School Administrators’ Preferences in Hiring Home Economics Teachers: The Role of Gender Stereotypes

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ABSTRACT

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| This study explored the School Administrators' Preferences in Hiring Home Economics Teachers: The Role of Gender Stereotypes. Purposive sampling was used to identify the seven (7) school heads based on the set inclusion criteria. This study used a phenomenology research design to extract the ideas from the participants. In-depth interview (IDI) was employed in this study. Previous study focused on the Filipino Hospitality industry Gender Disparities: Hiring Practices, Salary Levels, and Promotional Opportunities. However, gaps have been identified from the last study, which focused only on the hospitality industry, not the educational settings, particularly the hiring practices of home economics teachers.  Thematic analysis used themes that emerged from the work experiences of school heads with different genders: handling difficulty in the workplace, respecting cultural diversity, and being proficient in home economics teaching. The gender preferences of school heads in hiring home economics teachers were valuing diversity and female-dominated. The insights drawn from the study's findings that will contribute to the academic setting were promoting gender and development in the workplace and harmonious relationship to academic settings. Department of Education (DepEd) key officials may conduct school campaigns on the importance of gender equality by integrating it into the school curriculum as an elective subject.  School heads may suggest implementing seminars, training, and workshops about gender equality for all the teaching and non-teaching staff in the organization. |

***Keywords:*** *Gender Preferences; Gender Equality; School Heads; Home Economics*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, gender equity is a significant social issue. In fact, gender discrimination influences recruitment, salaries, and promotions, particularly in private organizations, resulting in decreased employee satisfaction and increased stress (Njoki, 2021). Schools should embrace principles of equality for everyone, especially in the teaching and learning process. For example, in Japan, the subject became mandatory for all students in 1994, aiming to encourage men's participation in domestic life (Branlat & Sano, 2021). In addition, with the guidance of teachers, the classroom environment will create a fair learning environment that can help all students explore various career options and prepare them for evolving roles at home and in the workplace as Martin (2022) suggested that teachers should foster safe spaces that allow students to explore their gender identities and treat all students equitably.

Some employees indicate gender preferences as one of the requirements in a particular workplace. This is because research on gender preferences in hiring home economics teachers reveals complex attitudes and biases. For instance, Card et al. (2021) proposed that a study in Austria found that eliminating explicit gender preferences in job ads increased the hiring of women for traditionally male-targeted jobs and vice versa. Moreover, gender stereotypes associated with job criteria influence hiring decisions, with more stereotypically masculine traits reducing female hires and vice versa.

Furthermore, one of the factors also in the hiring process in the workplace is pedagogical content knowledge (PDK).  As Mafa-Theledi (2024) discussed, PCK and Subject Matter Content Knowledge are essential for effective STEM teaching, enhancing educators' professionalism, and improving learning outcomes. In other words, pedagogical content knowledge (PDK) is about knowing what to teach and how to prepare it well. Teachers must have the ability to combine subject knowledge and teaching strategies to create effective and meaningful learning for the students effectively.

In addition, another factor influencing the hiring of Home Economics teachers in the workplace is gender preferences and gender stereotypes, which can create bias and discrimination. For instance, Bongco & Abenes (2019) noted that the teaching profession in the Philippines is highly feminized, with women comprising most teachers in both elementary and secondary schools. Similarly, French et al. (2020) clarified that women are more likely to enter the teaching profession. Chagina (2023) further agreed, stating that females are recognized for their ability to understand emotions and build relationships with students. On the other hand, male teachers are more likely to leave the education system due to workload and lack of support (Triegaardt & Hugo, 2020). In contrast, McGrath et al. (2020) argued that male teachers in primary schools play important roles at the child, classroom, organizational, and societal levels, moving beyond simplistic notions of role models or father figures.

On the other hand, a study of male students in home economics found that gender inequality leads to unequal treatment, impacting classroom interactions and sustaining gender divisions in the subject (Pregoner et al., 2020).  Consequently, millions of men and women are denied access to land a job, training, and administrative and leadership qualities because of their gender identity or preferences. As a result, school heads show ambivalence towards minority-gender teachers, with more positive perceptions of women in non-traditional roles than men. Moreover, gender influences the administrative and instructional leadership styles of school heads, as proposed in Tan's Gender Role Orientation Theory of Institutional Management (Tan et al., 2020).

