

Gender Equity In Mexican Higher Education: Assessing The Effectiveness Of Institutional Policies Across Public And Private Universities

Regina Compeán González^{1*}, Mónica Fabiola Reyes Delgado², Rosa María Muñoz Briones³, Nubia Maricela Chávez Lamas⁴, Liliana Angelica Velez Rodriguez⁵, Daniel Rodriguez Tenorio⁶

^{1*}Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Law. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9398-6192>

Email ID : compean_77@hotmail.com

²Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Law. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0813-859X>

Email ID : monicard@uaz.edu.mx

³Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Law. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3358-9344>

Email ID : rosa.munoz@uaz.edu.mx

⁴Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Law. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1669-9074>

Email ID : nubiachavez@uaz.edu.mx

⁵Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Law. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8912-9532>

Email ID : velezliliana019@gmail.com

⁶Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Veterinary Medicine and Zootechnics.

Email ID : rtenorio00@hotmail.com, Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2113-5911>

*Corresponding Author:

Regina Compeán González

Autonomous University of Zacatecas, Academic Unit of Law.

Email ID : compean_77@hotmail.com , ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9398-6192>

ABSTRACT

Gender equity has become a central priority in global higher education, yet persistent disparities in academic participation and leadership continue to challenge institutional reform efforts. This study examines the effectiveness of gender-equity policies in Mexican higher education through a mixed-methods comparative design involving public and private universities. Quantitative data on gender representation, leadership composition, and policy participation were analyzed alongside qualitative insights from institutional documents, interviews, and survey responses. The results reveal that although women have achieved increased access to higher education, substantial gaps remain in career advancement and leadership roles. Public universities demonstrate more comprehensive policy structures supported by dedicated gender offices, accountability mechanisms, and formal reporting systems yet their progress is constrained by bureaucratic limitations and uneven policy enforcement. Private universities exhibit greater variability, often lacking systematic monitoring and clear equity mandates, which leads to inconsistent implementation and limited impact. Across both sectors, institutional culture emerged as a critical factor influencing policy outcomes, with entrenched norms, opaque promotion practices, and intersectional barriers shaping the lived realities of women in academia. The study underscores the need for equity strategies that integrate structural supports with cultural transformation, emphasizing continuous monitoring, transparent governance, and sustained leadership commitment. These findings contribute to gender-equity scholarship and provide actionable insights for strengthening policy design and implementation in Mexican higher education

Keywords: Gender equity; Higher education policy; Public and private universities; Institutional culture; Mexico....

1. INTRODUCTION:

Gender equity is currently one of the key issues of concern within higher education across the globe, and more universities are discovering that equitable participation and representation are vital in the quality of institutions, research excellence, and sustainable development (Bustamante-Mora et al., 2024; Rosa and Clavero, 2022). Several nations are incorporating gender mainstreaming in their higher-education system and use strong indicator systems to track the improvement, which is a manifestation of the move towards evidenced-based

governance in the field (Moreira and Sales Oliveira, 2022). Although these have been made, international trends indicate that the pace of change is still minimal, specifically on leadership tracks and academic career growth, which highlights the fact that structural and cultural barriers in the first place still exist in university settings (O'Connor and White, 2021). Mexico is no exception of these world trends. Despite the several policies that have been implemented in the country to facilitate gender inclusion, the effect of the measures has been uneven. Although access to higher education by women has increased, underlying inequities of academic

progress, empowerment, and known research opportunities have yet to be addressed, and that is where the mismatch of policy intentions and institutional realities is noticed (Worthman et al., 2022).

In Mexican universities, the national legislation, feminist movements, and institutional reforms have influenced the direction of gender-policy development to incorporate equity principles in academic organizations. However, there is significant diversity among institutions that are determined by the differences in governance, available resources, and internal culture. Public universities are more prone to national equality framework and are more institutionalized in terms of their structure like gender units, reporting systems, and monitoring systems. In contrast, private universities are more autonomous and tend to implement a policy that is driven by the internal priorities, but not by the regulatory requirements, which makes their implementation unequal and responsible (Levy, 2011; Ferlie et al., 2009). Evidence on the international scale supports that the implementation of policies of private institutions can be characterized by unique challenges related to institutional leeway and ineffective control, which is also reflected in the research of higher-education governance in other settings such as China (Liu, 2018). Such structural variations render Mexico as a serious place to study the effects of the institutional attributes in influencing gender-equity policy implications.

