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The Relationship between Academic Qualifications and Experiences with Women's Leadership Efficacy in Primary Schools of Harari Region, Dire Dawa, and Maya City Administration

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Abstract

Women's school leadership efficacy refers to a belief they possess in their ability to effectively lead and create positive educational outcomes. Educational qualifications and relevant job experiences enable women to contribute their unique perspectives and skills and to improve self-efficacy. Hence, this study analyses the relationships in academic qualifications and job experiences with women's school leadership efficacy. This research was guided by Bandura's self-efficacy theory, specifically, mastery of experiences. An explanatory sequential design of mixed research methods was employed. At the initial phase, quantitative surveys employed 112 women in primary school principalship selected through a census method, and analyzed using SPSS 25, incorporating descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation. 12 women (5 principals and 7 vice principals) for an interview were selected using purposive sampling. For three focused group discussions, participants were selected purposely, composed of women (principals and vice principals), supervisors, and male principals. The qualitative data were analyzed in the hermeneutic phenomenological method. The academic qualifications and classroom experiences positively correlate with women's leadership efficacy. Enhanced leadership efficacy of women contributes to leadership quality and gender equity. It *requires promoting access to higher education, addressing policy biases by offering scholarships, and considering classroom teaching experiences in school leadership appointments.*

Keywords: self-efficacy, women school leadership, academic qualifications, classroom experiences

1. Introduction

Self-efficacy of women in school leadership refers to a self-belief of ability to lead effectively(Dami et al., 2022), make informed decisions, and positively influence educational outcomes (Skaalvik, 2020) by contributing their unique leadership styles (Mekasha, 2017). A school leader with high self-efficacy

exhibits resilience, adaptability, and confidence; conversely, low self-efficacy can hinder a principal's ability to implement effective policies, resolve conflicts, and foster teacher motivation, ultimately impacting student achievement (Arhipova et al., 2021; Dami et al., 2022). Hence, understanding the self-efficacy of women in principalship fosters an inclusive and empowering environment in schools (Martíne et al., 2021).

Individuals with higher academic backgrounds are more likely to possess the skills needed to manage leadership responsibilities effectively, and it equips leaders with essential knowledge, skills, and mastery experiences (Martínez et al., 2021; Nordin et al., 2018). In Ethiopia, however, limited access to advanced education for women because of gender biases hinders leadership potential and self-efficacy (Dagnew et al., 2020; Woldegebriel & Mekonnen, 2023).

In addition, leadership training plays a crucial role in enhancing self-efficacy by equipping women with the skills and knowledge necessary for effective school leadership. In the Ethiopian context, access to such training remains irregular across regions (MoE, 2021), potentially limiting its impact (Dagnew et al., 2020; Woldegebriel & Mekonnen, 2023). The effectiveness of leadership training also depends on its quality, relevance, and delivery methods, with strategies like simulation and micro-teaching (Garcia & Lee, 2022).

On the other hand, the number of years in classroom teaching and participation in school leadership experiences are significant predictors of self-efficacy. Women with extended classroom and leadership experience feel more prepared to manage the demands of principalship (Martínez et al., 2021). Effective classroom teaching experiences enhance instructional leadership by developing essential skills for school leadership (Nordin et al., 2018), and leadership experience directly influences the self-efficacy of women in school principalship (Dami et al., 2022).

This study is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory (Dami et al, 2022), particularly on self-efficacy, because it addresses the belief in one's capabilities. It influences motivation, decision-making, and resilience in school principalship, and the most powerful factor of self-efficacy is mastery of experience, which suggests that self-efficacy is built through accumulated experiences, particularly in a formal education, leadership training, and on-the-job experiences (Martínez et al., 2021; Nordin et al., 2018).

In Ethiopia, gender equity in educational leadership is one of the cross-cutting issues (MoE, 2021), and the Federal Ministry of Education is currently concerned about the quality. Access was planned from 8% to 20% in women's school leadership participation, and for quality, the Post Graduate Diploma of School Leadership (PGDSL) and only women's school leadership training (MoE, 2015), is being implemented to improve women's leadership efficacy (MoE, 2015). This document clearly states ''any female teacher aspiring to become a leader can get support and training from the local network of school supervisors to develop their self-efficacy.''

