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Challenges Facing Female In-Service Students in Pursuing Higher Education in Tanzania: A Literature Review

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This study reviews literature on the barriers and challenges faced by female adult students in Tanzanian colleges and universities. By employing a systematic literature review methodology, the study collected and analyzed multiple research studies to comprehensively address the specific research question. The primary objective was to raise awareness of these challenges and to call for collaborative efforts from families, spouses, peers, institutions, and communities to address them. Despite significant strides toward gender equality in education, female in-service students in Tanzanian higher education institutions continue to face numerous obstacles. The findings reveal that these students struggle to balance household duties with academic commitments, leading to heightened stress and compromised well-being. Financial constraints further exacerbate their challenges, hindering their ability to cover tuition fees and other educational expenses due to a lack of support from spouses and institutions. The study concludes that systemic changes within educational institutions are necessary to recognize and accommodate the unique needs of female in-service students. By fostering a supportive environment and providing necessary resources, educational institutions can empower female students to pursue their educational goals without sacrificing their roles as caregivers and homemakers. Collaborative efforts from families, spouses, peers, institutions, and communities are essential in achieving this aim and promoting gender equality in higher education.

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INTRODUCTION

In the global pursuit of gender equality, the realization of women's rights to education has been a longstanding struggle across various societal contexts. International conventions, comprising of legal frameworks and agreements established by the global community, have served as pivotal instruments in advancing the cause of women's rights to education on a global scale. These conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), embody principles and norms aimed at safeguarding women's rights and promoting gender equality. Through ratification and implementation, governments around the world have dedicated and committed themselves in supporting women's right to education. Various programs have been implemented in order to address specific needs and challenges faced by women and further reinforce governmental commitments towards women's rights. This includes initiatives encompassing areas such as education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and access to justice, which are essential components for ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment.

Women across the globe have been striving for emancipation, both for themselves and their communities. Their thirst for education is undeniable, driving many to pursue in-service education programs. One might ask, what exactly are female in-service students?

Benshoff and Lewis (1992) define female in-service students as adults who return to school, either full or part-time, while juggling multiple responsibilities such as academic, family, job, individual, and community duties. Undoubtedly, fulfilling these obligations demands significant time, concentration, and financial resources. In-service education programs present promising avenues for empowering women by honing their skills amidst various responsibilities. Research (Lasode & Awote 2014; Hassan & Babu, 2021;

Bauer & Mott, 1990; Benshoff & Lewis, 1992; Dill & Henley, 1998) indicates a rapid increase in the enrollment of female in-service students in colleges and universities in recent years. This group is driven by their strong desire for quality education (Dill & Henley, 1998). However, despite their determination, this group faces various challenges. Bauer and Mott (1990) argue that these challenges, which stem from family, community, spouses, government, colleges, and universities, act as significant barriers to achieving their educational aspirations. Thus, the primary research objective guiding this literature review is to examine the challenges encountered by female in-service students in their pursuit of higher education.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology. Gough, et al., (2017) define systematic literature review (SLR) as a type of literature review that systematically collects, appraises, and synthesizes multiple research studies to answer a specific research question using rigorous and transparent methods. It aims to provide a comprehensive and unbiased summary of the existing evidence by employing a structured approach that includes clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, thorough searches of multiple databases, critical assessment of study quality, and systematic data extraction and synthesis. This methodology ensures that the review process minimizes bias and produces reliable conclusions, making it a valuable tool in evidence-based research and decision-making across various disciplines. The reviewed materials centered on formal learning experiences in colleges and university programs. The literature reviewed spans from the 1990s to 2023, aiming to capture the challenges faced by female in-service students in the 21st century.

Findings From Literature Review

The enrollment of female in-service students in higher education institutions has been rapidly increasing in recent years. Colleges and universities have started to actively encourage the enrollment of these returning students; however, they often overlook the challenges that this specific group may face while pursuing their studies. Despite concerted efforts to broaden access to education, female in-service students encounter multifaceted challenges on their educational journey. These barriers encompass domestic roles, student-lecturer relationships, and lack of support as well as age dynamics.

