



GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND INFLUENCES OF BARRIERS FOR PARTICIPATION OF ECUADORIAN EDUCATORS IN POSITIONS OF POWER

PERCEPCIÓN DE GÉNERO E INFLUENCIAS DE LAS BARRERAS EN LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LAS DOCENTES ECUATORIANAS, EN LOS PUESTOS DE PODER

Altamirano-Altamirano Silvia Jovanna¹

¹ Universidad Técnica de Ambato, UTA. Ambato, Ecuador. sj.altamirano@uta.edu.ec
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6152-6688>

ABSTRACT:

Gender perspective, its representations and influences have become barriers that make it impossible to reach those "glass ceilings" which are attainable for only certain privileged groups. On the other side, perceptions that become seemingly unavoidable realities and even family itself have become "sticky floors", making women feel guilty at the time of decision-making and participate in gender equity. One of the main objectives of this investigation is to identify the perception in female academic staff concerning the existence of institutional barriers for access to positions of power and decision-making in the universities where they work in two regions of the country: highlands and coast. The access and permanent exercise in academic positions of power and decision-making for Ecuadorian University Educators is the contribution of this investigation, using the methodological advantages of surveys and interviews, for women who achieved said positions or those who attempted to, desisted from, or resigned from them. The perceptions that are culturally built in the people's minds become a part of everyday life, in turn reproducing underdevelopment, entertaining the distracted masses with infighting, while others reap all benefits and the joy of living in a world made of and with respect.

Keywords: Perception, equity, gender, culture, inclusion, sustainability, family, education, labor.

RESUMEN:

La perspectiva de Género, sus manifestaciones e influencias vienen a convertirse en las barreras, que impiden acceder a esos techos de cristal, que están solo para cierto grupo de privilegiados, por otro lado, esas percepciones que se convierten en realidades, aparentemente insalvables, la familia que se convierten en esos suelos pegajosos, sintiendo culpabilidad a la hora de tomar decisiones y participar con equidad de género. Uno de los objetivos de la investigación es detectar la percepción de las académicas sobre la existencia de barreras institucionales para el acceso a cargos de decisión y poder en la universidad a la que se encuentran vinculadas en dos regiones del país: sierra y costa. El acceso y el ejercicio permanente en los puestos de poder y decisión académica de las Docentes Ecuatorianas Universitarias, es el aporte de esta investigación, utilizando las bondades de la metodología de la encuesta y la entrevista, a las mujeres que lograron acceder o las que intentaron, desistieron o renunciaron al cargo. Las percepciones que culturalmente trabajan en las mentes y se convierten en el diario vivir, reproduciendo el subdesarrollo entreteniéndolo a la masa distraída, en peleas internas, mientras otros gozan de las bondades y alegrías de vivir en un mundo de y con respeto.

Palabras clave: Percepción, equidad, género, cultura, inclusion, sostenibilidad, familia, educación, trabajo.



1. INTRODUCTION

Perception, the mental process of the human being that has always awakened interest in investigation, was historically studied and defined for the first time in the Gestalt Psychology field as the ideas that a person or group may have about a particular subject or topic are affected by psychic processes. Thus, it is defined as follows.

"The cognitive process of consciousness that consist in the acknowledgement, interpreting and meaning-assignation for the creation of any judgment pertaining sensations obtained from a physical and social environment, with the intervention of other psychic processes which include learning, memory and symbolization."
Vargas Melgarejo, 1994.p.48)

Consequently, not every person will have the same ideas, feelings or thoughts concerning something or someone, as the perception varies considerably between

every human being. This is because human beings tend to comprehend and remember events, depending on the emotions that they may feel.

According to (Oviedo, 2004. p. 89.
"Perception can be understood as a

permanent act of conceptualization. The events of the outside world are organized by means of category judgments that assign a quality that best represents a number of objects." This means that people give a meaning to objects, animals and things depending on several aspects, based off cultural context, social and family environments, ideologies and emotions related to the subject.

