

# THE STORY OF WOMEN SCHOOL HEADS IN THE CHALLENGING WORLD OF EDUCATION: A NARRATOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment opens up new avenues for all women to fight for their rights. Women no longer compete with men in traditional societies. This qualitative-narrative research aimed to determine the narratives of the story of women school heads in the challenging world of education. Results showed that women school heads viewed on women empowerment in school leadership are risk takers, shared the same abilities with men. The challenges or problems faced by women school heads are decision-making, poor classroom due to natural disaster and adjustment with colleagues. The women school head coped this by employing strategies in overcoming this challenged through settling work standards, settling conflicts in the workplace and establishing rapport with colleagues. By this, school heads had driven to create a healthy environment by creating a harmonious and healthy working environment.

**KEYWORDS:** Story of Women School, World of Education & A Narratology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

Women's empowerment opens up new avenues for all women to fight for their rights. Women no longer compete with men in traditional societies. Their performance sometimes matches, if not exceeds, that of men. Women provide balance to the presence of men, therefore the world would be incomplete without them. Women have been shaped through education to become the finest versions of themselves. They have emerged as the most promising leaders of the twenty-first century. Women have had an important part in societal progress (Hadi, 2006). They not only conceive children, but they also give birth to a child who has the potential to alter the path of world history. They have truly taken advantage of opportunities to alter their job path (Johnson, 2006). Education is undeniably dominated by women.

It has even been suggested that teaching is a woman's job (Irechukwu, 2010). The majority of people in the field are women, and some of them have even served as school principals, changing the lives of teachers and students in general. They also assisted communities in constructing their lives (Grace, 2000). Previous studies on female leadership were conducted in other countries (Shaya & Khait, 2017), particularly in China (Cunningham, 2021), and Israel (Shapira et al., 2010). Nonetheless, there may be some research in the national setting, but the local situation is still unexplored. As a result, the current study's gap. This research is timely, especially when the globe celebrates femininity every year. Women's struggles have curled and rolled down, giving and laying the groundwork for their greatest contributions to civilizations. As a result, the need for this research will open the road for women school principals to be exonerated and serve their country.

### 1.1.1 Research Questions

- How do the participants perceive women empowerment in school leadership?
- What challenges do the participants experience in school leadership?
- How do they cope with the challenges relative to school leadership?
- What intervention plan can be proposed to further enhance women empowerment in school leadership?

### 1.1.2. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This research will solely look into the lives of female school principals in the Makilala Municipality. They are both elementary and secondary school principals. During the school year 2021-2022, this will be done.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Research Design

I'll use qualitative narrative in this research. The goal of qualitative research is to investigate, comprehend, and explain social phenomena in their natural settings.

Researchers that employ a qualitative research methodology hope to gather more specific information and gain a more complete view of issues, situations, or events. It is a process for gathering evidence in order to find answers to questions (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Qualitative researchers acquire data through a variety of methodologies, including in-depth qualitative interviews, participant and non-participant observation, field notes, focus groups, document analysis, and a variety of other techniques.

It's all about gathering and telling a tale or stories in narrative research (in detail).

Individuals' experiences are described in narratives, and the meaning of the experience is discussed with the individual. A narrative research design is typically used to investigate a single person. In contrast to a community, the researcher becomes the interpreter of the stories of individuals.

As a result, because no statistical tools will be used to assess the data, this study is qualitative. The participants will be able to share their experiences as school principals, therefore it is narratology

### 2.2. Informants of the Study

Purposive sampling will be used to select the participants for this investigation. I shall use criterionbased sampling in particular. The identification of participants will be based on the following criteria

- A school head in one of the schools in Makilala;
- A female school head; and
- At least 3 years in service as school head.

### 2.3. Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in the Municipality of Makilala in Cotabato Province.

## 2.4. Data Gathering Procedure

To be certain that the study will be successful, I will first identify the participants. I'll have an initial discussion with them about their personal experiences. Following that, I will prepare the interview guide, which will be reviewed by a panel of experts. This is to ensure that the language adheres to the research's ethical standards and does not endanger the participants.

I'll prepare the consent-to-participate form in the same manner.

This will describe the study's goals as well as the rights of informants and participants. After that, I write a letter to the Superintendent of Schools, as well as the respective District Supervisors and school principals.

Following approval, I will inquire about the participants' availability for the interview. I will be asked to affix their signature as a manifestation of their consent during the interview. There will be an audio recorder present. Individual interviews will be conducted with the participants.

