International Journal of Educational Studies
ISSN: 2641-533X
Volume 8, Issue 2, pp. 120-128
2025
DOI: 10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.344

The Cultural implication of Gender Equity Policies in Academia

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ABSTRACT: *This study explores the intersection of gender equity policies in the education sector and their broader cultural implications, particularly in advancing Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5). Using a qualitative literature review methodology, this study synthesizes academic research, policy reports, and case studies to assess the effectiveness of institutional policies in fostering gender equity and driving cultural transformation. The analysis highlights how gender action policies contribute to increased female participation in STEM fields, enhance research quality, and promote diverse academic discourse. Moreover, it examines how these policies shape student aspirations and gender identities, influencing societal perceptions of gender roles. By identifying key themes and patterns within the literature, this study underscores the role of academic institutions as agents of systemic change. Findings suggest that well-designed gender equity strategies not only improve representation in education but also catalyze long-term cultural shifts toward greater inclusivity and equality. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equity by providing a critical examination of existing policies and their transformative potential in academic and social contexts.*

Key words*: Academia, SDG 5, Gender Equity policies, Gender Equity.*

1. Introduction

Gender equity policies in academia are critical structures designed to address systemic inequalities that persist in educational institutions and promote an inclusive environment for all individuals, regardless of sex. These policies aim to correct historical imbalances that disproportionately disadvantaged women and other marginalized gender identities, thus promoting a more equitable academic scenario. The relevance of these policies extends beyond the immediate context of academia and they closely align themselves with the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality and enable all women and girls. As the overall conscience of gender disparities has grown, the same is true of the recognition of the role that the academia plays to perpetuate or dismantle these inequalities (Lyu et al., 2025).

The importance of gender actions in academia cannot be exaggerated. Not only do they challenge the dynamics of power and existing cultural norms but also open the way for broad social changes. Educational institutions are not just academic performance centres; they are also transformative cultural hubs that influence social values and perceptions about gender roles. By implementing gender actions policies, academic institutions can stimulate cultural changes that transcend the university walls and promote social acceptance of gender equality (Cook, 2023).

2. Methodology and Rationale

This research employs a qualitative literature review methodology to analyze the intersection of gender equity policies in the education sector and their cultural implications, particularly in relation to the advancement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5). A qualitative literature review is a rigorous and systematic examination of scholarly sources that allows for an in-depth understanding of the theoretical, empirical, and conceptual dimensions of a research topic. This method is particularly appropriate for the

International Journal of Educational Studies
Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 120-128
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DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.344*

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present study, as it facilitates the synthesis of diverse perspectives on the role of institutional policies in fostering gender equity and cultural transformation.

The literature review draws upon peer-reviewed academic articles, policy reports, and case studies to identify and evaluate the effectiveness of gender action policies in higher education. This approach ensures that the analysis is grounded in existing scholarship while also allowing for critical engagement with varying methodological and theoretical frameworks. By examining the work of scholars such as Lyu et al. (2025) and Cook (2023), the study highlights key insights into how gender equity initiatives influence institutional environments, participation in STEM fields, research quality, and broader societal attitudes.

The review process is structured to identify recurring themes and patterns within the literature, including the impact of gender policies on student aspirations, identity formation, and academic diversity. Through thematic analysis, this study delineates the mechanisms by which academic institutions act as agents of cultural change, thereby aligning with SDG 5's objectives. Moreover, by integrating case study findings, the research contextualizes theoretical insights within real-world applications, demonstrating how policies translate into practice.

This methodology is justified by its capacity to provide a comprehensive and nuanced exploration of gender equity policies without being constrained by the limitations of quantitative approaches. Unlike empirical studies that rely on statistical measurement, the qualitative literature review allows for a critical discourse analysis that uncovers the socio-cultural underpinnings of policy implementation and its transformative potential. Ultimately, this methodological approach advances the scholarly discourse on gender equity by synthesizing existing knowledge and identifying gaps that warrant further investigation.

