



**UNIVERSITIES, THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SCIENCE SYSTEMS
AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP OF HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS IN AFRICA: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
ZIMBABWE**

ANALYTICAL REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Universities are the principal avenues for training researchers for Africa’s science systems and other leadership positions and are central to the socioeconomic and political development of the continent through the production of knowledge in various disciplines including science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects as well as behavioral and management sciences. However, African universities are also sites of contestations, inequality, and multiple forms of gendered exclusions. Furthermore, structural factors and organizational culture have created a glass ceiling barring women’s ascendance to top leadership positions in many African universities. And one is bound to ask: is there a nexus between the crisis in higher education institutions in Africa and the lack of gender diversity in the leadership structures? Will having women included in the leadership of science systems in universities in Africa lead to different outcomes, including mitigating crises?”¹. A case-study approach was used to answer these questions while also assessing the validity of these assertions. This case study is on the University of Zimbabwe.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are therefore to:

- Establish the extent of women’s participation in leadership positions at the University of Zimbabwe;
- Explore the facilitating and inhibiting factors to women's participation in leadership positions at the University; and,
- Establish ways of empowering women aspiring for, and holding leadership positions at the University.

Research questions

The following questions guide this study:

- How is the underpinning logic of leadership and leadership development in higher education systems in Africa gendered, or is it gendered, and what is the degree of such genderization?
- What needs to change in the logic, structures, and leadership development processes, and/or what needs to be sustained and fine-tuned in higher education institutions in order to ensure equal leadership opportunities for women in science systems in Africa? and,
- What channels of influence exist for leader emergence outside of the formal or recognized leadership progression pathways, which privilege women and men alike?

3. METHODOLOGY

The study triangulated quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. A survey was used to collect quantitative data from staff at the University of Zimbabwe with the use of a structured questionnaire. Three hundred and fifty male and female staff at the University were interviewed. Two focus group discussions (FGDs) with male and female participants, respectively, were undertaken using focus group discussion guides. Five key informant interviews (KIIs) with the key gatekeepers were undertaken with the use of key informant interview guides. While quantitative data are used to quantify the magnitude of the issues identified, qualitative data are used to explain such levels, and the existence of such issues. However, the data are used in a complementary fashion in the articulation and interpretation of the phenomena.

Quantitative data were captured using Google Forms. This facilitated the identification of errors during the data collection process. This facilitated the capturing and cleaning of data in time, thus, enhancing the quality of the data. Data analysis was done using SPSS. Data from the qualitative data collection methods were undertaken by two people, the facilitator who was a senior researcher, and a research assistant who took copious notes and audiotaped all conversations. Thematic analysis was used for the analysis of the qualitative data.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Sixty-five percent (65%) and 35% of the sample comprise females and males, respectively (Table 1). The participants were generally young, with about 60% being 25-35 years old. However, it is important to note that women are generally younger than their male counterparts with about 64% of them being 25-35 years compared to males, 52%. Consistently, women reported shorter durations of service at the University; for instance, while 60% of the females reported having served at the University for up to five years, only 48% of males reported the same. And while 6% of males reported having served the University for 16-20 years, this was reported by only 2% of their female counterparts. Males were more educated than females. For instance, while about 70% of males had at least a Masters degree, this compares to about 60% of females. Note that while the sample was fairly equi-distributed between academic and non-academic staff, 51% and 49%

respectively, males were more likely to report being academic staff, 55%, compared to their female counterparts, 48%.

Table 1: Percentage distribution of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Variable	Female	Male	Total
Age			
25-34	25.2	13.3	21.0
35-44	38.7	38.6	38.7
45-54	29.7	36.1	31.9
55-64	5.2	12.0	7.6
65+	1.3	0.0	0.8
Years in service			
0-5 Years	60.0	48.2	55.9
6-10 Years	24.5	38.6	29.4
11-15 Years	12.3	6.0	10.1
16-20 Years	1.9	6.0	3.4
21+	1.3	1.2	1.3
Level of Education			
O level	0.6	0.0	0.4
A level	1.9	1.2	1.7
Diploma	11.0	12.0	11.3
Undergraduate	25.8	16.9	22.7
Masters	37.4	34.9	36.6
PhD	21.9	34.9	26.5
Post Doctorate	0.6	0.0	0.4
Category of Occupation			
Academic	48.4	55.4	50.8
Non-academic	51.6	44.6	49.2
Discipline			
Administration	0.6	0.0	0.4
Agriculture Environment and Food Systems	1.3	1.2	1.3
Arts and Humanities	5.8	4.8	5.5
Asset Protection Services	13.5	8.4	11.8
Bursary	0.0	2.4	0.8
Business Management Sciences and Economics	7.7	6.0	7.1
Computer Engineering Informatics and Communications	3.9	2.4	3.4
Education	5.8	3.6	5.0
Engineering and The Built Environment	7.7	16.9	10.9
ICT Services Department	0.6	0.0	0.4
Law	1.9	1.2	1.7

Library	5.2	7.2	5.9
Medicine and Health Sciences	12.3	13.3	12.6
Science	6.5	6.0	6.3
Services Department	0.6	1.2	0.8
Services	13.5	12.0	13.0
Social and Behavioural Sciences	3.2	0.0	2.1
Students' Affairs	5.2	2.4	4.2
Veterinary Science	3.2	6.0	4.2
Other	1.3	4.8	2.0
Living with disability			
Living with disability	7.7	7.2	7.6
Total	65.1	34.9	100

N=350

4.2 Gender in leadership

Participants were asked whether or not they had observed any changes in the gender composition of leadership at the University. About 79% of the respondents maintained that they had observed a change (Table 2). Females were more likely to report the observation of change, 82%, compared to males, 72%. Asked about the direction of change, a comparable percentage, 79% maintained that they had observed an increase in women's participation, and consistently, women were more likely to report having observed an increase in the participation of women, 83% compared to men, 71%. Another 13% of the respondents reported that there was no change. Again, males were more likely to report having observed no change in the gender composition of leadership, 18% compared to females 10%. While 8% of the respondents maintained that they did not know if there was any change, men were more likely to report so, 11%, compared to women, 7%. The sentiment that there was an increase in female participation in leadership was echoed in the focus group discussions of both males and females. Note this remark by one of the female lecturers, as others supported her:

The participation of women in leadership at the University of Zimbabwe has really increased in the recent past. Note that we have had women as Pro-Vice Chancellors, Directors and Head Librarian. These posts used to be exclusively male. Recently, five of the 11 Faculty Deans are female, almost a 50-50 gender balance at this level.