Domestic roles

Female students in service often find themselves juggling multiple roles simultaneously: that of a student, a worker, and a family member. When these individuals decide to return to school, they bring with them the weight of their various responsibilities, including those of a spouse, caregiver, mother, family member, and active community participant. These roles become integral parts of their lives, ones that they must continue to fulfill without pause while pursuing their education. It's a delicate balance that requires careful management of time, energy, and resources.

The study conducted by Ariwijaya and NingSih (2020) sheds light on the profound impact of domestic responsibilities, such as household chores and caregiving duties, on the academic pursuits of married women enrolled in educational institutions while also being in the workforce. The links between domestic roles and academic performance among female married students in service are multifaceted and warrants a comprehensive examination. Ariwijaya and NingSih argue that the burden of domestic responsibilities often falls unreasonably on women, especially in traditional family setups where gender roles are deeply ingrained. The time and energy invested in managing household chores and attending to familial obligations can significantly infringe upon the time that could

otherwise be allocated to studying and academic pursuits. Consequently, married female students in service find themselves grappling with the challenge of balancing their domestic duties with their academic commitments, leading to heightened stress levels and compromised academic performance.

Ariwijaya and NingSih (2020) also pinpoint the issue of societal expectations placed on women to excel both in their professional careers and in their roles as homemakers. The multidimensional roles intensify married female students. Societal expectations create a constant juggling act between fulfilling familial responsibilities and meeting academic demands, thereby potentially hindering their ability to devote adequate attention and focus to their studies. The mental and emotional toll of navigating these dual roles results and affects overall academic activities.

Xi-Lin's (2016) study in China highlights a compelling correlation between the domestic responsibilities shouldered by female students in service and their inclination towards distance learning as a mode of education. The findings suggest that tasks such as washing, cooking, and caring for family members significantly impact the ability of these women to engage in traditional, on-campus educational programs. The domestic responsibilities enumerated by Xi-Lin underscore the tangible demands placed on married female students, particularly those balancing familial duties with their academic and professional pursuits. The time and effort required to fulfill these obligations often conflict with the structured schedules and physical presence demanded by conventional classroom settings. As a result, many female students in service find themselves compelled to seek alternative educational avenues that afford them the flexibility to manage their domestic responsibilities while pursuing their studies.

In the process of finding an alternative, distance learning emerges as a viable solution for these individuals, offering the flexibility to complete coursework and engage in educational activities remotely, without the constraints imposed by

traditional classroom attendance (Xi-Lin's, 2016). By eliminating the need for regular commute and adhering to rigid class schedules, distance learning accommodates the lifestyle demands of married female students, allowing them to allocate time more efficiently between their domestic duties and academic endeavors. Furthermore, distance learning platforms often provide asynchronous learning opportunities, enabling students to access course materials and participate in discussions at their convenience. This asynchronous nature of distance education aligns well with the unpredictable nature of domestic responsibilities, allowing female students in-service to adapt their study routines according to the demands of their household and family obligations.

Moreover, distance learning eliminates geographical barriers, enabling female students in-service to pursue higher education without relocating or disrupting their established familial and community ties. This accessibility aspect is particularly significant for women who may reside in remote or underserved areas where traditional educational institutions are scarce or inaccessible.

In essence, Xi-Lin's (2016) study underscores the pivotal role of domestic responsibilities in shaping the educational choices of female students in service, particularly their preference for distance learning as a means to reconcile their familial obligations with their academic aspirations. By recognizing and accommodating the unique needs of this demographic group, educational institutions can facilitate greater inclusivity and empower married female students to pursue their educational goals without compromising their roles as caregivers and homemakers.

Lasode and Awote (2014) delved into the intricate challenges faced by married university female students in Nigeria, specifically in Ogun State. Among the array of hurdles identified, domestic roles emerged as a prominent factor influencing these women's academic pursuits. Traditionally, women shoulder a multitude of domestic responsibilities, encompassing childcare,

household upkeep, and the maintenance of family well-being. Within the context of marriage and family, female students are confronted with the daunting task of balancing these traditional roles with their academic commitments. This juxtaposition often results in a clash of ideologies, characterized by what can be termed as family-school conflict.

