Kenyan Female Lecturers' Ambitions for Leadership and Perceived Challenges

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Abstract

Purpose: This study sought to determine whether there was a relationship between learned helplessness and the low involvement of women in leadership positions in higher education.

Methodology: All of the female lecturers at KU were the study's target audience. It used a descriptive survey design. 50 female lecturers representing all the university's academic departments were chosen using stratified random sampling. A questionnaire was used to gather the information. The data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methodologies.

Results: The survey found that female instructors have high aspirations for leadership. They have shaky opinions about their possibilities of rising to positions of leadership, nevertheless.

Conclusion: Only two female professors, or 4.3 percent, have sought for leadership roles in higher education, despite the fact that they are competent for these positions.

Recommendations: The study also advised the university to conduct a survey to learn why women are underrepresented in leadership positions and to encourage leadership training programs for female academicians. The study recommended the government appoint more women in decision-making positions, such as parliament, and ensure compliance with gender equality as required by the constitution.

Keywords: Leadership, Women, KU, Female Lecturers
1.0 Introduction

Women have made moderate progress in the fields of education, literacy, and unemployment, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women publication Progress of the World's Women 2002 (UNIFEM, 2002), which records and assesses women's progress toward gender equality globally. Less than 5% of the world's leaders of state, CEOs of significant enterprises, and top positions in international organizations are held by women. According to the studies mentioned above, despite some progress made over the previous 20 years, women's accomplishments still fall well short of men's in terms of leadership, money, decision-making, and opportunity. Cubillo and Brown (2003) contend that the teaching profession in most countries of the world is predominated by women. However, a look at the statistics reveals that despite the large numbers of women in the profession, they are greatly under-represented in leadership positions. For this reason, the European Journal of Education (1996) devoted an issue to women in education management. According to Chemers (2002), despite differences in the pattern of representation of women in leadership positions in education around the world, three things are universal: educational leaders are overwhelmingly male; women are under-represented at managerial levels in almost all nations; and the proportion of women employed as teachers decreases as students' ages rise. This feature emphasizes problems of equality and opportunity for individuals being taught, regardless of gender, as well as women and the progression of their careers within the teaching profession.

As Kenya progresses towards achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education, it is imperative that there be enough women holding positions of leadership in various sectors to act as role models to the girls who graduate from schools and universities. Kenya, like the rest of the world, has made significant achievements towards increasing the number of women in leadership positions in the society. A number of authors have noted that women are making a significant impact on national economies through their participation in organizations and their ownership of businesses. They have also noted that the increase in the number of women taking up significant roles in society is likely to continue into the twenty-first century (Davidhizar & Cramer, 2000; Stanford et al., 1995; Valentine & Godkin, 2000). However, the number of women holding positions of leadership in higher education is very low compared to that of men.

Researchers and advocates for women's rights have offered a variety of justifications for why there are so few women in higher education. The homogeneity hypothesis, which Shavlik and Touchton (2008) suggest may be to blame for the persistence of the same sort of persons in leadership positions, has been used, for instance, to explain the representation patterns of women. According to the homogeneity hypothesis, candidates for administrative or leadership positions are chosen based on how closely they resemble those in authority, for example, in terms of social group. According to Zulu (2003), since leadership is seen as being more male-oriented in higher education and other sectors, it stands to reason that males will typically hold key leadership roles. Other researchers such as Longman (2004) have used the 'metaphor of the glass ceiling' to explain why few women attain leadership positions, why they do not appear to move up the organizational hierarchy as rapidly as men, and why they tend to be faced with more stringent promotion requirements than are their male counterparts. The term 'glass ceiling' has been used to describe an invisible barrier that is transparent, yet strong enough to stymie access to leadership for women and other minorities.
According to Klenke (2004), the phrase "glass ceiling" is often used to denote a barrier to admission into leadership roles, even if it may exist at different levels in various companies or sectors. The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles has also been addressed in terms of early childhood socialization patterns, specifically primary socialization patterns. Early on, both girls and boys are taught to appreciate what society views to be feminine and masculine traits. According to Zulu (2003), this type of socialization pattern leads to girls and boys believing, for example, that being aggressive, assertive, independent, rational, and task-oriented are male characteristics, whereas being modest, submissive, affectionate, nurturing, people-oriented, and emotionally expressive are considered to be female traits. Young girls grow up with the belief that displaying male characteristics is improper and the same applies to young boys who are discouraged from displaying what society believes are female characteristics. The main argument of this study is that there are women who, despite having qualified for positions of higher education leadership, fail to apply for such positions based on what they have heard, read, and assumed all along: that gender discrimination, gender stereotyping, and male dominance will be a barrier to their success.