And one male participant during a male FGD remarked, with support from others:

There is no level at this University without women and there is nothing surprising about it. I am saying it is normal at this University to have women in leadership positions.

Table 2: Percentage distribution of the observed change in the number of women in leadership positions

Variable	Female	Male	Total
Noticeable change	81.9	72.3	78.6
No change	12.3	20.5	15.1
Don't know	5.8	7.2	6.3
Direction of change			
Increased participation	82.6	71.1	78.6
Decreased participation	0.6	0.0	0.4
No change	10.3	18.1	13.0
Don't know	6.5	10.8	8.0

N=238

Asked about what they perceived as the underlying factors to the increased female participation in leadership, a number of reasons were given. The largest proportion of the respondents, 65%, maintained that the increased interest of women in taking up leadership positions explained their increased participation in leadership (Fig. 1). The second reason given was the fact that women were acquiring the necessary qualifications as reported by 59% of the participants. Another 50% maintained that there was decreased discrimination, while 43% maintained that the positive attitude of hiring officers explained the increased participation in leadership. Only 27% of the participants reported affirmative action as an explanation of women's participation in leadership.

In a focus group discussion with women, the increase in women's interest was partly explained by a number of factors. First, it was argued that there was an intersectionality of factors. For instance, it was noted that as more and more women are getting into positions of power, they become role models for women at lower levels, thereby encouraging them to acquire more education and apply for the same. Note this remark by one of the women with support from others:

What you must know is that just getting to the University of Zimbabwe to lecture is unfeminine, yet when you get there and realize that after all there are women in positions of power you feel that if you manage to achieve the first level, you can also

achieve the next, leadership level. You see others with titles, and you follow suit. However, leadership is something very tricky especially if you are married and have a family.

There is also an intricate relationship between the three other factors: decreased discrimination, positive attitude of hiring officers, and affirmative action. Note this remark by one of the top hiring officers:

Our policy encourages us to have a 50:50 gender balance in leadership positions. I support this policy 100% given the ability of women to lead. I realize that women are quite meticulous in their leadership style. They care about detail and they work hard. I appreciate female leaders.

The positive attitude by hiring officers was supported by women in their FGD. Women noted that women have to work harder than men in order for them to prove that they are worth the position they hold. They also noted that female leaders are not accepted automatically, they have to prove that they know what they are doing, and that they are serious before they are respected by their colleagues and subordinates. Note this remark from one of the female KII:

I knew that when I was appointed all the eyes were focused on me thinking that the post was too big for me. I was determined to prove them wrong. I worked so hard that the department is now functioning better than ever before. One of my male subordinates made this remark: "Mam, I must confess, you have resurrected this department. We now have direction, unlike the time we were with Prof Zulu" (Pseudonym, the Prof was a male). I really did not expect this much from you.

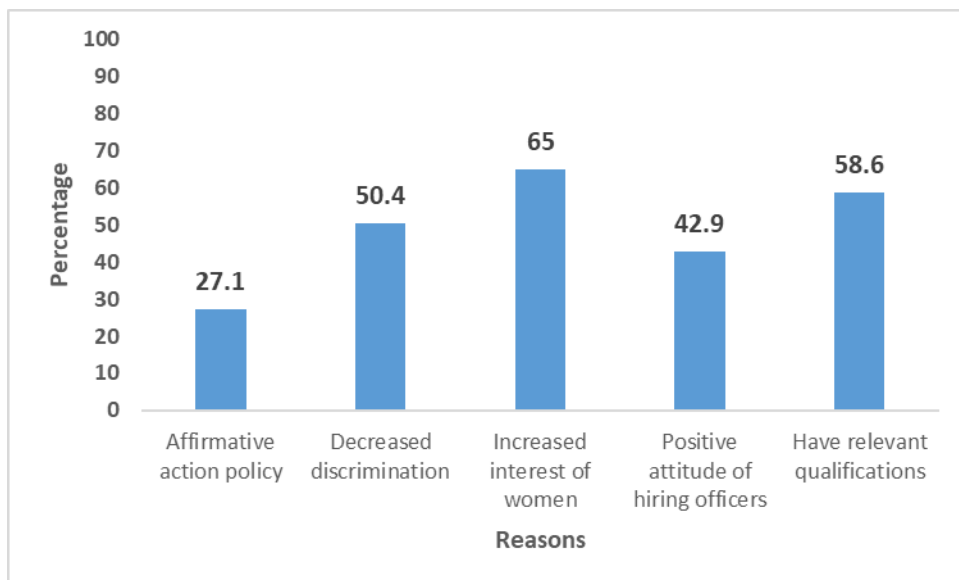
In a FGD with males it was noted that given that more and more women are achieving all that their male counterparts are achieving such as being professors which can only be achieved through hard work, it is also expected that these women can do anything within our context. Note this remark by one of the male participants with others supporting him:

You know what, the more we interact with women in this working environment the more some of the cultural beliefs and myths about women and their capabilities are disproved. Women are just as sharp as men; however, the leadership styles of men

are different from those of women, yet the different contributions are needed in institutions.

The fact that women are currently acquiring the necessary positions is something that is deeply entrenched in history. As shown in the first table, women are currently less educated than their male counterparts; they are also less experienced. It was noted that this lagging behind of females dates back to colonial times, but is cemented by the traditional norms. It was maintained that traditionally, men were the people who were forced by the colonial regime to go to town for work in order to pay the hut tax which was imposed on all men. Such men were not allowed to stay with their families in town; hence, women remained at home taking care of the families’ rural homes. It became inevitable that men had to acquire education in order to be marketable in the modern urban labour market, thus women remained with limited education in the rural areas. However, universal education became the goal of post-colonial Zimbabwe; hence the positive impact we are having of the increased qualifications of women.