Although there is increasing scholarly and policy interest, there are major gaps in the comprehension of the way gender-equity policies operate in Mexican publicly and privately funded universities. The current literature is inclined to examine a single institution or national patterns, which provides little information on the interactions between governance, cultural norms, and institutional resources and their impact on policy success. Very minimal comparative analyses combine both structural, cultural, and institutional dimensions into a single evaluation, although that is the necessary way to comprehend why inequalities remain despite a massive amount of policy-making (Moreira and Sales Oliveira, 2022). It is necessary to fill this gap not only in the context of advancing academic knowledge but also in providing support to policymakers, accreditation bodies, or institutional leaders who aim to develop and maintain more effective gender-equity strategies. The empirical evidence created within the industry and the discovery of circumstances under which this process can be more effective or ineffective allow taking practical steps and enhance the implementation of reforms and move universities closer to more equitable and inclusive academic spaces (Bustamante-Mora et al., 2024).

Research Objectives

To assess the effectiveness of gender-equity policies in Mexican public and private universities

To compare gender-equity outcomes between public and private institutions

To identify key factors influencing successful gender-equity policy implementation

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks

Gendered organizations theory helps explain why gender inequities persist in higher education despite formal policies. Rodriguez and Guenther (2022) argue that institutions are inherently gendered in their structures, norms, and everyday practices, reproducing inequality not only through explicit discrimination but through routine expectations such as hiring, promotion, workload distribution, and masculine-coded performance norms like uninterrupted careers and high research output. Intersectionality adds another dimension by showing that gender cannot be separated from other identity factors. Bowleg (2020) notes that overlapping categories such as race, class, ethnicity, and caregiving roles shape access to institutional resources and exposure to disadvantage, while Yuval-Davis (2015) emphasizes that social inequalities operate through multiple axes of power. In higher education, this perspective reveals why women from different social groups experience policies differently and why outcomes remain uneven. Policy implementation theory further clarifies the gap between policy design and practice. O'Connor and White (2021) argue that despite widespread adoption of gender-equality policies, progress remains slow because implementation depends on leadership commitment, resource allocation, administrative capacity, and institutional culture. Effective gender policies succeed not merely by existing but by being embedded in governance processes that enable monitoring, accountability, and sustained institutional effort.

2.2 Global Landscape of Gender Equity in Higher Education

Globally, gender equity in higher education is assessed through indicators such as enrollment, faculty representation, leadership, and research productivity. Although women's enrollment has risen sharply, significant gaps remain in academic advancement and leadership, reflecting persistent gendered labor patterns (Baily and Holmarsdottir, 2015). Women continue to be underrepresented in senior faculty and high-status research roles, indicating systemic barriers shaping career trajectories. International best practices emphasize multidimensional gender mainstreaming, inclusive governance, transparent promotion criteria, and data-driven monitoring systems (Eyben, 2015). Institutions that embed gender perspectives into strategic planning tend to achieve more sustained progress. However, as O'Connor and White (2021) argue, even leading global universities show slow and uneven change, highlighting deeply rooted structural and cultural constraints. Myers and Griffin (2019) add that gender disparities vary across geopolitical, cultural, and economic contexts, underscoring the need to examine national and institutional settings such as Mexico's to understand local manifestations of inequality that global trends alone cannot explain.

2.3 Gender Equity Policies in Mexican Higher Education

Gender-equity policies in Mexico have been increased in accordance with both national and international law, and include interventions as gender units, violence-prevention policies, and institutional equality plans. These trends are indicative of wider trends in the world towards the incorporation of gender equality in the governance of higher education. Nevertheless, the practice varies among institutions depending on the priorities of the leadership, the administrative ability, and the local culture (Masinire and Sanchez-Cruz, 2020).

Universities are encouraged to be gender-sensitive by national policies but institutional policy documents vary significantly in the extent, implementation strategies, and accountability. Others have created formal gender offices, reporting provisions and well-structured action plans in keeping with international standards and others have disjointed or token policies that are not operationally clear. This difference highlights the relevance of the examination of institutional policy documents in order to see how national requirements are turned into practice on the university level.