3. Literature Review

Understanding the cultural implications of gender equity policies in academy requires a critical analysis of intersectional factors that inform these policies. The intersectionality structure postulates that oppression experiences may vary widely, depending on a multitude of factors, including race, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1991). This approach emphasizes the need for gender equity initiatives to be designed with an awareness of these intersections, ensuring that they are inclusive and effective in various populations. In short, the role of gender actions in the education sector is multifaceted and extends beyond mere compliance with regulatory structures. These policies are fundamental in the formation of cultural narratives around the genre in academic environments and beyond, influencing individual aspirations and social norms.

4. Defining SDG 5

The Sustainable Development Goal 5 aims to achieve gender equality and enable all women and girls, recognizing the fundamental role that gender equity plays in promoting sustainable development in various sectors. The United Nations describe various goals of SDG 5, including the elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls, ensuring full participation in leadership positions and guaranteeing equal rights to resources and access to education. By directing these multifaceted problems, SDG 5 establishes a robust structure to address systemic barriers that hinder gender equality (Razavi, 2020). In addition, the objective emphasizes the importance of integrating gender perspectives into various contexts and institutions, including academic environments, where gender disparities usually manifest in terms of institutional representation, promotion and support. The relevance of SDG 5 in academic environments is underlined by its emphasis on equitable access to education, which forms a critical basis to enable women and girls (Chakraborty, et al. 2019). In academia gender capital policies that align with SDG 5 seek to correct historical imbalances in representation between teachers, students and administrative positions. These policies advocate equal opportunities in hiring, promotion and possession processes, particularly in disciplines where women remain under -displayed. The implementation of such policies is not just a measure of compliance, but a transformative approach to creating inclusive academic cultures that recognize and value various contributions.

The cultural implications of SDG 5 are profound, as these policies challenge rooted norms and attitudes that perpetuated gender inequality in the academy and beyond. For example, establishing guidance programs and leadership initiatives designed specifically for women can promote a support environment that encourages growth and professional representation (Razavi, 2020). In addition, the cultural change necessary to embrace

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gender equity usually requires the active participation of men and women to promote an inclusive academic environment (Biesta, 2020). This collective responsibility responds to the interconnected layers of cultural attitudes towards gender papers, which may facilitate or hinder SDG 5.

5. Formulation of Gender Equity Policies

Integrating the principles of SDG 5 into the educational institutions, creates the opportunity to shape a more equitable society that reflects the diversity of its constituents. The implications extend beyond academic domain. They influence the broader cultural scenario, challenging stereotypes and promoting a vision of equality that can inspire future generations (Chakraborty, et al 2019). Thus, SDG 5 serves not only as a fundamental structure for formulating gender equity policies in the academia, but also as an essential guideline for generating sustainable cultural changes that promote empowerment and advancement of women and girls in all sectors. The strategic alignment of academic policies with SDG 5 can serve as a catalyst for a broader social transformation, feeding an environment conducive to gender equality, contributing to the achievement of a fairer and more sustainable future (UNICEF, 2022). The implementation of gender equity policies in the academic world is vital to promote an inclusive educational environment and tackle the disparities between the sexes in various cultural contexts. In recent years, higher education establishments around the world have developed and adopted a range of policies aimed at promoting gender equity, enlightened both by national legislation and international initiatives such as the development objectives in accordance with United Nations SDGs. This objective underlines the need to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls, who cross clearly in the academic domain.

6. Driving Cultural Transformation

Gender equity policies in the academic world serve as a powerful tool not only to promote greater equity in educational establishments, but also to advance cultural transformation. As these policies are implemented on a global scale, they create training effects that question long -standing gender standards and promote a more inclusive academic landscape (Fennell and Arnot, 2009). In this sense, the intersection of policies of gender equity and cultural implications in the academic sphere significantly contributes to the advancement of the SDG 5, promoting an environment that supports equal opportunities for all sexes. The implementation of gender equity policies in academia involves deep cultural implications that extend beyond institutional limits, influencing the social perceptions of gender roles and expectations. Gvozdanović, J., & Maes, K. (2018) examine the transformative potential of these policies and suggest that they serve as catalysts to redefine traditional gender standards within educational environments. As academic institutions adopt policies aimed at promoting gender equity, such as inclusive recruitment practices, equitable salary structures and tutoring programs, inadvertently challenge the rooted stereotypes with respect to gender capacities and professional roles. By normalizing leadership and participation of women in the academy, these policies can initiate a broader cultural change that encourages the visibility of women's contributions in various fields, thus altering the social notions of long gender work data.