Figure 1: Percentage distribution of the reasons for the increased participation of women in leadership positions



N=350

Respondents were asked if they ever worked at another University. About 25% of the respondents reported that they had worked at other Universities (Table 3). Those who had

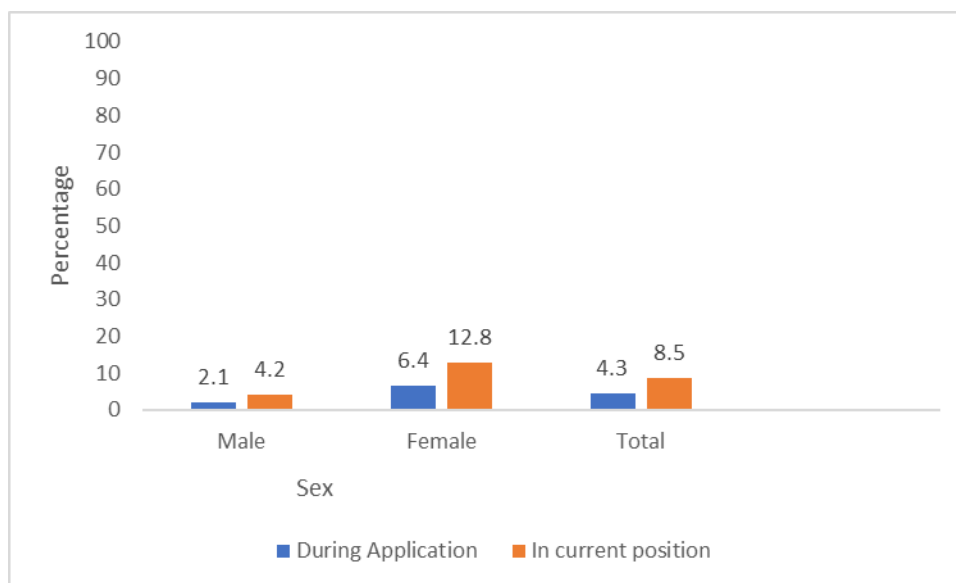
worked at other Universities were asked to compare the extent to which the UZ had advanced the cause of women compared to their former universities. A majority of the respondents, 60%, maintained that the University of Zimbabwe was similar to other Universities in the country. Women were slightly more positive, 61%, compared to men 58%. However, it is worth noting that another 21% of the respondents maintained that the University of Zimbabwe was ahead of other Universities; albeit with males being more positive than females, 25% and 19%, respectively. About 13% of the respondents maintained that UZ was behind others, consistently, men were less likely to report that UZ was behind other Universities, 11%, compared to women 14%.

Table 3. Percentage distribution of the perceived position of the University of Zimbabwe in incorporating women in leadership

Variable	Female	Male	Total
Having ever worked at another university			
Ever worked at another university	25.8	25.3	25.6
Never worked at another university	74.2	74.7	74.4
University of Zimbabwe's position			
Ahead of other universities	18.7	25.3	21.0
Behind other universities	14.2	10.8	13.0
Similar to other Universities	60.6	57.8	59.7
Don't know	6.5	6.0	6.3

N=238

Respondents were asked if they encountered any challenges when they were applying for their current positions, and during their incumbency at their respective positions (Fig.2). While about 4% of the respondents maintained that they faced challenges when they were applying for their current positions, females were more likely, 6%, to report challenges than their male counterparts, 2%. And while about 9% of the respondents reported that they faced challenges while they were in their current jobs, females were consistently more likely, 13%, than their male counterparts, 4%, to report challenges in their current jobs.

Figure 2: Percentage distribution of challenges faced by respondents**N=350**

The most common challenge experienced by 68% of the respondents was lack of resources to support one's activities (Fig. 3). This problem was common across gender. Note this remark from the male FGD:

The major challenge at this University is the lack of funds to support your planned activities. We do not even have adequate resources for teaching let alone research and other activities. Hence one's effectiveness is limited. (Male lecturer)

Lack of support by administrative staff, lack of support from academic staff, lack of support from support staff and lack of financial support were each reported by about 36% of the respondents. It was however interesting to note that female staff were more likely to report lack of support from support staff than their male counterparts. Note this remark from a female participant, with support from others:

One of my biggest challenges was the lack of support from support staff. My secretaries were bent on sabotaging me. If I gave them an instruction, they would execute it after a long time regardless of the urgency of such a task. At some point, I had to type my own memos because it would take them so long to execute such a little task. I got mad one day and I told them not to come to work the following day. The reason which I gave them was that their presence disturbed the smooth flow of the office. Then, they realized that I was serious. A day later, they came and apologized and I gave them my ground rules.

Another participant in echoed, with the clapping of hands by others:

I am telling you secretaries would rather get instructions from male bosses. If you take a post soon after a male colleague, rest assured that you will encounter problems with your support staff, tradition is really a problem, permeating even the work spaces.

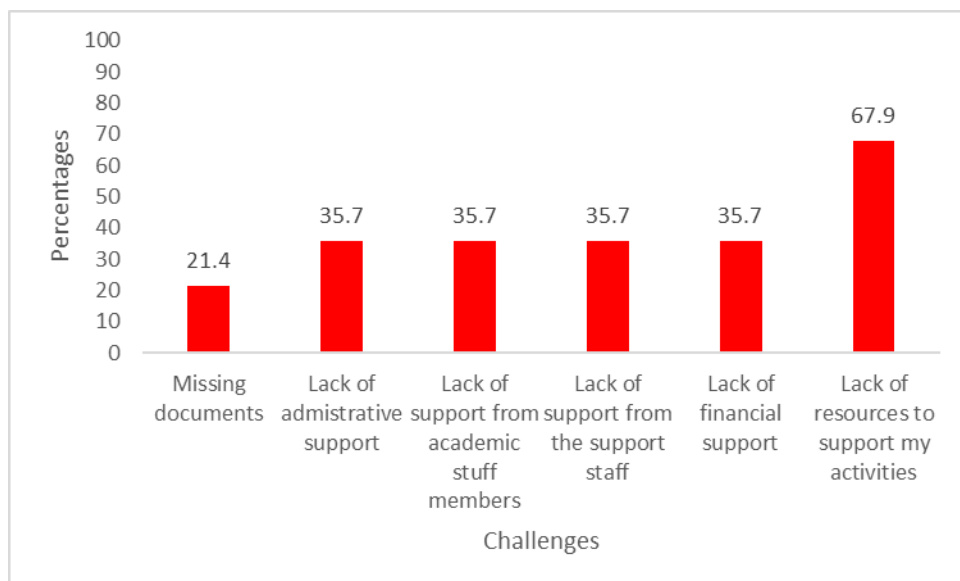
Note that another 21% of the respondents maintained that one of the challenges they experienced was missing documents. This was a common challenge during the application process. Note this remark by one of the female KII:

I could have assumed this position two years ago but my papers got missing during the course of my application. Someone was appointed last year but thank God she left the university last year and the post was re-advertised. I made an effort to ask one of the officers in the advertising offices why I was not even shortlisted the previous time. I was told that I hadn't submitted adequate documents which I knew was not correct. This time around I asked people to sign for the receipt of my documents each time I submitted something. It seemed that was the solution.

A challenge which was reiterated by most women, both in FGDs and in KIIs was the fact that women have a triple burden that women in leadership suffer; it was noted that women on leadership carry out their leadership roles, they need to play their role as wives, and the caring in the home. Note this remark by one woman as other women clapped their hands in an FGD:

Taking up a leadership role as a woman means increasing your workload. While at work, your performance has to be hundred percent regardless of gender; yet when you get home you are expected, as a wife and mother, to fulfil your wifely and maternal responsibilities. You actually think twice before you apply for any leadership positions. Generally, women apply for leadership positions when their children are reasonably grown so that they do not have to spend too much time caring for them. These trade-offs affect the progression of women in the labour market.

