

Gender Equality in The Higher Education Workforce in Nepal

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Abstract

This article focuses on the challenges of achieving gender quality that led to gender well-being in the workforce in the Higher Education sector in Nepal. Well-being by gender refers to the overall health and quality of life seen from a gender perspective. It includes physical and mental health, while from a quality-of-life perspective it includes social, psychological, cultural, political and environmental aspects. This principle says that everyone, regardless of their gender, should be treated fairly and equally in all aspects of their lives. This includes equal access to high-quality education, employment opportunities, and a role in politics and social life. In addition, gender equality in education means ensuring that men, women, marginalized community and LGBTQI+ have equal opportunities to obtain high quality education without facing any barriers or discrimination. Similarly, gender equality in employment requires that men, women, marginalized community and LGBTQI+ receive equal opportunities to work, receive equal pay and progress in their careers regardless of their gender. Gender equality in politics aims to ensure that men and women have the same right to be involved and contribute to the political process and decision-making. The involvement of women in employment must consider the implementation of strategies regardless of gender and must be fair in offering employment. Previously, women in the employment sector were quite marginalized from the current state of national development. The research method used is a qualitative study that uses document content analysis using secondary data, namely journals and scholarly writing, library research and previous research by previous researchers. This study found some challenges that women face to become leaders in the higher education sector. Including prejudice and stereotypes against women's ability, gender-based pay disparities, occupational segregation and work-life balance.

Keywords: Gender equality; Workforce; Higher education; Challenges; Prospects

1. Introduction

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) clearly envisions Nepal as an inclusive state and guarantees the right to equality, social justice and freedom from discrimination to all. The Constitution of Nepal is a significant milestone for promotion of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to ensure equal rights for women, the poor, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, people living in geographically remote areas and people from other excluded or vulnerable groups.

A core aspect of the 2015 Constitution is ensuring that the policies and systems of Nepal are inclusive, particularly of the rights of women and historically excluded groups, calling for ‘ending discriminations relating to class, caste, ethnicity, region, language, religion and gender’ and to ‘create an egalitarian society on the basis of the principles of proportional inclusion and participation, to ensure equitable economy, prosperity and social justice’.

The Constitution explicitly provides a broader framework for ensuring GESI, i.e.: i) the principle of equality and non-discrimination; ii) Constitutional national commissions and human rights institutions, including the National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, National Inclusion Commission, National Madhesi Commission, National Muslim Commission, National Indigenous Commission and National Human Rights Commissions; and iii) various fundamental rights of individuals and groups that address gender inequality and women’s empowerment, i.e. Rights to Equality, Rights of women, provisions for positive discrimination towards women and assurance of special measures for women in education, health, employment and social security. Other positive provisions as per the Constitution includes affirmative action to address historical disadvantages and a prohibition of any sex or caste/ethnicity-based discrimination.

Along with that, ensures the protection of women from physical, mental, sexual, psychological and other forms of violence, exploitation or discrimination on grounds of origin, religion, race, ethnicity, caste, tribe, sex, economic condition, language, region, ideology or on other similar grounds. The Constitution identifies specific disadvantaged groups that have the right to participate in the functions of the state and equal access to public services, includes socially or culturally backward women, Dalit, indigenous people, indigenous nationalities, Madhesi, Tharu, Muslim, oppressed class, Pichhada class, minorities, the marginalized, farmers, labors, youths, children, senior citizens, gender and sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, persons in pregnancy, incapacitated or helpless, backward region and indigent Khas Arya. The state has accepted gender-based violence and power dynamics between male and female as It is necessary to systematically address the issues related to the security and welfare of women, children, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens.

The recognition of equal rights for all its citizens is a cornerstone of Nepal’s constitution. As a signatory to various international conventions, the country is legally committed to Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). The Government of Nepal (GoN) and various development partners have developed and implemented policies and programs in line with these commitments. Institutional mechanisms have been put in place to address GESI issues at the national, district, and municipality levels, including a quota system to ensure women’s political representation. Donor-funded programs and international NGOs have, for their part, addressed women’s empowerment, gender equality, and social inclusion through gender mainstreaming, social mobilization/empowerment, and capacity-building interventions.