However, in contrast to the planned self-efficacy development, the number of

women principals is declining because of poor resilience, and some women principals voluntarily exclude themselves from leadership roles due to contextual factors (MoE, 2021). It is also not researched, and little is known about women's education and experiences regarding self-efficacy, which hinders their self-belief in a leadership role. In addition, female principals in Ethiopia face additional challenges, including a lack of knowledge and skills (Dagnew et al., 2020); in other words, mastery of experiences.

Hence, this study explains the relationships between self-efficacy and educational qualifications and experiences for integrating self-efficacy development into leadership, empowering principals to improve decision-making, teacher support, and school outcomes. In reducing turnover and poor placement of women in principalship, policymakers can make evidence-based conclusions on facilitating the education level and experiences.

1.1. Problem Statement

Female education leaders have a positive impact on student outcomes, create supportive and inclusive learning environments, and promote gender equality (UNESCO,2019; Bush, 2021). Moreover, women in leadership positions serve as role models for students, challenge gender stereotypes and inspire young girls to pursue their leadership aspirations (UNESCO, 2019; Mekasha, 2017). In this regard, for example, nations like Finland and Canada have leadership training programs, mentor-ship schemes, and gender-inclusive policies to empower women in educational leadership (Moorosi, 2020). Leadership efficacy can be affected by mastery of experiences, and the number of women principals is declining because of poor resilience, and some women principals voluntarily exclude themselves from leadership roles (MoE, 2021). In women principals' assignments, mastery of experience plays a crucial role, but research on women's leadership focuses on identifying factors.

Studies in Ethiopia have acknowledged the significance of leadership efficacy as a major contributing factor (Woldegebriel & Mekonnen, 2023; Dagnew et al., 2020). However, the factor identified by these researchers was not analyzed separately, as the most powerful self-efficacy factor-mastery of experiences (Dami et al. 2022). Schools use demographic information about school leaders, specifically, educational qualifications and experiences. In addition, little is known about women's leadership efficacy and the measurement for it (Skaalvik, 2020) in the Ethiopian primary school context, and mastery of experiences, which is rooted in educational qualifications and experiences.

Therefore, this research focuses on explaining the relationship between women's professional experiences and their self-efficacy in primary schools. The unique context of Harari Region, Dire Dawa, and Maya City Administration public primary schools is considered. The study also takes the theoretical lens of self-efficacy to analyze women's leadership efficacy to explain educational qualifications and experiences that affect leadership efficacy (Martínez et al., 2021).

1.2 Research Questions

1. How do academic qualifications correlate with self-efficacy?
2. What is the relationship between leadership training and self-efficacy?
3. How does teaching experience correlate with self-efficacy?
4. How does leadership experience correlate with self-efficacy?

2. Research Design and Methodology

This study utilized explanatory sequential mixed-methods, which strengthens the validity and reliability of the findings by cross-verifying results and examines how academic qualifications and professional experiences relate to the self-efficacy of women in principalship. This approach allows for the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in two different phases, and the qualitative phase can help explain or provide context to the quantitative results. The focus was on women who serve as principals and vice principals in public primary schools.

2.1 Sample and Sampling Techniques

For the quantitative component, a census method was employed. In the first survey phase, 112 women in principal and vice principal positions were involved from the three study areas. In the second and qualitative phase, 12 women participants (including five principals and seven vice principals) were chosen through a purposive sampling technique. Furthermore, three FGDs were conducted from the three study areas to capture collective perspectives.

2.2 Research Instrument

The study utilized two questionnaires, specifically, a demographic information questionnaire and the self-efficacy for instructional leadership scale (SEILS) questionnaire, adapted from (Skaalvik, 2020). The Likert-scale instrument consisted of 20 items to evaluate self-efficacy in five sub-themes: goal setting, teacher support, raising a positive learning environment, motivating educators, and promoting a collaborative culture.

To ensure validity, the instruments were reviewed by two experts in Psychology to review the SEILS in relation to principals' roles. Two experts from the field of Gender Studies participated to evaluate the construct concerning the women's school leadership context. Two experts from the Educational Leadership field were concerned about sixteen items in SEILS' original questionnaire and added five items to adapt it to the actual school leadership context.