The implications of domestic roles on married undergraduate female students are manifold. The relentless demands of household duties encroach upon their time and mental bandwidth, leaving them with limited capacity for focused group discussions and personal study outside of class hours. Furthermore, the scarcity of a good environment for academic work exacerbates their challenges, as finding a quiet and private space becomes a luxury amidst familial obligations. Consequently, interruptions and difficulties in concentration ensue, hindering their academic progress and contributing to feelings of frustration and inadequacy.

According to Hassan and Babu (2021), female students within India's education framework encountered several challenges. They argue that despite concerted efforts aimed at enhancing women's education, gender discrimination remains deep-rooted within Indian society. This discrimination manifests in various forms, including the disproportionate assignment of household chores such as cooking and cleaning to women. Additionally, prevailing patriarchal norms perpetuate the subordinate status of women, thereby constraining their access to educational opportunities. Their research highlights the significant impediment posed by the multitude of responsibilities faced by female students. Juggling various tasks within both the domestic and academic spheres can prove daunting, hindering the attainment of their educational goals.

This study underscores the intricate challenges that female students encounter within India's education system. The pervasive nature of gender discrimination and the burdensome responsibilities placed on women seem to be the

biggest barriers impeding women's educational advancement.

Mbunda (2022) conducted a comprehensive study delving into the experiences of married female students engaged in open distance learning (ODL). The research discovered a plethora of challenges, notably centered on domestic and academic responsibilities. Within societal frameworks, there exists a prevailing expectation for women to shoulder the lion's share of domestic tasks, encompassing caregiving, nurturing, and upholding familial ties. Consequently, the rigors of domestic duties impose formidable barriers upon these female students, spanning the realms of personal, social, psychological, mental, and financial dimensions. This multifaceted burden exacts a toll on their academic pursuits, impeding their ability to fully immerse themselves in their educational endeavors. This research indicates that domestic activities compel these female students to make poignant compromises, often at the expense of their academic aspirations. The intricate balancing act between familial obligations and educational commitments creates a palpable strain, leading to heightened stress levels and compromised well-being.

In essence, the all-encompassing influence of societal expectations regarding women's roles within the domestic sphere erects alarming barriers for married female students pursuing education through ODL programs. Their journey is fraught with intricate challenges, necessitating nuanced support systems and proactive interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of this conundrum.

Low level of Self Confidence

Female students in-service encounter numerous responsibilities outside of the classroom, often leading to a lack of confidence. Their primary pressures stem from the challenges of conflicting time management, balancing multiple roles and responsibilities, juggling work and study commitments, and navigating financial constraints. These conflicting demands create significant stressors that can undermine their confidence and overall well-being. The constant

juggling act between academic pursuits, professional obligations, and personal responsibilities can leave these students feeling overwhelmed and uncertain about their abilities to succeed. Despite these obstacles, however, many persevere, demonstrating remarkable resilience in the face of adversity.

Lasode and Awote (2014) argue that the psychological burden borne by married female students extends beyond the realm of time management and academic performance. A pervasive sense of guilt pervades their experiences, stemming from the perceived prioritization of education over familial duties. This guilt manifests in various facets, including concerns about childcare quality and affordability, as well as the perceived neglect of responsibilities within the family and career domains. Non-traditional students, particularly those with parental obligations, grapple with the added challenge of securing reliable childcare, further exacerbating their financial and logistical burdens. Ultimately, the cumulative stress of managing multiple roles not only impedes academic success but also exacts a toll on the overall well-being of these women, underscoring the pressing need for systemic support and intervention.

Student-Lecturer relationship

Another challenge facing married female in-service students is the student-lecturer relationship. The dynamics between lecturers and students is a critical component of the educational experience, and the quality of this relationship can significantly influence academic outcomes. Brown (2020) investigated the intricacies of the lecturer-student relationship. He particularly examined its effects on female students enrolled in service-oriented programs. This relationship, when positive, plays a pivotal role in shaping students' experiences, fostering a conducive learning environment, and ultimately contributing to their academic success. Conversely, negative interactions or inappropriate behavior such as love affairs with lecturers can lead to detrimental consequences, particularly for female students,

disrupting their learning journey and impeding their ability to achieve their academic goals.