2.4 Differences Between Public and Private Universities

Mexican public and private universities operate under different governance structures that shape how they implement gender-equity policies. Public institutions receive government funding and are expected to follow national gender provisions, making them more likely to institutionalize equity efforts, establish monitoring systems, and align with accountability frameworks. However, their size and administrative complexity can lead to bureaucratic delays and uneven policy execution (Adams et al., 2018). Private universities have greater autonomy to set priorities and allocate resources based on institutional missions, which can lead to innovative practices in some cases but minimal or inconsistent gender-equity policies in others, especially where equity is not central to organizational goals. These sectoral differences highlight the need to examine how institutional structures influence organizational change and policy effectiveness (Fazal et al., 2025). Cultural norms also vary between sectors: public institutions may face resistance from entrenched academic hierarchies, while private institutions often lack internal or regulatory pressure to prioritize gender equity. Together, these disparities create divergent policy environments and outcomes.

2.5 Prior Empirical Studies

Gender equity in Mexico is empirically researched with numerous achievements and obstacles. According to Masinire and Sanchez-Cruz (2020), the gender policy in the Mexican science and engineering programmes has seen growth in awareness, but still, cultural resistance and academic norms do not allow making any improvements. Moreover, according to international studies, although many institutions have extensive policies and commitment toward gender equality, institutions of higher education face mechanical difficulties in converting the policy into practice because of structural limitations and lack of resources and cultural values that do not value

gender reform (O'Connor and White, 2021; Baily and Holmarsdottir, 2015).

Another important gap on literature is the numbers of comparative studies that can be conducted to explore gender-equity policies in both public and private universities in Mexico. Current studies tend to concentrate on a single case study or nationally based trends without extracting a clear distinction between sectors resulting in an unfinished picture of organizational differences determining policy outcomes. This gap is necessary to create a better understanding of gender equity within the higher-education system of Mexico, which is multifaceted.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employs a mixed-methods comparative design to evaluate the effectiveness of gender-equity policies in Mexican higher education. This approach is essential because gender equity involves both measurable institutional outcomes and subjective experiences that cannot be captured through quantitative data alone. The comparative component allows systematic examination of differences and similarities between public and private universities, which operate under distinct administrative structures, resource frameworks, and organizational cultures. Integrating quantitative indicators with qualitative insights provides a comprehensive understanding of policy design, implementation, and lived experience across diverse institutional contexts.

3.2 Study Setting and Sampling Strategy

The study uses a purposive sample of Mexican public and private universities selected to represent regional diversity, institutional size, and varying levels of policy maturity. Institutions from the northern, central, and southern regions are included to capture socio-cultural and administrative differences. While the sample prioritizes universities with established gender-equity programs, it also incorporates those with emerging or inconsistently implemented policies to reflect a broad range of implementation contexts. Within each institution, purposive and snowball sampling identify participants directly involved in policy development or affected by gender-equity initiatives, including academic leaders, gender-office staff, faculty at different ranks, and student representatives. This targeted sampling ensures the inclusion of informed perspectives on institutional dynamics and policy outcomes.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Quantitative Data

Quantitative data are gathered from institutional records, annual reports, equality dashboards, and public datasets, providing detailed information on gender distribution in enrollment, faculty ranks, leadership roles, and promotion patterns. Additional indicators of institutional commitment include participation in gender-training programs and annual resource allocations for equity initiatives. A structured online survey of faculty and administrative staff captures perceptions of policy awareness, fairness, and effectiveness, using validated

Likert-scale measures for reliability and comparability. The combined dataset supports the assessment of institutional progress and reveals sectoral disparities.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data

Qualitative data are collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and, where feasible, focus groups. Interviews involve decision-makers such as gender-unit directors, deans, and HR administrators, as well as faculty and students who experience policy outcomes directly. These conversations address policy adoption, institutional challenges, cultural barriers, and perceived successes. Institutional documents including gender protocols, strategic plans, and evaluation reports are reviewed to understand formal frameworks. When possible, focus groups provide deeper insight into everyday gender dynamics. All qualitative data are transcribed and systematically analyzed to identify common themes and contextual explanations of policy outcomes

