

## Towards Gender Equality in the Workplace: How Male Lecturers View Their Female Counterparts in Zimbabwean Teacher Training Colleges

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**KEYWORDS** Gender. Gender Stereotypes. Attitudes. Workplace. Higher Education

**ABSTRACT** The present study sought to establish male lecturers' views about their female counterparts in Teacher Education Colleges in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe. The study utilized a descriptive survey design which made use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. A random sample of male lecturers selected from the three teacher training colleges participated in the study. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. Percentage computations were used to analyze the quantitative data while content analysis was used to analyze qualitative data. The study found that male college lecturers largely held positive views about female lecturers in terms of the promotion, staff and career development. However, there were gendered views in female lecturers' roles as wives and mothers at home and in task allocation at the workplace. The study concludes that male lecturers generally viewed women as equals and accepted them at the workplace though gendered views about women remained in other areas.

### INTRODUCTION

In a developing country such as Zimbabwe, women play an important role, as part of the workforce, in the development of the country. There has been a notable increase in the representation of women in the labour force the world over. The World Guide (2001/2002), for example, notes that representation increased from 17% in 1980 to 45% in 2000. However, whilst Zimbabwean women have penetrated the workforce, only a few have gained access to senior management positions in organizations. Muller (1994) states that only a small group of elite African women have been able to attain professional or managerial positions in Zimbabwe. Women senior managers in public service constituted 19.7% of total management in 1999 (Zigomo-Nyatsanza 2001).

In Zimbabwean tertiary institutions, there has been an under-representation of women in

general academic grades and at senior management levels. At the National University of Science and Technology, in 2005 only 15% of the total number of academic staff were women and only 13.7% of senior management staff were women (African Association of Universities 2005). Gaidzanwa (2005) reveals that out of the 1166 lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe in 2001, only 7.1% were women. This shows a great gender disparity in staffing figures. Gaidzanwa (2005) further observes that in the same year, women were also seriously under-represented at Professorial level. This further shows the high degree of underrepresentation of women at the workplace in institutions of higher education.

In higher leadership positions in the public service, women remain under-represented as well. Makombe and Geroy (2008) state that according to a Zimbabwe Human Rights Forum Report for 2001, in 2001, of the seven universities in Zimbabwe, only one had a female province chancellor; of 24 High court judges, 6 were women and the first woman was appointed as a Wing Commander in the Air Force of Zimbabwe in the same year. The report noted that women had similar status in the private sector.

The under-representation of women as evidenced above reveals that the professions cited

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are male dominated with a few women trickling in. Delamont (1990) argues that where women are under-represented, they have to fight against traditional attitudes which see the primary role of women as being that of mothers and housewives. Gaidzanwa (2005), for example, found that at the University of Zimbabwe, male academics strongly felt that the primary role of women was in the kitchen while their academic careers came second.

The gender imbalance in Teacher Training colleges is also a common feature in other organisations such as the Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA) and at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) (Gaidzanwa 1997). In ZIMTA for example, 84% of representatives were males and only 18% were females (Nangati 1997). Though improved, to date only (41.6%) women constitute the standing committee for ZIMTA (The 28<sup>th</sup> ZIMTA National Conference 2009 Declaration).

According to Lawlor (1994) and Schwartz (1989), women's roles in society have changed, especially with the emergence of the women's movement. In Zimbabwe, the opening up of opportunities in line with equity and equality policies has seen a significant number of women joining the academia as lecturers (Government of Zimbabwe 2004). However, from the college staff records in teacher training colleges in Mavingo Province in Zimbabwe, the number of women employed as lecturers lagged behind that of their male counterparts. Martin (1991) argues that gender inequality in the workplace results in women facing numerous and major obstacles in male-dominated areas. In a similar study carried out to ascertain male police officers' perceptions towards female police officers, Davis (2005) found that male police officers largely looked down upon their female counterparts.

Perceptions and attitudes towards female professionals such as lecturers are based on internalised gender norms (Cortis and Cassar 2006). Gender norms are the expectations society holds for masculine and feminine behaviour and these expectations serve to set limits on the roles and behaviours considered appropriate for men and women (Allan 2004; Kimmel 2000). It is important to observe that gender norms are learned roles and behaviours and not genetically determined by sex. However, emphasis on gender norms is placed as if they were geneti-

cally determined. Valian (1999:2) refers to these norms as gender schemas, which are "a set of implicit, or non-conscious, hypotheses about sex differences [that play] a central role in shaping men's and women's professional lives."