A positive lecturer-student relationship cultivates an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and support within the academic setting. When students feel valued and understood by their lecturers, they actively engage in the learning process, seek assistance when needed, and strive for excellence in their academic endeavors. Conversely, negative experiences, such as inappropriate behavior or misconduct from lecturers, can have profound repercussions on female students' well-being and academic progress. Instances of harassment, discrimination, or favoritism create a hostile learning environment, eroding students' confidence, self-esteem, and sense of safety within the educational setting. Moreover, such experiences can lead to feelings of alienation, disengagement, and even withdrawal from academic pursuits among affected students.

For female students' enrolled in service programs, who may already contend with numerous external pressures and responsibilities, the impact of negative lecturer-student relationships can be particularly devastating, further exacerbating their challenges and hindering their ability to focus on their studies. Brown also indicates that in USA there is a problem with the lecturer-student relationship

Age dynamics

Patel and Singh (2022) in their research titled "Mentoring Program for Female In-Service Students," address the challenges faced by mature and older women enrolled in educational programs. They argue that one significant hurdle these female students encounter is interaction with younger lecturers. A common assumption among these mature female students is that they should receive special treatment due to their age. They demand special treatment from younger lecturers something which is very challenging. Younger lecturers given their position and their status cannot compromise their roles in the hands of students because of their age. Furthermore, they often perceive younger lecturers as lacking

sufficient knowledge and competence to effectively mentor them. This perception not only impacts their academic experience but also hampers the potential benefits of mentorship programs.

Mwangi and Nyaguto (2019) undertook a study examining the dynamics of the lecturer-student relationship. They found that married female students face distinct challenges when interacting with their lecturers. One notable obstacle arises from age disparities, which often disrupt communication between female students and their lecturers.

Lack of Support

Another challenge affecting in-service female students is the lack of support. Kaplan and Delphi (2020) highlight the significant challenges faced by married female students pursuing education through open-distance learning. One of the primary issues identified is the lack of cooperation from their spouses. This lack of support stems from a perception held by some spouses that women's education is trivial or nonsensical. Consequently, these spouses may not provide financial support or assist in adjusting domestic responsibilities to accommodate the educational pursuits of their wives. This lack of support from spouses has profound implications for married female students. Also, there is an issue concerning lack of financial support. Financial support is crucial for covering tuition fees, purchasing study materials, and meeting other educational expenses. Without it, these students struggle to pursue their academic goals effectively. Additionally, the absence of assistance in managing domestic responsibilities leads to increased stress and time constraints for married female students, making it more challenging for them to balance their academic and personal lives.

Dampo et al., (2018) focused on lack of institutional and government support. He highlights the lack of clear support mechanisms within academic institutions, particularly universities, for married female students. One critical aspect he discusses is the absence of facilities that would enable these students to reside

with their families and children while pursuing their studies. Instead, these women are often compelled to leave their families behind and live separately, which can lead to feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Separation from family can also expose them to various temptations and challenges, potentially jeopardizing their academic pursuits and impacting their marital relationships. Dampo et al also note the absence of dedicated support services tailored to the unique needs and challenges faced by married female students. There is no provision for a special desk or support system within universities to address the specific concerns and struggles of these women. This lack of targeted support further exacerbates the difficulties experienced by married female students, as they may feel overlooked or marginalized within the academic environment.

There is also a lack of support from family and community members (Hassan & Babu's, 2021). Babu and Hassan argue that despite their status as students, these female students often find that their families do not regard them as such. Instead, they are expected to fulfill traditional gender roles and prioritize household chores over their academic pursuits. This lack of recognition and support from family members creates a hostile environment for married female students, hindering their ability to focus on their studies and pursue their educational goals.

Financial constraints

Lin's (2016) addressed the issue of financial burdens faced by married female students, even after obtaining permission or study leave from their workplaces. Lin highlights common scenarios where married female students are granted study leave by their employers but receive no financial compensation during this period. This means that these women must rely solely on their own salary or savings to support them and cover the expenses associated with their studies. This situation places a significant financial burden on them, as they must allocate a portion of their income towards tuition fees, study materials, transportation and other educational costs

together with family costs. Another key point raised by Lin is the lack of financial support from spouses. Despite pursuing education to improve their prospects and contribute to the family's well-being, married female students often find that their spouses are unwilling or unable to provide financial assistance. This lack of support further exacerbates the financial strain experienced by these women, making it even more challenging for them to meet their educational expenses.