3.4 Variables and Operational Indicators

Policy impact is assessed using structural, cultural, and outcome indicators. Structural indicators include formal gender-equity policies, implementation practices, and resources allocated to gender offices and training. Cultural indicators examine institutional climate, perceived bias, leadership commitment, and accessibility of reporting systems. Outcome indicators measure changes in gender representation across faculty ranks, leadership roles, research involvement, and policy utilization. A standardized scoring rubric is used to operationalize these indicators, enabling consistent comparison across institutions and minimizing interpretive variability.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics are used to analyze quantitative data. Descriptive measures summarize gender distributions, leadership compositions, and policy participation rates, while t-tests or ANOVA identify significant differences between public and private universities. Multiple regression models determine predictors of policy effectiveness, including institutional resources, governance characteristics, and organizational culture. Correlation analyses explore relationships between structural support, cultural climate, and gender outcomes. All analyses are conducted using SPSS, Stata, or R to ensure precision and replicability.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to identify key themes related to policy design, implementation experiences, and institutional issues. Analysis begins with repeated reading of transcripts and documents to ensure familiarity, followed by coding to capture significant concepts and organize them into themes reflecting institutional dynamics and sectoral differences. Constant comparison across universities refines these themes and reveals shared patterns and challenges. Triangulation strengthens credibility by confirming consistency across interviews,

surveys, and documents. Qualitative software such as NVivo supports coding and theme development

3.6 Validity, Reliability, and Research Rigor

Several strategies ensure methodological rigor. Data triangulation strengthens credibility by integrating multiple sources. Pilot-testing surveys improves clarity and reliability, while inter-coder agreement supports consistency in qualitative coding. An audit trail documents analytical decisions, and member-checking verifies that interpretations accurately reflect participant views. Together, these measures enhance the study's overall validity and credibility.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Data collection is carried out under ethical approval from a recognized institutional review board. Participants receive clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality protections. Interviews and surveys require informed consent, and participants may withdraw at any time without penalty. To protect institutional and individual identities, all data are anonymized in transcripts, analysis files, and publications. Given the sensitivity of issues such as discrimination and harassment, additional measures ensure participant safety and that disclosures do not result in institutional repercussions. All data are securely stored and used solely for academic research purposes.

4. Results

4.1 Institutional Gender Representation Patterns

Quantitative analysis revealed clear disparities in gender representation across ranks and leadership positions. As shown in Table 1, women formed the majority in undergraduate and master's programs in both sectors, yet their presence declined sharply at senior academic levels. In public universities, women represented 54% of entry-level faculty but only 29% of full professors. The decline was even more pronounced in private universities, where only 22% of full professorships were held by women. Leadership roles remained overwhelmingly male-dominated across institutions, with fewer than one-third of positions held by women in either sector (Figure 1-2).

Table 1. Gender Representation Across Academic Ranks and Leadership Roles

Category	Public Universities (Women %)	Private Universities (Women %)
Undergraduate Enrollment	58%	61%
Master's Enrollment	55%	57%
Entry-Level Faculty	54%	47%
Mid-Level Faculty	41%	35%

Full Professors	29%	22%
Leadership Positions	32%	27%

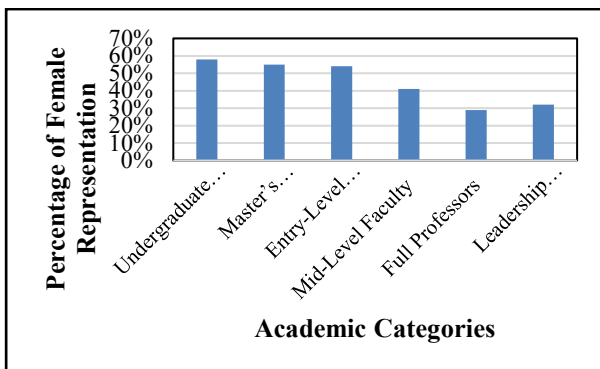


Figure 1: Gender Representation in Public Universities (Women %)

The figure illustrates decreasing female representation as academic rank rises. While women form a majority in undergraduate and early faculty levels, their presence drops significantly in mid-level, full professorship, and leadership roles, highlighting persistent structural barriers to advancement.