Additionally, most people believe that the home economics course is intended for women because they believe that this subject is focused on household chores, cooking, sewing, rearing the child, decorating, and home management. As Kim et al. (2019a) said, implicit gender biases are prevalent among students, who often perceive home economics as feminine despite expressing favorable explicit attitudes towards the subject. Nevertheless, home economics is also for boys because it has areas such as agriculture, industrial arts, and computers. For instance, males prefer ICT devices like smartphones and tablets, while females prefer online services such as WhatsApp and text messaging (Williams et al., 2019). Students' gender equity awareness also impacts attitudes towards home economics, with those holding traditional gender role views scoring lowest on perceived usefulness but highest on career importance (Kim et al., 2019b). Best practices for promoting gender equality in Philippine schools include training personnel to combat discrimination, integrating gender issues into curricula, and providing equal opportunities for all students (Emfimo et al., 2024).

In addition, some previous studies focus on the Filipino Hospitality industry Gender Disparities: Hiring Practices, Salary Levels, and Promotional Opportunities (Darroca et al., 2024). This research employs a qualitative approach, utilizing the snowball sampling technique to conduct in-depth interviews with women from various roles within the Filipino hospitality sector. However, gaps have been identified since the previous study focused only on the hospitality industry, not the educational settings, particularly the hiring practices of home economics teachers.

Given this, the researchers argue that school heads have a different perspective regarding gender preferences since they know what specific areas in home economics are being offered at the school. With increased attention to gender equity in other educational fields, this is an area where the researcher needs further insight as to how leaders make decisions about hiring home economics teachers based on their gender, and This also highlights potential gender biases in leadership and hiring practices within the education sector, which can contribute to a better understanding of how gender influences decision-making processes.

* 1. **Research Questions**
1. What are the work experiences of school heads with different genders?
2. What are the gender preferences of school heads in hiring home economics teachers?
3. What insights can be drawn that will contribute to the academic setting?

2. material and methods

The study utilized Qualitative research design, precisely the Phenomenology approach, focusing on understanding the lived experiences of school heads and their perceptions regarding gender preferences in hiring home economics. The purposive sampling was used to select the seven (7) school heads as a participant from different secondary schools in Digos City, Davao del Sur, Philippines. The inclusion criteria of the participants must have five (5) years in service as school heads, manage home economics teachers in junior high school and senior high school, and have five or more leadership or management seminars and training to support in selecting what gender preferences in hiring home economics teachers as part of their respective schools. In-depth interviews (IDI) were used to collect the data on the participants based on their personal experiences and perspectives.

Moreover, a semi-structured interview was used to explore the gender preferences of school heads in hiring home economics teachers. The instrument consists of open-ended questions that allow the participants to express their opinions, experiences, and views. The transcript was analyzed in English using thematic analysis. Key terms were identified for manual coding, and themes were developed during the data analysis process. The research study followed ethical guidelines to verify pleasant practice in research. The ethical codes are given importance in that they were observed and applied to the informants in the context that concerns the agreement of both participants and the researchers. Confidentiality was also ensured in the study. All the gathered data was kept with absolute confidentiality to respect the identity of our key informants and to ensure the informants feel safe. The use of pseudonyms is advised to protect the anonymity of the participants.

3. results and discussion

**3.1 Work Experiences of school heads with Different Genders**

Three major themes summarize the work experiences of school heads with different genders: difficulty handling in the workplace, respect diversity, and proficient home economics teachers.

* + 1. **Handling Difficulty in the Workplace**

School heads face significant challenges, especially when dealing with teachers who act as if they are in charge. Some teachers disrespect their department heads, believing they are more competent or better suited for leadership. This creates a difficult situation for department heads in managing discipline, addressing diverse backgrounds, and handling unprofessional behavior. Other participants shared their experiences, as they said:

“*It’s a quite challenging for me to handle different gender in the workplace with different attitudes and behaviors. “(P4)*

“*As a school heads, my work experience with different gender is very challenging and enjoy of dealing different attitudes and behavior.” (P5)*

*“My work experience as a school head it is quite difficult to handle with 55 teachers in our department with different attitudes. Some of them are so bossy and some of them are feeling just like a boss.” (P6)*

*“School head is very stressful since some of my teachers are very hard-headed in terms of submission of the paper works.” (P1)*

The responses highlight the challenges of managing a diverse workforce with varying attitudes and behaviors in handling different genders. School heads face challenges such as work ethics and values that can hinder collaboration and innovation (Lazaro et al., 2024). School heads acknowledge the difficulties in balancing with some teachers displaying strong personalities or resistance to administrative tasks. Despite the challenges, they also recognize the enjoyment and growth of navigating such diversity, emphasizing the importance of effective management in fostering a productive and harmonious work environment. School heads foster a positive work environment and organizational success (Panunciar et al., 2024) and engage in self-improvement and leadership development to enhance their ability to create supportive school environments (Obien Calatin, 2024).