Due to the financial constraints mentioned above, married female students mostly struggle to pay their school fees on time. This delay in fee payment can have several negative consequences, including late registration, penalties, and the risk of being barred from sitting for examinations or accessing academic resources. These financial hurdles not only disrupt their academic progress but also add stress and academic anxiety. Lin notes that some married female students may opt for special examinations as a last resort due to their inability to pay school fees on time. However, special examinations often come with negative academic implications, such as reduced preparation time, limited resources, and increased pressure to perform well. This can ultimately impact their academic performance and overall learning experience detrimentally.

Socialization mistakes

Another aspect is socialization mistakes as a result of age dynamics. A study conducted by Silva and Alndoveira (2018) addresses the challenges facing female students aged 25 and above in Brazil, particularly in their interactions with other students and lecturers regarding socialization between student-student and lecturer-student socialization. The findings reveals that female students aged 25 years and above tend to refrain from interacting with their peers when assigned tasks. This withdrawal from group activities may stem from a sense of autonomy or a perception that they should have more authority in academic settings. These female students often feel that they should wield greater authority, possibly due to their age and life experience. If they perceive a lack of opportunities to exercise authority, they

distance themselves from collaborative efforts or group work.

Also, there is a tendency among older female students to disparage younger lecturers, possibly based on assumptions about the educators' level of education or competence. This attitude reflects broader age dynamics regarding age and respect for authority. Older female students harbor doubts about the educational qualifications and competence of younger lecturers. This skepticism contributes to a strained lecturer-student relationship, affecting the quality of education and learning experiences. The observations made by Silva and Alndoveira (2018) suggest that these dynamics are particularly prevalent in developed and developing countries.

Findings and Discussions

The findings from various studies highlight the complex challenges faced by female students in service higher education particularly those balancing multiple roles and responsibilities. These studies underscore the profound impact of domestic duties on married female students' academic performance, emphasizing the struggle to balance household responsibilities with educational commitments. They reveal that there is often no balance between academic responsibility and domestic roles. While schooling, they must also accommodate familial obligations. Additionally, these studies have clearly pointed out the pervasive issue of gender discrimination and the unequal distribution of household chores, which hinder women's educational advancement. The clash between traditional domestic roles and academic aspirations exacerbates the relentless demands of household duties, often impeding these students' ability to fully engage in their studies, leading to heightened stress levels and compromised well-being. These findings underscore the need for systemic changes within educational institutions to recognize and accommodate the unique needs of female students in service. By addressing the multifaceted barriers imposed by societal expectations and domestic responsibilities, educational institutions can foster greater

inclusivity and empower female students to pursue their educational goals without sacrificing their roles as caregivers and homemakers.

The literature reveals that female students in service often experience a low level of self-confidence due to the myriad responsibilities they face outside the classroom. The challenges of conflicting time management, balancing multiple roles, and navigating financial constraints contribute to significant stressors that undermine their confidence and well-being. Despite demonstrating remarkable resilience, many still feel overwhelmed and uncertain about their ability to succeed. Moreover, Lasode and Awote (2014) argue that the psychological burden on married female students extends beyond time management and academic performance, encompassing a pervasive sense of guilt stemming from prioritizing education over familial duties. This guilt manifests in concerns about childcare quality and affordability, amplifying financial and logistical burdens. The cumulative stress of managing multiple roles impedes academic success and highlights the urgent need for systemic support and intervention.

The relationship between lecturers and female students in-service presents a significant challenge within the higher education landscape. Brown's (2020) study delves into this dynamic, emphasizing its crucial role in shaping students' experiences and academic outcomes. Positive interactions foster a conducive learning environment, promoting active engagement and academic success. However, instances of inappropriate behavior or misconduct from lecturers, such as love affairs, can have detrimental effects, disrupting the learning journey and impeding academic progress. A positive lecturer-student relationship cultivates mutual respect and support, while negative experiences, like harassment or discrimination, erode confidence and well-being. For female students already balancing external pressures, these negative relationships exacerbate challenges, hindering their ability to focus on studies and navigate their academic pursuits effectively. This research highlights the need to

address issues of lecturer-student relationships to ensure a safe and supportive educational environment.