The principle of gender equality emphasizes that all people, regardless of their gender, should be treated fairly and equally in all aspects of their lives. This concept argues that gender should not determine treatment, opportunities, or a person's rights in society. In addition to them, it instead argues that every person, whether male or female, or people with a different gender identity, has the same right to be respected, heard, and given the same opportunity to develop. In the context of education, gender equality means ensuring that boys and girls have equal access to high quality education without facing any barriers or discrimination. This includes giving everyone equal access to basic and higher education as well as opportunities for skills training and vocational education.

In addition, gender equality in the field of employment means that men and women have the same opportunity to work, receive equal pay, and thrive in their careers regardless of their gender. According to these researchers, this can involve the implementation of policies that prevent discrimination in employment, such as providing equal pay for equal work, and encouraging men and women to participate actively in various fields of work. Gender equality in politics means that men and women are given the same right to participate and contribute to the political process and decision making. This includes ensuring that men and women have equal opportunities in political positions and providing support and opportunities to those who are active in politics from all walks of life, regardless of gender.

The purpose of gender equality in social and economic fields is to stop injustice and inequality caused by gender. This can include combating gender violence, empowering women's rights in the economy, and promoting the development of a fair and inclusive society for all. Overall, the main principle of gender equality ensures that everyone has the same opportunity to develop and contribute to society without being discriminated against or marginalized because of their gender. This principle strives to create a world that is not biased by gender and can live with dignity and justice.

Again, it is emphasized that the principle of gender equality aims to eliminate discrimination based on gender and ensure that men and women have equal access to opportunities and resources. According to these researchers, recognition and respect for gender diversity and other gender identities are also needed. To create a fair and inclusive society, the principle of gender equality is an important foundation. The purpose of this principle is to combat discrimination based on sex, including unfair or unequal treatment of people based on their sex, and to ensure that men and women have equal access to opportunities and resources. Lau, , et al. (2023), stated that in this context, it is important to understand some of the main points that form the basis of gender equality, which is through the elimination of discrimination based on gender. The principle of gender equality opposes any discrimination that may occur based on a person's gender. This includes things like discrimination in education, employment, politics, access to health services, and other

aspects of social and economic life. Next is giving equal opportunities to all genders. According to them, this idea says that men and women should be given equal access to the opportunities and resources needed to grow and succeed in life. This includes equal access to high-quality education, decent employment, health services, social support, and opportunities to participate in political and social life. While the latter is through fair recognition to all. The idea also acknowledges that apart from men and women, society consists of various gender diversity and other gender identities. Therefore, it is important to respect and recognize the rights of people with different gender identities and ensure that they are not discriminated against or oppressed.

The issue involving gender equality has become something that is very important nowadays because of various factors that exist. In addition to researchers, this situation has also been detected among those who work as members of academics and professionals in this country. All this is one of the challenges on the way to achieving success in the higher education sector. In this issue, we cannot ignore the gender factor that has an influence in shaping the pattern and dynamics of the workforce in the field of higher education when we move towards inclusive and sustainable higher education excellence. In the higher education sector, gender equality should be an important component in the development strategy of human resources. It should not only be an interesting issue. However, the statement continues to show significant differences between men and women in certain fields, as well as the lack of access and opportunities faced by certain groups. The purpose of this writing is to examine the issues and prospects of gender equality in the higher education workforce. The researcher will carefully examine some of the key issues faced by academics and professionals. The researcher will also show solutions and opportunities to improve the gender imbalance in this industry.

Through a deeper understanding of this issue, we can reduce the gender gap in the workforce in the higher education sector in Nepal. Through efforts such as creating a more gender-friendly environment, it is very helpful in efforts to create equality between genders. So, through this article the authors will take readers to find inspiration and solutions to build a fairer and more viable future for everyone. Various challenges can be seen. The effect of this issue is the existence of segregation in certain fields. The imbalance between men and women in certain fields is a big problem. For example, fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are still dominated by men, while fields such as nursing and early childhood education are usually filled by women. This causes a gender imbalance that has occurred since the university/college level.

