The Leadership Preferences of Women Leaders Working in Higher Education

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the emic concepts and self-perceptions of leadership of women working in South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The study uses a phenomenological-hermeneutical research approach and qualitative methods to analyse twenty-three semi-structured interviews and data from observations in organizations.

Findings show that women in HEIs in South Africa prefer associating leadership with certain characteristics which correspond to their core values of human existence. These core values are seen to influence the actions of women in leadership positions in HEIs. Based on their self-perceptions, women leaders use mindfulness which is characterized by various self-competencies, defined attitudes, spirituality at work and certain management practices. However, women leaders also feel that their mindful practices seem to be misunderstood in a highly competitive HEI environment in South Africa.

Keywords

women, leaders, academia, leadership, South Africa, education, mindfulness, self-perceptions, spirituality

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