Figure.3 Percentage distribution of challenges faced by respondents



N=350

Respondents were asked if there were some cultural values that affected the participation of women in leadership positions at the University. About 81% of the respondents maintained that the dominance of males in all traditional leadership roles affected the gender balance in modern-day institutions (Fig. 4). One male participant during a FGD, chuckled with others clapping hands:

You can educate a man, but you can't decant the male dominance in him soon enough. This male dominance is inculcated from infancy in our families; you are craftly trained to show some dominance over your sisters. You see how your mother and father behave towards each other, indeed how community distinguishes male and female roles. Sometimes you get surprised when you get to University and interact with female lecturers who are as good and sometimes better than their male counterparts. Getting gender neutral is a gradual process which takes time to complete, if ever.

Another 60% of the respondents maintained that male dominance in political leadership positions also impacts how society views the role of men and women. Interestingly enough, about 46% of the respondents maintained that the perceived headship position of men in the family also impacts society's perception of gender in leadership. During the FGD of women, they maintained that women must be labelled as heads of households because men did very little in households. They maintained that men as husbands, are like a woman's firstborn. Note this remark by one female participant as others clapped their hands:

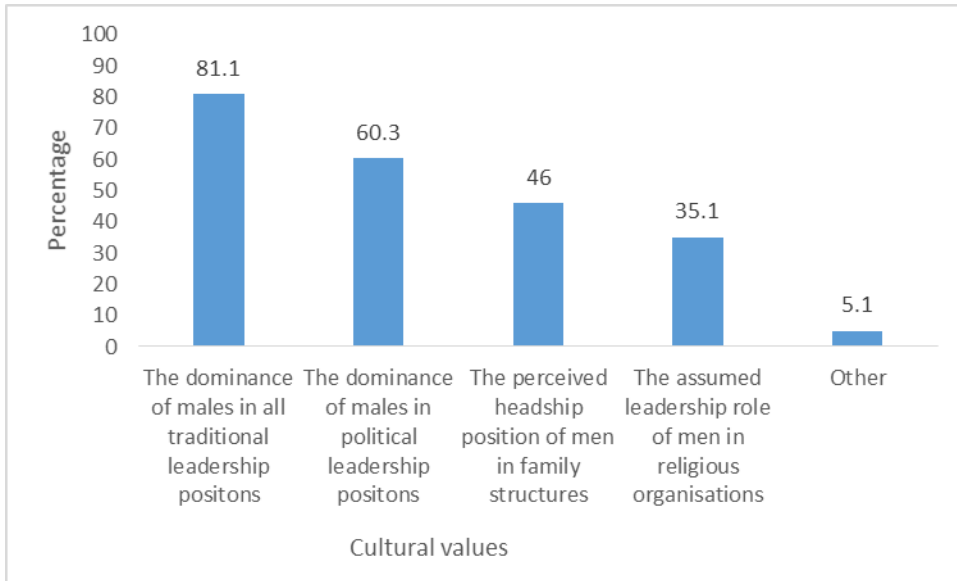
I have since stopped hoping that my husband can help me much. I look at him as my dependent. Other than the salary that he brings home, I determine largely how I should spend the money for the good of the family. I do most of the work, while he watches his soccer. I am afraid my daughters live to see an abused mother, while my sons grow to see an insensitive unhelpful father, negative role models indeed!

Men were quick to echo this sentiment:

In our culture, we have a saying which says: A home is a reflection of the woman/wife in charge of the home. It is unfortunate that women do not get the open and obvious respect and appreciation for what they do. While our culture has accepted women working in the modern labour market, they have not yet accepted the need to relieve or assist them with most of their traditional household chores. It remains taboo to be seen undertaking household chores and we also find it difficult to assist our wives in our homes, educated as we are (Male lecturer).

Finally, 35% of the respondents maintained that male dominance in church leadership also sends negative vibes regarding female leadership. It was further noted, during the female FGD, that the church largely supports female subordination which they erroneously anchor in the book of the Bible: Ephesians 5:22-23 as they ignore the seven subsequent verses.

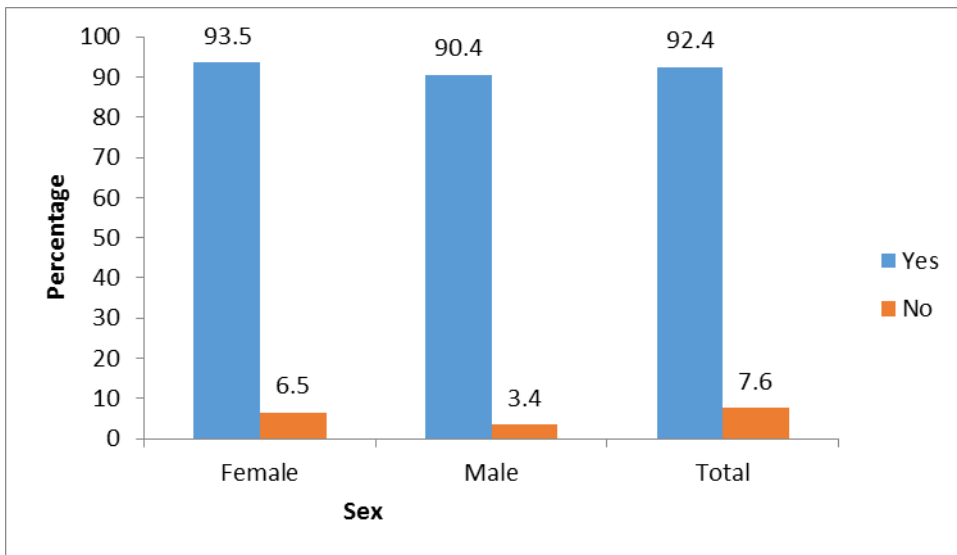
Figure 4: Percentage distribution of cultural values which negatively affect female leadership



N=350

Asked whether or not the inclusion of women in leadership would change the development trajectory of the country, a positive response was almost universal, 92% (Fig. 5). Women were slightly more likely, 94%, to agree with the sentiment than their male counterparts, 90%.

