



COPING MECHANISMS OF NEW GRADUATE FEMALE INSTRUCTORS TO DEAL WITH THEIR CHALLENGES: THE CASE OF BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Women in the world have a huge contribution for the economic, political and social development of nations. Teaching is one of the social aspect wherein women are involved. In the Ethiopian context, the participation of women in teaching, especially in higher education has been growing from time to time. However, information about how to cope up their challenges is not well studied. Acquainted of this gap, this study attempted to explore the coping mechanisms of new graduate female instructors for their challenges by taking Bahir Dar University as a case in point. To meet the objective of the study, qualitative method with the case study design was used. In this study, fifteen semi structure interviewees were participated. All of the participants were selected by using non probability sampling technique specifically purposive sampling. Therefore, the data sources were primary data. The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. The findings from the study revealed that new graduate female instructors used different strategies to deal with their problems. Such as, Keeping silent, seriousness, student and peer evaluation, spend free time at home, share office, withholding information about their profession. From the finding we can conclude that new graduate female instructors used various coping mechanisms to cope up there challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

Instructors can determine the quality of education in universities of Ethiopia and their performance represents one of the main determinants in quality of higher education (Dubovicki and Banjar, 2014). Instructor means a person who is capable of instructing knowledge that will help students to acquire skills that will be used to face the tasks in their life and they promote the development of a country by producing skill human power in diverse fields of area (Hakielimu, 2008). According to Mahwish (2012), described that from different function of Instructors, teaching has taken a lion share and it is considered as a female work in most advanced countries. However, in developing countries, being Instructor is a demanding profession (UNESCO, 2006). Whereas, the situations under which men and women can deal with these demanding professions is different.

In developing countries, since women are participating less than men while increasing the number of female Instructors in higher education have a positive effect on girls' education and making students more motivating indicated by (Appiah and Agbelevor, 2015). In Ethiopia, each year thousands of students graduate from the universities and some of them join in the profession of university teaching (Teshome, 2008). And through affirmative action and quota system females are joined in this profession. Meanwhile, they need professional assistance from university administrators and experienced Instructors in order to be effective in the profession (Butucha, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

Instructors are the pillar of the higher education system who help students to enhance their skills that used to shoulder the

responsibility of their country and they also have a high social relevance due to the decisive function of education for the wellbeing of both individual and society at large (Jeylan, 2013). Furthermore, Almaz (2003) states that educating women have great social, economic and political relevance of a certain country. Hence, the presence of female Instructors in universities would play a significant role to encourage women's education in a country. This implies that the hiring of female Instructors in university is an issue that has become increasingly important for ministries of education and giving greater policy and programming attention to them (UNSECO, 2006).

There are different studies which were conducted in Ethiopia and abroad related to issues of female Instructors. To mention some of these studies, Nzeli (2013) studied on 'challenges faced by the female head teacher in the management of secondary schools in Kenya'. Mahwish (2012) conducted a research on 'Factors influencing women to become instructors in Pakistan'. Amare (2013) also studied on 'relationships among teachers' sense of efficacy, self- perceptions of the teaching roles and selected background characteristics'. Other researcher Abu Baker *et al.*, (2015) studied on 'Factors that influence the female instructor's satisfaction in private higher education institutions in Malaysia'. Furthermore, Desta (2014) studied on 'teacher job satisfaction and commitment in general secondary schools of Hadiya zone'. Sinknesh (2014) studied on 'the representation of female instructors in selected colleges of Addis Ababa University'. Apart from these, Meskerem (2014) studied on 'factors that influence female teacher's involvement in action research and UNESCO (2006) conducted a research on 'The impact of women instructors on girls' education'. Upon review of the above studies, the researcher able to reach at a few conclusions. As far as the researcher knowledge is concerned, none of these studies focused on the coping mechanism of new graduate female Instructors to deal with their challenges in the study area. Hence, there is a need for research focused on contextualized and understanding of the coping mechanism of new graduate female Instructors to deal with their challenges as many studies has yet not addressed.

Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the coping mechanisms of new graduate female instructors to deal their challenges in Bahir Dar University?

Research Questions

- What are the coping mechanisms of new graduate female instructors to deal their challenges in Bahir Dar University?

