

A narrative literature review of 'Women Teach, Men Lead' in Tanzanian schools

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ABSTRACT

This narrative literature review, explores the factors constraining women's advancement to leadership roles within Tanzania's educational system, despite their numerical dominance in the teaching profession. Analyzing 15 studies published between 2014 and 2024, this review employs the Glass Ceiling Theory and Intersectionality Theory to explore the barriers women encounter in achieving supervisory roles. The findings reveal a complex interplay of barriers: First, organizational barriers which include, male-dominance in the appointment process coupled with demand for sexual favors, reflecting the Glass Ceiling Theory's insights on structural obstacles. Second, societal barriers, rooted in persistent patriarchal norms and gender power structures which align with the Intersectionality Theory, highlighting how various identities intersect to create unique challenges. Third, individual barriers such as perceived lack of qualifications and confidence, which further contribute to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions. On similar note, this study concludes that, women encounter multifaceted challenges that require comprehensive reforms to set up an inclusive and equitable education system. By providing a cohesive understanding of the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon, this review advocates for policy decisions and interventions aimed at promoting gender equity in leadership. Subsequent studies should concentrate on assessing the effectiveness of specific reforms and on exploring the experiences of women wishing to be or who are currently on leadership roles in educational settings.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the topic on women's leadership in education, has gathered great interest from many researchers (Ibrahim et al., 2024; Chase & Martin, 2021; Bergmann et al., 2022; Shemahonge et al., 2022; Maheshwari & Nayak, 2022; Dhlamini & Khoza, 2023; Johnson & Fournillier, 2023; Torres et al., 2023), including women who are teachers leading at the basic level of education (Mwanache, 2019; Mbalilaki & Onyango, 2022). The increased attention on women's leadership, stems from the recognition that, women's inclusion in school leadership positions can offer diverse perspectives, serve as role models and contribute to positive educational outcomes (Mpofu, 2019; Martínez et al., 2021; Abdallah & Farhan, 2023). Nevertheless, even though the importance of women in supervisory roles is acknowledged in the society, available literature indicates that, they remain under-considered in school's supervisory positions, leading to "women teach, men lead phenomenon" (Fuller, 2017; Mbepera, 2017; Ngonyani, 2017; Fuller et al., 2018; Dzimiri & Jita, 2022; Mbalilaki & Onyango, 2022).

The disproportionate representation of women in school supervisory positions represents a persistent global challenge across diverse educational systems (Guihen, 2017; Maranto et al., 2018; Martínez et al., 2021). In England, only a small number of women are head teachers (Fuller, 2017), while in Australia, a study by McGrath (2020) shows that, female teachers are principals in primary schools, equivalent to 33.8% in 1998 to 66.4% in 2018, of all the principals in the country, though the number of women who hold supervisory positions in secondary education is still under 50 percent. Similar patterns emerge across different contexts for instance in South Africa, as reported by Akinola and Naidoo (2024) that, women occupy only 36% of principal positions. On a similar note, teaching has been spotted as a profession for women in most parts of the world; OECD countries being the best example in which, 68% of teachers are women, while only 45% of female teachers are principals (Bush, 2021).

Tanzania exemplifies this global challenge with its own distinct characteristics as female teachers who are heads of schools, have increased from just 18.7% in 2013 to 33% in Dodoma region by 2024 (Mbepera, 2023; Dodoma REO Office, 2024), showing steady progress but being persistent under-considered for the posts. Despite the fact that the Tanzania's Constitution emphasizes gender equality (URT, 1977), its educational policies reveal significant gaps in addressing gender disparities. For instance, the Education and Training Policy of 2014, 2023 Edition, lacks specific section that spells out the aspect of supervisory positions for women whilst, the Guidelines for Appointing Education Leaders (TAMISEMI, 2022) outlines merely qualifications, without addressing the aspect of gender equity in the supervisory positions. In general, this policy framework operates against the backdrop of international initiatives like SDG number 5 and the Beijing Declaration, thus fails to translate these global commitments into specific local reforms for educational leadership.

The current literature offers competing explanations with regard to women being under-considered in school leadership positions as some researchers attribute it to societal factors, including women's triple roles compared to men's dual responsibilities (Mpofu, 2019; Karakose et al., 2021; Radd et al., 2021). Besides, others suggest constraints related to qualifications, confidence (Mbepera, 2017; Moorhouse, 2024) or work-family balance (Ngonyani, 2017). Moreover, male-dominated organizational structures in educational institutions are also cited as favoring men's appointments (Ngonyani, 2017; Mbepera, 2017; Starks, 2021; Tshipani, 2021; Dhakal, 2022; Nyondo, 2023; Zuma, 2023; Akinola & Naidoo, 2024).