However, in order to prevent the virus from spreading further, I will strictly adhere to the protocols established by the Inter Agency Task Force (IATF) on health standards. They will be given a token of appreciation after the interview. In the meantime, their responses will be verbatim transcribed and translated into English. The data analyst will conduct thematic analysis.

Emergent themes will be identified, and basic concepts will be sketched. I'll return the transcripts to the informants and participants and ask for their permission in order to achieve transferability. The findings will be given in both tabular and text format.

## 2.5. Data Analysis

This research will include a thematic analysis (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

The identification of emergent themes from the responses of the participants are part of this process.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1. Women School Heads Views on Women Empowerment in School Leadership

Table 1 reveals the themes and core ideas on women school heads views on women empowerment in school leadership.

#### Risk-Takers

It shows that they are risk-takers. This means that they tried to find ways that sometimes are hard to explain. Also, they faced all the challenges without any hesitations and they model themselves to bring change to the lives of their colleagues, learners, and the community they serve. It was mentioned during the interview that:

*“Being empowered women leader in school, I have not encountered any significant setback in my leadership that woman as I am is well respected and I am able to carry out my duties and obligations.” (P4)*

A good leader has the will to implement change in the organization. She also leads by example and do the right thing. With this, women school heads took the risks in facing the problems that are impossible to bear. They always focus on change though there are those who opposed with it. Indeed, they are incessant to make a difference in the organization.

School heads who take the risks in making decisions are an epitome of change. They look the brighter side of their decisions though it may be difficult to others. Because of this, they became the source of inspiration and never left their colleagues. They work side-by-side and see to it that things are done rightly (Junninen, 2006).

**Shared the Same Abilities with Men**

Women school heads are no different with men. They are on equal footing and gender is not an issue in leading schools. As stated during the interview:

*“Women can be leaders despite of the fact that leadership are designed primarily for men.” (P1)*

Correspondingly, the participants strengthened this view by saying that:

*“What men can do, women also can and that stereotypical roles among men and women are now considered inter-changeable.” (P4)*

*“The Philippines has successfully recognized the importance of gender equality in all aspect and is continuously implementing programs to break down such barriers in recognizing gender equality in society.” (P4)*

There are no things that women cannot do. Generally, they can perform better than men because they use their heart in making decisions. Though they are quite sentimental as compared with men, yet they have the heart of the mother who explicitly understands the situation in the organization.

As a matter of fact, it was stated that women principals lead to achieve better school management. This means that they are capable enough in reaching their goals. They have the leadership skills equal or better with that of men. Above all, they never forget that they are leaders who tend the needs of their children (Steyn & Parsaloi, 2014).

**Table 1: Themes and Core Ideas on Women School Heads Views on Women Empowerment in School Leadership**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Risk Takers	Variant	<p>They tried to find ways that sometimes are hard to explain.</p> <p>They face the challenges without any hesitations.</p> <p>They model themselves to bring change to the lives of their colleagues, learners, and the community they serve.</p> <p>They are no different with men leaders.</p> <p>They can do what men leaders can.</p>
Shared the same abilities with men	General	

Legend:

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

### 3.2. Problems Faced by Women School Heads

Table 2 presents the themes and core ideas on the problems faced by women school heads.

#### Decision-Making

In reality, they found it difficult in making decisions. Sometimes, their decisions can affect relationships with colleagues and the overall operations of the school. In particular, it was mentioned during the interview that:

*“Decision-making that are critically important. Communication or collaboration among your teachers, pupils, and stakeholders in order to promote collaborative learning.” (P2)*

Another participant shared:

*“I encountered problems like handling the different attitudes and personalities of my teachers, maintaining good relationship of the stakeholders and looking for financial resources to help the school.” (P10)*

Making decisions in the workplace is such an arduous to do. For the school female school heads, they faced this problem since there are those who cannot understand the nature of their decisions. In addition, it is not easy to please everyone in the organization. There are always those who would refute and would have a negative perspective.

The study of Miller et al. (2009) that decision-making is somewhat giving the school heads the power. Through this, they could be able to say their thoughts and ideas. Aside from that, they are giving strength in their decisions though it would be difficult for others to accept. However, at the end of the day it is the school head who has the power to execute. But this will have the approval of the majority.

#### Poor Classroom due to Natural Disaster

It cannot be avoided that classrooms are affected by natural and man-made disasters. They faced the wrath of natural disaster which destroyed the classrooms and affected the students in general. It was narrated that:

*“School site-because of not so sure site to where the school building would be possible to build. School building-most of it was damaged during the earthquake in 2019.” (P3)*

The classroom is said to be the second home of the students. However, with the series of natural disasters that struck the Province of Cotabato there were classrooms which are no longer suited for learning. These could put the lives of the children in the perilous condition.

