to be leaders and not women as noted by Grant (2005). Interestingly, when asked if leadership was a man’s role, the women strongly disagreed and confirming that there is now a current understanding of the capability that women had to lead just like men. The liberal feminist theory, has consistently argued that radicalism is not the way to fight for the right of women in society. A liberal stand that is gradual in nature seem to have more impetus in gradually seeing women emerge in leadership positions (Oakley, 1981). The women seem to have a social cultural mindset given their stand in this research. The women equally agreed that the leadership role is male dominated. This is true for both Zimbabwe and Zambia. Statistics revealed that 100% of the participants in Zimbabwe and Zambia agreed that the leadership positions were heavily dominated with men not women. Such a position is difficult to break through as men too, believe that they are owners of the leadership positions culturally. Panigrahi (2013) indicated how many families still believe in the leadership of men than that of women.

Leadership for men

Table 4

Is Leadership for Men

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Strongly Disagree	27	87.1	87.1	87.1
		Disagree	2	6.5	6.5	93.5
		Neutral	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Strongly Disagree	15	50.0	50.0	50.0
		Disagree	8	26.7	26.7	76.7

	Neutral	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Table 5

Is Leadership a Challenging Role for Women

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Strongly Disagree	10	32.3	32.3	32.3
		Disagree	7	22.6	22.6	54.8
		Neutral	6	19.4	19.4	74.2
		Agree	6	19.4	19.4	93.5
		Strongly Agree	2	6.5	6.5	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
		Neutral	8	26.7	26.7	33.3
		Agree	17	56.7	56.7	90.0
		Strongly Agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Women in Zimbabwe strongly disagreed with the assestion that women found the leadership position challenging. Zambia on the other hand agreed that the leadership role was challenging. The following were the responses:

Men tend to intimidate women in higher positions. This results in bullying at times and it is not a good thing. That makes leading challenging [UniPriv. 6 Zam.].

I have been undermined a number of times and my decision over looked. Women are the worst perpetrators here. They emerge as supportive but they are dangerous in getting the men align with them to discredit a female leader (UniPriv. 8 Zam.).

In Zimbabwe despite strongly agreeing, they equally confirmed that there are undermined by men.

Men have a propensity of undermining women in leadership positions. This is not a secret (UniPriv. 2 Zim.).

Panigrahi (2013) agreed that society has much to do with accepting women’s leadership. The tendency to assume that women are not confident in their role is old school and is a social culture disposition that undervalue women. A shift in low and poor attitudes towards women is supposed to start at the very top level in ensuring that women are positively accepted and supported. The HEI are crucial here. The women find it difficult to excel in a male-dominated environment, try to prove themselves over

and over again that they are capable. This can be tasking because it is not necessary. Women are not in competition with men. This can easily create challenges in their role as agreed by Mitroussi and Mitroussi (2009) who argued that women in leadership face leadership challenges. Another challenge women raised was that of the home expectation. Women are expected to spend longer hours at home as the main support system than at work and ensure that they meet all the home demands, hence their performance at work tend to be affected given the double role as noted by Kiamba (2000) who equally confirm such a disposition indicating that culture and cultural expectations are known barriers challenging women's position as leaders. As a result of this propensity, the participants were asked if as leaders they tend to fail in their leadership roles because they are not leaders. Both Zimbabwe and Zambia strongly disagreed indicating that they are leaders and they fail only because of the noted challenges.

If a man can lead so can I. We can all be leaders except as a woman I have more to do than the man. He concentrates at work completely while I still have to think of home and ensure home runs as well as work. So who is a better leader? It is me [UniPriv. 10 Zam].

I don't think women fail at leadership because they are not leaders. That is not true. They fail because society expects them to fail. So they are always looking for a sign of failure. Any small thing that is picked, every one cries wolf. You see, they all cry out. Women are not leaders (UniPriv. 24 Zim).

Men's Role in Motivating Women into Leadership Roles

The table 6 below demonstrate that women are not motivated into leadership roles because of men in leadership. Men want themselves to lead not women. The majority of the women according to table 6 strongly disagreed or disagree to men motivating them into leadership roles. The subsequent question wanted to know if men pushed women. Again 80% in both Zimbabwe and Zambia strongly disagreed. Women do not see men pushing them into leadership roles. Men are not the motivation reason for them to attain a leadership position.

I became a leader because I worked hard. Men had nothing to do with it. Unless if you say, they picked me during interviews because the panel comprised men, but again, it is because I beat the men that were there. I was the best of them (UniPub. 18 Zam.).

The above quotation seems to indicate that even the panel that interviewed her was dominated by men. For her to be appointed was a big thing but does not mean men pushed her into the leadership position. The same was true of Zimbabwe. The participants were not pushed by men nor were they motivated by men. They had the qualifications, experience and qualification to showcase for the role.

Table 6

Are Women Motivated to Aspire for Leadership Because of Men?