Figure 5: Percentage distribution agreeing that inclusion of women in leadership would increase the development trajectory of the country



N=350

In explaining why the inclusion of women would enhance the development trajectory of the nation, about 75% of the respondents maintained that women are generally good leaders (Fig. 6). There was a general agreement that women are natural leaders in their homes (remember the saying: a home is a reflection of the woman (wife) in charge). Note this remark from one male FGD participant, at the support of others:

Mothers are leaders at home; they are the socializers of children. In fact, during the time of HIV and AIDS there was a tendency to consider children who lost a mother as orphans and not those who lost a father. Normally, women sacrifice their well-being for that of their family which includes husbands and children.

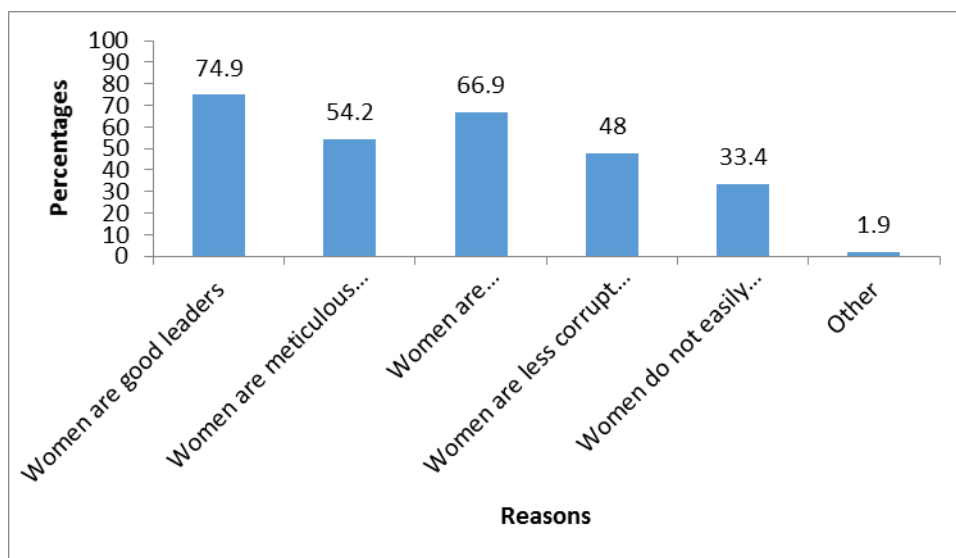
Another 67% of the respondents maintained that women are generally development-oriented. Again, there was a general agreement that women, even in their homes, are development-oriented. It was noted that once females get money in their respective homes, they often think of improving a certain aspect of their homes such as furniture, curtaining, clothing for the family and even food. This was aptly summarized by one male FGD participant, with support from others:

Women are home administrators. They are in charge of the home.

About 54% of the respondents maintained that women would enhance the country’s development as leaders because they are meticulous whenever they execute their tasks. This is an echo to the KII’s sentiment referred to earlier on. About 48% of the respondents also maintained that women are less corrupt than males, a leadership quality that was perceived to enhance development. In addition, it was noted that women are less likely to succumb to sexual manipulations. Note this remark from one female FGD participant who received support from the rest of the group:

Men are generally corrupt and they are easily derailed by sexual manipulations. Men seem to think that being corrupt is macho; they describe corruption as “business deals”. At the same time, men can easily lose their minds when manipulated sexually. This is rare with women. It is not surprising that a whole chief executive officer can take advice from a secretary who happens to be his girlfriend. When you get in such offices you can easily know who the boss is. It is pathetic.

Figure 6: Percentage distribution of reasons for perceiving that inclusion of women in leadership would enhance the development trajectory



N= 350

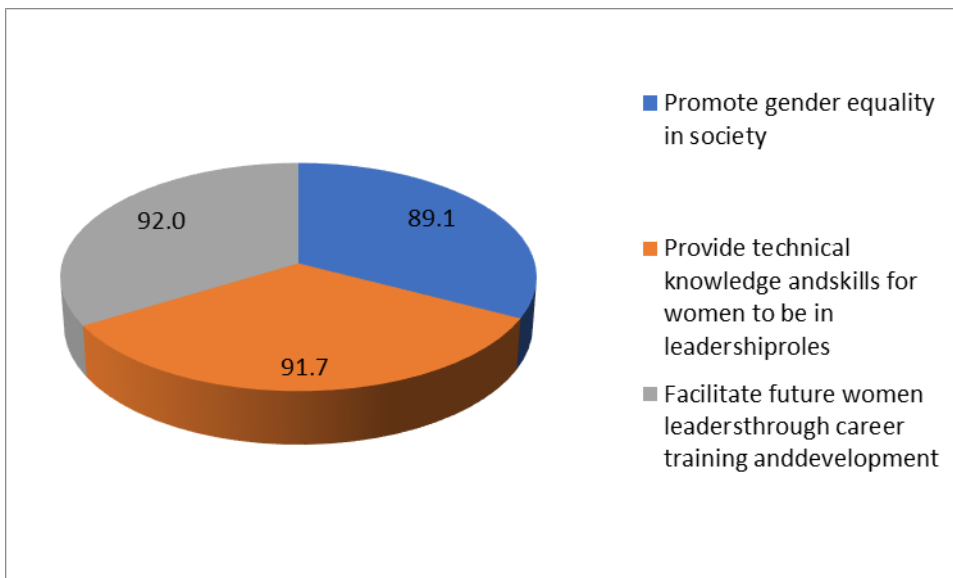
Respondents were also then asked about what they perceived to be the role of the University in society. Approximately 92% of the respondents maintained that Universities are expected to provide technical knowledge and skills to be in leadership roles (Fig.7). In focus group discussions, the role of Universities was extended beyond that of empowering women only, to the empowerment of entire nations. Note this remark from the male FGD:

Universities must spearhead development. They are the ones most exposed to the outside world where development innovations are taking place. Education underlies most development; hence Universities must be pace setters as they educate young men and women for development. Innovations aimed at improving the lives of people must be situated in Universities. Even the issue of gender equality must start at Universities which should role model what societies must emulate (Male service provider, supported by others).

Another 92% of the respondents maintained that the role of universities is to facilitate future women leaders' career training and development. About 89% of the respondents maintained that Universities must promote gender equality in society. Note this remark from one female who received support from others during a FGD:

Universities are places for not only churning out graduates in various disciplines, but leaders in various aspects of life. Notice that whenever media wants to get a technical view on any aspect of life they go to Universities. When such views are seen to be coming equally from men and women, then society starts appreciating also the role of women in society; female leaders at the University thus become the harbingers of female liberation. And it has been argued that if you educate a woman you have educated a nation.