Domenico and Jones (2006) identify several perceptions held against working women historically and these include being looked at as immoral, unfeminine, objects of pity and negligent mothers. Working women were often not taken seriously by their bosses, colleagues and society and as Heins et al. (1982:455) contend that it was more difficult for a woman to achieve professional status than a man. Working women's problems are further compounded by their competing and conflicting roles as mothers, wives and workers. Cortis and Cassar (2006) further observe that family obligations and domestic responsibilities often reinforce the argument that women may not be as deeply involved in their work as much as men. Govender (1997) identifies several obstacles women encounter at the workplace which hinder their career development and these include lack of mentors and role models. On the issue of mentoring, Gaidzanwa (2005) observes that male academics easily mentor fellow male academics leaving female academics largely without mentors. Women academics' career development is also negatively affected by their having to reconcile different roles as workers, wives and mothers. It is often difficult to find adequate time and pay attention to career demands. Gaidzanwa (2005) further observes that issues of marriage and child rearing made women academics less physically and socially mobile. In universities, research productivity is considered very much for promotion and women academics were not doing very much in research as evidenced by the fact that in 2001 at the University of Zimbabwe, men contributed 83% of the research articles produced in the institution (Gaidzanwa 2005). This shows that women's advancement at the workplace maybe negatively affected by the social and marital responsibilities. Males in society also have negative attitudes towards working women and this in a way affects women who may end up satisfying societal expectations about them at the expense of career development. There are also some employment issues which affect female lecturers' career development such as issues of maternity, maternity benefits and re-entry into

the jobs though most of these have been addressed in Zimbabwe. This shows that in their attempt to progress professionally, women have to grapple with numerous work-related problems.

Bass et al. (2003) observe that despite the inroads that women have made, there are still negative attitudes and stereotyping of women as leaders. Many think women cannot be effective leaders. Caplan and Caplan (1994) observe that in the World of Academia the workplace culture, structures and values are traditionally elitist, male biased and patriarchal. Sutherland (1994) further observes that women academics have challenges of complete integration in their academic departments when compared to men. Women's challenges are attributed to lack of mentors and networks. These observations tie very well with one of the authors' experiences at one of the Teacher Training Colleges in Masvingo which suggests some of these stereotypic attitudes where there is a tendency of allocating domestic roles to females with males getting masculine roles. Other stereotypes were revealed through students' comments and through students' tendency to consult male lecturers more often than females on both academic and social issues. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the attitudes of male lecturers towards female lecturers at teachers' colleges in Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe.

### **Goal of the Study**

Myths about women's competencies and stereotypes at home and at work tend to disadvantage women in organisations sometimes even interfering with how they perform their duties (Maddock and Parkin 1994). The study sought to ascertain male lecturers' views of their female counterparts by addressing the question "What are the male lecturers' views towards their female counterparts in terms of career aspirations, professional development and allocation of duties in Teacher Training Colleges in Masvingo?"

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

Trochim (2006) contends that a research design provides the glue that holds the research project together. The present study followed a descriptive survey design which utilised a combination of quantitative and qualitative ap-

proaches. Lodico et al. (2006) state that the most common types of descriptive research involve assessing events or procedures, attitudes or opinions towards individuals. Since the purpose of this study was to investigate male lecturers' perceptions of female lecturers, the researchers found the descriptive survey design to be most appropriate.

### **Population**

Wegner (2007) contends that a population or a universe represents every possible item that contains the data value or measurement of the random variable. The population for this study was made up of all the 125 male lecturers from three Teacher Training Colleges in Masvingo Province. For the purpose of this study, 25% of the total 125 males were chosen that is 31 male lecturers. It was necessary to limit the number of respondents because using the entire population would have called for the employment of research assistants and for printing large numbers of questionnaires both of which the researchers could not afford due to time and financial constraints. Also, more detailed and quality analysis could be made because the researchers would concentrate on a few respondents.