In addition, the cultural implications of these policies are clarified by Cook (2023), who argues that the institutional embrace of gender equity initiatives can stimulate critical dialogue about gender roles beyond the academy. According to Cook, when academic institutions actively defend gender equity, they not only advance the professional development of women but also influence public perceptions regarding femininity and masculinity. For example, by promoting women's achievements in STEM fields traditionally dominated by men, these policies challenge the notion of male superiority in certain disciplines, thus contributing to a gradual normalization of the presence and authority of women in several sectors.

This intersection of academia and cultural transformation is aligned with the broadest objectives of the SDGs 5, which emphasizes gender equality and the empowerment of all women and. By promoting environments where gender equity is prioritized, academic institutions can position themselves as leaders in social change, pressing other sectors to consider similar capital frames. As Gvozdanović, J., & Maes, K. (2018) point out, the domino effect of these policies can alter the dynamics of the community, encouraging collaborative associations at different social levels aimed at dismantling systemic gender biases.

In addition, an essential cultural implication of these policies is the change in the expectations surrounding the roles of men in the field of gender equity. Cook (2023) emphasizes that promoting an inclusive academic culture requires an active commitment of male allies that not only support women but also challenge the

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existing power dynamics that favor male domain. This reconfiguration of gender expectations encourages a culture that values inclusion and reciprocity, which causes a re-evaluation of what masculinity implies in professional environments. Consequently, involving men in the discourse surrounding gender equity serves not only to support the progress of women, but also to recalibrate the broader society: gender -related standards, which results in a more equitable distribution of responsibilities both in the academy and in society (Stromquist 1995; Salo 2001; UNESCO 2020; Unterhalter and North 2017; Mjaaland 2021).

In general, cultural implications of implementing gender capital policies in academia extend far beyond institutional benefits, defining social norms, aspirations and expectations with respect to gender roles. The progress of these policies is fundamental not only to achieve gender equity but also in promoting a culture that covers equality in all its Dimensions, which finally contributes to contributing to the objectives are described in SDG 5 (Stevenson and Lavigne, 2021; Cook, 2023) Gender equity policies in academic institutions serve as fundamental mechanisms for the advancement of the sustainable development goal (SDGs) 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and enable all women and girls. Research by Ngari and Mutegi (2023) points out that gender actions policies are fundamental in the creation of inclusive environments that promote educational opportunities for women, later increasing their participation in leadership roles in the academy and beyond. These policies often cover measures such as orientation programs, equitable recruitment practices and directed scholarships, which work collectively to dismantle barriers that have historically marginalized women in higher education environments. Consequently, its implementation correlates directly with the general objectives of SDG 5, which emphasizes the need for access to education as a fundamental pillar for equality.

The cultural implications of these policies cannot be underestimated. Peña & Les Valls Ortiz (2023) state that gender initiatives in academia transcend mere policy structures. They actively contribute to the change of social norms in relation to roles and gender expectations. By cultivating a culture of equality and support, these initiatives encourage not only female representation but also challenge predominant narratives around gender skills in the STEM and Social Sciences. The authors further posit that when educational institutions are committed to gender equity, they establish a precedent that resonates beyond their walls, influencing cultural attitudes and expectations in broader contexts (ibid).

In addition, the integration of gender actions policies in academic structures are aligned with various strategies posted by the educational, scientific and cultural organization of the United Nations (UNESCO). These strategies advocate a gender responsive education system, which is fundamental not only to achieve gender parity, but also to promote economic growth and social development (Loots and Walker, 2016). Ngari and Mutegi (2023) emphasize that, as educational institutions adopt gender actions policies, there is a corresponding increase in women's economic participation. This economic empowerment is essential to breaking poverty cycles and encouraging the sustainable development that the champion SDG 5.