While individual studies have examined specific aspects of this phenomenon, this study has typically focused on isolated factors rather than their complex interrelationships. In that regard, the study addresses the critical gap through a comprehensive narrative literature review that synthesizes existing studies to provide a holistic understanding of the organizational, societal and individual barriers perpetuating gender disparities in Tanzanian school leadership. By analysing the effectiveness of the current policies and identifying persistent barriers, this study aims at informing the education stakeholders on the targeted interventions that could increase the women's ratio in educational leadership. In addition, the findings offer relevant insights not only for Tanzania but also for other countries experiencing similar challenges in achieving gender equity and equality in schools.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This narrative literature review aims at exploring barriers that perpetuate the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon in Tanzanian schools. The study specifically explores the barriers at the organizational, societal and individual levels in the Tanzanian school system as reported in the existing literature.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study is grounded on two complementary perspectives namely: The Glass Ceiling Theory and Intersectionality Theory. The Glass Ceiling Theory, is primarily conceptualized through a metaphor for indiscernible yet impenetrable barriers impending the progression of women and minorities in the workplace that contribute to the "Women Teach, Men Lead" phenomenon in Tanzania. In this context, the theory helps to scrutinize organizational barriers—including biased selection processes, exclusion from informal networks and lack of mentorship opportunities—that limit women's progression to supervisory positions. This theory acknowledges that, these barriers are often more solid and less penetrable for women in the contexts like Tanzania, where traditional gender norms are deeply entrenched in institutional practices.

Complementing this organizational perspective, the Intersectionality Theory offers a framework for understanding how the "Women Teach, Men Lead" phenomenon in Tanzania, is influenced not only by gender but also by the intersection of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, marital status and geographical location (rural versus urban) (Mbepera, 2017; Nyondo, 2023). In addition, the theoretical lens helps to explain why certain groups of women face compounded barriers to leadership advancement, as their experiences are shaped by multiple, overlapping forms of disadvantages. Collectively, these theories provide a comprehensive framework for analysing the interplay of organizational, societal and individual barriers perpetuating the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon in Tanzanian schools, allowing an in-depth examination of both visible and invisible barriers to women's leadership advancement within their specific cultural and institutional contexts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current study has employed a traditional literature review methodology to comprehensively synthesize and analyse existing research on women's leadership in an educational setting within the Tanzanian context. The literature search was conducted using the academic databases including Scopus, DOAJ, and Google Scholar, utilizing keywords related to "women leadership," "primary/secondary schools," "Tanzania," and "gender."

Selection Criteria and Sampling

The inclusion criteria for the literature review encompassed several key aspects. Thus, studies published between 2014 and 2024 were considered, ensuring a focus on the recent studies. Only peer-reviewed articles and dissertations were included, with an emphasis on research specifically centred on Tanzania or relevant comparative studies. Besides, publications were required to be in English and had to address women's leadership in primary and secondary schools.

A total number of 15 studies were selected for this narrative review. The sample size was determined based on a preliminary scoping review that revealed a limited number of high-quality studies specifically addressing women's leadership in Tanzanian basic education. While larger samples are often preferred, the decision to focus on 15 studies helped the researcher to do an in-depth analysis of the most relevant and rigorous research available specifically on this topic. This approach aligns with the recommendations by Grant and Booth (2009) for narrative reviews that prioritize the in-depth analysis over exhaustive inclusion when examining specialized research questions.

Limitations and Potential Biases

Several limitations are acknowledged. First, the language restriction to English-only publications excluded potentially valuable literature in Kiswahili, which may have reduced access to locally produced knowledge. Second, the reliance on published academic sources introduced potential publication bias, as unpublished reports, policy documents and "gray literature" that might have contained relevant insights were not included. Third, database accessibility limitations may have affected the comprehensiveness of the literature identification process.

Thematic analysis process

The selected studies were analyzed by employing a systematic thematic analysis approach, in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-steps framework. The initial step involved data familiarization, whereby each study was read multiple times in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the content. Subsequent initial coding allowed the development of a coding framework to identify key concepts related to the barriers and facilitators of women's leadership. This framework included both deductive codes derived from the research questions and inductive codes that emerged from the literature. Theme development followed, grouping initial codes into potential themes based on identified patterns and relationships. A thorough theme review was then conducted to ensure coherence and distinctiveness by comparing the themes against the coded extracts and the entire dataset. Themes were clearly defined and named in order to capture their essence and relationship to the research questions. The final report production synthesized the analysis into a coherent narrative.