In addition, the lack of access and opportunities is also a barrier among women from developing in the professional field. Additionally, the greater involvement of women in the higher education workforce is hindered by a lack of supporting infrastructure, such as

childcare facilities and work flexibility. According to the researcher, leadership is also one aspect that contributes to the imbalance between men and women in the higher education sector. In higher education institutions, there are many cases proving that women are not given the opportunity to hold positions in high leadership. They often have difficulty climbing the higher leadership ladder. This imbalance is due to various reasons, including lack of the support, gender stereotypes, and the tendency for men to have a greater role in the process of selecting leaders. As per the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) Fiscal Year Data 2023, Total Staffs are 8418, among them women are 1385 (16.5%; in Leadership positions both men and women are 91 and Women Leaders are only 4 in numbers. This data in the energy sector in Nepal clearly state the Gender Inequality in NEA.

The issue of discrimination and gender stereotypes cannot be denied the existence in an organization and will continue to exist if not taken seriously by the authorities. The socially constructed perception that men are better suited for certain positions or that women are not as good as men in certain fields continues to be a major obstacle to gender balance in the workplace. This can prevent women from getting equal higher education opportunities and equal recognition. When talking about the disproportionate amount, it is a significant issue happening nowadays. In many countries, persistent gender patterns in career choices and the tendency to differentiate men and women into stereotypical fields reflect this imbalance.

As a result, this leads to another issue which is the issue of incentives, salary and recognition. Although many women work in the higher education sector, they are often treated unfairly in terms of incentives, salary and recognition compared to their male counterparts. This can be due to several reasons, such as wage discrimination based on gender, lack of support for women to move forward in their careers, and an imbalance in the number of female representatives in leadership positions, all of which have an impact on the decision-making process regarding wages and recognition. Women are also involved in career advancement issues. Women in higher education often face specific obstacles that prevent them from progressing in their careers. This has already been linked through the previous paragraphs and this proves that something more drastic needs to be done to curb this issue.

In conclusion, this article also emphasizes that to achieve true gender equality, gender identity needs to be recognized and respected. In addition, it shows some of the issues faced in achieving gender equality, such as gender imbalance in some fields of work and education, as well as issues of unfair pay and recognition. Thus, by underlining how important gender equality is to build a fair and inclusive society, this article emphasizes how important it is to act and raise awareness to address gender imbalance in all aspects of life. Finally, gender equality is essential to building a more just and viable world for everyone, regardless of their gender in the professional field.

1.1 Country Context

Inequalities exacerbated by Nepal's history of caste discrimination and social exclusion has prompted the GoN to identify women, Adivasi, Janajatis, Madhesis, Muslims, people with disabilities, gender and sexual minorities, and people from remote regions as disadvantaged or excluded. The GoN has been progressive in addressing inequalities by instituting different policies and legislation aimed at ending all forms of discrimination. Moreover, the 2015 Constitution guarantees the right to equality by prohibiting all discrimination based on any grounds. 1 Nepal's economy is largely agricultural, providing 67 percent of total employment but accounting for only 1.3 percent of growth and one-third of the total value-added produced (WB 2018). The service sector is largely informal and dominated by wholesale and retail trade, accounting for half of the total growth, and the industry sector contributes 0.5 percent points to the total growth (ibid). The labor force participation data indicates that disparities remain in labor market outcomes between women and men, and rural and urban areas. The Nepal Labor Survey (2017/18) reports unemployment rates are higher among women (13.1 percent) than men (10.3 percent). At least 57 percent of youth find employment by contacting relatives and friends (WB, 2018). Women have fewer networks than men and are discriminated in wages and opportunities. The 2017/18 Nepal Labor Force Survey shows that women earn 29.45 percent less than their male counterparts, with the same level of education and equivalent positions. However, the Article 18 (4) of Nepal's 2015 Constitution states that there should be no discrimination in remuneration for the same kind of work. The National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) which assesses poverty and living conditions of the Nepalese population shows a declining trend in poverty in which remittances have played a significant role. Despite decreasing rates of poverty, the Census of 2011 shows that lower caste and traditionally excluded social groups are more likely to be poor and rural poverty is nearly double urban poverty (27.43 percent versus 15.46 percent, respectively). Social and gender inequalities continue to reduce the opportunities for poverty reduction among the historically marginalized groups. In 2002, the 11th Amendment of the Civil Code provided equal inheritance rights to unmarried daughters and sons. There is a policy of tax exemptions to incentivize the registration of land in a woman's name and joint ownership of husband and wife. According to the 2018 Nepal Social Inclusion Survey (CDA 2020), 7.3 percent of women own houses and 21.4 percent of women own land. The rates of landlessness among Dalits is high, as they have traditionally depended on income from trades and services rendered. The Seventh and Eighth Amendment of the Land Act has provided the legal framework for the Constitutional provision, which requires the state to provide land to landless Dalits and to landless squatters and unmanaged dwellers. In Nepal, gender, caste, and ethnic exclusions intersect with hierarchies, sectors, institutions, religions, occupations, languages, and locations. Dalit men tend to have a lower status in society than non-Dalit women. A rural woman would face problems compounded by caste, religion, ethnic group,