In addition, the recognition and approach of intersectionality in gender action policies can sharply increase its effectiveness in achieving the objectives of SDG 5. Peña and de Las Valls (2023) argue that the policies that consider the various experiences of women of various socio- economic, racial and cultural background are crucial for the development of a comprehensive approach that incorporates true equity. This sentiment is echoes by other researchers who highlight the intersectionality of gender equality and other issues that marginalize the population globally (Crenshaw 1989; Yuval-Davis 2006; Hill, Collins and Bilge 2016). When policies are created and implemented with a different understanding of diversity, it is more likely to generate a holistic transformation in the cultural landscape of the academy, influencing social attitudes towards gender.

7. Educational Equity and Sustainable Development

In discussing the direct correlation between educational equity and sustainable development, it is clear that gender equity policies in the academy serve not only to raise women, but also to start broader cultural changes that align with global sustainable development agendas. By establishing equitable structures in educational institutions, the long -range potential for social norms around gender roles is significant. Through careful analysis of these interconnected themes and their implications, it is evident that the advancement of gender equity policies is not just an academic enterprise, but a critical component of global sustainable development efforts as described in SDG 5. The implementation of gender heritage policies in academic institutions remains a formidable challenge, mainly due to entrenched institutional resistance, widespread

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cultural prejudices and insufficient resources. Institutional resistance usually manifests itself in the form of bureaucratic inertia and a reluctance to alter established practices and norms that harm women and gender minorities (Brighouse, et al. 2018). This resistance can result from a deeply rooted patriarchal structure in the educational system, which perpetuates the unequal dynamics of power. As a result, reforms designed to promote gender equity may be inadequately supported or rejected, which impairs the effectiveness of any political initiatives performed.

8. Obstacles to Progress

Cultural biases further complicate the execution of gender equity policies. These biases can be explicit or implicit, influencing the perceptions and actions of individuals in academic environments. For example, traditional views on gender roles can lead to scepticism around the capabilities and accomplishments of female academics, reinforcing stereotypes and creating hostile or unchanged environments (Adeleye et al., 2024). Such biases not only affect the recruitment and retention of faculties, but also shape the students' experiences, especially in the STEM fields, where women are underrepresented. Consequently, without broad cultural changes, net equity policies are at risk of mere tokens, without application or genuine impact.

In addition, the lack of resources significantly hinders the implementation of effective gender actions in the gym. Institutions often fail to allocate enough financial and human resources for the development and execution of these policies, limiting their ability to promulgate real changes (Brighouse, et al 2018). The absence of dedicated financing for initiatives such as orientation programs, training workshops and resource allocation to support marginalized groups reflects a broader apathy or disinterest in promoting an equitable academic environment. This in sub -finance not only impairs the possible positive impacts of gender actions policies but also signals institutional priorities that may not align with the principles of inclusion and equality.

In general, the intersection of these challenges - institutional resistance, cultural biases and resource restrictions - creates a landscape in which gender equity policies fight for legitimacy and effectiveness in academic institutions. To promote the objective of sustainable development goal 5, which aims to achieve gender equality and enable all women and girls, it is imperative that these barriers are approached through systemic changes and institutional commitment to promote an equitable academic environment (Adeleye et al. 2024). Failure to face and dismantle these impediments finally impair not only the advancement of gender equity in the gym, but also the broader objectives of sustainable development.

9. Findings

An illustrative example is Sweden, where policies such as the 1991 law on gender equality have been fundamental to shape the approach of university establishments in matters of gender equity. Del-Rio-Sánchez et al. (2024) highlight how Swedish universities have implemented explicit gender policies that force institutions to set gender equilibrium objectives in recruitment and promotions. These institutions have also adopted gender awareness training programs for teachers and staff, thus integrating gender considerations in institutional culture. The Swedish model has the effectiveness of government mandates coupled with an institutional commitment to considerably increase the representation of women in higher academic posts (Del-Ro-Sánchez et al., 2024).

In Kenya, Wanjiku et al. (2023) discuss the initiatives of the University of Nairobi to promote women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), a region notoriously underrepresented by university women. The university has developed mentorship programs targeting specifically students and launched campaigns to highlight the achievements of women in these disciplines. According to Wanjiku et al. (2023), these policies have not only increased female participation in the STEM fields, but also contributed to a cultural change within the institution which questions traditional gender roles.