In order to enhance both the reliability and validity of the current narrative literature review, the comprehensive search for relevant literature was conducted to capture the wide range of studies and diverse perspectives in relation to the topic. Each study was analyzed thoroughly well so as to extract key themes and insights. Besides, critical self-reflection throughout the analysis process was employed to identify and mitigate potential biases in the interpretations. In addition, a detailed record of the decision-making process was maintained, including the criteria for the study inclusion and the rationale behind themes development. This transparency, led to a clear understanding of how conclusions were drawn. While no second researcher was involved independently in reviewing the subset of studies, the approach taken prioritized thoroughness, rigor and the incorporation of feedback and thus suggestions from peers was encouraged to further enhance the analysis of the current study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Organizational Barriers

The studies reviewed revealed that, women in Tanzania face significant organizational barriers so as to climb the ladder of school leadership roles, contributing to the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon. As summarized in Table 1, these barriers include problems associated with the transparency of appointment procedures, lack of adequate mentorship and role models as well as issues associated with sexual harassment.

Table 1: Organizational Barriers Limiting Women's Progress to Leadership Roles in Tanzanian Schools

Main Theme	Sub -Theme	Articles Reviewed
Organizational Barriers	Problem of transparent Appointment procedure	Mbepera (2015), Mwahombela's (2023) Mbepera (2017); Sipemba (2017). Mwahombela's (2023)
	Inadequate mentorship and role models	Bayo & Silayo, 2024), Mwanche (2019)
	Sexual harassment	Mbepera (2017), Mamiro (2021), Mwahombela's (2023)

Mwahombela's (2023) study in Iringa, identified explicit gender bias in head teacher's appointments in certain wards, aligning with broader findings from Mbepera (2015), which highlight how non-transparent appointment processes create structural barriers for women, especially in rural and marginalized communities. These findings reflect the Glass Ceiling Theory's on invisible yet impenetrable barriers that inhibit qualified women to climb the ladder of supervisory positions.

In the same vein, a significant policy gap exists in Tanzania's educational leadership framework as the Education and Training Policy of 2014, 2023 Edition and the "Guidelines for Appointing Education Leaders in Tanzania (TAMISEMI, 2022)" by TAMISEMI (2022) are silent with regard to gender considerations during appointments. Thus, the absence of gender-specific guidelines, perpetuates structural inequalities and reinforces the barriers as outlined in Glass Ceiling Theory, where institutional practices appear neutral but disproportionately disadvantage women. Similar policy shortcomings have been documented in the region, with Chakanyuka's (2022) study in Zimbabwe as well as Chibvembe et al., (2023) research in Zambia indicating a broader pattern of institutional failure to address gender disparities in educational leadership appointments.

Conversely, countries that have implemented specific gender targets in educational leadership appointments, have shown measurable progress. In Ghana for instance, Abonyi et al. (2024) recommended that, educational policymakers should develop pragmatic policies with clear targets for qualified women to be appointed for the school leadership roles, noting persistent under-consideration of women on the leadership vacancies in place despite general commitments to gender equality and equity.

Along the same lines, multiple studies in Tanzania document sexual harassment as a systematic barrier to women's leadership advancement as Mbepera (2017) revealed cases of sexual coercion in leadership appointments, while Mwahombela (2023) and Mamiro (2021) confirmed similar findings. These instances represent clear abuses of power that reinforce gender-based discrimination, echoing Martínez et al.'s (2021) research in other contexts. Through the lens of Intersectionality Theory, these findings illustrate how gender interacts with power hierarchies, creating unique forms of discrimination that particularly affect women in vulnerable positions seeking advancement in climbing the ladder of leadership in educational settings.

Besides, the lack of mentorship and role models, emerged as another critical organizational barrier, reinforcing the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon. The scarcity of women in headship positions, creates a self-perpetuating cycle, particularly impacting those in rural areas (Mbepera, 2017; Sipemba, 2015). This trend is not unique to Tanzania; since studies in Kenya (Moraa, 2022) and Nepal (Ghimire, 2023) have also found women in supervisory positions often lacking the necessary support.