Pilot testing was conducted, and 25 questionnaires were distributed for women in primary school principalship. The mean value for Cronbach’s alpha was 0.88. The reliability statistics of the mean of a Cronbach's Alpha based on four items for each five sub-teams indicates ($\alpha \geq 0.8$: Good) signifies the survey validly measured the construct.

2.3 Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative and the first phase survey was administered by trained enumerators to collect numerical data. Data collection occurred from May 1 to October 2, 2024, and allowed for an in-depth investigation into how educational backgrounds and professional experiences correlates with women's leadership efficacy. Qualitative phase in-depth interviews, lasting between 45 to 70 minutes each, were conducted twice with each participant.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha Scores of SEILS Validity Test

Items in Measuring SEILS	*Number of Items*	*Threshold*	*Cronbach's alpha*
goal setting	*4*	*.70*	*.83*
teacher support	*4*	*.70*	*.89*
raising a positive learning environment	*4*	*.70*	*.90*
motivating educators	*4*	*.70*	*.91*
promoting a collaborative culture	*4*	*.70*	*.90*

Source - adapted from SPSS 25 output of pilot test Cronbach's alpha result

Table 2. The *Interviewees Demographic Information*

Code	*Age*	*Marital status*	*Experience in teaching*	*Education level*	*Position in school leadership*	*Experience in school leadership*
A	*30-35*	*divorced*	*13*	*BA*	*principal*	*3*
B	*40-45*	*married*	*26*	*MA*	*deputy principal*	*2*
C	*30-35*	*married*	*11*	*BA*	*deputy principal*	*4*
D	*25-30*	*married*	*8*	*BA*	*principal*	*3*
E	*35-40*	*not married*	*17*	*BA*	*deputy principal*	*3*
F	*40-45*	*divorced*	*14*	*BA*	*principal*	*6*
G	*25- 30*	*married*	*6*	*Diploma*	*deputy principal*	*2*
H	*35-40*	*married*	*15*	*MA*	*deputy principal*	*7*
I	*30-35*	*not married*	*12*	*Diploma*	*deputy principal*	*5*
J	*30-35*	*married*	*12*	*BA*	*principal*	*4*
K	*40-45*	*married*	*14*	*BA*	*principal*	*9*
L	*45- 50*	*married*	*16*	*BA*	*deputy principal*	*6*

Furthermore, the three FGDs, each lasting 1.5 to 2 hours, were held in one location for each research area, employing semi-structured questions. All rigorous protocols were implemented, and sessions were audio-recorded with the consent of participants to maintain the integrity of the research.

2.4 Data Analysis

The collected data of the quantitative survey were analyzed using SPSS 25, incorporating descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation analysis. From the distributed 129 questionnaires, 112 were returned after the removal of incomplete and outlier entries. Qualitative data from the interviews and FGDs were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically. To interpret the experiences of participants, a hermeneutic phenomenological approach was employed with multiple verification checks conducted to ensure trustworthiness.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Demographic information result

Women in public primary school principalship, who participated in the survey data showed that 44.6% were based in the Harar Region, 39.3% in Dire Dawa Administration, and 16.1% in Maya City

Administration. The age group in their thirties (30-39) larger age distribution, which represented 50.9%, (20-29) accounts for 23.2%, and 40-49 represented 21.4%, but only 4.5% of respondents were over 50. The legal status showed that the majority, 81.3%, were married; in contrast, 11.6% were single, 6.3% were divorced, but less than 1% were widowed. The majority of women (75.9%) were vice principals, while 24.1% were principals. The distribution indicated 24.1% were principals, and 75.9% were vice principals. The highest educational level, BA, accounted for 76.8%, Diploma 13.4%, and 9.8% held the MA education level. Formal educational leadership training attainment results showed 39.3% lacking specific qualifications, a Diploma of Leadership (PGDSL) represented 30.4%, and women with a certificate of educational leadership represented 23.2%. A BA in educational planning and management or educational leadership holds the lowest 7.1%.

