

Gender and leadership: factors influencing election into student representative council and implications for sustainable development

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Abstract

The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is symptomatic of every known society. This study investigates the influence of gender on access to leadership positions in the Student Representative Council (SRC) among final year student teachers at a college in the Harare province of Zimbabwe. The study establishes the criteria that student teachers used when electing a fellow student to take up a position of leadership in the SRC, and analyses the explanations the students gave for considering a position suitable for male or female students or both sexes. 90 students (50 male and 40 female) participated in the survey, which used an open-ended questionnaire. The results suggest that students have gendered perceptions towards particular SRC positions. Thus, a male student was more likely to be elected to the positions of SRC president or secretary general, while a female student was more likely to be elected to the positions of catering officer or treasurer. This appears to confirm the prevailing view that males tend to control dominant and influential positions.