* + 1. **Respecting Cultural Diversity**

Our diverse culture, shaped by various colonizations, brings together individuals with different beliefs, traditions, and behaviors, all of which should be respected. Respect fosters a healthy environment, encourages collaboration, and boosts productivity. When employees feel valued, it leads to organizational success. Respecting individual differences creates a positive work culture that motivates employees to contribute to the organization's growth.

“*Culture is diverse. I am upholding culture sensitivity and equality. “(P4)*

*“Go with them, work with them and gain more respect regardless of what gender, beliefs and culture.” (P3)*

*“The very important thing is to respect the differences in terms of culture, gender and language. We should know how to show respect someone.” (P4)*

Cultural Diversity is essential for fostering positive interactions and communication by respecting and understanding different cultural backgrounds. When culturally aware individuals are better equipped to engage with others in diverse environments, especially in the workplace. Implementing culturally responsive leadership practices is essential for effectively including all students and promoting harmony within the school and community (Savvopoulos et al., 2024). Cultural diversity in the workplace has become more prevalent, necessitating adaptability and openness to different ways of thinking (G. C. Martin, 2014).  School heads must prioritize cultural awareness and demonstrate openness and sensitivity, creating inclusive workplaces where cultural identities are valued. Effective leaders demonstrate moral leadership with high sensitivity to cultural diversity (Raihani, 2022).

* + 1. **Proficient Home Economics Teacher**

Proficient Home Economics teachers play a key role in the 21st century, equipping students with academic knowledge and practical skills. As part of Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), they help shift the subject from being seen as essential to a valuable, career-oriented field, preparing students for future professions with expertise and hands-on learning.

*“I have been handling in our school for how many years, and they perform well as a TLE teacher who are teaching different specialization in Home Economics.” (P5)*

*“I have observed the strong performance of TLE teachers specializing in Home Economics” (P1)*

*“Women excel in key areas such as cooking, budgeting and possess essential traits like honesty and work ethics.” (P2)*

*“Both male and female teachers bring valuable skills to the table. Female teachers often demonstrate empathy to the students while male teachers excel in hand-on technical areas.” (P6)*

*“Having worked closely with both male and female Home Economics Teachers. I‘ve seen that they are proficient in their teaching, and they have ability to relate their teaching in the experiences of the diverse students.” (P7)*

*“When I conduct an observation with my teachers, I was amazed that they have the ability to integrate their own hands-on experiences into their lessons, they were also relating their lessons to the experiences of their students.” (P2)*

Proficient Home Economics teachers, supported by school heads who recognize the subject's growing importance, play a crucial role in shaping students' skills for the 21st century. Moreover, Home Economics teachers understand the significance of developing critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and collaboration competencies in their students (R. Escobar, 2023). As part of Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE), Home Economics is essential not only for academic learning but also for practical career skills, and it is now considered a key career-oriented field. In fact, according to Ehioghiren Uyiosa Faity et al. (2022), this subject enhances entrepreneurial abilities, wealth creation, and poverty alleviation. Additionally, Home Economics provides competencies in financial management, culinary expertise, leadership, entrepreneurship, and adaptability (Romero et al., 2024). By prioritizing this subject, school heads ensure that teachers with the necessary expertise can equip students for success in diverse professions.

**3.2 Gender Preferences of School Head in hiring Home Economics Teachers**

Two major themes where summarize the gender preferences of school head in hiring home economics teachers: Valuing Diversity and Female Dominated.