Table 3. Demographic Information of Questionnaire Participants

No	Demographic Information	Frequency	Percent	No	Demographic Information	Frequency	Percent
1	***Place of Respondent***			*5.1*	*Diploma*	*15*	*13.4*
1.1	*Dire Dawa Administration*	*44*	*39.3*	*5.2*	*Bachelor's Degree*	*86*	*76.8*
1.2	*Harar Region*	*50*	*44.6*	*5.3*	*Master's Degree*	*11*	*9.8*
1.3	*Maya City Administration*	*18*	*16.1*	***6***	***Leadership Training Background***		
2	***Marital Status***			*6.1*	*Certificate of Leadership*	*26*	*23.2*
2.1	*Married*	*91*	*81.3*	*6.2*	*Diploma of Leadership*	*34*	*30.4*
2.2	*Single*	*13*	*11.6*	*6.3*	*BA in Educational Planning and Management*	*8*	*7.1*
2.3	*Widowed*	*1*	*0.9*	*6.4*	*None of the Above*	*44*	*39.3*
2.4	*Divorced*	*7*	*6.3*	***7***	***Years of Experience in Teaching***		
3	***Age of Respondent***			*7.1*	*<5*	*11*	*9.8*
3.1	*20-29*	*26*	*23.2*	*7.2*	*5-10*	*39*	*34.8*
3.2	*30-39*	*57*	*50.9*	*7.3*	*11-20*	*45*	*40.2*
3.3	*40-49*	*24*	*21.4*	*7.4*	*>20*	*17*	*15.2*
3.4	*>50*	*5*	*4.5*	***8***	***Years of Experience in School Leadership***		
4	***Current Position***			*8.1*	*<5*	*40*	*35.7*
4.1	*Principal*	*27*	*24.1*	*8.2*	*5-10*	*57*	*50.9*
4.2	*Vice Principal*	*85*	*75.9*	*8.3*	*11-20*	*14*	*12.5*
5	***Highest Educational Qualifications***			*8.4*	*>20*	*1*	*0.9*

Participants with over 20 years of teaching experience were 15.2% of the total, those with less than 5 years of experience represented 9.8%, and the total years of teaching experience indicated 40.2% in the 11-20year category. Women with 5-10 years of teaching experience represented 34.8%. In short, these leadership experiences show that ascending to leadership positions is basic for school leaders to serve as teachers, as teaching is the foundational profession for educational leadership.

The leadership experience of women school leaders indicated that 50.9% counted within the 5-10 years, but new emerging leaders with less than 5 years of leadership experience represented 35.7%. Only 12.5% counted 11-20 years of leadership experience, while 0.9% portrayed over 20 years of experience in school leadership.

3.1.2 Self-efficacy of women in primary school principal-ship

The adapted questionnaire of SEILS was used to examine the self-efficacy of women primary school leaders. Overall mean showed 3.62, with a standard deviation of 0.59. The finding indicated the self-efficacy of women's belief in their ability of goal development, teacher guidance, create a positive learning environment, motivate teachers, and foster a collective culture. It also indicates a moderate level of women's belief in these capabilities, despite there not being a standardized scale for labeling the self-efficacy level nationally. The significance of understanding the self-efficacy of women in school leadership roles is to identify it as negatively or positively related to the ability to effectively lead and impact the school environment.

3.1.3 Academic Qualifications and Self-Efficacy

The Spearman's correlation analysis indicates a positive relationship between self-efficacy and educational qualifications. As Table 4 shows, a p-value of 0.00, which is less than the common alpha level of 0.01, indicates that the correlation is statistically significant. A Spearman's correlation coefficient of 0.26 shows that as the self-efficacy of women in primary school principalship increases, their academic qualifications also increase.

Table 4. **T**he correlations between self-efficacy and educational backgrounds and experiences

Items	***Values***	***Self Efficacy scale result***	***Highest Educational Qualifications***	***Year of experience in teaching***
Self Efficacy scale result	*Correlation Coefficient*	*1.00*	*.26***	*.23**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		*.00*	*.01*

Highest Educational Qualifications	*Correlation Coefficient*	*.26***	*1.00*	*.17*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	*.00*		*.06*
Years of experience in teaching	*Correlation Coefficient*	*.23**	*.17*	*1.00*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	*.01*	*.06*	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

The interview result shows the importance of better educational attainment in strengthening leadership efficacy. One participant, a vice principal with a Diploma, shared her frustration: *"No matter how well I perform, they judge me, saying, 'She doesn't have a BA.'"* This was because a BA degree is often perceived as a prerequisite for primary school principalship.