Natural disasters destroyed not only house but also classrooms. Buildings did not escape from the wrath of nature. This resulted to poor motivation among the students since they do not have the rooms to use for learning. Conducive for learning classroom is a must to learn the lessons (Herrera-Almanza & Cas, 2021).

#### Adjustments with Colleagues

More so, they have to adjust to different personalities in the organization that they handle. It can be associated by the mere fact that not everyone has the support to the actions of the school heads. It was reiterated that:

*“Adjustment between colleagues- in every institution there are different personalities and principles that needs understanding.” (P3)*

In addition:

*“As a woman leader, I had encountered significant and remarkable problems among my subordinate and this is suggestive of the high regard and respect of men and women alike in my leadership.” (P4)*

Normally, the school heads have to deal with different people. Each of them has different attitudes and personalities. There are those who would support and others would not. It is also a normal picture where teachers do not report to school and do not even have a prior notice to the school head. Thus, for female school heads, this resulted to a problem since they have to adjust to each one of them in the organization.

As stated by Walker and Yu-Kwong (2008) that school heads are the leaders who would have to bring every individual to their target programs and activities. Their participation is a must wherein they could work together for the common good. Adjustment is indeed a difficult thing to overcome. Not everyone will like someone’s leadership styles.

**Table 2: Themes and Core Ideas on the Problems Faced by Women School Heads**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Decision-making	Variant	
Poor Classroom due to natural disaster	Variant	<p>They faced different problems especially in making the right decisions that may affect relationships with colleagues and the overall operation of school.</p> <p>They faced the wrath of natural disaster which destroyed the classrooms and affected the students in general.</p>
Adjustments with Colleagues	General	<p>They had to consider a lot of things in dealing with their superiors, and colleagues who have the detrimental influence on the operation of the school.</p>

Legend:

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

**Strategies Employed by Women School Heads in Overcoming the Challenges**

School heads employed different strategies in overcoming challenges as presented on table 3.

**Setting Work Standards**

They set work standards which they believed that they need to implement work professionalism that are acceptable to all.

As stated in the interview:

*“Setting standard between work and colleagues for the betterment of the school.”* (P3)

Female school heads reminded their colleagues about their sense of professionalism especially in their work ethics. It enabled teachers to be reminded of their responsibilities. They have to keep in mind that they have the role to fulfill. Their school heads will lead them in honing their learners. More importantly, when they know their work ethics, they will have the realization that indeed they have to follow their school heads to promote easy access to all the school's programs.

The improvement of work should precede the setting of work standards. This will guide the employees to do what is good and what is right for the organization. They are led to knowing their own roles and responsibilities. Teachers will become progressive their teaching career since they have the strong ethical standards (Samkange, 2013).

### **Settling Conflicts in the Workplace**

Women school heads also tried to settle conflicts in the workplace. They learned to respond to different differences in the workplace and learned to settle them based on their abilities in settling disputes.

*“I usually settle minor differences among my subordinates in a diplomatic way. I call their attention and talk each other why and how they behave that way and settlement follows.”* (P4)

Female school heads are not like any other leaders. No any leaders who like conflict in the workplace. This means that when conflicts arise, they are mediating so that they could settle everything in their level. Above all, there is no reason that misunderstandings will not be solved because it will reflect to their leadership skills.

Dealing with conflicts tests the leadership skills of the school heads. When things do not work well in the organization, they have to call the attention of the two warring groups. They have to be a good listener and will look into the solution to the problem. It was suggested that every leader must have a unique conflict resolution (Follett, 2011).

### **Establishing Rapport with Colleagues**

Meanwhile, they establish rapport with their colleagues. They learned to value the importance of strong positive working relationship in achieving the goals of education. Also, they valued to become strong in facing the aridity in leading schools. It was shared by the participant that:

*“Actively establishing rapport to reduce confusion or better yet, to develop a more harmonious relationship.”* (P5)

Socializing with the teachers could make a difference in strengthening good relationship between school heads and teachers. They could also listen whenever there are problems may it be personal or related to the job. Right immediately, they can share their helping hands and even have their ears to listen.

School heads have to first build connections with the teachers. Problems will occur if there is the failure on their part. They will not also lead with divisiveness, instead they have to lead by example. In the same vein, they are authentic and spent time with the teachers. Also, they embraced teamwork and offered help (Lieberman & Miller, 2005).