* + 1. **Valuing Diversity**

According to Ranta & Ylinen (2021), gender diversity is found to be a significant predictor of workplace gender equality and inclusiveness. Furthermore, gender equality in the workplace has positive effects on organizational performance and economic growth. As Hoa (2020) states, gender diversity enhances quality improvement practices and overall performance. In the same vein, valuing diversity in teaching emphasizes the importance of recognizing and appreciating different backgrounds, perspectives, and teaching styles. In the context of Home Economics, this approach highlights how both male and female teachers bring unique strengths to the classroom. By fostering an inclusive environment that values diverse teaching approaches, schools can provide students with a more enriching and well-rounded learning experience.

*“It’s true that more women apply for Home Economics positions, as a department heads, I make sure that all candidates were based on their teaching credentials and professionalism. Gender doesn’t influence my decision making”. (P2)*

*“I prefer to look candidates based on their teaching abilities and expertise rather than gender. My goal is to ensure that the teacher has the skills needed to inspire and teach students effectively” (P3)*

*“As a school head, my focus is the candidates’ qualifications and their ability to engage with diverse students. Although more women apply for these positions, there are also qualified male candidates who bring unique teaching methods in the four walls of the classroom.” (P7)*

*“I don’t have gender preferences, what matters most is the teacher’s ability to teach effectively. (P4)*

*“I don’t see gender is an issue. I believe that diverse experiences, backgrounds and perspectives are most important to enriching the teaching of the subjects”. (P6)*

*“Gender in not an issue. In the past, I have hired both male and female teachers who bring unique perspective to the subject matter Now, they are passionate and committed to their role as a teacher. I don’t regret it.” (P1)*

*“Work ethics matters me most.” (P7)*

School heads emphasize that teaching ability and qualifications are the primary factors in hiring Home Economics teachers, rather than gender. According to Leibur et al. (2021), professional standards (PS) assess teacher competence and support professional development. Although more women may apply for these positions, school leaders focus on the diverse experiences and skills each candidate brings to the classroom. In addition, School focuses on both professional skills and personal characteristics as preferences (Tamir, 2021). As a result, this approach ensures that teachers, regardless of gender, are hired for their ability to inspire, engage, and effectively teach students, ultimately enriching the learning environment.

* + 1. **Female Dominated**

History shows that women were once ill-treated, often defined solely by their roles as wives and mothers (Albayrak, 2023). However, today, they play a vital role in society, especially in the workplace. Indeed, women are goal-oriented, hardworking, and excel in meal preparation and office paperwork. As Pathak and Pant (2023) note, their hard work, passion, and dedication across various professions, including teaching, are increasingly recognized as valuable assets in the modern workforce. Therefore, all individuals, regardless of gender, deserve equal opportunities and women’s skills and knowledge should be respected not only for their beauty but also for their professional abilities.

*“I prefer female teacher because based on my personal experiences, female teacher is more meticulous, more teachable and organized.” (P1)*

*“When it comes to the rules oriented, cooking skills, females are more dominated.” (P5)*

*“Female teachers are keen to instructions than male teachers”. (P4)*

*“Home Economics field has always attracted more female teachers; female teachers often bring nurturing qualities.” (P2)*

*“Female teachers tend to bring strong organizational skills to the table which is beneficial for managing administrative duties.” (P7)*

*“Gender doesn’t influence my hiring decisions, but I do see that female teachers nurture the roles both classroom and administrative task such as organizing school events.” (P3)*

These responses reflect common perceptions of female teachers in Home Economics, emphasizing their strengths such as attention to detail, strong organizational skills, and an aptitude for following instructions. Additionally, many participants note that female teachers often bring nurturing qualities to classroom teaching and administrative responsibilities. Female administrators, according to Özcan et al. (2022), were perceived as more interested in the profession, meticulous, and dedicated. However, despite these observations, the importance of focusing on qualifications and abilities rather than gender is highlighted, reinforcing that hiring decisions should prioritize skills and experience over gender preferences. In fact, employers prioritize various skills and experiences when making hiring decisions. Teacher education graduates must possess communication, ICT proficiency, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, research, and leadership (Caingcoy, 2021). Moreover, employers seek qualities aligned with institutional learning outcomes, including knowledge, skills, and values (Santillan et al., 2020).

**Insights can be drawn from the findings of the study that will contribute to the academic setting.**

* + 1. **Promoting Gender and Development (GAD) in the workplace**

Gender and development are interdisciplinary studies of the social relationships between men and women in the emerging society. Many schools in the Philippines, specifically public schools, have adapted and promoted gender and development. Department of Education (DepEd) issued the enclosed Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy in line with its Gender and Development (GAD) under the DepEd Order 32, Series 2017.