The FGD remarks on efforts made by education authorities to consider candidates with Diplomas and teaching experience because of the scarcity of female principals with a BA. Participants were triggered to have women primary school principals who have a Diploma in other subjects, and they lead the school. From word of his mouth '' She has a Biology Diploma, but she leads the school as a vice principal.

They also emphasized that appointing qualified women to leadership inspires future generations and fosters gender-inclusive leadership. One participant stated,

> *We appoint women primary school vice principals with a subject Diploma and relevant teaching experiences, but we need to see them improve their education level and leadership qualifications.*

The FGDs remark that it is challenging to find women with appropriate educational qualifications to assign. One participant reminded of the MoE report, which shows that unqualified women are assigned as vice principals in primary schools because women who qualify for the criteria want to live in centers, and they don't prefer to apply.

3.1.4 Leadership Training and Self-Efficacy

The Spearman's correlation analysis indicates a weak negative connection between educational leadership training and self-efficacy, since in this research context, a significant proportion (39.3%) lacked formal leadership training of any level. Further analysis has been done with the same Spearman's correlation analysis by making women who took leadership training (1) and not (0), but the same result was found. Other factors like vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and Physiological states need to be incorporated. The quality of school leadership training needs to be analyzed.

Furthermore, the number of participants who have a leadership training background needs to be increased.

In contrast, qualitative findings support the positive correlation of leadership training on self-efficacy. Participants emphasized that training enhanced their leadership skills, resilience, and confidence in managing school environments. One participant shared her professional journey, explaining how obtaining a teaching diploma, followed by a BA and enrollment in a Postgraduate Diploma in School Leadership (PGDSL) program, empowered her to advance in the leadership hierarchy. She expressed her aspirations,

> *I joined a teacher education college and earned a teaching diploma before my BA. Now, I plan to enroll in the PGDSL program, and after graduation, I hope to be promoted to higher leadership positions.*

Another participant recounted the challenges she faced upon returning from her leadership training, highlighting the diverse and often difficult school environment she encountered, ''*Without leadership training, I wouldn't have survived in a challenging school situation. (par. K).''*

Others emphasized that leadership training played a crucial role in fostering gender awareness and empowering women to challenge stereotypes and biases. One participant described how training gave her the confidence to stand up against gender discrimination,

> *Now, I am gender-sensitive. A man once pressured me not to compete for a leadership position, but I said 'no.' The training gave me the knowledge and confidence to resist gender biases. I also believe I can now help female students facing sexual harassment and discrimination.(par. G)*

Additionally, participants emphasized that leadership training equipped them with adaptive leadership skills, enabling them to manage diverse school communities effectively. One school principal acknowledged how her approach to leadership changed after participating in the PGDSL program,

> *My leadership approach has transformed. Before, I believed in being a purely democratic leader, but now I've learned to be more flexible with committed teachers who make occasional mistakes. (par A)*

The FGDs remarked on the necessity of leadership training, particularly for women leading schools without formal leadership training. Participants agreed on giving responsibility without fulfilling their rights, since if they make mistakes in school principalship, no one may set them free. In short, they agreed on the importance of mastery experiences in building leadership confidence and the need for structured training programs to support women in school principalship.

3.1.5 Teaching Experience and Self-Efficacy

The Spearman's correlation analysis in Table 4 showed a positive correlation between teaching experiences and self-efficacy. This finding implies that when women's years of teaching experience increase, their self-efficacy in leadership roles increases.

This finding implies that women's leadership efficacy correlates with performance accomplishments or successful past experiences, which strengthen self-efficacy. Teaching skills transferable to principal-ship are mentoring colleagues, leading committees, repeated opportunities to master classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement provide experiences.