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Strongly Disagree	9	29.0	29.0	29.0
		Disagree	10	32.3	32.3	61.3
		Neutral	1	3.2	3.2	64.5
		Agree	5	16.1	16.1	80.6
		Strongly Agree	6	19.4	19.4	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Strongly Disagree	14	46.7	46.7	46.7
		Disagree	13	43.3	43.3	90.0
		Neutral	1	3.3	3.3	93.3
		Agree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
		Strongly Agree				
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

With reference to the table 7 below, approximately 50% of women in both countries believes that they are in leadership positions because of the affirmative action. One suggestion is that universities should focus on changing their culture to make women more receptive to differences, instead of through affirmative action alone.

Table 7

Are Women in Leadership Position as an Affirmative Action?

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	6.5	6.5	6.5
		Disagree	19	61.3	61.3	67.7
		Neutral	2	6.5	6.5	74.2
		Agree	8	25.8	25.8	100.0
		Strongly Agree				
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Strongly Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
		Disagree	4	13.3	13.3	20.0
		Neutral	5	16.7	16.7	36.7
		Agree	16	53.3	53.3	90.0
		Strongly Agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Zimbabwe disagreed with affirmative being the reason for women in leadership positions, while Zambia agreed. Affirmative action remains strong in bringing women into leadership positions in Zambia. The affirmative action is with an intention to meet the NGP, MDG and the SADC protocol which have not been successfully achieved in Zambia as noted by (Bandura, 2013). If affirmative action was an active action, many women would have been in leadership positions in all sectors. This situations is not so different from Zimbabwe. The National Gender Policy (2004, p. 3) recorded that despite all government ministries being mandated to ensure best gender balance, they had failed a gender balanced leadership

result in their respective ministries. Women are not motivated into leadership due to affirmative action, men or because men have pushed them into the leadership position. Their capability, experience and qualifications stood out. Hence, accordingly, they did not mind taking up leadership position even when men were available. See the statistics below. The absence of men should not be a reason for the appointment of women into leadership positions.

With reference to table 8 above, both Zimbabwe (81%) and Zambia (80%) respondents results on whether women should take a leadership position when men are available indicates a high rate averaging approximately 80%. This shows that women have confidence in leading in universities. From this result, we can say women leaders believe in themselves due to the high confidence they have.

Leadership Styles

Most of the respondents in Zambia and Zimbabwe indicated that they make use of democratic leadership style. This finding was also supported by Kelley (1997) who stated that “women are participatory and democratic; they share power and information with employees (employee performance and commitment is driven through esteem-building).” In addition, the study indicated that over 40% of women make use of transformational leadership style. According to Riggio (2010), he stated that “the theory of transformational leadership is a perfect example of successful leadership (inspirational, positive role models, concerned about followers, empowering, and push followers to be creative and take chances); research has shown that women have more transformational qualities than men (Riggio, 2010). Another respondent has to say;

I am democratic in my style of leadership but, believe me you, I can be dictatorial if forced to. I become dictatorial especially when I have tried to be democratic and I am undermined (UniPub 20 Zam.).

Another participant indicated that she was able to use the authoritarian style to help achieve her goals.

Characteristics of Female Leaders

The question on the characteristics of female leaders brought out a variety of responses as noted below. The characteristics confirm Glick and Fiske (1999) who confirmed that women are stereotyped with communal characteristics such as helpful and nurturance.

Women value work-life balance: The study indicated that the majority of women in both countries (Zambia and Zimbabwe) value work life balance. This is also supported by Killoran (2016) who argued that “Women are great leaders because we are able to balance professional and personal leadership skills. It’s easier to approach a women leader with a personal request, or a sensitive question. Women care about their team as well as their well-being, which includes their performance at work and their work-life

balance. Women are more proactive in becoming mentors, and sometimes it's already such an open and communicative relationship that the transition to mentor is easy." However the women did not see such a characteristic restraining them from becoming or leading. They wanted this characteristic to be appreciated. It made them who they are. One participant insited: *'This is who I am.'*

Women are empathetic: The results from the study indicates that women in leadership in higher educational institutions in Zambia and Zimbabwe are empathetic. This is supported by Crowe (2013) argued that most women are naturally empathetic and value relationships. This enables them to have a strong understanding of what drives and motivates people, and how to acknowledge different people for their performance (Crowe, 2013). Moreover, this characteristic is supported by Spencer (2011:18) who stated that "women are able to be more creative because they tend to be more empathetic. Women's empathy enables them to look at business issues through a wide-angle lens verses men who tend to have tunnel vision."

Women are great listeners: The survey's results show that women in Zambia and Zimbabwe are great listeners. "Women make great leaders because they take the time to listen instead of reacting right away. They appreciate people and their viewpoints. Whether they are right or wrong, women hear them out and then make a final decision." (Best Seller Publishing, 2016).

Women focus on teamwork: The study results shows that women in leadership in both countries (Zambia and Zimbabwe) attend more to the individuals they work with. According to negotiation research, women in leadership positions tend to fight harder for their subordinates, for example getting better salaries and raises for their teams (The Editors, 2009).

women are strong communicators. The study indicates that women in Zambia and Zimbabwe in the higher education sectors have good communication skills. Kiamba (2008:16) stated that "women are better at conflict management since they have better communication and listening skills and show more tolerance and empathy." Open communication allows for clarity in executing roles and responsibilities in organisations.

