

Chapter 13


Women Supporting Future Women Leaders in Higher Education: Stories of Encouragement and Discouragement

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the impact of the social cognitive factors of motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation on women related to their pursuit or avoidance of leadership roles in higher education. The chapter begins with a review of research related to the connection between Bandura's social cognitive theory and decisions women make regarding their leadership path. Case studies from interviews with women academics in higher education will be interwoven throughout the chapter to support and expand the existing literature. The case studies will present a range of experiences across a variety of fields including social sciences, education, business, and STEM disciplines. A qualitative analysis of the interviews is presented and connected to existing literature and theory. The chapter closes with recommendations for institutions of higher education in providing support for future women leaders. The recommendations focus on women's leadership training programs and mentoring that incorporate the social cognitive factors into the programming.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the impact of social cognitive factors on women related to their pursuit or avoidance of leadership roles in higher education. The social cognitive factors of motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation are presented as factors contributing to women's perceptions of their leadership potential in higher education. The authors examine how the social context of higher education intersects with social cognitive factors in relation to women's pursuit or avoidance of leadership roles.

The chapter begins with a review of research related to the connection between Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory and the social cognitive factors of motivation, self-efficacy, and self-regulation as they relate to decisions women make regarding their leadership path. Models of support specifically beneficial for women interested in a leadership position are then presented. Case studies from interviews with women academics in higher education are interwoven throughout the chapter to support and expand the existing literature. With the goal of making this chapter informative for a variety of audiences, the case studies present a range of experiences across a variety of fields including social sciences, education, business, and STEM disciplines. A qualitative analysis of the interviews is presented and connected to existing literature and theory. The chapter closes with recommendations for institutions of higher education in providing support for future women leaders. The recommendations focus on women's leadership training programs and mentoring that incorporate the social cognitive factors into the programming.

Context

A gender gap exists within high level leadership positions, such as university president and dean, in higher education throughout the world, with fewer women than men serving in high level leadership positions (American Council on Education, 2023). Only 19.5 percent of the top 200 institutions of higher education in the world are currently led by women. In the United States, 30.1 percent of women serve in high level leadership positions. While this is higher than the international statistics, it still identifies a significant gender gap. Additionally, only five percent of 130 major research universities in the United States have a woman serving as the president (Eos Foundation's Women's Power Gap Initiative & American Association of University Women, 2022). Despite widespread programs to develop gender equity

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