The intersectionality of gender equity policies can be examined more in the context of Australia, where universities are increasingly adopting the Athena Swan Charter, which initially developed in the United Kingdom to promote Gender equality in STEM subjects. Australian universities have adapted the principles of the charter to their specific institutional contexts, focusing on data collection, surveillance and systemic change initiatives (Del-Roi-Sánchez et al., 2024). These efforts reveal a concerted approach to make higher education environments more equitable while changing cultural perceptions concerning gender roles in the university world.

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In addition, Foss and Liu (2022) present a convincing case involving an interdisciplinary project which studied gender dynamics within STEM research teams in various higher education establishments in Utah. This initiative not only highlighted the biases that persist in team compositions and leadership roles but have also actively sought to rectify these disparities through targeted training and awareness campaigns. By integrating training on gender equity in the professional development of teachers and staff, the project has led to transformative changes in perception and practice (Ibrahim, and Alkire, 2007). The growing visibility and representation of women in the roles of research leadership have substantially contributed to the normalization of gender equity, which thus puts up cultural standards and longtime expectations concerning gender in the university world (Foss and Liu, 2022). This case illustrates that cultural change is achievable when strategic policies are used, strengthening the importance of sustained commitment to institutional levels.

Collectively, these case studies shed light on how various cultural contexts shape the formulation and effectiveness of gender equity policies in higher education. In addition to illustrating the diversity of approaches, they highlight the importance of stakeholders' commitment – including government, teachers, administration and students - in the effective implementation of these policies. For example, Wanjiku et al. (2023) point out that the empowerment of local champions within institutions can considerably influence the adoption of gender equity initiatives and their sustainability over time.

Table 1. Cross country comparison of gender equity policies in academia.

Country	**Key Gender Equity Policies**	**Impact/Findings**	**Challenges**
Sweden	Gender Equality Law (1991), gender balance targets in recruitment and promotion, gender awareness training	Increased female representation in higher academic positions, improved institutional commitment to gender equity	Institutional inertia, need for continued monitoring and enforcement
Kenya (University of Nairobi)	Mentorship programs for women in STEM, campaigns to highlight female achievements	Increased female participation in STEM, cultural shift in gender role perceptions	Persistent gender stereotypes, underrepresentation in STEM leadership
Australia	Adoption of the Athena SWAN Charter, focus on data collection, monitoring, and systemic change	Improved gender diversity in STEM fields, institutional accountability through data-driven strategies	Need for sustained funding and institutional support
United States of America (Utah) (Foss & Liu, 2022)	Gender equity training in research teams, leadership development initiatives	Increased visibility of women in research leadership, cultural shifts in gender expectations	Resistance from traditional leadership structures, slow adoption of policies

10. Discussion

These cases reviewed in this study highlight the need to use an approach to reflect on systems to combat gender equity. Institutional policies that prioritize equity between sexes not only to advance women's rights in university spheres but also reflect broader cultural changes to inclusiveness. McCowan and Unterhalter (2022) point out that successful initiatives frequently involve a participatory approach, engaging in various stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of action measures. Such collaboration promotes a feeling of belonging and responsibility among teachers and administrative organizations, ensuring that equity between the sexes becomes an integral part of institutional ethics.

In the light of progress made through these initiatives, it is imperative to consider the role that monitoring and evaluation play in ensuring continuous success. Foss and Liu (2022) argue for the systematic collection of data measuring the results of gender equity interventions. The rigorous evaluation provides not only information on the most effective strategies, but also demonstrates institutional engagement towards transparency and responsibility, the essential elements to support momentum in advocacy for gender equity.