Qualitative findings also supported the importance of classroom teaching as a foundation for leadership development. Participants emphasized that strong teaching backgrounds contribute to building leadership confidence. However, they had concerns about past challenges in teacher training. One participant noted that private colleges previously produced under-qualified teachers with poor pedagogical skills, limiting their leadership potential. She explained,

> *In the past, private colleges flooded the system with under-qualified teachers. Many struggled with basic skills like lesson planning, but now, teacher training is strictly controlled by the government rather than private colleges, ensuring better-qualified educators. (Par. C)*

The FGDs emphasized that effective teaching serves as a natural stepping stone for leadership. One participant affirmed,

> *Women teachers with advanced classroom teaching skills often transition into leadership roles, investing their pedagogical expertise to manage schools effectively.*

However, they had concerns about appointing principals without prior teaching experience, particularly in remote areas. Participants acknowledged that teaching experience should be a prerequisite for school leadership, as it enables women to develop essential pedagogical, managerial, and problem-solving skills before stepping into principalship.

3.1.6 Leadership experiences and self-efficacy

The result of a Spearman correlation analysis shows a weak positive correlation of coefficient of 0.13 between self-efficacy and years of total experience in school leadership. The statistical significance value of 0.15 is above the common alpha level of 0.05, indicating the correlation is not statistically significant. As descriptive statistics indicate, 35.7% were new emerging leaders with less than 5 years of leadership experience. Increasing the number of participants with better leadership experiences, and adding other factors of vicarious experiences, social persuasions, and physiological states may strengthen the result as the two variables correlate.

On the other hand, qualitative findings reveal that leadership self-efficacy develops through stretching activities, such as delegated responsibilities and exposure to leadership roles. One participant assured,

> *I actively engaged in leadership by participating in various leadership roles. These challenges enabled me to confront and progress with full school leadership responsibilities. (Par. F)*

Participants also noted that women were often delegated to principal tasks by male principals. Another participant emphasized the importance of both formal and informal leadership experiences in developing their leadership efficacy.

> *School leadership is a scientific job, and formal and informal settings give us opportunities to develop our leadership skills and to lead by example. (Par. C)*

The FGD also addressed the role of leadership experience in balancing work and family responsibilities. Participants agreed that women with prior leadership experience were better equipped to manage the demands of both school administration and personal life in minimizing both tensions. One participant affirmed,

> *Women school leaders with some leadership experience are able to balance family and work-related duties more effectively. (Par. G)*

Another participant reinforced this view, emphasizing that early leadership exposure fosters resilience and adaptability, helping women overcome challenges in both professional and personal life.

> *Work and family conflicts can be minimized with appropriate prior leadership experience, as it equips women to balance responsibilities and develop the strength to overcome challenges. (Par. J)*

One participant shared how early exposure to leadership tasks prepared her for future roles.

> *My principal used to delegate me in school leadership activities. I never hesitated to take on challenges, even in rural areas, and that prepared me for formal school leadership. (par. I)*

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> *My principal used to delegate me in school leadership activities. I never hesitated to take on challenges, even in rural areas, and that prepared me for formal school leadership. (par. I)*

The FGD supported the interview findings, stressing that stretching activities, exposure to diverse leadership roles, and delegated responsibilities significantly contribute to leadership efficacy. One participant added,

Prior leadership experiences allow women to develop essential skills, including decision-making, delegation, and problem-solving, which are crucial for effective school leadership.

Moreover, they underscored the importance of providing women with opportunities to gain leadership experience.

3.2 Discussions

This study marks a positive correlation between higher educational achievements and self-efficacy. Academic qualifications are related to women's leadership efficacy, equipping them with the skills necessary for principal-ship. Similarly, Dagnew et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of educational capacity-building programs to foster women's self-efficacy. Northouse (2022) also added the need to equip principals with the knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes. Therefore, women in primary school principalship should get educational opportunities to develop their self-efficacy.

The Spearman's correlation analysis revealed no correlation between leadership training and self-efficacy because most women in primary school principalship were without formal leadership training. Consistent with the current findings, (Smith & Johnson, 2021; Brown & White, 2020) reported that many women in primary school principal-ship lacked formal leadership training, and the need for educational interventions. The FGDs also emphasize the unconventional nature of appointing women to principal-ship without structured leadership training, and the effectiveness of leadership training may also depend on its quality, relevance, and delivery methods of simulation and micro-teaching (OECD, 2018). The interviewees confirmed that leadership training correlates with women's leadership efficacy, as previous findings marked skill development as a key factor in leadership efficacy. In this regard, Dagnew et al. (2020) emphasized the relationship between leadership training in strengthening women's confidence in assuming principal-ship. The OECD (2018) to shape effective school leadership, they suggest leadership development through formal and informal learning methods, such as mentoring, work-based learning, peer support, and networking.