### **Sample**

A simple random sample of 31 male lecturers from different departments at three Teacher Training Colleges in Masvingo Province was considered to be appropriate for the sample. "Simple random sampling is that method of drawing a portion or sample of a population so that each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected" (Wollhuter et al. 2003: 26). Haralambos and Holborn (2008) say that the possibility of including each member of the population in the study is one of the strengths of random sampling. A total of 31 respondents were included in the study. Small sample sizes can provide highly reliable findings depending on the sampling procedures adopted (Schiffman and Kanuk 1997).

### **Instruments**

A questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions was used as the data gather-

ing instrument. The use of the questionnaire was considered appropriate because it enabled the respondents to express their views without fear of reprisal. It also enabled the researchers to reach out to the respondents at little cost. The questionnaire was first pilot tested on five male lecturers in one teacher training college outside the province in which the present study was carried out. Pilot testing ensured the validity and reliability of the questionnaire because after the pilot testing the questionnaire items were confirmed to be clear to respondents hence the instrument was usable.

#### Data Collection Procedure

The researchers administered the questionnaire on the selected lecturers by personally visiting institutions. Follow-up visits were also made to recover the questionnaires.

#### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze data. Data were presented in frequencies by use of percentages and tables.

### RESULTS

#### Male Lecturers' Perceptions on Female Lecturers' Promotions

Sixteen (55.2%) males perceived female lecturers as keen to be promoted. They justified their response by saying that they believed females have been sensitised on gender issues thus they were also as ambitious and as good as males.

Twelve (41.4%) males indicated that the majority of female lecturers were not keen to be promoted. In their reasons they indicated that some females were not keen to take up challenges and that it depended on the post that the female lecturers held at college. Others said some female lecturers wanted to attend to family matters and that the society was to blame for not encouraging women to take up leadership roles. Only 1 (3.4%) was not sure on whether females were keen or not keen on promotion. The general feeling, deducing from these statistics is that male lecturers perceived their female counterparts as keen to be promoted.

#### Male Lecturers' Views on Female Lecturers' Academic Advancement

The researchers investigated male lecturers' perceptions on academic advancement of female lecturers. Male lecturers were asked to indicate their attitudes on female lecturers going abroad to study for a period of two or more years. Table 1 shows male lecturers' responses to this question.

**Table 1: Male lecturers' attitudes towards academic advancement of women**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Spouses should move around together	7	24.1
Female lecturer should abandon the idea	4	13.8
Female lecturer should be free to go while the spouse remains behind with the family	18	62.1
Total	29	100

Seven (24.1%) respondents indicated that female lecturers should be accompanied by their husbands when they go for a long time on studies. Reasons given for this response were that they would wish to avoid infidelity. They also expressed their desire to keep the family together. Four (13.8%) said they would advise female lecturers to abandon studies for the sake of the family. Eighteen (62.1%) felt that there was no problem in female lecturers going for studies while their husbands were left behind with families. Added together, 25 (86.2%) of the respondents indicated that they had no objection to female lecturers going abroad for studies for a long period of time. This is a very high percentage. It was gleaned from the above responses that male lecturers felt it was a problem for female lecturers to travel alone without spouses for studies outside the country for a relatively long period. There were fears that in the quest for professional advancement there were problems of infidelity that could result in family breakdowns.

#### Male Lecturers' Views on Distribution of Opportunities for Staff Development at College

The majority of lecturers 18 (62.1%) were of the view that both male and female lecturers were

given equal opportunities for staff development. The respondents said there was a deliberate attempt at promoting gender equity and that both members of the opposite sex required professional growth. Six (20.7%) males thought that males got more opportunities for staff development. They said this was due to the fact that there were more males at college and that these had served in the profession longer than females had done. Since these were more senior, they would be more eligible for staff development. Five (17%) males thought that females got more opportunities for attending workshops and seminars. They cited gender bias as the reason for such a state of affairs.

Male lecturers were asked to indicate which group of lecturers they thought should be given more chances to attend staff development workshops. Twenty-seven (93.7%) respondents indicated that both male and female lecturers deserved to be given equal opportunities of attending workshops. Only one (3.4%) indicated that more opportunities should be offered to males and another one (3.4%) indicated that more chances should be offered to females for staff development. Reasons given for responses that both males and females be offered equal chances were that both deserved the chance since the nation needed both for national development.