Despite these barriers, some regions have shown progress in dismantling organizational obstacles. For instance, in Tanzania, Mtwara district in particular, Mwanache (2019) demonstrated successful institutional commitment to gender equality and equity through targeted mentorship programs and transparent appointment procedures. Similarly, in Shinyanga Municipality, (Bayo & Silayo, 2024) illustrated how increased women's participation in decision-making bodies can lead to positive changes in an institutional practice.

On similar note, several female leaders in Tanzania have successfully navigated these organizational barriers, the best examples being, the current President of Tanzania, Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, who serves as a notable role model. In addition, the Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania, Honorable Dr. Tulia Akson, and Prof. Joyce Ndalichako, who has served as a Minister of Education, Science and Technology and was also the Executive Secretary of the National Examination Council of Tanzania, exemplifying successful leadership roles. There are also a few women who are heads of schools and are performing well. These success stories demonstrate that, when supportive organizational structures are in place, women can overcome barriers and excel in leadership positions.

When analyzed through the dual lenses of Glass Ceiling Theory and Intersectionality Theory, the findings reveal how organizational barriers operate at multiple levels to maintain gender disparities in school leadership. Thus, the Glass Ceiling Theory explicates the invisible structural barriers embedded in the appointment procedures and mentorship systems, while Intersectionality Theory highlights how these barriers are experienced differently based on factors such as geographic location, particularly affecting women in rural areas who are rarely mentored due to the paucity of role models. The persistent organizational barriers identified in this review, indicate a clear gap between policy intentions and implementation. While Tanzania has made formal commitments to gender equality and equity, the absence of specific mechanisms to address gender disparities in educational leadership appointments represents a significant policy failure.

In that regard, addressing the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon will require comprehensive reforms targeting structural discrimination and underlying power dynamics, including interventions such as targeted mentoring programs (Blake & Fielding, 2023; Chibvembe et al., 2023), specific gender targets in appointment guidelines, transparent selection criteria and effective anti-harassment policies that acknowledge and address intersecting forms of discrimination.

Societal Barriers

The researched literature reveals that; significant societal barriers are amongst the main factors impeding women appointments to educational leadership roles in Tanzania. As shown on Table 2. These barriers are primarily manifested through deeply embedded cultural norms and patriarchal attitudes.

Table 2: Societal Barriers Constraining Women's Advancement to Leadership Roles in Tanzanian Schools

Main Theme	Sub- themes	Article Reviewed
Social Barriers	Cultural Barriers	Dady and Bali (2014), Mollel and Tshabangu (2014) ; Mbepera (2015); Sipemba (2015), by Ngonyani (2017)
	Patriarchal Attitude	Mollel and Tshabangu (2014), Ngonyani (2017), Bayo and Silayo's (2024)

Studies by Mbepera (2015); Dady and Bali (2014), and Sipemba (2015) highlight how cultural expectations regarding women's roles create powerful obstacles to their leadership advancement. Sipemba's work reveals persistent negative community perceptions about women in headship positions, which reinforce institutional barriers. In this manner, the intersection of gender with cultural and religious identities further complicates these challenges, as demonstrated in Mbepera's study in Sumbawanga.

On similar note, the study by Mollel and Tshabangu (2014) and the study by Ngonyani (2017) illustrate how patriarchal systems within Tanzanian education system create multilayered obstacles, particularly impacting women from specific social backgrounds. These findings resonate with Gobena's (2014) research in Jimma Town, Ethiopia, which shows that, societal perceptions of male superiority significantly influence election and appointment processes. For instance, Bayo and Silayo's (2024) study in Shinyanga Municipality underscores how women's exclusion from decision-making perpetuates male-dominated leadership structures, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that sustains the "women teach, men lead" narrative.

The current Educational and Training Policy of 2014, 2023 Edition, along with the "Guidelines for Appointing Education Leaders in Tanzania (TAMISEMI, 2022)" which outlines only the qualifications required for heads of schools to be appointed, are silent regarding gender balance in appointing female heads of schools in Tanzania. This highlights a critical gap in addressing gender disparities. Thus, it is essential to educate the society

about the importance of having women in school leadership positions, as studies, such as those by Martínez et al. (2021) stress that, female principals are associated with higher management quality.

Regional patterns reveal similar cultural barriers to women aspiring the supervisory roles in the society. Studies by Moraa (2022) in Kenya and Mpezeni (2022) in Zambia, identify comparable obstacles, underscoring the necessity for women's involvement in decision-making process. Such involvement is crucial for ensuring that, their views are heard, especially in the absence of female leaders. Notably, both male and female respondents report similar views of the ethical climate established by their administrators and supervisors (Sagala et al., 2022) in the workplace.