Figure 7: Percentage distribution of the perceived role of Universities



N=350

Respondents were asked if they were familiar with the university's appointments and promotions systems. While about 55% of the respondents reported that they were familiar with the promotion requirements, the difference between males and females is minimal, 54% and 55%, respectively (Table 4). While 36% of the respondents reported lack of familiarity with the promotion procedures, females were more likely, 36%, to report so than males, 31%. About 46% of the respondents were also of the opinion that the promotion requirements worked in favour of females; this was reported by about 49% of the males and 44% of the women.

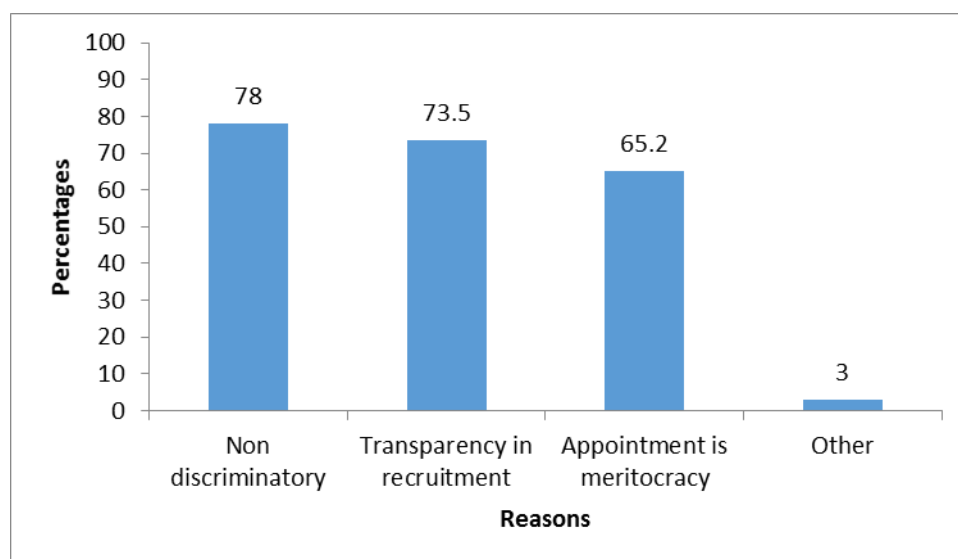
Table 4: Percentage distribution of familiarity with the University appointment and promotion systems

Familiarity with appointment systems	Female	Male	Total
Familiar with appointments systems	54.2	55.4	54.6
Not familiar	36.1	31.3	34.5
Not sure	9.7	13.3	10.9
Favours women			
Yes	43.9	49.4	45.8
No	10.3	7.2	9.2
Don't know	45.8	43.4	45.0

N=328

It was argued that the appointments and promotion systems worked in favour of women because they were non-discriminatory. Thus, even if there was a male chauvinist officer who would not like to hire women to fill certain positions, the system would not give him a chance to do so. The non-discriminatory nature of the system was reported by 78% of the respondents, while 74% maintained that the system was transparent (Figure 8). Another 65% maintained that the system was meritorious.

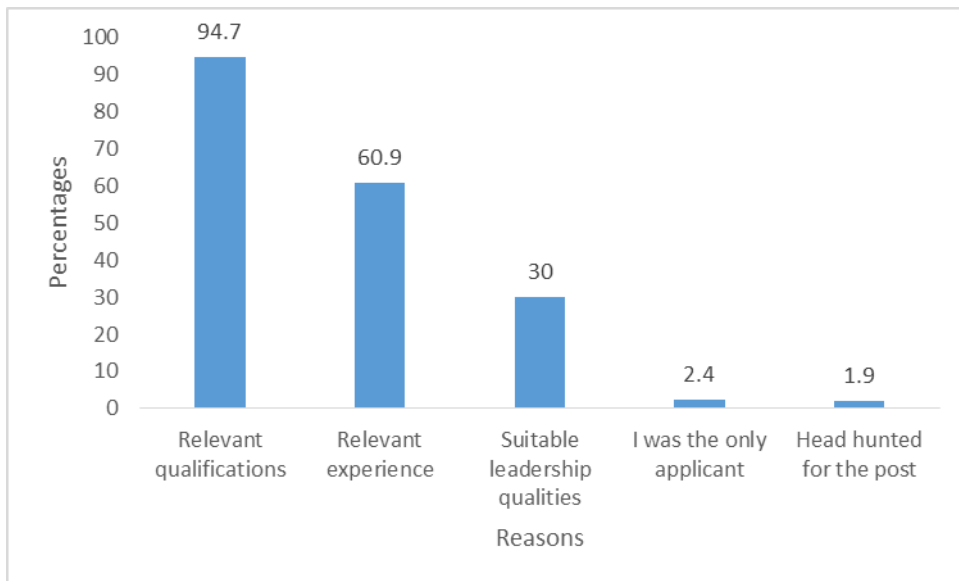
Figure 8: Percentage distribution of the reasons why the appointments and promotion systems work in favour of women



N=350

Consistent with the view that the system is meritorious, a majority of the respondents, 95%, maintained that they were appointed to their current positions because of their relevant qualifications. (Fig. 9) Relevant experience was reported by about 61% of the respondents while 30% reported good leadership traits as the reason for their appointment at their current positions.

Figure 9: Percentage distribution of reasons for appointment at current position



N=350

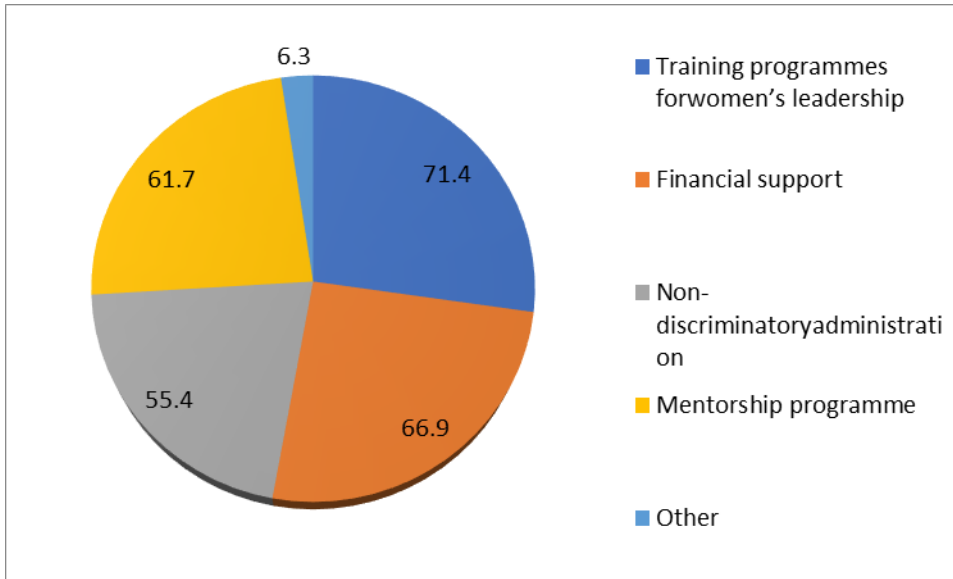
Respondents were asked for the support they would need for them to want to get into leadership positions. The largest proportion of respondents, 71%, maintained that they would need training programmes in leadership (Fig. 10). In addition, 67% maintained that they would need financial support for them to receive leadership training. About 62% of the women maintained that they would need mentorship programmes. The idea of mentorship was emphasized during the FGD for a number of reasons. First, women maintained that mentorship would help them to think out of the cultural box. Observing other women in

