

“Unheard Voices”: An Interpretive Phenomenological Study of Female NGO Workers' Participation in Crisis Management Situations of an Organisation

Arya. A. S

Amrita University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Aswathi. K. R

Amrita University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Dr. Dipanjan Bhattacharjee

Amrita University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

Abstract

Women constitute a substantial proportion of the workforce in nonprofit organisations; however, their participation in organisational decision-making and crisis management processes remains underexplored in academic literature. This study investigates the lived experiences of female professionals working in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Kerala, India, with particular emphasis on their participation in leadership processes and crisis-related decision-making. The study employed a qualitative research design using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore how female NGO workers interpret and make sense of their professional experiences. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 female NGO professionals aged 25-35, each with at least 2 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. Data were analysed following the six-stage IPA framework proposed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The analysis generated four superordinate themes: participatory leadership and organisational agency, psychological safety and supportive organisational climate, gender-inclusive organisational culture, and professional identity and personal development. The findings reveal that inclusive decision-making practices and supportive workplace environments significantly enhance women's sense of professional recognition, confidence, and organisational commitment. At the same time, structural challenges such as staff shortages and infrastructural limitations continue to shape their workplace experiences. The study contributes to the literature on gender and nonprofit organisational dynamics by highlighting the importance of participatory governance and gender-inclusive institutional cultures in strengthening organisational resilience and employee engagement.

Keywords

Interpretive phenomenological analysis, women professionals, NGOs, organisational decision-making, crisis management, nonprofit sector.