Significance of the Study

This study will important in contributing knowledge for a person who have never been known about the coping mechanisms of new graduate female instructors to deal their challenges in Bahir Dar University. It can also use as a secondary source for further studies related to the topic and will motivate other researchers to study further on the issue under study.

Scope of the Study

The study is geographically limited at Bahir Dar University. The target groups of this study new graduate female instructors

who have greater than six months or one semester experiences and who have not more than two years' experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Bahir Dar University. In order to achieve the objectives of this research the researcher employed qualitative approaches for its most advantage over quantitative approach. The aim to employ a qualitative approach to this study because it helps the researcher to examine the challenges of new graduate female instructors in detail and in-depth manner through case study design. The researcher employed case study design by considering Bahir Dar University and a group of new graduate female instructors as a case. Regarding to Sampling Techniques non probability sampling techniques and from non-probability sampling techniques, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique. In this type of purposive sampling, it was difficult to specify how many interviewees the researcher intended to contact at the beginning of the research. Instead the researcher was continued choosing them until a saturation point is reached. Accordingly, 15 new graduate female instructors interviewed from Bahir Dar University. To address the objective of the study, the researcher used primary data sources. The researcher used primary data sources which were collected from new graduate female Instructors. In order to achieve the research objectives, the researcher conducted the semi-structured interview with 15 new graduate female instructors. The discussion was conducted in Amharic language and notes are taken during interview session by researcher peer. Based on the interest of participants and the researcher, the time was appointed. Thematic data analysis was employed. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher used different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and cited properly in text and reference part.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Semi- Structured Interviewees

No	Code	Work Experience
1	P1	1 year and 3 months
2	P2	1 year and 8 months
3	P3	1 year and 6 months
4	P4	1 year and 6 months
5	P5	1 year and 6 months
6	P6	1 year and 3 months
7	P7	1 year and 6 months
8	P8	1 year and 6 months
9	P9	1 year and 6 months
10	P10	1 year and 6 months
11	P11	1 year and 6 months
12	P12	1 year and 8 months
13	P13	1 year and 6 months
14	P14	1 year and 3 months
15	P15	1 year and 6 months

Key: P = participant

Coping Mechanisms

The finding indicated that new graduate female instructors used the following coping mechanisms to cope with their challenges.

Keeping silent

Regarding to keeping silent, almost all of the semi-structured interviewees described that they keep silent when they faced

harassment from students, staffs, and youths both in the community where they live in and in campus. In relation to kept silent, one of the semi-structured interviewees (P 5) on this described: "I kept silent when students show me signs of harassment like beckon during teaching. Youths in the village also speak unnecessary words to me. Male instructors in campus approach me for the sake of love and try to harass me".

Moreover, the other semi-structured interviewees (p11) mentioned that,

I keep silent when academic staffs and security guards forward unfriendly words such as "you daughters of president of the university!" Some others speak if I am employed by the university president on which I also keep silent. In the department meeting I also prefer to keep silent, for the reason that I suspect if senior staffs undermine or scorn my idea.

As the participant described in her words depicted above the finding in this study realizes that keeping silent is also identified with other previous findings (Vohlidalova, 2011 and Rabinowitz, 1996). Vohlidalova (2011), for instance, finds that a victim and enhance confidence in one's own capacity is significant to cope with sexual harassment. The fact that person's being able to cope up with sexual harassment strengthens and highlights her agency and makes it possible to distance herself from the identity of a victim. Rabinowitz (1996), on the other hand, finds that regarding oneself as an active actor makes it possible to maintain a feeling of control over the situation, analysis of responses of actual targets of sexual harassment, confirmed that silence has repeatedly featured as a crucial and by far the most common coping strategy.

However, this finding contravenes with the previous finding by Hill and Silva (2005), who argued that open resistance strategies contributes to resolve sexual harassment. With the support of an institution and its representatives and direct confrontation with the harasser and using internal strategies focused on managing one's own emotions and mental coping with the situation. Nearly, all universities have policies on sexual harassment, and most female instructors know this, and they report the situation in order to correct a person who harassed. From the foregoing discussion, we can understand that new graduate female Instructors used keeping silent as a coping and managing strategy. When they are harassed in the campus by students and academic staffs in the campus and by the youths in the community, they keep silent instead of informing the case to gender office so that it punishes the harasser based on the university's harassment policy.