The findings does prevail that female in-service students face difficulties when engaging with younger lecturers, primarily due to age-related expectations. These students, often older and more experienced, anticipate receiving special consideration because of their age. However, this expectation can lead to friction and communication hurdles with younger lecturers, who may view such demands as unreasonable or unfair. This dynamic creates a disparity in the lecturer-student relationship, complicating communication and potentially impeding academic advancement. Ultimately, these challenges highlight the importance of fostering understanding and effective communication between students and lecturers, regardless of age differences, to ensure a supportive learning environment conducive to academic success.

It is pointed out clearly that lack of support emerges as a significant challenge for in-service female students, encompassing various dimensions. These include the absence of cooperation from spouses, who may view women's education as inconsequential, thereby withholding financial support and failing to assist with domestic responsibilities (Kalpana & Jamwal 2022). This lack of support not only hampers academic pursuits but also intensifies stress and time constraints. Furthermore, financial constraints exacerbate the struggle, hindering these students' ability to cover tuition fees and other educational expenses. The dearth of institutional support within academic institutions is another challenge, with inadequate facilities for married female students and a lack of dedicated support services tailored to their needs. Separation from family due to institutional shortcomings exacerbates feelings of isolation and vulnerability.

According to the reviewed literature, financial hurdles represent another significant challenge faced by married female students, even after securing study leave from their employers. Despite being granted study leave, these students

often find themselves without financial compensation, forcing them to rely solely on their income or savings to cover a myriad of expenses including educational, personal, and familial costs. This situation imposes a considerable burden as they must allocate funds for tuition fees, study materials, transportation, and family expenses. Additionally, the absence of financial support from spouses further compounds the strain. Consequently, many struggle to pay school fees on time, resulting in late registration, penalties, and academic repercussions such as being barred from examinations. As a last resort, some may opt for special examinations, which present their challenges including reduced preparation time and heightened academic pressure.

Employers face a significant challenge in balancing the workload assigned to in-service students with their pursuit of higher education. These students are often burdened with heavy responsibilities in the workplace, requiring them to accomplish assigned tasks diligently. As a result, they find themselves tirelessly engaged throughout the day, expending their energy and focus on meeting professional obligations. However, as the day progresses, fatigue sets in, leaving them exhausted by evening. This exhaustion becomes a formidable obstacle, as it often prevents these students from attending classes or, if they do manage to attend, they do so while being extremely tired. Consequently, their ability to concentrate and focus during classes is compromised, leading to diminished academic performance and a loss of learning opportunities.

Employers must recognize the impact of heavy workloads on the educational pursuits of in-service students and strive to implement strategies that support their academic endeavors. Providing flexibility in work schedules, allowing for reasonable accommodations to attend classes and fostering a supportive work environment are essential steps in addressing this challenge. By understanding the needs of in-service students and offering support, employers can help alleviate the strain of balancing work and education, enabling these individuals to fulfill their professional

responsibilities while also achieving their academic goals effectively.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the literature review underscores the myriad challenges facing female in-service students in their pursuit of higher education, particularly within Tanzanian colleges and universities. The findings illuminate the significant impact of domestic responsibilities, financial constraints, institutional barriers, permission from superiors, student-lecturer relationships, age dynamics, low self-confidence, and lack of support on the educational journey of these women. The persistent clash between traditional gender roles and academic aspirations imposes formidable barriers, hindering female in-service teachers' ability to fully engage in their studies and achieve their educational goals.

Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from various stakeholders, including families, spouses, peers, educational institutions, and communities. Recognizing and accommodating the unique needs of female in-service students is paramount for fostering inclusivity and empowering them to pursue quality higher education without sacrificing their roles as caregivers and homemakers. Systemic changes within educational institutions, such as the provision of support services tailored to the specific challenges faced by these women and the promotion of positive lecturer-student relationships, are essential for creating a supportive learning environment conducive to academic success. Additionally, societal attitudes towards women's education and domestic responsibilities need to be challenged and transformed to ensure equal opportunities for all aspiring educators. Through collaborative efforts and proactive interventions, it is hoped that the barriers highlighted in this literature review can be overcome, enabling female in-service students to realize their aspirations for higher education and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of their profession and society as a whole.