Even while the number of women in academic leadership roles has increased, both in terms of numbers and positions, relatively few women can be found in these positions in higher education. This is the situation at KU, where, as was already said, the percentage of women in leadership roles has regularly lagged below that of males by over 25%. The government has made attempts to increase the involvement of women in leadership, therefore the question of "what accounts for this low representation of women in higher education leadership" emerges. For example, affirmative action has seen to the lowering the girls' cut off points for every entry into public universities by two points, which creates more opportunities for the girl-child to access university education thereby increasing their chances of advancing to leadership positions. In addition, there is a policy shift by the government to ensure at least a third representation of women in leadership positions for public offices. In spite of such efforts, the number of women in leadership positions, especially in higher education, is still low. Previous literature suggests that that there could be some form of gender discrimination in appointment of higher education management staff (Oplatka, 2006).

According to earlier research, there may be cultural stereotypes that link feminine traits to unsuccessful leadership (Curry, 2000), which would prevent more women from moving up the corporate ladder. However, prior studies did not demonstrate how women's desires for leadership affect their choices to apply for leadership roles. The majority of justifications offered for why there are so few women in leadership roles may also discourage women from seeking leadership positions because they encourage them to believe that they would face discrimination or fail, which is in keeping with everything they have previously read and heard. This means that even those women who hold leadership aspirations, even if qualified, may fail to apply for such positions. Consequently, the study set to find out the factors contributing to low participation of women in leadership in institutions of higher education. This was done by examining the aspirations and perceived barriers to female employees' access to leadership positions in Kenyatta University.
The general objective of the study is examining goals and perceived hurdles to female workers' admission to leadership roles in institutes of higher learning with particular reference to Kenyatta University in Kenya was the study's overall goal. The specific objectives that guided this study were:

1. Identify the leadership goals of women professors in KU
2. To learn what attitudes female workers have regarding how simple it is to move up into leadership roles.
3. To investigate how female lecturers' perceptions of how simple it is to go up the corporate ladder affect whether or not they apply for leadership positions.

2.0 Literature Review
2.1 The Concept of Leadership

Leadership is not simply defined due to its many dimensions and the many meanings the notion involves in various cultural contexts. In the study literature, there have been several efforts to define it, each concentrating on different problems or characteristics. The process of social influence by which one person enlists the assistance and support of others in the realization of a common goal has been referred to as leadership (Chemers, 2002). There have also been definitions that include followers more broadly. According to Kouzes and Posner (2007), leadership is essentially about providing a means for others to participate in bringing about something special. In order to achieve organizational or personal goals, effective leadership must be able to properly integrate and leverage resources from both the internal and external environments. A leader has the ability to make people feel good about what they are doing and helps people feel like the work they are accomplishing is working towards the larger goal of the organization. A leader challenges someone to go beyond his or her base level of operation and work to their highest potential; they strive to get the best out of their employees. A leader is someone who recognizes accomplishment and properly rewards for accomplishments. One of the most important aspects of a leader is they treat mistakes as learning experiences (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Thus, social environment forces severely impede women's development into leadership positions. However, there are other significant inhibitors besides external ones. It seems to reason that before women can fully benefit from new chances, they must already have a desire to pursue leadership roles. Opportunity and desire are what break down "glass ceilings." But what elements support women's aspirations for leadership? Much is known about how institutionalized gender prejudice restricts women's access to leadership positions, but in order to increase the number of women in leadership positions, we also need to look at the often-overlooked issue of women's desire in taking on leadership responsibilities. Savery (2002) found that women desire leadership promotions less than male workers in part due to the multiple demands of work and family. Yet this information pinpoints what factors deter women from seeking leadership roles, not what factors encourage women to seek such roles.