level of education, age, and position within the family if widowed or disabled. Women experience Gender-Based Violence (GBV) both in domestic and public spaces including workplaces. In Nepal, the most common forms of GBV include female infanticide and food/nutrition deprivation, early and forced marriage, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, and domestic violence, and ostracism during menstruation. The full extent of GBV in Nepal is still unknown as 66 percent of women who have experienced any type of physical or sexual violence have not sought any help (GoN 2017). Nepal is a signatory to many international agreements and has passed national legal and policy frameworks for protecting human rights and promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Nepal's national legal and policy frameworks are establishing important precedents in support of equal opportunities and ending discrimination based on gender and social identities. The Constitution supports gender equality, proportional inclusion, and social justice. Positive provisions include affirmative 2 action to address historical disadvantage and a ban on gender or caste/ethnicity-based discrimination. While Nepal's legal provisions are intended to eliminate gender and social discrimination and to promote gender equality and social inclusiveness, many laws are not implemented effectively. Large numbers of women, especially in rural areas, are also unaware of laws that are intended to protect them. The Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens (MoWCSC) plans and executes programs for empowering women, children, and senior citizens. There are Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) units and focal persons in all the ministries, and they regularly communicate and consult with MoWCSC. Some line ministries have prepared their GESI Strategies to integrate gender and social inclusion into their respective programs. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) also makes provision for seven National Commissions on Women, Dalits, Inclusion, Indigenous Nationalities, Madhesis, Tharus, and Muslims. The major role of these commissions is to assess the situation of the social groups for which it has been established and make recommendations to the GoN for necessary policy, legal and institutional reforms.

Despite these efforts, Nepali women and minorities are still lagging in terms of meaningful participation and representation in political, social, economic, and educational arenas. Nepal's ranking in the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index (2020) was 101 out of 153 countries, putting it among the lowest five countries for gender equality in South Asia.

2. Literature Review

Gender equality is the concept of treating all people equally and fairly, regardless of their gender. It encompasses the idea that no one should face prejudice or discrimination because of their gender and that all genders should have equal access to opportunities, resources, and rights. The aim of gender equality is to eliminate prejudice, stereotypes and

discrimination based on gender and to promote the full participation and empowerment of all genders in all areas of society, including politics, employment, education, and decision-making.

Gender equality highlighted by the United Nations Development Program includes three main aspects of human life and expectations according to gender aspects, namely health, measured by female and male life expectancy at birth; education, measured by female and male expected years of schooling for children and female and male mean years of schooling for adults ages 25 years and older; and command over economic resources, measured by female and male estimated earned income (<https://hdr.undp.org/gender-development/index#/indices/GDI>).

Table 1 shows the ranking of the 20 countries in the world that have the highest GDI, that is, they record high values for each of the three main aspects that are evaluated. Among other things, this evaluation looked at the small educational opportunity gap between genders and the balanced number of parliamentary seats between men and women.