Limitations

The literature review provided a comprehensive examination of the challenges faced by female in-service students across (Undergraduate, MA, and PHD programs). By grouping them together, the review suggests a commonality in challenges experienced by female students pursuing higher education, albeit with potential variations based on the level of education. However, it is crucial to investigate whether these students indeed encounter similar challenges across different educational levels or if there are distinct differences that manifest. Moreover, the existing literature has certain limitations, particularly in its coverage of recent studies, especially in global southern countries. While the reviewed literature offers valuable insights, there is a noticeable gap in recent research on this topic, particularly from regions where the challenges faced by female in-service students may differ significantly due to socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors.

It's important to acknowledge that the research did not differentiate between full-time and part-time female in-service students. This oversight may have obscured potential nuances in the challenges faced by these two groups. Circumstantial evidence suggests that there could be slight differences in the obstacles encountered by full-time versus part-time in-service students. For instance, full-time students might struggle with managing a heavier course load alongside their professional responsibilities, while part-time students may face challenges related to time management and balancing work, education, and personal commitments.

Therefore, there is a need for further research to thoroughly investigate and compare the experiences of full-time and part-time female in-service students. By conducting a more nuanced analysis, researchers can uncover specific challenges unique to each group and develop targeted interventions to address them effectively. Understanding the distinct needs and obstacles faced by full-time and part-time students will enable policymakers, educational institutions, and employers to implement tailored support

mechanisms that facilitate the academic success and professional advancement of female in-service students across various contexts. This research gap underscores the importance of future studies in providing comprehensive insights into the multifaceted challenges encountered by in-service students pursuing higher education.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Action

The researcher recommends that Higher Educational institutions should implement robust support systems tailored to the unique needs of female in-service students. This includes establishing on-campus childcare facilities, providing flexible scheduling options, and creating dedicated support services such as counseling and academic advising. By recognizing the dual roles these women play, institutions can offer practical solutions to alleviate the burden of balancing academic and domestic responsibilities.

Given the flexibility that distance learning offers, educational institutions should expand and enhance their online education programs. These programs should be designed to accommodate the schedules of female in-service students, allowing them to complete coursework asynchronously and manage their domestic responsibilities without compromising their academic goals. Providing resources and training on how to effectively engage in distance learning can further empower these students.

Training programs for lecturers on gender sensitivity, inclusivity, and mentorship can improve the academic environment for female in-service students. Addressing issues of harassment and creating a respectful, supportive atmosphere are crucial. Institutions should also establish clear policies and reporting mechanisms for any inappropriate behavior to ensure a safe and conducive learning environment.

Governments and institutions should offer targeted financial aid packages and scholarships to support female in-service students. This could include grants for tuition, subsidies for study

materials, and financial support for those taking unpaid study leave. Providing financial literacy workshops can also help these students manage their resources more effectively.

Initiatives to engage families and communities in supporting the educational pursuits of female students are essential. Awareness campaigns highlighting the long-term benefits of women's education for families and communities can help shift societal attitudes and encourage more supportive environments.

Recommendations for Further Studies

The researcher recommends the need for conducting longitudinal studies to track the academic performance and career outcomes of female in-service students can provide valuable insights into the long-term impact of their educational pursuits. This research can help identify the most effective support strategies and highlight areas where additional interventions are needed.

Further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of distance learning programs specifically for female in-service students. Studies should examine how these programs influence academic performance, time management, and overall well-being compared to traditional classroom settings.

Empirical study into the dynamics of spousal and familial support can shed light on the ways in which these relationships impact the educational journeys of female in-service students. Understanding the barriers to obtaining such support and identifying successful strategies for fostering a supportive home environment are critical for policy development.

Investigating the psychological well-being of female in-service students and the impact of academic stress on their mental health is crucial. Studies focusing on stress management techniques, resilience-building and mental health support can inform the creation of comprehensive wellness programs within educational institutions.

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