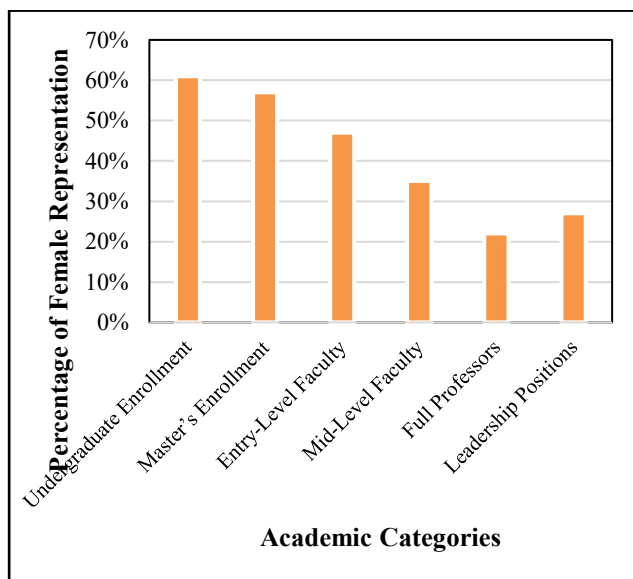


Figure 2: Gender Representation in Private Universities (Women %)

The figure shows a clear decline in women's representation as academic rank increases in private universities. While women are well represented in enrollment and entry-level roles, their presence drops significantly in mid-level faculty, full professorships, and leadership positions.

4.2 Policy Structures and Implementation Mechanisms

Document analysis revealed substantial variation in policy structure and implementation fidelity. Public universities

demonstrated more comprehensive frameworks, while private institutions displayed inconsistent adoption and enforcement. As summarized in Table 2, public institutions were more likely to possess formal gender units, dedicated budgets, and reporting mechanisms.

Interview data confirmed that public institutions frequently struggled with bureaucratic delays, while private institutions faced challenges related to inconsistent prioritization and resource scarcity. The presence of formal structures did not always translate into uniform implementation, yet institutions with stronger frameworks demonstrated more consistent outcomes (Figure 3).

Table 2. Comparison of Gender-Equity Policy Structures

Policy Component	Public Universities	Private Universities
Formal Gender-Equity Policy	92%	58%
Dedicated Gender Office	85%	43%
Reporting/Complaint System	88%	40%
Annual Monitoring Reports	70%	32%
Budget Allocated to Gender Initiatives	78%	36%

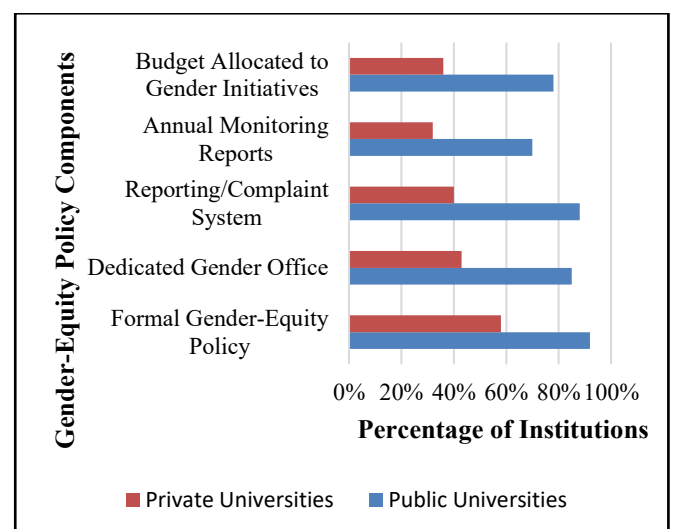


Figure 3: Comparison of Gender-Equity Policy Structures Across Public and Private Universities

The figure illustrates that public universities consistently outperform private institutions across all gender-equity policy components. They demonstrate stronger formal policy adoption, dedicated offices, reporting systems, monitoring mechanisms, and budget allocations, highlighting a more structured and accountable approach to gender-equity implementation.

4.3 Quantitative Comparison of Policy Effectiveness

Statistical comparison revealed significant sectoral differences in policy outcomes. Public universities demonstrated higher levels of policy awareness, training participation, and reporting behaviors. Regression analysis (referenced in Table 3) identified the presence of gender offices, dedicated funding, and formal accountability mechanisms as significant predictors of positive policy outcomes.