2.2 Empirical Review

The claim that women are less career-focused than males and are more prepared to sacrifice happiness in favor of a balanced existence has been the subject of several research. This is supported by contradicting evidence. Swedish academics, according to Elg and Jonnergard (2003),
can be divided into two groups: those who have comparable professional objectives as males and those who have different aspirations because of family obligations. Marongiu and Martin and Acuna (2002) show that women wish to be promoted to a higher degree than has been acknowledged in past research, contrary to the findings of Barker and Monks (1998), who found no indication of differences in the career aspirations of men and women. Oplatka (2006) finds that women's under-representation in leadership positions may be attributed to women's own decision not to apply for promotion in education for a variety of reasons, such as lack of necessary aspirations, lack of awareness of the promotion system and a lack of confidence that they will succeed, gender-based socialization, fear of failure, and lack of competitiveness. Other researchers such as Boatwright and Egidio (2003) have investigated the role of connectedness needs, self-esteem, and fear of negative evaluation in determining leadership aspirations among women.

Contemporary relational theory gives rise to the connectedness needs hypothesis, which contends that early interdependent relationships with primary caregivers and ongoing gendered socialization strongly encourage women to develop their identities in the context of reciprocally responsive interpersonal connections (Gilligan, 1982). Women thereby establish their identities in "the context of relationships," with "responsiveness to others," and with higher demands for connection than their male counterparts (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). (Boatwright & Forrest, 2000). Leadership aspirations can be influenced by connectedness needs in one of two ways: either positively if a woman is "pulled towards leadership" by leaders she feels connected to, or negatively if it is accompanied by a fear of severing meaningful connections with others (such as coworkers), which discourages women from pursuing leadership roles (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003). Boatwright et al. (2003) also found that gender role, self-esteem, and fears of negative evaluation accounted for a significant amount of the variance in predicting college women's leadership aspirations.

Absence of structures and policies to deal with discrimination or to support women in their multiple roles of wife/mother and professional woman have contributed to the insignificant number of women in leadership positions in the institution. Dickens and Colling (1990) explained how job segregation continued in respect of both role and hours/arrangements as one of the factors which result in discriminatory agreements between employers and union. They also point to the problem of job evaluation schemes which perpetuate old values and hence encourage rather than discourage inequity of pay.

3.0 Methodology

All of the female lecturers at KU were the study's target audience. It used a descriptive survey design. 50 female professors representing all the university's academic departments were chosen using stratified random sampling. A questionnaire was used to gather the information. The data were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis methodologies.

4.0 Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

4.1 Demographic Characteristics

Out of the 46 respondents, 13(28.3%) were aged below 30 years, 11(23.9%) were aged between 31-40 years, 18(39.1%) were aged between 41-50 years while 4(8.7%) were over 50 years of age. Eight (17.4%) of the respondents had 4-6 years of teaching experience, 4(8.7%) had a teaching experience of 7-10 years while 34(73.9%) had over 10 years of teaching experience.
4.2 Descriptive Analysis

4.2.1 Academic qualifications

Table 1 shows that 14(30.4%) of the employees had Masters’ Degree while 32(69.6%) had PhD qualifications. This shows that the female lecturers involved in the study had the prerequisite qualifications to be considered for leadership positions.

Table 1: Academic qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic qualification</th>
<th>No. of female lectures</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters’ Degree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 shows the positions held by the female lecturers in the University. As shown in figure 1, majority of the respondents 34(74%) were lecturers while 12(26%) were senior lecturers.

![Figure 1: Positions held by the female lecturers in the University](image)

4.2.2 Lecturing Departments

Table 2 shows that 6(13%) were lecturers in the Zoology department, 17(37%) In Chemistry department, 12(26.1%) were in the SSH department, 5(10.9%) were in Botany department while the Commerce and Economics studies; FST and ICSIT Departments each had 2(4.3%) of the respondents lecturing in those departments.
### Table 2: Lecturing departments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>No. of female lecturers</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoology</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSH</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Economic Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FST</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICSIT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3 Number of Published Research Papers

As shown in figure 2, out of the 41 respondents who had published research work in a peer-review journal, 2(4.3%) had one published paper, 9(19.6%) had two published papers while 30(65.2%) had over three published papers. In addition, half of the women lecturers (50%) had other published work like text books while the other 50% indicated that they did not have any published textbooks. The results presented above show that most of the female lecturers had published journal articles and textbooks, which is a major requirement for persons to be considered for leadership positions. In previous studies, it was concluded that women lack adequate time for research because they are more involved than men in home and family life (Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007).