The manifestations of patriarchal attitudes vary across East Africa as Ndebele (2018) found that, women who are principals in South Africa, face negative attitudes from some parents and educators, while Ghimire (2023) reported that, women who are school heads in Nepal are viewed as inferior to their male counterparts. Research by Oyeniran (2020) in Côte d'Ivoire highlights resistance faced by female heads from male teachers. In Sweden and Texas, Murakami and Törnsten (2017) noted that, successful female leaders in upper secondary schools are often appraised negatively.

Countering the reviewed literatures, studies show that, female teachers who are heads of schools are generally democratic, committed and caring. Oyeniran and Anchomese (2018) revealed that, Ivorian female primary school principals regularly create supportive academic environments that prioritize children's needs. For that reason, educational practitioners, policymakers and stakeholders must focus on empowering women principals to showcase their expertise and positively impact student's learning.

Despite persistent societal barriers, recent research indicates evolving cultural paradigms as Mbalilaki and Onyango (2022) found cross-gender acknowledgment of women's leadership capabilities, while Nkya and Kibona (2024) highlighted the unique contributions of women who are leaders in educational settings. Similarly, Mpfu, (2019) carried out the study in Zimbabwe which shows that, female heads of schools prioritize tasks, empathize better, enhance teamwork and adopt more democratic leadership styles.

To address the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon, a multifaceted approach is essential to foster positive cultural shifts, strengthening women's appointments in decision-making positions, thus leveraging the complementary strengths of both male and female leaders. Along these lines, integrating gender theories can significantly enhance this analysis. Thus, the Glass Ceiling Theory which illustrates the invisible barriers hence preventing qualified women from ascending to leadership roles, emphasizes the need for cultural shifts within organizations to dismantle these obstacles. Furthermore, effective policy implementation is crucial, as many initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality often lack enforcement and commitment, thereby reinforcing the Glass Ceiling Theory.

On the other hand, Intersectionality Theory sheds light on how gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, marital status and geographical location intersect to create unique challenges for women, particularly those in marginalized groups. By recognizing that women's experience in supervisory positions is not monolithic, we can develop inclusive strategies that address these diverse barriers. Thus, adopting a comprehensive approach that considers both the Glass Ceiling Theory and Intersectional Theory, will be vital in promoting women in supervisory positions effectively.

Individual Barriers

The research literature highlights several significant individual-level barriers that contribute to the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon in Tanzanian schools. As shown in Table 3, these barriers are primarily manifested through the challenges in work-family balance, education and experience and lack of confidence or self-efficacy.

Table 3: Individual Barriers Constraining Women's Advancement to Leadership Roles in Tanzanian Schools

Main Themes	Sub- themes	Article Reviewed
Individual Barriers	Work family balance	Mbalilaki & Onyango (2022), Mwanache (2019), Bayo & Silayo (2024)
	Education and experience	Mollet and Tshabangu (2014), Salum (2020) Bayo and Silayo (2024)
	Lack of confidence and inferiority complex	Sipemba (2015), Mamiro et al. (2021), Bayo and Silayo (2024)

The work-family balance challenge, is a significant barrier faced by women aspiring the leadership positions in Tanzanian schools. Studies indicate that, family responsibilities such as, parenting and caregiving, create systematic obstacles to women's advancement (Mbalilaki & Onyango, 2022; Mwanache, 2019; Bayo & Silayo, 2024). As a result, women often navigate triple roles—reproductive, productive, and community roles—which complicate their professional responsibilities. In this manner, in Tanzania many female teachers who are heads of schools face difficulties in balancing the triple roles altogether.

Regional comparisons reveal that; work-family balance issues are not unique to Tanzania as the studies by Ranjha et al. (2021) in Punjab, Pakistan; Mpezeni (2022) in Zambia; and Akuka (2021) in Bolgatanga Municipality, Upper East Region, highlight similar challenges faced by women in these contexts. The studies underscore the pervasive nature of work-family conflict across different cultural settings and its impact on women's leadership roles in educational settings.

On similar note, the "Women Teach, Men Lead phenomenon" is relevant in Tanzania, reflecting societal norms that often confine women to supportive roles while men dominating the leadership positions. Besides, multitasking has been identified as a significant source of stress in teaching profession. Subsequently, according to Dureza et al. (2022), the burden of multitasking appears to be even more pronounced for women, exacerbating their work-related stress levels and hindering their advancement into leadership roles.