Private universities generally exhibited weaker relationships between policy measures and institutional outcomes, largely due to irregular implementation. This suggests that the effectiveness of policies hinges not only on policy existence but also on operational capacity and institutional culture.

Table 3. Predictors of Policy Effectiveness (Regression Coefficients)

Predictor Variable	Coefficient (β)	Significance (p)
Presence of Gender Office	0.41	<0.01
Policy Implementation Capacity	0.37	<0.01
Dedicated Budget Allocation	0.33	<0.05
Leadership Commitment	0.29	<0.05
Institutional Autonomy (Private Sector)	-0.22	<0.05

4.4 Qualitative Insights on Institutional Culture and Experiences

Qualitative findings underscored the prominent role of institutional culture in shaping policy impact. As illustrated in Table 4, respondents identified a set of recurring factors influencing policy success or failure. In public universities, cultural resistance among senior faculty and slow bureaucratic processes were frequently cited barriers. In private universities, participants emphasized reputational concerns, lack of institutional prioritization, and limited transparency.

Across both sectors, women described unequal access to mentorship, disproportionate administrative labor burdens, and challenges balancing academic responsibilities with caregiving roles. These themes reveal a persistent gap between formal commitments and lived experiences.

Table 4. Key Themes Identified from Qualitative Data

Theme	Public Universities	Private Universities
Cultural Resistance	High	Moderate

Policy Awareness	High	Low to Moderate
Transparency of Processes	Moderate	Low
Support for Reporting Harassment	Moderate	Low
Mentorship Opportunities	Limited	Limited
Perception of Leadership Commitment	Variable	Low

4.5 Cross-Sector Comparison and Emergent Themes

Cross-sector synthesis identified consistent patterns that clarify why policy effectiveness differs across institutional contexts. Public universities benefit from regulatory alignment and structured accountability, whereas private universities exhibit flexibility but lack consistency. As shown in Table 5, the strongest differences emerged in resource allocation, monitoring systems, and institutional transparency.

Table 5. Summary of Sectoral Differences in Policy Effectiveness

Domain	Public Universities	Private Universities
Alignment with National Regulations	Strong	Variable
Policy Implementation Consistency	Moderate	Low
Resource Allocation	Higher	Lower
Monitoring and Evaluation	Systematic	Limited
Organizational Culture Support	Moderate	Weak
Leadership Engagement	Variable	Low

Discussion

The findings of this research show that while gender-equity measures in Mexican higher education have increased women’s access, they have not yet produced meaningful structural transformation in academic advancement or leadership representation. This mirrors global patterns indicating that although women’s participation in higher education has expanded, institutional power structures continue to evolve slowly (Baily and Holmarsdottir, 2015; O’Connor and White, 2021). The persistent gap between policy implementation and actual outcomes suggests that many equity initiatives remain superficial, addressing symptoms rather than the

underlying organizational norms that reproduce inequality (Lester et al., 2017). This aligns with scholarship demonstrating that universities often sustain masculine expectations in promotion, evaluation, and leadership processes even when formal gender policies are in place.

A notable trend in the findings is the divergence between public and private universities. Public institutions tend to have more formalized gender-equity structures, including gender offices, reporting channels, and monitoring systems, reflecting stronger alignment with national regulations and external accountability. However, their efforts are frequently slowed by bureaucracy and inconsistent enforcement, confirming research that internal administrative constraints can limit the effectiveness of policy implementation (Larson and Guy, 2024). Private universities show far more variability; many lack comprehensive frameworks or systematic monitoring, leading to inconsistent policy outcomes. This supports the broader argument that institutional autonomy without accountability results in uneven commitments to equity (Rabossi, 2011; Myers and Griffin, 2019). Respondent accounts further suggest that gender initiatives in private institutions often rely on the priorities of individual leaders rather than institutional mandates, a trend also observed in studies of postgraduate science and engineering programs in Mexico (Masinire and Sanchez-Cruz, 2020).