![Number of published research papers](image)

**Figure 2: Number of published research papers**
4.3 Leadership Aspirations of Female Lecturers Working in KU

The first objective of the study was to find out the leadership aspirations of female lecturers working in KU. The study established that only 2(4.3%) of the female lecturers had applied for leadership positions in the University while 44(95.7%) indicated that they had not applied for a leadership position in the university. The two lecturers who had applied for a leadership position in the university had each applied once and twice respectively. The positions applied for were positions as Associate Professor, Director Manager and Head of Department. This seems to suggest that the women employees did not have leadership aspirations. All the female employees considered themselves qualified to hold a position of leadership in the university and they gave various reasons for this. They indicated that they had the potential and minimum requirements to become leaders; they had been exposed to people at various levels and that they had the experience, knowledge and skills to influence and direct. However, some employees suggested that management training should be conducted. The respondents were presented with eleven statements to measure their leadership aspirations, whereby they were to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Their responses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Leadership aspirations of female lecturers in KU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I hope one day I will be promoted to a position of leadership in the University</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel I have the potential to become an effective leader in this university</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I plan to apply for a leadership position in the university in the near future</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been working hard (e.g. by conducting research) to improve my chances of being considered for a leadership position</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I admire people in leadership position because of my obligation as a woman</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cannot apply for a leadership position because of my family obligations as a woman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>76.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although there is stiff competition for leadership, I am among the most qualified to be promoted</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel contented with my current position, and I have no intentions of applying for leadership positions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership positions are too demanding, therefore I cannot apply for leadership in the university</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would not like to be embroiled in University politics; therefore I do not intend to hold a leadership position

Although I am qualified, I have no intentions of applying for leadership positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I would not like to be embroiled in University politics; therefore I do not intend to hold a leadership position</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Although I am qualified, I have no intentions of applying for leadership positions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key: SA [Strongly Agree], A [Agree], D [Disagree], SD [Strongly Disagree]

Table 3 shows that all the female lecturers (100%) strongly agreed that they felt they had the potential to become effective leaders in this university. In addition majority (over 50%) agreed with the statements that although there is stiff competition for leadership positions, I feel I am among the most qualified to be promoted, I plan to apply for a leadership position in the university in the near future, I have been working hard (e.g. by conducting research) to improve my chances of being considered for a leadership position, I admire people in leadership position because of my obligation as a woman and 36 I hope one day I will be promoted to a position of leadership In the University. Employees disagreed with the other statements indicated in the table 3.

Figure 3: Overall scores on leadership aspirations

Figure 3 shows that 40 (87%) of the female lecturers scored 27 and below on the scale, meaning that they had strong leadership aspirations. On the other hand, 6 (13%) of the female employees obtained scores above 27 meaning that they had weak leadership aspirations. This therefore indicates that majority of the female employees had strong aspirations to become leaders. The results presented here disagree with some previous study findings, for example Savery (1990) who found that women desire leadership promotions less than male workers due to the multiple demands of work and family. Morley et al. (2002) also established that women tend to have attitudes towards careers and lifestyle balance that could affect career progression. On the other
hand, Marongiu and Ekehammer (1999) suggest that women want to be promoted to a higher degree than has been recognized in prior studies. Barker and Monks (1998) found no evidence of differences in the career aspiration of men and women in their study.

4.4 Beliefs about Ease of Ascending to leadership Positions

The female employees were presented with ten statements regarding the beliefs held by female lecturers about the ease of ascending to leadership positions. They were to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Their responses are as indicated in table 4.