Gender equality in the higher education workplace is about ensuring fairness and equal treatment for individuals of all genders. It involves creating an environment where both women and men have equal access to positions, resources, and opportunities for career advancement, research, and leadership roles. By prioritizing gender equality, academic institutions can foster an inclusive culture that values diversity and promotes the full participation and empowerment of all members of the academic community, regardless of gender identity. This not only enhances the overall well-being and satisfaction of faculty and staff but also contributes to the excellence and innovation of higher education.

In the Gender Gap Index 2022 globally, Nepal scored a 0.692 and ranking at 98 for gender parity (table 1). The country performed best in the political empowerment dimension with a score of 58 out of 146. In terms of Economic Participation and Opportunity, the country ranks 98 and 125 in Educational Attainment.

Encouraging inclusive and equitable academic environments requires achieving gender equality in the higher education workforce. While there have been advancements, certain issues such as insufficient leadership positions and a gender pay disparity still exist. It is crucial to adopt a multimodal strategy that includes institutional support, policy changes, and cultural transformation in Nepal to address these problems. However, those who take the initiative and work together to promote gender equality in academic affairs have bright futures ahead of them.

One major problem in academic institutions is the low number of women in leadership roles (Dahlvig & Longman, 2021; Abd & Ramlee, 2022). Even though they make up a sizable portion of the workforce women are still underrepresented in positions of senior administration, including department chairs, presidents of universities, and deans (Dahlan,2023).

Table 1: Gender Inequality Index 2022

Gender Inequality Index		
Country	Value	Rank
Denmark	0.009	1
Norway	0.012	2
Switzerland	0.018	3
Sweden	0.023	4
Netherland	0.025	5
Finland	0.032	6
United Arab Emirates	0.035	7
Singapore	0.036	8
Iceland	0.039	9
Luxembourg	0.043	10
Belgium	0.044	11
Austria	0.048	12
Slovenia	0.049	13
Italy	0.057	14
Spain	0.059	15
Korea (Republic of)	0.062	16
Australia	0.063	17
Canada	0.069	18
Germany	0.071	19
Ireland	0.072	20
Nepal	0.692	98

These decision-making processes impede institutional advancement and innovation in addition to reinforcing gender stereotypes. There are numerous important ramifications for both people and institutions from this lack of representation. First, by implying that men are better suited for leadership roles, it maintains gender inequality and traditional gender stereotypes (Dahlan 2023).

The persistence of gender inequality in academia and the creation of obstacles for women aspiring to leadership positions can result from the perpetuation of stereotypes. Additionally, the low representation of women in leadership positions results in a lack

of diverse perspectives at the decision-making tables of academic institutions. Diversity in leadership is critical to fostering innovation, creativity and effective problem solving. When leadership teams lack gender diversity, they may overlook the unique perspectives and experiences that women can bring, ultimately limiting the institution's ability to address complex challenges and adapt to changing circumstances (Dahlan 2023). Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions may be detrimental to the atmosphere and culture of the company. According to research, diverse leadership teams are more likely to build welcoming workplaces where all staff members are treated with respect and feel appreciated. Academic institutions may find it difficult to foster inclusive environments that encourage the full participation and engagement of all faculty and staff members if there is insufficient representation of roles women in leadership.

Conclusively, gender equality in higher education is hindered greatly by the low number of women holding leadership roles in academic institutions (Dahlan, 2023; Abd & Ramlee, 2022). Gender diversity in leadership roles, the dismantling of gender stereotypes, and the development of inclusive environments that afford women equal opportunities for growth and success are all necessary to address this issue. Academic institutions can enhance the success and wellbeing of all members of their community by cultivating leadership teams that are inclusive and diverse (Dahlan, 2023).

Another issue that keeps coming up in academia is gender-based pay disparities. Research continuously demonstrates that, with respect to equivalent roles and qualifications, female faculty members are paid less than their male colleagues. Implicit bias in wage negotiations, occupational segregation, and opaque compensation practices are some of the factors that contribute to the gender pay gap (Burke, 2021; Stimpson, 2021). The financial stability of female academics is threatened by these injustices, which also serve to maintain wider socioeconomic divides. Several factors contribute to this gender pay gap, including occupational segregation, implicit bias in salary negotiations, and a lack of transparency in compensation practices.