In order to choose a more focused approach for the issues at hand, it is necessary to define gender equity as one of the important subjects to study. This particular social subject has been on the rise during recent years.

Equity refers to the need to provide every individual with the corresponding amounts of what they deserve and need depending on their conditions. It is important to mention that there is a considerable difference between equity and equality, as equality refers only to the idea of providing individuals with the same amount of something, regardless of their own needs and merits. From this, it is possible to establish a definition in relation to "gender"



and analyze it as a single unit for convenience.

Historically, according to (Scott, 1986.p.3) gender was a term proposed by those who claimed that the knowledge held by women would bring a paramount transformation for the paradigms of this area of knowledge. Feminist scholars soon stated that studies made by women would not only bring light on new subjects, but also force a critical reconsideration of the premises and standards for existing academic work. This means that the very definition of this word was brought into existence by women, geared towards seeking inclusion and expecting greater deeds, as is it necessary to start creating new conceptualizations in the minds of people, as well as the modification and adaptation of the concepts involved to promote growth and social changes.

It is necessary to state what can be understood with "gender equality" and "gender equity", as their definitions are close in meaning but not entirely similar. Thus, according to (UNESCO, 2012. p. 105), equality is defined as "equality of rights, responsibilities, and opportunities for women and men, children both male and

female"; this means that both would have the same rights, responsibilities, and opportunities regardless of their gender at birth. Thus, it is proposed that the needs, requirements and priorities of both genders are considered, acknowledging, and giving every of them the importance that they justly deserve. On the other hand, (UNESCO, 2012. p. 106) refers to gender equity as the impartial treatment between men and women based on the individual needs that they may have, including all responsibilities, rights, and possibilities to attain a higher social development by means of the implementation of policies that make up for previous flaws at a historical level.

However, how can we identify a situation where gender equality or equity does not exist? It is possible to define Violence Against Women according to (UNESCO, 2012. p. 106) as any act of violence based on the victim being of the female gender, which has or may have a harmful result or causes physical, psychological, or sexual suffering, including threats of any type, arbitrary deprivation of liberty; referring to work or school environments for sexual harassment, domestic violence, and rape.



Due to this, one of the most viable solutions for reducing violence against women and a means to place them in charge of enforcing their rights is by being socially active in the empowerment of individuals. This would make every person responsible for their own lives and widen their options and opportunities to grow in any area that they so desire.

The quest for gender equality has long been a controversial subject. Not only because many people with contrary mentalities that blatantly oppose it still exist, but also because several women have misunderstood the idea of seeking equity and equality with the manipulation and undervaluation of men, which caused the appearance of the so called "feminazis". The origin of this word can be traced back to the decade of the 90s and, Bozzo (2018) defined it as an exaggerated and radical variation of feminism. The main goal should be to highlight the difference between this variation and true equality, attempting to work for the common welfare of both genders, not only women.

An important addition considered, even for development at a global level, is the

development of projects for female inclusion, as the objectives set by the United Nations refer to sustainable development at an economic, environmental, and social level. The world and the various member countries of the UN are trying to support one another and provide ideas for the efficient fulfilment of all said objectives pertaining gender equality by year 2030. Objective number 5 according to (CEPAL: United Nations, 2016. p. 17) refers to seeking gender equality in as many countries as possible, socializing actions which help include more women every time, including proper education for women since childhood. The objective also refers to "girl empowerment" as education based on girls promoting their presence as protagonists and maintaining the necessary self-esteem so they themselves can promote the enforcement of their rights and that this equality is more focused and can be arranged into a normalized part of culture itself, with women holding an important role in society. This would represent great progress for social development.

Additionally, several international instruments refer to gender equity. The



report "Gender Equality" by (UN Women, 2016. p. 2) mentions the following elements:

"-Since the foundation of UNO, discrimination based on a person's gender was forbidden; the principle of equality of rights between men and women was embodied in the United Nations Charter of June 1945.

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) also mentioned the principle of equality and the forbidding of all sorts of discrimination based on gender and establishes the right of all people to participate in an equalitarian manner in political decisions and to access functions for public affairs.