Table 4: Beliefs held about the ease of ascending to leadership positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even if I applied for leadership position, I would not be considered because I am a woman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male dominance is still rife in University leadership, and so women continue finding it difficult to ascend the leadership</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African culture and traditions are still discriminatory against women's role in leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if women have same qualifications as me, it is easier for men to ascend to leadership</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University provides equal opportunities for men and women to ascend to leadership</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although policies are changing to achieve gender balance in leadership, it is still difficult for women to ascend to leadership positions</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualified women who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if I ascended to a leadership position, I would not get support from male colleagues</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a successful leader is a matter of hard work; gender has little or nothing to do with it</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our culture has relegated women to lower positions of influence, so men will always take the lead</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 shows that over 50% of the female lecturers agreed with the statements that male dominance is still rife in university leadership, and so women continue finding it difficult to ascend the leadership; African culture and traditions are still discriminatory against women's role in leadership; even if women have the same qualifications as me, it is easier for men to ascend to leadership positions; the university provides equal opportunities for both men and women to ascend to leadership positions; our culture has relegated women to lower positions of influence, so men will always take the lead and although policies are changing to achieve gender balance in leadership, it is still difficult for women to ascend to leadership positions. Employees disagreed with the other statements indicated in the table.

![Overall score on beliefs](chart.png)

**Figure 4: Strength of beliefs on ease of ascending to leadership positions**

Figure 4 shows that majority 29(63%) held weak beliefs about the ease of ascending to leadership positions, while 17(37%) held strong beliefs about the ease of ascending to leadership positions.

**4.5 Effects of Beliefs about Ease of Ascending to Leadership on Leadership Aspirations**

The third objective of the study was to examine how the beliefs held by female lecturers about the ease of ascending to leadership positions influence their decisions to apply for leadership positions or not. To address this objective, Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient was used to determine whether there was a correlation between leadership aspirations and the beliefs held by women employees about the ease of ascending to leadership positions in the University. Table 4.6 shows the mean scores obtained and the correlation coefficient statistics for leadership aspirations and beliefs held about ease of ascending to leadership positions.
Table 5: Correlation Coefficient Analysis Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belief on ease of ascending to leadership</td>
<td>25.22</td>
<td>5.440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership aspirations</td>
<td>18.41</td>
<td>6.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson correlation coefficient , r</td>
<td>0.403</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P value</td>
<td>0.006*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at p<0.05

As shown in Table 5, there was a significant correlation between leadership aspirations and the beliefs held about the ease of ascending to leadership positions. The correlation coefficient was positive, meaning that high scores on one variable predicted high scores on the other variable. This means that women who held weak beliefs about the ease of ascending to leadership positions also had weak leadership aspirations, meaning they were not likely to apply for leadership positions. It therefore emerges that despite women lecturers have strong leadership aspirations, majority of them have weak beliefs about the ease of ascending to positions of leadership in the University. This makes it difficult for the employees to apply for leadership positions. As a matter of fact, the study established that out of the 46 women lecturers, only two had applied for leadership positions.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

According to the study's findings, female university lecturers want to be powerful leaders. They have shaky opinions about their possibilities of rising to positions of leadership, nevertheless. This leads to the conclusion that the majority of female lecturers, while being competent for leadership roles in higher education, choose not to apply for them, with just 2 (4.3 percent) of them doing so. The failure to apply for leadership positions despite having aspirations could be explained by negative beliefs formed on the basis of what the women employees have heard, read, and assumed all along: that gender discrimination, gender stereotyping, and male dominance will be a barrier to their success in leadership. This lends credence to the learned helplessness theory, which holds that people become powerless when they realize that their actions will never result in the intended results. The person eventually loses hope and gives up trying to accomplish the goal. This gets so ingrained that the person will not attempt again for fear of failure when circumstances change and new efforts would make a difference.

5.2 Recommendations

It is advised that the government appoint more women to positions of power, such as parliament, in order to have an impact on laws pertaining to female leadership. The 47 government should ensure use of the recommended 30 percent to appoint women and increase this to 50:50 with time. In addition, Institutions of higher learning should put policies in place for women and provide scholarships for women to carry out research. The University management should hold seminars with motivational speakers to encourage women to aggressively seek for leadership positions. Meetings and other leadership activities should be scheduled within family friendly hours. Women lecturers and other women leaders on the other hand should organize mentorship programmes in
girls' schools to instill in them a positive attitude towards leadership. Finally, the community should be sensitized to discourage cultures which deter women from progressing and creating awareness that women can do the same jobs as men. Further research is recommended to examine the aspirations and perceived barriers to female employees' access to leadership positions in other institutions other than those of higher learning and to examine the aspirations and perceived barriers to female employees' access to leadership positions in management.

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**Conflict of Interest**

The authors declares no conflict of interest.

**References**


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