Occupational segregation refers to the tendency for women to be concentrated in lower-paying academic fields or positions compared to men (Burke, 2021). While engineering and computer science are frequently dominated by men, certain disciplines, like the humanities and social sciences, have historically had a higher proportion of female students and typically pay less. Working women in the ICT industry still face barriers: in both Malaysia and Indonesia, women make up only 10-20% of mid-level managers, 8 10% of ICT CEOs, and senior division leadership positions. They are concentrated in subordinate positions. In the US, for instance, males are more likely to work in doctorate programs and somewhat more likely to work in master's or bachelor's degree-granting institutions, while female faculty members are more likely to work in two-year associate degree programs. The structural disparities that exist in academic fields may therefore result in women having lower earning potential.

In conclusion, eliminating gender pay gaps is critical to advancing gender equality and creating inclusive learning environments in academic settings. Academic institutions must proactively address occupational segregation, reduce implicit bias in wage negotiations, and improve the transparency of wage practices. Academic institutions can take steps to close the gender pay gap and advance gender equality in academia and beyond by ensuring that all faculty members, regardless of gender, receive fair compensation.

Aside from representation and pay equity concerns, women in science face the challenge of achieving a fulfilling work-life balance. Women can find it particularly difficult to balance the demands of an academic career with caring responsibilities, which can lead to higher turnover rates and slower career advancement. Work conflicts are often exacerbated by the demands of long working hours, constant availability and the need to carry out research and teaching tasks. These factors have a negative impact on job satisfaction and overall well-being.

The balancing act between professional responsibility and care responsibilities is one of the biggest challenges for women in science. Women are often expected to work in addition to their academic responsibilities, such as: child and elderly care, also carry out traditional care tasks (Park & Park Ozee 2023). Because of the demanding demands of this responsibility, which can be particularly stressful, women must invest significant time and energy in both aspects of their lives.

This imbalance can result in feelings of tension, exhaustion, and job dissatisfaction. To support women in finding a healthy work-life balance and addressing these issues, systematic adjustments within academic institutions are needed. Women can manage their personal and professional commitments more effectively by adopting practices and policies that encourage flexibility, such as parental leave policies, flexible work schedules and the ability to telework.

One way to reduce the pressure to prioritize work over personal life is to foster a culture that values work-life balance and recognizes diverse needs. Finally, women in academia have great difficulty achieving a satisfactory work-life balance given the demands of their academic careers and caring responsibilities. To help women overcome these obstacles and create an environment in which they can thrive both personally and professionally, academic institutions must take the initiative. Academia can retain talented female faculty members and create an inclusive and equitable academic environment for all by fostering understanding, flexibility, and support.

Fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive culture, alongside implementing policy changes, is critical to building a workplace where women feel valued and empowered. For example, diversity training and implicit bias awareness programs can be used to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion issues. Academic institutions can foster a more inclusive environment in which all faculty members, regardless of gender, feel respected

and supported by addressing stereotypes and bringing unconscious biases to light. Additionally, mentoring programs designed specifically for female faculty members can provide invaluable support and guidance in overcoming academic obstacles and developing their careers. In addition to networking opportunities and sharing experiences, mentors can provide women with the guidance and confidence they need to succeed in leadership positions and overcome obstacles to their career development.

Finally, addressing the barriers women face in higher education requires a multidimensional strategy that includes institutional support, policy changes, and cultural shifts. Academic institutions can create circumstances in which female faculty members feel valued, empowered, and able to succeed in their careers by adopting gender-responsive policies, fostering an inclusive and supportive culture, and providing mentoring opportunities. In academia, a more inclusive and equitable learning environment can be created for all students, and through coordinated efforts, gender equity can be achieved.