high positions will encourage others to believe that it is possible for women to fill such positions. However, women also hastened to add that they found it difficult to reach out to such women in positions of power; they just feel intimidated, while they sometimes just perceive such women as exceptional, hence, not to be emulated. However, they argued that the creation of a forum where women from all levels in the University can meet and share experiences, ideas and fun would help to break the perceived barriers between women in leadership and those who are not. Note this remark from one lady during a FGD, as others supported her:

I was once advised to see our Dean for help on my dissertation and it took me more than two months before I collected the guts to approach her. To my surprise, when I got to her office, she took her time to assist me and I regretted why I had wasted my time. She proved all my assumptions wrong; I found her to be very friendly, helpful and encouraging. We need such direct encouragement from those already in power, thus, a mentorship programme would help.

Participants even suggested social meetings which would be organized by women at lower levels who will invite those in positions of power on campus. At such meetings, it was suggested, women in high positions would give their historical experience within the University while the younger ladies would be free to ask questions. All this would be informal with the hope for aspiring women to realize that those who have made it to the top are just women like they all are, albeit with specific qualities that can be developed by most. Women also maintained that they are generally afraid to take positions of power given their upbringing. Hence, mentors would help reduce such fear. Both men and women expressed the view that culture inculcates into the girlchild that she is to be led, and the boy child is there to lead. Yet in modern institutions like the University or even industry where skills matter, it becomes apparent that those with skill and ability should do so, and such can be in a male or female. Thus, there is need for social reconstruction of masculinity and femininity. In FGDs for both men and women, it was noted that female leaders tend to be somewhat emotional, which is also necessary at times, while men tend to be concerned about issues only, which also leaves some of the relevant underlying issues which can be addressed. In essence, both genders enhance the smooth running of institutions.

Figure 10: Percentage distribution of the support required by the participants to achieve their leadership objectives

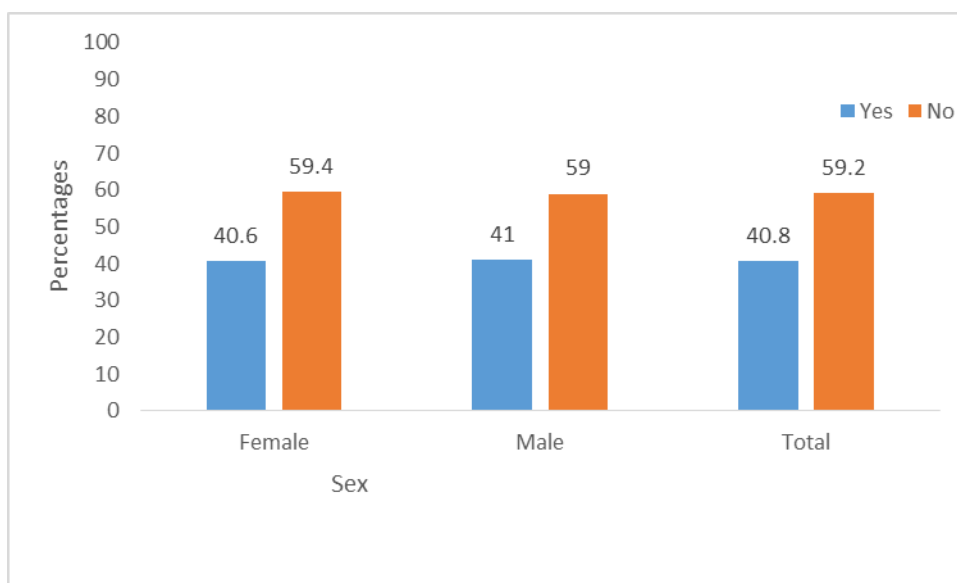


N=350

Participants were asked if they ever had an opportunity to influence anything in the University. It is interesting to note that there is no difference between males and females in this aspect. Approximately 41% of both males and females maintained that they had influenced aspects of the University system (Fig. 11). It was argued that there are certain roles which are tied to one's post especially as a lecturer, and such is not influenced by gender per se. Note this remark by one of the male participants, with support from others in the FGD:

Once you become a lecturer you have somewhat crossed the gender boundaries in a number of ways. Job descriptions are not in any way gendered hence we do almost exactly similar things, while we are exposed to the same opportunities. The only differentiating factor is one's creativity and zeal for work; these are not gender-specific, if anything.

Figure 11: Percentage distribution of influencers of certain aspects of the University systems



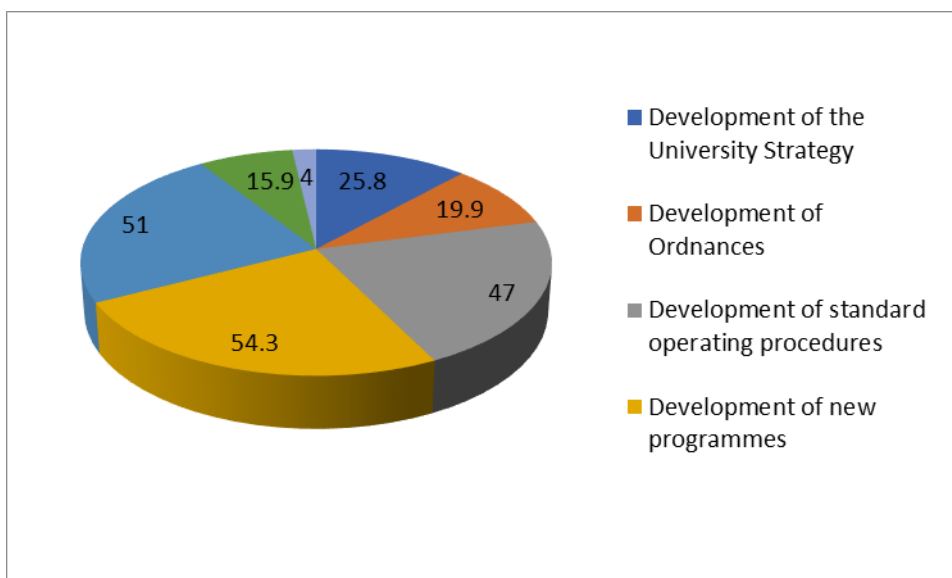
N=350

Consistent with the argument that the influencing of aspects of the University is generally not gendered but rather job-specific, the largest proportion of the respondents, 54%, reported that they influenced the teaching at the University through the development of new programmes and courses (Fig. 12). Note this remark from one of the female FGD participants:

One of my first challenges was the development of a module which had never been taught yet I was hired to teach the module. I had no choice but to search from many sources, and thank God I produced a beautiful module outline which was also Education 5.0 compliant. That module outline is now being used as a template for the development of other module outlines in our department.

