Exploring Leadership in Managing Operational Requirements of Female Teachers at Schools in uMkhanyakude District

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Abstract:

This study explores the experiences of female teachers in leadership roles in UMkhanyakude District, focusing on operational challenges shaped by evolving cultural dynamics and life experiences. Historically, discriminatory practices have hindered women's access to leadership positions, stalling their professional growth. Grounded in feminist theory, it investigates how gender perceptions shape the leadership journeys of women in education and how these perceptions affect their professional interactions and advancement. Using a qualitative approach, the research gathered data through semi-structured individual and group interviews with ten participants, analyzed via content analysis. Findings highlight persistent barriers such as gender discrimination, limited institutional support, challenges balancing work and home life, and inequitable promotion practices all contributing to diminished confidence in female leadership. These challenges contribute to diminished confidence in female leadership. The study proposes strategies to combat these issues: fostering a positive attitude, strengthening support networks, empowering female leaders, and encouraging strong interpersonal relationships within institutions. Despite challenges, the study found that both male and female educators often view female leadership positively, seeing women as motivational and capable leaders. To address the identified challenges, it recommends strategies including fostering supportive attitudes, empowering female leaders, strengthening professional relationships, and promoting inclusive, participative leadership styles. This research advances the discourse on gender equity in education and presents practical solutions to dismantle structural inequalities in school leadership.

Keywords:

Leadership, feminist theory, discrimination, female leadership.