

Achieving Gender Equality and Women Leadership in a selected State University in Zimbabwe: A Feminist Capabilities approach

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Abstract

Despite international efforts towards gender equality, universities in developing countries including Zimbabwe continue to grapple with underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. The glass ceiling remains an impediment for women in universities in developing countries. This study explores the lived experiences and perspectives of female leaders and prospective female leaders in Zimbabwean state universities. The study adopts the feminist capability lens to illuminate the complexities and nuances of challenges that obstruct female academics to assume leadership positions. This qualitative study adopted a sequential exploratory design and collected data through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews selected state universities. The findings highlight the deeply entrenched cultural values gender stereotypes that continue to disproportionately disadvantage prospective female leaders in universities. Such stereotypes include belief in mancho masculine attributes for leaders, women's domestic responsibilities and lack of support and role models. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions, including policy changes, leadership development programs, and initiatives to address work-life balance and support prospective female leaders. This study thus contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in higher education, offering valuable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and scholars working towards a more inclusive future for African universities.

Keywords: female leaders, gender intersectionality, feminist capability approach, glass ceiling, state universities, Zimbabwe