 *“LGTBQ will be given an equal opportunity in the workplace.” (P1)*

 *“Observe gender equality opportunity in the workplace either in assigning the tasks or in giving opportunities for promotion.” (P2)*

 *“Both male and female teacher are great teacher and impact in academic growth.” (P3)*

 *“In my role as a school head, I strike to create an environment where gender equality is promoted in every aspect of the workplace which includes ensuring equal opportunities for both male and female in professional development, leadership roles, and classroom responsibilities.” (P7)*

 *“Promoting gender and development (GAD) in the workplace is important for a fair and balanced environment.” (P4)*

*“I actively support Gender and Development initiative by proving resources and training on gender sensitivity. I encourage diversity in the hiring process and create a more inclusive atmosphere where teachers recognize of their contributions and skills.” (P5)*

The school heads emphasize the importance of gender equality and inclusivity in the workplace, ensuring equal opportunities for all, including the LGBTQ+ community. Additionally, they recognize the value of both male and female teachers and promote a fair environment through gender sensitivity training, inclusive hiring practices, and support for professional development. Moreover, organizations focus on cultivating inclusive work environments, enhancing skills for a diverse professional landscape, and emphasizing leadership's role in shaping inclusive spaces (Monisha & Annapriya, 2023). Similarly, school heads can create an inclusive work culture by ensuring fair hiring processes, addressing discrimination, promoting diversity training, and providing equal career growth opportunities (Garrick et al., 2024). As a result, the commitment to the Gender and Development (GAD) initiative aims to foster a balanced and empowering workplace for all staff. Effective implementation of GAD policies is crucial for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in educational and healthcare settings.

* + 1. **Harmonious Relationships in Academic Settings**

A strong workplace relationship is key to success, especially in an academic setting, as it fosters camaraderie, reduces toxicity, and creates a sense of belonging. In addition, a harmonious environment encourages support, motivation, and teamwork, which allows individuals to perform better and face fewer challenges. Moreover, in academic settings, workplace happiness positively affects perceived performance (Arar & Oneren, 2021).

“I *think it can create a harmonious relationship within each other since we are all open in terms of gender sensitivity in the workplace.” (P5)*

*“Promote positive environment to by respecting different cultures and beliefs regardless of what gender.” (P7)*

*“All employees are important and have different roles of the organization. Everyone is important regardless of their gender preferences.” (P1)*

“*Skills and talents of a teacher will boost if there is no discrimination towards his or her/his gender in the workplace.” (P2)*

An institution or organization can only thrive when everyone fosters strong professional relationships. In addition, effective human relations, including open communication, empathy, and constructive conflict management, are key to fostering positive work environments and employee engagement (Olivia Putri Andini et al., 2024). Furthermore, positive relationships create a sense of freedom, allowing individuals to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their ideas, opinions, and perspectives. As a result, effective teamwork leads to performance gains that exceed individual efforts and allows employees to adapt to a dynamic environment (Bisbey & Salas, 2019). Consequently, this openness ultimately drives the collective effort needed to achieve the organization's vision, mission, and goals.

4. Conclusion

Based on the summary of the findings, several themes emerged from the participants' responses during the interview. The work experiences of Technology and Livelihood Education (TLE) department heads with different genders revealed the following themes: difficulty in handling workplace challenges, respecting cultural diversity, and proficient Home Economics teachers. Regarding the gender preferences of TLE department heads when hiring Home Economics teachers, two key themes were identified: valuing diversity and the female-dominated nature of the profession. Additionally, insights from the participants' stories highlighted two other themes: promoting Gender and Development (GAD) in the workplace and fostering harmonious relationships in academic settings.

It is important to note that the study only focuses on seven school heads in public secondary schools in Digos City, Davao del Sur. Given the limited scope of this study, future researchers may expand the research to include both public primary and secondary schools across the entire Davao Region. Furthermore, key officials from the Department of Education (DepEd) may consider conducting school campaigns on the importance of gender equality, integrating it into the school curriculum as an elective subject. Lastly, school heads may suggest implementing seminars, training, and workshops on gender equality for all teaching and non-teaching staff.

**Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)s**

Option 2:

The author used Grammarly as a language editor during the writing or editing of manuscripts. The author reviewed and edited the content and took full responsibility for this publication.

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