

REASONS FOR FEMALE ACADEMICS' UNDERREPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP ROLES: A CASE STUDY OF THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES AT SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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1. Introduction

Research on Organizational Studies emphasizes the importance of gender diversity in achieving success within organizations. Although gender diversity is valued, women's underrepresentation in top management is still evident. While the issue is prevalent in higher educational institutes, research is lacking in comprehending the problem in the Sri Lankan context. As a result, this study aims to explore the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female academics in leadership roles within the Faculty of Management Studies at Sabaragamuwa University in Sri Lanka. The research provides knowledge specific to its context and is practically significant for understanding a common issue faced by comparable organizational entities.

2. Research Methodology

Grounded in the interpretivism philosophy, this study employed a qualitative approach with an inductive strategy, utilizing the case study research method to investigate the identified problem. Employing the purposive sampling technique, data was collected through semi-structured interviews by interviewing 10 female academics in the Faculty of Management Studies. Thematic analysis was carried out to analyze the data.

3. Findings and Discussion

The findings uncovered two main themes, internal and external reasons, elucidating the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of female academics in leadership positions. For internal reasons, the issues stemmed from personal choice, psychological characteristics, and the absence of a strong academic profile. The external theme encompassed reasons such as the glass ceiling, organizational politics, and an unsupportive work environment.

4. Conclusion and Implications

This study finds that female under-representation in leadership is influenced by both internal and external factors, highlighting the need for action at personal and organizational levels to address and overcome this issue.

Keywords: Academia, Female leaders, Gender inclusion.