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Gender preference in higher education leadership: insights from gender distribution and subordinate perceptions and expectations in Vietnam universities

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparity in higher education (HE) leadership is a global issue that has attracted numerous

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ABSTRACT

Gender disparity in higher education (HE) leadership is a global issue that has attracted numerous studies. However, not much is known about the perceptions and expectations of the subordinates who have experience working with female leaders. This study, conceptualized within the social justice and liberal feminist theories, explores gender distribution in HE leadership in Vietnam, subordinates' perceptions of women's leadership, their expectations from female leaders and the extent to which female leaders are in demand. The research highlights an increasingly positive view about women's leadership but also indicates acceptance of women leaders does not necessarily mean women leaders have equal opportunities to be selected compared with men. There exist an unconscious preference toward male leaders and possibly a problem with women leaders' legitimacy, which may lead to a future picture of gender distribution in HE leadership with the shape being less and less skewed but never reaching balance. This gender disparity in leadership positions raises the need for appropriate actions to be taken or else the concepts of gender equality and social justice in the domain of HE leadership remain controversial.

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