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EDITED AND REVIEWED BY
Margaret Grogan,
Chapman University, United States

*CORRESPONDENCE
Francis Thaise A. Cimene
✉ francis.cimene@ustp.edu.ph

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Editorial: Women in educational leadership

Francis Thaise A. Cimene^{1*}, Elizabeth C. Reilly² and Alev Elçi ³

¹Center for Inclusive Development Studies, College of Science and Mathematics, University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines, Cagayan de Oro, Philippines, ²School of Education, California State University, Channel Islands, CA, United States, ³YÖMEGA, Higher Education Faculty Professional Development Network Association, Ankara, Türkiye

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Editorial on the Research Topic Women in educational leadership

Entering the AI era, globally, for women still the path to leadership in education is not very smooth. The latest research on Women and Leadership in Higher Education indicates that women hold leadership positions in teaching, research, and management roles, but their participation in each area is unequal (del Carmen Meza-Mejia et al., 2023). Currently, less than 30% of researchers globally are women (UNESCO, 2020). Although possessing the necessary skills and experience, they may face significant barriers such as sexual harassment, hiring practices, and work-personal conflicts in their leadership paths (Bowen, 2024). Persistent biases, gender stereotypes, and challenges related to work-life balance discourage many girls and women from pursuing careers in scholarship and leadership. However, fostering an equitable research environment and promoting gender equality are crucial for sustainable development across all fields. To shift traditional mindsets, it is imperative to promote gender equality, dismantle stereotypes, and encourage women to pursue academic careers.

In response to this need, Frontiers in Education has curated a collection of articles showcasing the contributions of women researchers, educators, and professionals in the field of educational leadership.

Despite progress, female representation and leadership in key roles within this discipline remain insufficient. It is essential to further investigate how equitable education contributes to creating fairer and less biased academic and professional environments worldwide.

This Research Topic emphasizes the diversity of research within educational leadership, presenting advancements in theory, experimentation, and methodology that address pressing issues. It also includes papers that explore the intersectional aspects of gender identities and highlight perspectives from various cultures, religions, races/ethnicities, and abilities.

In her work “*New lands, new languages: navigating intersectionality in school leadership*,” Fuller examines the growing social and political divides in an era marked by increased forced displacement due to conflict. Fuller highlights the critical need for educators and school leaders to understand equality and diversity issues, both in relation to themselves and the students they serve. She discusses how the intersecting characteristics that shape individual and collective identities can offer opportunities or impose limitations depending on the context. The paper also theorizes intersectionality as simultaneity, analyzing linguistic exchanges to reveal shifts in empowerment and disempowerment within culturally and linguistically responsive school leadership. Drawing from

research in England as part of a broader international study on the experiences of Black women principals in England, South Africa, and the USA, the paper includes the account of a British Pakistani Muslim woman navigating institutional racism while leading a school with a diverse student body. Using Bourdieu (1992)'s linguistic concepts, Fuller argues that a detailed analysis of reported linguistic interactions with various stakeholders shows how different members of the school community either accepted or resisted her authority to use official language. She notes that linguistic habitus does not always translate into linguistic capital. Hence, Fuller's examination of intersectionality in school leadership underscores the importance of understanding and navigating the complex identities of educators and students. Her analysis reveals how linguistic exchanges can reflect shifts in empowerment and disempowerment, emphasizing the need for culturally and linguistically responsive leadership. Fuller's Figure 1 illustrates Holvino (2010)'s point.

Moreover, Schiffecker and McNaughtan's study on women university presidents during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrates the effective application of Feminist Educational Leadership principles in crisis management, highlighting themes of social justice, empowerment, caring, and addressing injustices. This implies that emphasizing social justice and empowerment can enhance the resilience and effectiveness of university leadership during emergencies.

In addition, Boche's research on mother leaders in higher education during the pandemic reveals the heightened challenges these women faced due to neoliberal feminist and capitalistic ideologies. The study's findings on burnout, guilt, and the need for support emphasize the importance of understanding the unique experiences of mother leaders. The study emphasizes that creating a more supportive and inclusive work environment will benefit not only mother leaders but all employees balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

Likewise, Flaxman's exploration of women leading large K-12 independent schools addresses the gender disparity in these roles. The study highlights the critical role of networking and adaptability in overcoming gender bias within the leadership pipeline. She stresses that leadership development programs should focus on enhancing networking and adaptability skills among women aspiring to lead large schools.

Furthermore, Cheng et al.'s analysis of Black women principals sheds light on their career trajectories, perceived influence, and time allocation compared to their counterparts. The study suggests that Black female principals often serve as representatives for minority parents, reflecting their crucial role in fostering inclusive school environments. This implies that increasing diversity in school leadership can lead to more inclusive and supportive environments for students and parents from minority backgrounds.

Lastly, Salazar Montoya and Kew's study on Latina school leaders highlights the unique challenges and cultural norms they navigate. Their dedication to overcoming barriers and serving as role models underscores the importance of mentorship and support for aspiring leaders. This implies that culturally responsive leadership development programs can help Latina leaders balance their professional and personal responsibilities effectively.

These studies underscore the importance of understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by women in educational

leadership. By fostering supportive environments, promoting gender equity, and implementing targeted policies, institutions can empower women leaders to thrive and contribute to more inclusive and effective educational systems.

In conclusion, the representation of women in educational leadership, while improving, still faces significant challenges due to persistent biases, gender stereotypes, and work-life balance issues. As less than 30% of researchers globally are women, it is imperative to foster an equitable research environment and promote gender equality to ensure sustainable development across all fields. The collection of articles in this editorial highlights the contributions of women researchers, educators, and professionals in educational leadership, showcasing their efforts to overcome barriers and pave the way for future generations.

Overall, these narratives underscore the ongoing need to promote gender equality and support women in educational leadership. By understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by women leaders, we can create more equitable and inclusive academic and professional environments. This is especially crucial in an era driven by AI, where diversity and inclusivity are not just encouraged, but are imperative in all career fields.

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Conflict of interest

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