Policymakers should prioritize access to professional development programs, such as PGDSL, to narrow the training gap. Other findings suggested giving contextualized leadership training programs tailored to the unique challenges faced by women in school leadership (Garcia & Lee, 2022). Additionally, it is important to mentor novice leaders with practical exposure and guided mastery experiences (Patel & Nguyen, 2021). Leadership training should incorporate soft skills like communication, adaptability, and collaboration (Wang & Adams, 2023).

Teaching experiences relate to the self-efficacy of women, as evidenced by a positive correlation between years of teaching experience and self-efficacy levels (Nordin et al., 2018). The study revealed that 40.2% of participants had 11-20 years of teaching experience, while 34.8% had 5-10 years, highlighting that accumulated classroom experience relates

to leadership expertise. The research revealed a positive correlation between the total years of teaching experience and levels of self-efficacy. This suggests that as teachers gain more experience, their self-efficacy is likely to rise.

The earlier studies have consistently shown a relationship between teaching experience and self-efficacy among educators. As Dami et al. 2022) state, social cognitive theory underscores the importance of mastery experiences in building self-efficacy. They emphasize the connection between teaching experiences and continuous professional development that strengthens self-efficacy. On the other hand, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2018) emphasized the need for formal verification of teaching experiences as formal education. In other words, while teaching experience positively correlates with leadership efficacy, it must be complemented by formal qualifications and continuous professional development.

Quantitative analysis revealed no correlation between leadership experiences and self-efficacy since most participants reported 5-10 years (50.9%) or 0-5 years (35.7%) of leadership experience, indicating a concentration in early to mid-range leadership experiences. However, as Dwyer (2019) and McCormick et al., (2002) state, qualitative findings revealed leadership experiences, such as delegating responsibilities, engaging in diverse roles, and participating in leadership training, which fostered skill mastery. FGDs identified that the stretching activities correlate with self-efficacy. Similarly, research by Tusianah et al. (2021) further underscores that self-efficacy contributed to fair treatment, manageable stress levels, and institutional biases. Furthermore, Nordin et al. (2018) highlight the connection between teaching experiences and mastery opportunities in shaping leadership efficacy. Diverse leadership roles, such as leading committees and managing projects, develop self-efficacy. Hence, institutional support like flexible work arrangements and mentorship programs tailored for women with caregiving responsibilities may give women a chance to develop their self-efficacy.

4. Conclusions

This study examined how academic qualifications, leadership training, teaching experiences, and school leadership experiences correlate to self-efficacy. The finding revealed, firstly, that there is a positive correlation between academic qualifications and self-efficacy; therefore, women in primary school principal-ship have to be given scholarship opportunities. Secondly, classroom teaching experiences have a positive correlation with self-efficacy of goal development, teacher guidance, creating positive learning environments, motivating colleagues, and fostering a cohesive culture. At recruitment time, education officers should give attention to teaching experiences and their effectiveness. Thirdly, a significant proportion of participants (39.3%) lacked any formal leadership training, and at the time of this research, they were leading schools. In minimizing risk, they need structured leadership programs that may give leadership training opportunities for women who took responsibility without fulfilling their right to be trained. Finally, the women in the primary school principalship are beginner leaders.

Therefore, in developing their leadership efficacy, providing them with educational opportunities and women with better classroom teaching experiences needs to be considered for school leadership positions.

5. Limitations and Implications

The finding is based on a sample of 112 women despite the high costs associated with reaching one school for each participant. A significant number of participants who didn't join any formal leadership training, and women with a few years of principalship, may create fewer participants. The finding is also based on self-reported results of SEILS may create a potential bias as participants may provide socially desirable responses, limiting the generalizability. Again, the absence of a standardized scale for labeling SEILS nationally, which may affect the comparability of the findings. Finally, focusing on only mastery of experiences related to personal/ professional development predictors may neglect other factors of vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and physiological states. Future research should examine these factors by adding the sample size to increase the understanding of factors that contribute to the leadership efficacy of women.

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