Academic institutions can make the work environment more equitable and welcoming for all faculty members by emphasizing gender equality and taking proactive steps to address structural barriers. By promoting diverse viewpoints, cutting-edge research, and inclusive teaching methods, supporting women in science not only improves their well-being and sense of fulfilment in the workplace, but also strengthens the value and impact of higher education overall. Ultimately, funding the institutional support of female faculty members serves the academic community as a whole and the goal of higher education.

3. Methodology

This study is a study that uses qualitative methods to answer research questions. Qualitative methods are used because they are consistent with the concept of conceptual research, which is to develop an initial understanding through a second data content analysis. Content analysis can help researchers develop an initial understanding of the research being conducted and can then serve as a guide for more in-depth research. The secondary data was obtained through studies by previous researchers, library studies, gender equality guidelines and researchers' diaries.

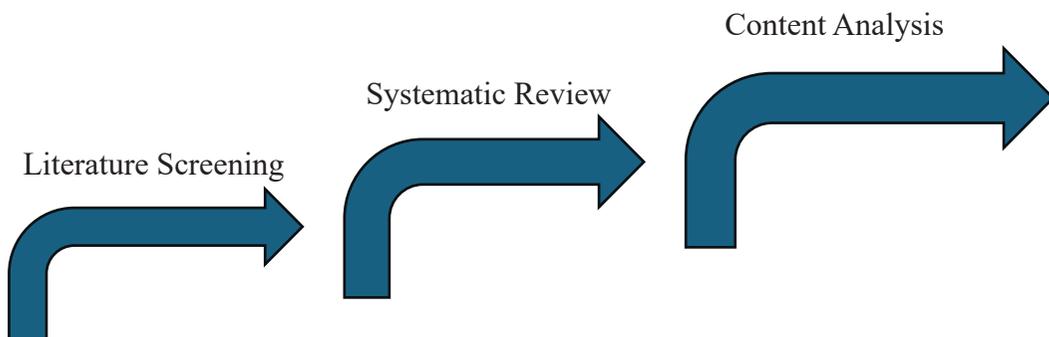


Fig.1. Research Methodology Phase

4. Results And Discussions

The purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges and prospects of achieving gender equality in the higher education workforce. Despite significant strides in recent decades, gender disparities persist in leadership positions across various industries globally. Thus, by examining existing literature, this paper aims to provide insights into the current state of gender equality in the higher education workforce, analyzing key challenges that hinder progress, detecting potential reasons and propose recommendations for fostering more inclusive workplaces.

Gender inequality remains a pervasive issue in higher education institutions worldwide, affecting not only academic staff but also students' experiences and opportunities. While numerous initiatives and policies have been implemented to address this issue, challenges persist. Often people misunderstood the terms of gender equality, by perceiving the stereotypes of a person's capacity in executing a job or task by placing the weightage on the difficulties or high-risk task execution.

However, in present study the term of gender equality is focusing on cerebral equality of a person on his or her ability to complete tasks. Many studies indicate that while there has been some progress in increasing the representation of women in higher education workforce, disparities persist, (Adam & Funk, 2023). Factors such as the gender pay gap, stereotypes, limited career development opportunities, and challenges with work-life balance continue to hinder women's progress into leadership roles within the higher education sector. Furthermore, organizational cultures that prioritize masculine leadership traits and norms exacerbate these obstacles, even within the higher education workforce.

Rastrygina and Ivanenko (2023) advocate for a pedagogy of freedom to promote gender equality within Ukrainian educational institutions. Their research underscores the significance of creating an inclusive and empowering atmosphere where individuals feel encouraged to challenge conventional gender norms and roles. Conversely, Dunne et al. (2022) present an examination of the Irish national strategy concerning gender equality in higher education, with a specific focus on STEM disciplines. Their analysis delineates advancements achieved, obstacles encountered, and the essential role of intersectionality in tackling gender discrepancies.

The analysis indicates that despite endeavors by organizations to foster diversity and inclusivity, systemic obstacles persist in numerous workplaces. Both studies emphasize the importance of holistic strategies for achieving gender equality, which should encompass policy frameworks, institutional practices, and cultural transformations.