Seriousness

Concerning to this almost all semi-structured interviewees have showed that they would be serious if somebody tried to harass them in campus and outside campus because they were serious in invigilating students. In relation to being serious one of the semi structured interviews (p 4) stated that,

I would be serious if students try to cheat on exams and trying to use very organized clip note, assuming that I will let them make the cheat because I am a fresh female instructor. But being serious, I found, is important because it makes a harasser afraid of me.

Based on this, the researcher understands that the new graduate female instructors used seriousness as a coping or managing strategy, which was very important for instructors to prevent students' harassment against them and cheating during exams.

Student and Peer Evaluation

The semi-structured interviewees revealed that they used student evaluation and peer evaluation as coping mechanism to identify their weaknesses and strength of their teaching. In other words, they received feedback and comments from their students in order to be aware of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

One of the semi-structured interviewees (p 8) on this issue indicated that,

I use student evaluation and peer evaluation in order to identify the strong and weak side of me in my teaching and learning process. I also invited my peers to supervise my teaching activities in classes. Although I have not much trust with students' comments, I asked them to give me comments written on a piece of paper from which I got something important.

Student and peer evaluation were the coping mechanism for new graduate female instructors, which is supported by Craig et al., (1998). The finding showed that instructors used peer evaluation to solve the challenges they faced due to lack of induction and mentoring. Peer evaluations are important to enhance relations among staffs and reduce job isolation. Furthermore, student evaluation can provide useful information about instructional effectiveness and the learning environment, to minimize the limitations of the sorts of questions asked by students, and for opinions for which they lack expertise, other sources of information should be used such as project work, essays, and other products in student portfolios that provide examples of what students have learned (Ibid). Concerning to the above discussion, we could understand that new graduate female instructors used student and peer evaluation to identify their weaknesses and to enhance their strength.

Share Office

Almost all of the semi-structured interviewees described that to solve problems related to absence of office; they shared available offices with their senior instructors in the department.

One of the semi-structured interviewees (p 9) stated that,

I shared an office with other senior instructors in our department to use a desktop computer, to put my teaching materials and to take a break after I teach. But I did not find the office key as soon as I need to get.

Spend Free Time at Home

Al most all of semi-structured interviewees mentioned that, after they teach classes they were going to their home due to inaccessibility to facilities such as office and female's toilet.

One of the semi-structured interviewees (p 15) stated that, *I spend most of my time at my home when I haven't class, because there is no office. Although I shared an office with other senior instructors in our department, I faced a challenge*

to access a key. Absence of female's toilet forces me to spend my time at home to control natural impositions such as menstruation.

From the above, the researcher understands that new graduate female instructors devoted their free time at home because of low access of office and lack of female specific toilet. Therefore, this may affect the quality of teaching and learning process indirectly because instructors' absence from campus destroy students' access to instructors' consultation.

Withholding Information about Their Profession

The semi-structured interviewees mentioned that they withholding information about their profession in order to avoid the increment of rental house from the house owner who rent housing and to eliminate the harassment in the community. Concerning to withholding information about their profession one of the semi-structured interviewees (p2) stated that,

I introduce myself to the house owner as I am a student at Bahir Dar University. Even when the house owners ask me to show them my identity card, I will show them a card that identifies me as a student. Otherwise, the house owners may increase the price of housing if they know about my job. To the others, who know me outside the campus I also introduce myself if I am a student. I got told the truth about my job to others outside the campus is exposing me to those who wish to harass me.

From this we could understand that new graduate female instructors are not volunteered to introduce who they are and what they do.

Conclusion

The advantage of the study was contributing knowledge for a person about the coping mechanisms of new graduate female instructors to deal with their challenges in Bahir Dar University. And it could use for Bahir Dar university administration to interfere on the issues to support new graduate female instructors in order to cope up there challenges easily. It can also use as a secondary source for further studies. Based on the findings identified in this study the following conclusion is drawn. New graduate female instructors in the Bahir Dar University have used different coping mechanisms to deal with their challenges. Such as keeping silent, seriousness, student and peer evaluation, share office, spend free time at home, withholding information about their profession. In general we can conclude that new graduate female instructors used various coping mechanisms to deal with there challenges.

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