Women in Aviation: A Phenomenological Study Exploring the Needs and Wants Necessary for Graduation

Introduction

Despite the increased awareness of gender and race equality movements, today's population of minority women in aviation is still underrepresented. This study aimed to explore the needs and wants that could lead to academic success for minority women.

Methods

Objective: build a depth of understanding around minority women's success in their aviation college career.

Framework: Guiding theories of CRT and the student attrition theory.

Participants:

- Six self-identified cisgender or transgender females
- Racial minority: Asian, Black, American Indian /Alaska native, Hispanic or Latino, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Findings

- Epoche was the primary strategy used by the researchers to bracket their experience
- Phenomenological reduction and qualitative research was used in order to develop meaning from the text (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).
- The data presented three recurring themes as perceived needs and wants of female students in aviation: Open communication, friendship and community and positive faculty support.

Limitations

The lived experiences of the participants may not reflect the diverse perspectives of female student enrolled in other aviation higher education institutions.

Conclusions

- The needs and wants can be subjective, depending on the students' strengths and weaknesses as well as their background.
- Early exposure to aviation, accessibility to female pilots, role models, and their ability to connect with the faculty is critical for attracting and retaining more female minority students. The underrepresentation of minority females in aviation is a systematic issue that cannot be solved overnight.

Recommendations

Some of the best practices that higher degree education could adopt from this research are:

- Actively promote and foster a welcoming environment in which students are able to build a strong sense of community
- Sponsor workshops is which both students and faculty member are able to improve their communications skills,
- Survey students to identify the effectiveness of the faculty support and engagement.

References

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches (5th ed.). Sage

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