### Male Lecturers' Views on Female Duties at College

Male lecturers were asked to indicate which lecturers at their colleges served food to visitors at college gatherings like graduation ceremonies. While serving food may not be seen as one of the core duties of lecturers in a college, it happens time and again during meetings and general college functions. However, it should be noted that it is not the frequency of the activities that are at stake here but the mes-

sage which such activities portrayed in general. All lecturers had a role to play when college functions were held and such roles were revealed to be gender biased. Their responses are shown on Table 2.

According to the statistics on the table, not a single male lecturer indicated that serving food was a male responsibility. Twenty-one (72.4%) males said both males and females served food. They justified this response by saying that there were more male lecturers at college than females. The implication is that had there been more female lecturers, then these females would have been left alone to serve food to visitors. These respondents also explained that college policy was that those males in the catering committee should assist in serving food. If males are to assist, this means that the main responsibility is left to the female lecturers. The distribution of college duties according to sex is further evidenced by views expressed on Table 3.

**Table 2: Male lecturers responses on who served food at college functions**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Males serve food	0	0
Females serve food	8	27.6
Both males and females serve food	21	72.4
Total	29	100

Male lecturers were asked to identify duties that were usually done by either males or females at their colleges. The above statistics reveal that duties at colleges were distributed according to sex. Thus duties such as manning the gates, controlling crowds, and driving college vehicles were delegated to male lecturers because they were seen as masculine duties. On the other hand, duties such as decorating venues, buying and presenting gifts to guests

**Table 3: Views on the distribution of duties at college functions**

<i>Duties</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Both males and females</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
Manning college gates	21	72.4	0	0	5	27.6	29	100
Controlling crowds	24	82.8	0	0	8	17.2	29	100
Driving to town for purchases	13	44.8	1	3.4	15	52.7	29	100
Buying presents for visitors	1	3.4	20	69.9	8	27.6	29	100
Decorating venues	7	24.1	8	27.6	14	48.3	29	100
Presenting gifts to visitors	3	10.3	23	79.3	3	10.3	29	100

were delegated to female lecturers because they were considered feminine duties.

Male lecturers were asked to indicate their views on whether female lecturers should be given fewer duties at college than male lecturers so that they take care of their family responsibilities. Six (21.4%) males thought that females should be given fewer duties than male lecturers at college. The majority of the male lecturers in this study, twenty-two (75.9%) expect female lecturers to engage in the same college duties as male lecturers do.

However, on whether females should be given less family duties at home so that they concentrate on their profession, fifteen (55.5%) of the males indicated that females should not be given less family duties than males. In other words, they are saying that in addition to their professional duties, women should continue pursuing their domestic roles in the homes. Only 12 (44.5%) males were of the view that women should be given less family duties so as to afford them the chance to pursue their professional careers. In fact, twenty (74.18%) male respondents suggested that husbands of female lecturers could assist them in domestic chores in the home "if they wanted".

#### **Male Views on Women Participation in Formal and Informal Groupings**

The researchers investigated whether male lecturers accepted female lecturers in both formal and informal groupings. While formal groups referred to official groups such as a group of teachers in a staff meeting, informal groups referred to those groups which are not bound by rules where people mix in a relaxed atmosphere for example at a party. The male lecturers were asked to comment about their interaction with their female colleagues. Interaction here meant a situation where males and females could mix and talk to each other. Twenty-one (69%) of the respondents said that male and female lecturers mixed freely and that they could tolerate and understand each other as colleagues. Only 9 (31%) thought that males and females did not mix freely.

### **DISCUSSION**

It emerged from the study that the majority of the male participants indicated that their fe-

male counterparts were keen on promotion. Such a finding contradicts findings in a study by Chabaya et al. (2009) which found that women were not keen on promotion as it entailed extra responsibilities which in turn competed for time and attention with their family responsibilities. This finding also contradicts findings in a similar study by Mugweni et al. (2011) which found that there were very few women in leadership positions in state universities because women had fear to apply for vacant positions, lacked confidence, faced challenges of a patriarchal society and had pressure of work and family. This buttresses Gaidzanwa's (2005) contention that female academics have social and marital responsibilities that impede on the professional advancement. Giddens (1989) notes that the existing sex ratio in organisations tends to disadvantage women since men outnumbered them. As a result women tended to have little confidence in leading males. This is especially so since in their families it is men who are considered to be leaders as husbands and fathers.