Women have high emotional intelligence: The study shows that majority of women have high emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognise emotions in yourself and others. It is a trait that has recently gained momentum as an essential leadership behavior. This result is supported by The Editors (2009:11) who argued that "the majority of women are better at mind-reading than most men; they can read the emotions written on people's faces more quickly and easily". Asked if women learders are emotional, the responses were interesting with 78% of the Zambian participants dsagreeing while 58% of Zimbabwean reposnses emerged neutral. They neither agreed or disagreed. The reasons for their responses included the following:

Women are by nature emotional. It is part of who we are. That is not a crime and it is not wrong for anyone to be emotional but it is wrong to hide because then, one is not being sincere or honest as a leader. (UniPriv. 21 Zam.).

Men hide their emotions. Everyone has that part in them, the emotional thing. As a woman I don't hide. So I disagree because the emotion is not being petty. It is human to be emotional (UniPriv. 12 Zim.).

Table 8

Do Female Leaders Tend to be Emotional?

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Strongly Disagree	3	9.7	9.7	9.7
		Neutral	15	48.4	48.4	58.1
		Agree	5	16.1	16.1	74.2
		Strongly Agree	8	25.8	25.8	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Strongly Disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
		Disagree	19	63.3	63.3	76.7
		Neutral	4	13.3	13.3	90.0
		Agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Are Women the Best Leaders?

Table 9

Are Female Leaders the Best as Leaders?

Country			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Zimbabwe	Valid	Neutral	5	16.1	16.1	16.1
		Agree	17	54.8	54.8	71.0
		Strongly Agree	9	29.0	29.0	100.0
		Total	31	100.0	100.0	
Zambia	Valid	Agree	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
		Strongly Agree	25	83.3	83.3	100.0
		Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The participants agreed that women are best at leadership. The statistics are in agreement with the current debates where female presidents have fared very well under the Covid-19 strain (Bear & Aner (2021). This is also supported by many female writers, women often have a different attitude to power compared to men (Prigent, 2011). Regarding women's attitude, Halsebo (1987) defined women as having

the ability to exercise power in a more constructive way, mobilize human resources better, encourage creativity and change the hierarchical structures. Women leaders succeed to see beyond the boundaries of the routine activities and classical settings (Budrina, 2012).

Suggestions to Support Women in Leadership

As suggested by Bullough (2008, p. 251), “economic and political freedom and gender empowerment are significant forces across the board for women’s participation in leadership, provided a government’s rule of law is set to facilitate safe business practices. Women in both Zambia and Zimbabwe, may enjoy the opportunities for progress toward leadership roles if there is adequate government support. “Cultural norms that support a belief in hard work, a belief in personal ability, individualism, risk taking behaviors, and participative leadership are indicative of women’s participation in leadership” (Bullough, 2008, p. 251).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Women in higher institutions of learning continues to be a concern worldwide, although significant progress have been made in the western world. Women leaders are emerging in Africa especially in Zambia and Zimbabwe and can be as successful as their male counterparts. However, in order to move forward in institutions of higher learning on the gender agenda, women in leadership positions need to understand their struggles and ensure to be better representatives for the other women aspiring to be leaders. Their leadership style remains crucial hence, they need to ensure to be affirmative and not assume their leadership style in competition with the man. Results have confirmed the frugal application of the leadership style in line with the situation moving from democratic to dictorial and vice versa.

By looking at the history of inequality and by identifying the profile of woman leaders, one can move towards becoming a successful woman leader as confirmed by the liberal feminist theory. In the present paper, we elaborated some main issues in the literature of women leaders. The main point of focus was the motivations of women to be in leadership positions. It has been concluded that men or affirmative action does not push or motivate women into leadership positions. The push factor is their capability, experience and qualifications that put them to be at par with male leaders. The feminine nature should not be an issue but should be appreciated just as the masculine nature is appreciated. The results further confirm that the characteristic/ traits of women leaders have a huge role to play in leadership positions. Their characteristics attest to who they are, and not their inability to function in a leadership role. Women in leadership positions should be seen as proof of being successful leaders. The HEI

institutions are crucial in both countries to demonstrate the significance of ensuring that equal representation of gender is done. When HEI are male dominated, the leadership will be male dominated and vice versa. So a balance representation should be sought for. If more men are being educated, then men will occupy positions of leadership. HEI have a task to help educate the female populace and equally employ them in decision making positions.

Future studies could investigate differences between men and women in leadership positions in different contexts, considering differences and similarities. Moreover, the motivating factor for leadership position can further be clarified in order to gain more knowledge about the approaches and mechanisms which influence the success of women leaders. Women should further be encouraged to aspire for the highest qualifications if they can attain the high leadership positions. The HEI should equally publish female leaders statistics to give a sense of inequality.

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