- The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1954) proposes the implementation of the principle of equality of rights of men and women established in the United Nations Charter.

- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) proposes policies towards the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination and promotion of common understanding among all races.

- In the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Member States agree to respect and ensure that all individuals in their territory and within their jurisdiction are granted the rights established in said instruments, regardless of their race, language or gender, nationality, religion, political opinion, etc."

For women, the support of legal frameworks that protect rights that promote equality is a positive element and has great importance. Thus, it is aimed towards every human being having different perspectives of gender equality.

According to\ (UNESCO, 2012. p.111-112) gender equality is evaluated depending on the number of opportunities for men and women in various areas such as education, health, labor force participation, and promotion opportunities. These are all indicators that allow the measurement of social advancement, as well as the exercise of certain values, attitudes and cultural traditions that make it possible to analyze the circumstances from a personal and community perspective, as well as any influences on possible contributions for



cultural, political, economic, and social development of the country. Finally, it is possible to make the best out of the beneficial results of the achievements obtained by both men and women, as that is the only way a positive numerical rating can be obtained.

Culture is key for the attainment of gender equality as the environment is, sadly, the main limiting condition. Thus, it is necessary to find strategies and aid from public entities to promote said equality, although it may result in conflicts with cultural practices and traditions. Culture may start to be considered a negative element, as an efficient instrument in the resistance to change which is even justified by the chronology and "history" behind said culture.

The use of culture as a justification to avoid change and maintain the "status" of men in society preserves a sort of backward dynamism established in previous centuries and avoids any adaptations to social changes and certain sets of values that can achieve positive social transformations.

One of the most important values needed to start the change would be the respect to

diversity, traditions, and cultural rights compatible with the gender equality desired. This would allow the same opportunities for access and participation in culture and various processes for both men and women, becoming a stepping-stone for equality.

If equality can be ensured, many new options would become available, guaranteeing the development of interests and creativity of every individual. People will always have different perceptions, but the main goal should be to make it so that every person keeps an open mind towards inclusion and opportunities not only in public institutions or situations, but also at a personal level. This way, it could be considered a human right and a means for the development of society.

This change in perception may also be attained with strategies and agreements that focus on gender as the main subject and promote the evolution and renewal of practices, values, attitudes and, of course, perceptions related to the roles of men and women within society. This, along with the support from governing

officers in this context and the creation and promotion of public policies will help the



construction of open, integrative societies according to the rights of all genders to obtain sustainable results. It is possible if this type of intervention becomes more commonplace and more people become involved. This means that it is necessary to work in a change in mentality for this kind of projects so that they do not span over a specific period only, but instead remain alive and present within the people who participated in it: in this case, the female educators of Ecuador.

This change in perception will be attained using the corresponding tools: dialogues, agreements, and incentives for its execution, as well as the transmission of the collective benefits that gender equality would bring for everyone.

2. METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, there were various methods and materials starting with a pilot test to validate the survey. Afterwards, a script for a semi-structured interview was drafted for the G1 and G2 groups. The surveying took place at the Technical University of Ambato (UTA) and the Technical University of Manabi (UTM) with groups G1 and G2, using a Data Matrix in

SPSS. There were also interviews to certain key informers from the G1, G2-UTA; and G1, G2-UTM groups. Finally, conclusions were drawn up concerning the perception of the existence of institutional barriers for access to academic power positions. A general report was drafted including the main findings of the study.

3. RESULTS

According to the results of the surveys that were carried out for the women who do not occupy academic power positions at the Technical University of Ambato who attempt to reach, have desisted from or had resigned this year mentioned that that if they want to get a higher position, there are several factors that need to be considered, 30.77% expressed that their couples represent a barrier at home and their children limit their access, 23.08% stated that they have problems with their sons and daughters, 15.38% do not any problems, they are free to make decisions because they do not have family responsibilities. Also, 7.69% highlighted that experience is another factor. Likewise, 7.69% of the women who cannot get higher-ranking job positions mentioned that their parents influence



them. Likewise, the results of the surveys of the women who have higher positions at Technical University of Ambato show that 64% were mentored by one of their coworkers, 36% of the women who are part of the surveyed population determined that the rector of the university and family members mentored them for the insertion in the occupational environment at the University. Regarding the influence of other people in decision-making it is said that 35.29% are influenced by their children, followed by 25.53% from their parents and another high percentage argued that they are not influenced by anyone.