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Overall, these successful initiatives reveal that when gender equity policies are strategically implemented and monitored, they offer substantial cultural and academic advantages. As these programs advance the objectives of SDG 5, they also contribute to broader movements to gender equality, the reshaping of institutional cultures and the improvement of the academic landscape for future generations. The lasting efforts in this regard are likely to resonate beyond the academic world, more broadly influencing societal attitudes towards gender roles and equity. By defending the policies of equity in the sexes, university institutions carry out not only a moral imperative, but also play a crucial role in the global pursuit of gender parity., The analysis presented in this study underlines the critical role of gender share policies within academic institutions as a mechanism to advance SDG 5. These policies are not only administrative measures, they incorporate cultural changes that try to dismantle the systemic inequalities that persist in the academic world. As pointed out by Wrigley (2020), effective gender policies contribute to the creation of more inclusive environments that favor academic excellence and equitable opportunities for all sexes, reflecting and promoting social progress ultimately. The cultural implications of these policies extend beyond institutional boundaries, influencing the wider social attitudes against roles and gender expectations.

11. Conclusion

A robust framework for implementing gender equality in research and academic institutions must be rooted in structural transformation, stakeholder engagement, and continuous assessment. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) proposes a six-step approach to developing and sustaining Gender Equality Plans (GEPs), beginning with familiarizing institutions with the GEP concept and assessing existing gender imbalances through sex-disaggregated data collection and policy analysis (EIGE, 2024). Central to this framework is the necessity of tailoring GEPs to institutional contexts while aligning them with broader policy frameworks, such as the European Union's Horizon Europe initiative. Successful implementation requires setting clear objectives, engaging stakeholders through participatory methods, and integrating gender considerations into research content, recruitment, and career progression (Loots and Walker, 2016). Additionally, GEPs must allocate dedicated resources and implement measures to combat gender-based violence, ensuring inclusivity in organizational culture. This structured methodology enables institutions to transition from policy compliance to meaningful and sustainable gender equality reform.

Sustaining gender equality initiatives necessitates ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptability to institutional and societal changes. The EIGE framework underscores the importance of embedding monitoring mechanisms within the GEP process to track progress using defined indicators, fostering transparency and accountability. Continuous data collection and stakeholder communication ensure that institutions remain responsive to emerging challenges, such as shifts in legal frameworks or societal transformations, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender disparities in academia. Moreover, adopting an intersectional approach that considers multiple dimensions of inequality—such as age, ethnicity, and disability—enhances the effectiveness of GEPs. By institutionalizing successful initiatives, benchmarking against similar organizations, and aligning gender equality measures with broader institutional strategies, universities and research institutions can move beyond short-term interventions to cultivate a culture of equity and inclusion that is both resilient and progressive.

In addition, the suggestions provided by Zhang (2023) highlight the need for institutions to adopt a more intersectional approach in the development and implementation of gender share policies. This entails the recognition of the different gender experiences between different cultures, socio -economic states and identities, thus guaranteeing that policies are complete and sensitive to different needs. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies that evaluate the long -term impacts of gender share policies on institutional culture and on gender representation in leadership positions within the academic world.

In addition, politicians are essential to consider collaborative efforts in different sectors to further improve the effectiveness of gender equity initiatives. Coming on with the interested parties, including students, teachers and external organizations, will create more robust paintings that face structural barriers to gender equity. In addition, enhanced professional training and professional development programs designed to provide academic leaders with the skills necessary to support and implement effective gender shareholders.

In summary, the intersection of gender equity policies and their cultural implications is crucial to advance SDG 5. Future directions for research must give attention to global strategies that promote inclusiveness and face the complexity of gender equity in the academic world. Only through prolonged commitment and

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2025
DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.344*

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innovative approaches can SDG 5 aspirations be made, resulting in equally educational environments for the benefit of all members of the academic community.

13. Limitations and Further Research

Given the qualitative approach used for this study, there are a number of limitations, including subjectivity and bias in source selection, limited generalizability due to reliance on case studies, and gaps in available literature, particularly from underrepresented regions. The lack of longitudinal data and the predominant focus on binary gender perspectives further constrain the findings, while the gap between policy development and actual implementation remains a challenge. To address these limitations, future research should incorporate mixed-methods approaches, conduct cross-cultural and intersectional analyses, and examine institutional resistance to gender equality initiatives. Additionally, studies should explore the impact of remote work on gender equity and assess the role of AI-driven hiring tools in academia.

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Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 120-128
2025
DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.344*

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International Journal of Educational Studies
Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 120-128
2025
DOI: *10.53935/2641533x.v8i2.344*

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