**Table 3: Themes and Core Ideas on strategies employed by women school heads in overcoming the challenges**

Themes	Frequency of Response	Core Ideas
Setting work standards	Variant	They believed that they need to implement work professionalism by setting standards which are acceptable to all.
Settling Conflicts in the workplace	Variant	They learned to respond to different differences in the workplace and learned to settle them based on their abilities in settling disputes.
Establishing rapport with colleagues	Variant	<p>They learned to value the importance of strong positive working relationship in achieving the goals of education.</p> <p>They valued to become strong in facing the aridity in leading schools.</p>

Legend:

General 50%

Typical 25-40%

Variant 20%

**Intervention Plan**

**Rationale**

When school heads have the drive to create a healthy environment, then they have to facilitate knowledge sharing. As a leader, it is their role to lead by example. They have to keep in mind that there are teachers who have struggles in their lessons and in handling the students. Teachers are also bombarded with a lot of paper works aside from teaching.

Hence, this intervention plan provided a picture of cooperation between teachers and the school heads regardless of their gender. It is believed that they have to inspire their subordinates and should not use their power to delineate negativity and poor management skills. As leaders, they are empowered to sustain the pedestal of camaraderie through innovative leadership which in turn empower teachers to perform well.

**Objective**

Create a harmonious and healthy working environment



**The Intervention Plan**

**Table 3**

Areas of Concern and Database	Objective	Activities	Time Frame	Persons' Involved	Performance Indicator
Workplace conflict	Create a harmonious and healthy working environment	Seminar workshop in workplace conflict resolutions	2021-2022	Speaker Teachers School Head	95%
		Attendance in Retreat	2021-2022	Speaker Teachers School Head	98%

**4.1. Implications for Practice**

Women leaders are of equal footing with men. They can do what men can in the workplace. Having them is an example of gender equality despite the fact that there are still those who do not believe in them. Empowering women means removal of misogynistic mindsets where women are treated as sex symbol and no value in the society.

In the parlance of school system, women school heads created an environment full of colors. They acted like mothers who treated their children with equal value of love. This study gave me the perspectives as a woman that I have a good place to prove my worth.

Their stories inspire me that I have to pursue and be like them in the near future. There are no rooms for negativities that I cannot make things happen. In the same vein, this study connotes that women school leaders are epitome of home and strength. After work, they have to tend to their own family and give their needs.

Henceforth, I can say that as they took risks in the workplace, they overtly show that they are bold enough. They have the will to pursue things even though it might affect their credibility. Above all, having a woman leader is not a hindrance in the delivery of the Department of Education’s programs.

**4.2 Implications for Future Research**

Since this study determined women empowerment among the school heads in the Municipality of Makilala, this study suggests that another study will cover the wider setting. This will include men as well so that their leadership styles will be compared using the qualitative approach.

Meanwhile, another study should be done wherein it will be participated by teachers. Their responses will confirm how firm and strong women school heads in terms of different aspects of leadership especially in handling differences and solving conflicts in the workplace. On the contrary, this will investigate how teachers viewed women school heads in general.

The findings of the study could serve as the spring bound for researchers in supporting and negating their findings. Nevertheless, they can see the other sides of the coin. Through this, they can make inferences that is beyond the contexts of the present study. It is noted that different people have different worldviews. As such, they could have different findings comparing to my study.

This study corroborates that future researchers could have used the themes in coming up with a questionnaire in conducting a descriptive-correlational research. Finally, it implies that the findings of this study could widen the horizon of researchers especially those who are interested on empowering women in the workplace. Hence, as they venture, they can see the brighter side of women leadership skills.

### 4.3 Concluding Remarks

As a woman and as a teacher, I see myself in these women school heads. They are mothers, grandmothers, leaders, and sometimes considered as enemies by those who do not like their leadership skills. But on my side, I can understand their journey. Being in the Department of Education, different forms of problems occurred. Each school head needs to face it with their might so that they can make a difference in the lives of the learners and the teachers.

It substantiates the idea that women school heads can equally do how men can. Sometimes, they performed better. Though, they are quite meticulous as compared to those of men, eventually it is understood that women are women.

It is their very nature to have that kind of persona. Their undertakings in school reminded me that soon I can be like them. Therefore, I have to replicate their attitudes and mindsets especially when I am in the midst of fear and quandary. I have faced a lot of challenges especially in dealing with my learners but my leadership skills helped me a lot to overcome them.

Women school heads deserve love and respect by their colleagues. Due credit should be given to them since it is not that easy to be like them. Though sometimes they are feeling so down, yet they lead teachers to reach their ultimate goals. One of the things which I like most is that they have the mother in them who knows how to listen and consider every time we have problems in our own family.

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