With respect to behavior in the workplace, 96.15% of people determine that their participation when taking decisions is active and they act when it is needed for their participation to become valid.

Instruction was also mentioned because it is carried out in their homes. Parents had influenced an effective instruction and growth process in the academy. They have more relevance for a child to develop since both, father and mother have a specific role regarding their children development. For instance, women had made progress by

taking the example of their parents and to obtain success in their lives.

One of the most significant questions regarding the survey are the reasons why they accept to take other positions at work. This is determined by job training, in other words, the updating of knowledge produces new bases that are commonly developed to promote knowledge and updating it.

According to 63.64% of people health is the main cause for leaving positions of authority. Being at work all the time neglects people's health and even more their personal care, personal life, family, and friends for executing authority responsibilities in the workplace.

Another aspect that tends to create tension for women is to put aside friendship relations due to the occupational field they are working on. It is mentioned that 60% of the people are interested in social and cultural events, taking care of the family represents the 40% of women surveyed. It is worth mentioning that 88,6% of women are valued in their homes for the performance they are doing and their development in professional life.



Apart from conducting surveys to women who occupy and do not occupy senior positions, important interviews were also conducted. For women who are not in a currently public position or who rejected one, a remarkable fact was found.

For both the women who enter higher positions and those who do not have a common factor. According to 30.77%, women state that this factor is their partner. As a result, there are household implications. Furthermore, as reported by 23.08% of women, they have not had any implications and they are free of their decisions. Since they do not have family responsibilities.

On the other hand, in the interview with the women who are currently holding public positions, other series of questions were asked to know what difficulties they faced to get to where they are today.

In agreement with the 65% of women there are various barriers to holding high-ranking positions. Moreover, the 35% of the participants affirm there are no limitations for access to high-ranking positions.

Another question that was analyzed in this interview revealed that 75% of surveyed

women who work at Technical University of Ambato had to put aside their professional career to work in other positions. Nevertheless, 25% of women who correspond to 7 women mentioned that working in high-ranking positions has not been a factor to abandon their professional career.

Additionally, the gender conquest has favored working and occupational practice. Therefore 90% of the women in the study do not have difficulties to develop their work as authorities at Technical University of Ambato. Furthermore, 40% of women acknowledge that the reason for accepting a higher position is professional satisfaction. In addition, they point out they know the educational system more closely.

There are several factors that are included for obtaining a higher position. 15% of the women who access to the system is due to the petition of one of their coworkers, 10% mentioned that administrative imposition, personal satisfaction, knowing the educational system and their coworker's petition as it was previously mentioned are factors to enter a higher hierarchy job.



Despite the difficulties of holding public functions in the Educational System, 60% of people did not have any issues in exercising them. In addition, 20% of those surveyed have had some dilemmas with time and social incompatibility, and in 5% there is little capacity to perform higher-ranking positions.

4. CONCLUSIONS

According to the results of indices and surveys, it can be concluded that many of the women who are currently holding public functions are mothers. The problem also lies in the way mothers see their children as a motivation to their professional growth. On the other hand, they unconsciously see their children as one of the greatest impediments. Besides, it should be emphasized that in many cases it is not only the children, but also the partner and sometimes their parents.

The inequality of opportunities does not only lie in what is socially done but goes further. Due to family reasons and even insecurities created by the woman herself, which is why these factors are taken as personal limitations in the process of knowledge update.

As mentioned in (Organización Internacional de Trabajo, 2014), men and boys are also in charge of working together to open opportunities to the market and maintain equality in a healthy and respectful relationship between equals. Since people want to achieve this objective, it should be coordinated by both genders and notice the benefits of them.