Another 51% reported that they were involved in the development of the resource mobilization strategy, while 47% maintained that they were involved in the development of the standard operating procedures. Involvement in the development of the University Strategy, University Ordinance and start-up projects were reported by 26%, 20% and 16%, respectively.

Figure 12: Percentage distribution of areas influenced at the University



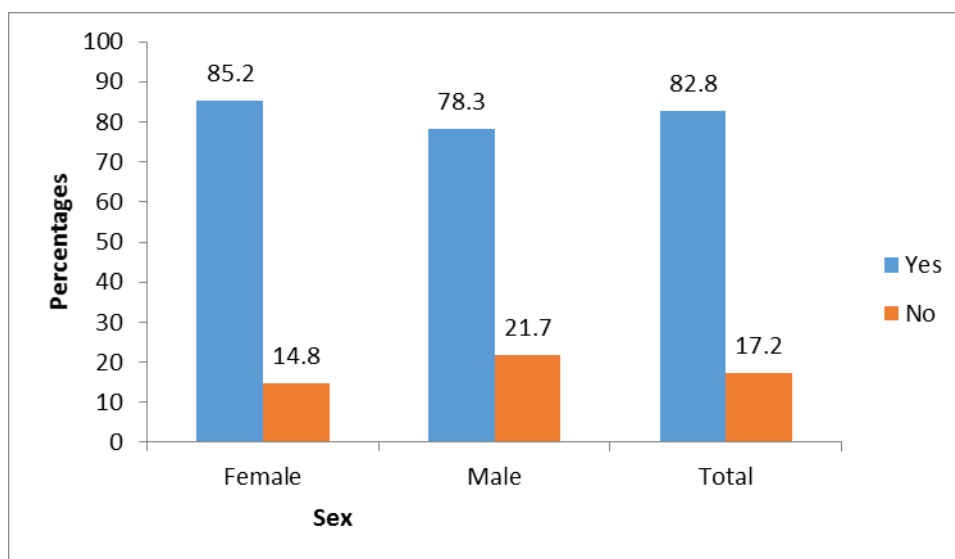
N=350

Asked whether or not they would enrol in a programme aimed at training leaders, a majority of the respondents, 83%, responded in the affirmative (Fig. 13). However, females were more likely, 85%, to report that they would enrol in a training programme for leadership than their male counterparts, 78%. Note that there is also some complacency in men when it comes to the need for training in leadership for someone to be able to lead. Note this remark from one of the participants in a male FGD, with others just laughing away:

Aaa, given the opportunity to lead, you would normally learn while on post. Experience is the best teacher.

Yet one of the male KII maintained that male leaders can learn from female leaders on how to care for detail. Note his remark:

Definitely, male can learn from women on how to be meticulous. Men suffer from overgeneralization of issues.

Figure 13: Percentage distribution of the desire to enrol on a leadership training programme**N=238**

5. Discussion

The findings show that staff at the University of Zimbabwe are of the general view that Universities are the principal avenues for training researchers for Africa's science systems and other leadership positions, and are central to the socioeconomic and political development of the continent through the production of knowledge in various disciplines. Respondents in the study maintained that Universities must be pace setters in development innovations and social transformation. The findings revealed that the University of Zimbabwe, which was perceived as largely similar to other Universities, or better, as reported by at least 78% of the respondents, in terms of the advancement of female leadership, has significantly increased the proportion of women in leadership. This has been attributed to a number of factors which are interrelated. First, Zimbabwe policy acknowledges the need for a 50-50 gender balance in leadership, starting in politics to tertiary institutions of higher learning. This gender-balance call has been cushioned by the post-colonial universal education policy which narrowed the educational gap between men and women. Hence, the increased education of women, along with that of men, has increasingly ushered into Zimbabwe a generation of educated women who can now compete side-by-side with their male counterparts in the various sectors of the economy, indeed society in general. As women gain experience, albeit, behind males who have been in the modern labour sector earlier, they have, and are continuing to fill in positions of leadership even in institutions of higher learning. At the University of Zimbabwe, it was noted, there is almost a 50-50 gender

balance at the highest level of leadership. And as younger women observe the other women in positions of leadership, they in turn appreciate the feasibility and desirability of taking up leadership positions, hence they acquire more education as they gain experience in the system. Granted that there has been an increase in female leadership, the male leaders, indeed male counterparts in the system, appreciate the ability of women as leaders, their dedication to duty and excellence, and their extra eye on detail. This acquired perception of female leadership, increasingly makes female leadership attractive, thereby eroding the deeply cherished male dominance in leadership as reflected in the traditional positions of power in the country. Yet even in these traditional systems, women are creeping up the leadership ladder. It has been an exposure to education, which has in turn exposed the country in general, and thus policy, to the global society which demands a 50-50 gender balance in all spheres of life, which has also positively impacted on the traditional institutions of power. Note that University appointments and promotions policies are also consistent with these global and national requirements, they are gender-neutral and meritocratic. Of course, the study noted that male dominance in traditional leadership positions, politics and even the church do impact negatively on the gender composition of leadership even in the modern labour market. However, the erosion of the toxic masculinity of patriarchy through the global policy stances externally acquired has improved the attitude of hiring officers, reduced gender discrimination, and enhanced female determination to excel and assume leadership roles at the University. However, women maintained that they still need support for them to be able to climb the leadership ladder with ease. The assistance they noted was mentorship and training programmes, formally and informally. It was maintained that such programmes should be aimed at addressing both the strategic and practical needs of women. Thus, the programmes should be aimed at redefining femininity and masculinity at the workplace in a manner that neutralizes gender biases and myths; it was maintained that informal social spaces created and run by women themselves would also encourage and build confidence in women. In addition, it was noted that the programmes should also address women's practical needs, especially those of motherhood – the care for infants and children at the workplace.