The study also found that male lecturers were supportive of women's academic advancement as they felt there was nothing wrong in women advancing themselves academically. This finding is inconsistent with claims by Schwartz (1989) in Bret and Stroh (1994:57) that "men continue to perceive women as rearers of their children so they find it understandable and appropriate that women should renounce their careers to raise families". Men would advocate for women to give precedence to their social and marital roles over the career aspirations. As a result, the author suggests that taking care of families was a major factor that drove away many female managers away from their professions. In a study on factors that impede the advancement of women into leadership positions in primary schools in Zimbabwe, Chabaya et al. (2009) found that family attachment was a major reason that prevented women from taking up leadership positions.

The finding that women were given equal opportunities for staff development as men contradicts those made by Brett and Stroh (1994) who cited lack of opportunity for advancement as a reason for leaving the organisation. The finding further counters claims of the existence of the 'glass ceiling' phenomenon which is a metaphor that explains hindrances that affect women rise to top positions in their companies

(Harlan and Berheide 1994; Riley 1997; Carly et al. 2001; Fulcher and Scott 2003; Hughes and Kroeler 2005). The finding further shows that despite the numerous obstacles cited by Govender (1997) that women encounter at the workplace, they still have the opportunity to excel through staff development initiatives.

The study revealed that duties carried out by staff members in colleges were along gender stereotype lines. This finding is consistent with assertions by Valian (1999) that there were gender schemas which shaped people's lives according to gender expected roles. De Pater et al. (2010) observe that traditionally women have been allocated the so called feminine tasks in line with gender stereotypes. In colleges, for example, it was revealed that preparation and serving of food was done by female lectures while the controlling of crowds was left to male lecturers. Schaninger and Buss (1985) further observe that even at family level the allocation of tasks is based on sex-role norms. Brannen and Moss in Gardner (1997) also found that in Britain full-time employment was not a guarantee for equal sharing of duties between males and females in the family. Therefore, it may not be surprising to find the same happening at workplaces.

This finding again supports assertions made by Brannen and Moss in Gardner (1997) discussed earlier in this presentation who found that sharing of duties according to sex spilled over to the formal sector. Cleveland (1994) argues that highlighting women's gender roles is a strategy employed by men to remind them that they are members of an out group meaning that they are not welcome in the male dominated sphere. Taylor (1992) is of the view that women's role in both the private and the public sector is seen as that of carer. Similarly, studies by Maddock and Parkin (1994) reveal that men expect women to be caring even at work and if they behave appropriately they are rewarded with warmth and concern. Equality of participation by male and female lecturers in all spheres of life is important especially if development is to occur (Riley 1997).

It also emerged from the study that male lecturers could relate and socialise freely with their female counterparts at the workplace. Female lectures could easily pursue professional relationships with the opposite sex. Such a finding contradicts observations made by Morrison

(1992), Estes (1989), Wilkinson and Blackmore (2008) who reported that women in organisations suffered from isolation from their male colleagues. Anderson and Fisher (1991) acknowledge of great developments at the workplace where women have been accepted as equals.

### CONCLUSION

- ♦ Male lecturers viewed female lecturers as being keen on promotion and also keen to have opportunities opened for academic advancement of females. However, there were always ferias that in seeking professional advancement there was always a danger of family breakdown due to infidelity especially in cases where female lecturers had to study outside the country for a considerably long period of time.
- ♦ The distribution of academic and some non academic duties at colleges was also found to be gender biased with women allocated mostly traditional stereotypical duties.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the insights gained from this study, the following recommendations are made:

- ♦ That since female lecturers are positively viewed by male lecturers, they be given more posts of leadership in colleges. There is need for programmes to educate males on the effects of domestic roles on the career development of women. Such programmes would develop awareness in males of the need for equitable distribution of duties both in the private and in the public sphere.
- ♦ The affirmative action approach to promotions and entry qualifications in tertiary institutions which was put in place in education as a measure to redress imbalances caused by gender inequalities should be strengthened if more females are to be found in positions of leadership.
- ♦ Colleges, schools and universities should endeavour to have gender sensitive programmes in the form of staff development and workshops for students, teachers and lecturers to ensure that duties at the work place were not distributed according to sex.

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