On the other hand, the societal dynamics emphasize the urgent need for interventions that not only support female educators in managing their work-family balance, but also challenge the traditional gender norms limiting women's participation in leadership positions within the education sector. Similarly, Ghimire's (2023) study in Nepal indicates that, women who are schools heads are frequently perceived as mediocre to their male counterparts, implying that, the "Women Teach, Men Lead" phenomenon, extends beyond national boundaries. Furthermore, lack of institutional support for career development, including mentorship and professional growth opportunities, exacerbates these challenges in countries with similar context.

In South Africa, Oyeniran (2020) found that, female principals regularly encounter insubordination from male staff and unethically experience sexual harassment, in this manner complicating their leadership roles. In addition, Khumalo (2021) noted that, women often achieve better results due to their participatory management style, contrasting with the more authoritarian approaches typically employed by men (Schmidt & Mestry, 2015).

Conversely, the complex interplay between educational qualifications and societal perceptions reveals deep-rooted systemic barriers in Tanzania. Studies by Mollet and Tshabangu (2014), Salum (2020) and Bayo and Silayo (2024) indicate that, women are often viewed as lacking leadership skills, despite holding equivalent or superior qualifications. This accentuates the need for solutions that address not only formal qualifications but also the cultural biases that perpetuate the "Women Teach, Men Lead" narrative.

Moreover, the "Guidelines for Appointing Education Leaders in Tanzania (TAMISEMI, 2022)" " from TAMISEMI does not adequately consider gender during appointments, focusing solely on qualifications. Therefore, it is crucial for women to take initiative to enhance their qualifications and skills, such as computer literacy in order to qualify for leadership positions aspired.

Along similar lines, confidence and self-efficacy also play critical roles as individual-level barriers. Studies by Sipemba (2015), Mamiro et al. (2021) which are in line with the study by Bayo and Silayo (2024) suggests that, internalized negative perceptions and lack of self-assurance, can impede women's progress to supervisory positions. Besides, Kulkarni and Mishra (2022) reported that, decision-making abilities under critical circumstances benefit organizations, emphasizing the potential of empowered women leaders. Addressing these multifaceted, individual-level barriers require a holistic approach that tackles the invisible and psychological barriers that hold back women from climbing the ladder of supervisory positions in educational settings. The persistent "Women Teach, Men Lead" phenomenon stresses the need for systemic change on how educational leadership roles are perceived and structured in the context of Tanzania. All in all, the findings indicate that, societal norms and individual barriers, such as work-family balance, insufficient educational support and lack of self-efficacy, contribute significantly to this narrative.

To dismantle the entrenched belief that women are suited primarily for teaching rather than leadership positions, it is essential to inculcate cultural shifts in the community for women's capabilities as leaders to be recognized. In the same vein, the integration of gender theories, such as the Glass Ceiling Theory, concur with the current narrative reviewed literature, highlighting the invisible barriers that women encounter, while Intersectionality Theory emphasizes the need to understand how overlapping identities affect women's experiences in leadership roles.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This narrative literature review has examined the multifaceted reasons behind the "women teach, men lead" phenomenon in Tanzanian basic education, revealing a complex web of organizational, societal and individual barriers through the lens of Glass Ceiling Theory and Intersectionality Theory. The theories employed in this study provided a holistic understanding of the interconnected barriers for women to climb the leadership ladder. In order to enhance female teachers in supervisory positions in Tanzanian schools, it is crucial for policymakers to amend the "Guidelines for Appointing Education Leaders in Tanzania (TAMISEMI, 2022)" and thus deliberately establish gender quotas, ensuring a minimum percentage of women heading primary schools and making leadership opportunities accessible to all qualified candidates.

Besides, targeted leadership training programs should be developed to bolster women's skills and confidence. Moreover, identifying successful women leaders as role models can inspire female teachers and newly appointed heads of schools, and thus challenging societal prejudices at both school and family levels. In addition, community education initiatives are essential in the community so as to be concertized that, empowered women can perform as effectively as men. However, this review acknowledges limitations, as it relied on existing literature that could lead to predispositions of the lived experiences of women in leadership positions. Furthermore, future research should evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions and include qualitative studies exploring the perspectives of women aspiring to or currently holding leadership positions. On the other hand, establishing metrics to track the progress of gender equity initiatives; regular assessments of gender quotas, training program effectiveness is vital as it will offer insights into the success of these initiatives, underscoring that Tanzania's gender imbalance reflects a global pattern that requires cross-cultural learning while being sensitive to local contexts.

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