In Ukraine, emphasis on pedagogical freedom within higher education indicates a requirement for transformative learning that extends beyond addressing gender biases. It aims to empower individuals to assert their rights and confront systemic inequalities. Conversely, the Irish national strategy stresses targeted interventions and institutional

responsibility in advancing gender equity, notably within STEM fields where women continue to be underrepresented. Similarly, in the Malaysian context, women's participation in academic roles within STEM disciplines, particularly in non-engineering institutions, lags that of male academics.

On the other hand, a study conducted by Smith and Smith (2029), highlights how factors such as race, class, and age intersect with gender to compound the challenges faced by women in accessing leadership positions. Women from marginalized backgrounds often encounter additional barriers and face greater obstacles in breaking through the glass ceiling focusing on female managers within the UK retail sector.

Comparative analysis with prior research validates the continued presence of gender disparities in both the higher education workforce and the retail sector. Although there have been advancements, the pace of change remains sluggish, underscoring the necessity for targeted interventions and systemic reforms to tackle underlying inequalities. Consequently, the examination of articles underscores the multifaceted nature of gender equality in higher education and advocates for nuanced, context specific approaches to address this intricate issue. Drawing insights from experiences in Ukraine and Ireland, stakeholders in higher education can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing gender equality strategies, thereby striving to cultivate inclusive academic environments for all individuals.

An identified limitation in current research is the absence of intersectional analysis, neglecting to acknowledge the distinct obstacles encountered by women. Despite considerable endeavors to advance gender equality in higher education, numerous hurdles are endured, impeding the journey toward genuine parity in the workforce. In the current study, researchers delve into the constraints identified in the execution of gender equality strategies in Ukraine and Ireland, as documented by Rastrygina & Inanenko (2023) ; Dunne et al. (2022).

A study conducted by Rastrygina and Ivanenko (2023) highlighted several limitations in the implementation of a pedagogy of freedom to promote gender equality in Ukrainian educational institutions. These include cultural resistance to gender equality initiatives, inadequate institutional support, and the persistence of patriarchal norms and values within academia. Additionally, the author's perspective is highly synced with Malaysian academia context especially for the private sector's higher education workforce.

The enduring underrepresentation of women in higher education not only sustains gender inequality but also impedes organizational effectiveness and creativity. Identifying and tackling these constraints is vital for progressing gender equality in higher education. Initiatives ought to concentrate on crafting thorough, intersectional approaches that tackle the underlying reasons for gender discrepancies and nurture an environment of inclusivity and fairness within academic establishments. Furthermore, continuous dedication from

policymakers, institutional heads, and stakeholders is imperative to surmount these obstacles and facilitate significant strides toward gender balance in the higher education workforce.

In a nutshell, attaining gender equality in management necessitates a comprehensive strategy that tackles both personal and systemic obstacles. Companies need to adopt unbiased recruitment and advancement policies, offer mentorship and leadership training programs designed for women, and cultivate inclusive environments that appreciate various leadership approaches. Additionally, policymakers and stakeholders should push for legislative changes and industry-wide efforts to encourage gender balance in leadership roles.

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the reliance on existing literature and potential biases in data collection methods. Future research should aim to incorporate intersectional perspectives and longitudinal data analysis to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of gender inequality in the higher education workforce.

5. Conclusion

Gender equality in the Higher Education workforce shows that efforts to empower women in the employment sector face patriarchal values and cultures that are still thick, especially involving the sector of Higher Education Institutions (HEI). Society still considers women in the employment sector as a support group only and does not recognize them as individuals who help in development aimed at achieving national achievements. Despite various efforts by organizations and even the Government by creating Women's Day, Workers' Day and so on, the stereotype of employment according to gender lines is still thick in society.

Perceptions about the difference in women's ability to become leaders need to be eliminated because it will prevent women from developing in their careers. Past studies have found that there is a significant relationship between gender equality and well-being. Equal opportunities and treatment can reduce stereotypes, prejudice and create a more conducive atmosphere that helps improve well-being for both men and women. Thus, gender equality is important to build a more just and viable world regardless of gender. Gender equality ultimately needs to be seen as a human right that needs to be valued and fought for.

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