To change this perception, it must be considered according to the (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2015) (UNDP) which states that empowerment is essential for social development in a sustainable way and maintaining a balanced society, apart from providing notable economic growth, as the objective that is raised according to female empowerment.

“It is vital to ensure that women have a voice and vote in all government institutions, from the judiciary to the public function, as well as in the private sector and civil society, so that they can participate equally in public dialogue and the decision-making and influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families and countries.” (Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, 2015) (UNDP).



The role that a woman plays is a determining factor, which is why UNDP has also provided in Latin America and the Caribbean, a program that motivates public and private companies to promote gender equality in the workplace. In 12 countries, 1,700 companies have been certified for meeting program standards through hiring and practices relevant to this project.

There are more and more policies, which oversee allowing the global development of gender equality, which is an opening for the change of people's perceptions. Being in a certain way a slow process but effective. What becomes more complicated is the fact of breaking certain individual women limitations. As observed in the surveys and in the analyzed interviews, several cases show that society does not only impose obstacles, but also certain mental limitations motivated by the previous culture for women who tried to access these public functions.

The importance of working on this type of mentality change, with children, from a very young age will create empowerment and a positive perception about what gender equality is in a different way.

The perception process in gender equity regardless of where we live or where it is investigated, can become a social problem if it is not addressed because this equity process is a fundamental human right. In addition to being the basis for a healthy society that is aimed at reducing poverty when women receive economic incomes for invigorating society. There are improvements in the field of health, inclusive education, protection and well-being of children and adolescents.

Due to these indicators, intervention actions must be taken through the implementation of programs that also allow women not only to be part of a social but economic way promoting the generation of resources and the enjoyment of them within a country.

The research based on the results of the interviews and applied surveys provokes reflection in our world of perceptions about gender equity in the world of work to critically engage with solutions to each of these limitations and mental schemes.

Moreover, there are some factors that must be considered. One of them is people who work in gender projects. Professionals in charge of the execution of these projects



must be those involved in social areas, who can maintain direct and effective contact with people, who know how to listen, but also how to speak in a way to motivate changes.

Historically, impressive progress has been made for the change that is wanted, but despite that, several stereotypes continue that still influence the perception of gender issues, added to prejudices or stereotypes regarding age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, among others.

Although much work has been done for equal opportunities, there are still different barriers not only personal, but also within the labor society that prevent women from trying to reach high positions and eventually they will resign.

The perception that women have less time due to a bad distribution of roles, demand an obligation to their homes which detriment their own autonomous development.

Another type of problem, which could even be considered as a type of gender violence, is that the highest percentage of women who did not accept a position of authority is due to their partners. This could be an inconceivable action regardless of any type

of problem, it is not possible to speak of equality if this type of problem continues to exist.

The purpose of this research is to motivate the creation of labor and social policies that promote equity not only at Technical University of Ambato but also in the Coast and Highlands. These policies should be considered as a starting point to be socialized and applied not only here but in other places as well.

Women as professionals have the same capacity as men. For this reason, they should have the same possibilities to be promoted, receive equal incomes and that their role receives the importance that deserves.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- Bozzo, F. (2018). Feminazismo, hembrismo e ideología de género. *Litorales*, 3-13.
- CEPAL: Naciones Unidas. (2016). *Agenda 2030 y Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible*. Santiago: Naciones Unidas.
- ONU Mujeres. (2016). *La igualdad de género*. Ciudad de México: ONU.
- Organización Internacional de Trabajo. (2014). *Igualdad de género y no*



discriminación: Guía para la acción.
San José: OIT.

Oviedo, G. (2004). La definición del concepto de percepción en psicología. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 89-96.

Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo. (2015). Empoderamiento de la Mujer. Retrieved from: <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/es/home/ourwork/womenempowerment/overview.html>

Scott, J. (1986). El género: una categoría útil para el análisis histórico. *Bivipias*.

UNESCO. (2012). *Igualdad de Género*.

Vargas Melgarejo, L. (1994). Sobre el concepto de la percepción. *Alternalidades*, 47-53.