These findings reinforce core arguments in gendered organizations theory. The underrepresentation of women in senior roles indicates that gendered expectations regarding authority, productivity, and availability remain deeply embedded within academic institutions. This reflects scholarship showing that gender norms are reproduced through everyday organizational practices rather than explicit discriminatory acts (Lester et al., 2017). The study also contributes to policy implementation literature by underscoring the importance of structural supports such as dedicated gender offices, targeted funding, and clear reporting frameworks in influencing policy success. These elements emerged as strong predictors of policy effectiveness, resonating with monitoring and evaluation research emphasizing accountability, resource stability, and leadership engagement as essential for sustained policy impact (Mahmoud Saleh and Karia, 2024; Kamau, 2017). Where such supports are weak or absent, policies tend to deliver inconsistent results regardless of their formal design.

Beyond structural factors, institutional culture emerged as a decisive determinant of policy outcomes. Respondents described tensions between gender-equity initiatives and long-standing academic norms, informal networks, and narrow interpretations of merit rooted in uninterrupted career trajectories. In public universities, resistance among senior faculty often undermined enforcement efforts, while in private institutions, concerns about institutional reputation hindered open acknowledgement or resolution of gender-related issues (López et al., 2020). These findings align with broader research indicating that institutional culture significantly shapes how policies are interpreted, enacted, and experienced by faculty and students (Carey, 2018). Combined with cultural expectations around caregiving, limited mentoring

opportunities, and disproportionate administrative loads assigned to women, these conditions create cumulative disadvantages that reduce the effectiveness of gender policies.

Intersectional dimensions further complicate gender-equity outcomes. Respondents' experiences were shaped not only by gender but also by class, ethnicity, caregiving responsibilities, and other identity markers. These patterns align with intersectionality scholarship demonstrating that overlapping identities influence individuals' access to institutional resources and support (Hengelaar et al., 2023). Consequently, gender policies that do not incorporate intersectional analyses risk reinforcing inequalities by overlooking the compounded challenges faced by specific groups of women. This highlights the need for equity strategies that address the varied and intersecting barriers influencing academic participation and progression.

Despite the value of these findings, the study has several limitations. Although the institutional sample was diverse, it may not fully represent the wide range of Mexican universities, particularly smaller private institutions where policy documentation is less accessible. Qualitative data also depend on participant willingness to discuss sensitive topics such as discrimination or harassment, which may limit the depth or completeness of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not allow for evaluation of long-term policy impacts, indicating the need for longitudinal research to track the evolution and effectiveness of gender-equity initiatives. Moreover, while this study focuses on institutional dynamics, broader social, political, and economic factors also shape gender relations in higher education and warrant further exploration.

The findings underscore the need for gender-equity strategies that integrate structural policy mechanisms with cultural transformation, continuous monitoring, and intersectional awareness. Even well-designed policies produce limited or uneven outcomes when not supported by robust accountability structures and efforts to shift organizational culture. The results indicate that sustainable progress depends on universities' willingness to embed equity principles into governance processes, resource allocation, and everyday academic practices, ensuring that gender equity becomes an institutional commitment rather than an isolated initiative.

Conclusion

The work demonstrates that gender-equity interventions in Mexican higher education have shown significant gains in increasing access to women, but have not been able to alter the more structural and cultural level conditions that define academic careers and career advancement. The comparative analysis has shown that the more institutionalized gender structures are present in the public university and reinforced by special equity offices, reporting systems and periodic reviews, but weakened by bureaucratic inflexibility and unequal imposition. Instead, private universities are much more diverse in their policy adoption, and there is a general lack of institutional prioritization and sufficient accountability infrastructure

that inhibits the implementation. In both industries, the results indicate that there has been an ongoing disconnect between policy intentions and daily institutional practices that is largely caused by inert cultural values, convoluted systems of evaluation, and gendered expectations of leadership, productivity, and care giving. Intersectional inequalities tie up these dynamics and have the effect of complicating them further by influencing experiences in ways that cannot be solved by single-axis policies. The paper thus highlights the necessity of gender-equity policies that combine structural adjustments with cultural change, which should be facilitated by ongoing monitoring, open promotion practices, resource distribution, and commitment of leadership to the same. Although the present policy environment demonstrates an increasing level of awareness and institutional interest, for gender equity to become substantive and sustainable, long-term and system-wide strategies should be used to establish congruence in governance, culture and accountability. Future studies ought to build on this study by using longitudinal and intersectional research designs in order to gain a better amalgamation of how gender-equity practices change over time and how the wider socio-political environment affects institutional change in higher education..

.. REFERENCES

1. Adams, R., Martin, S., & Boom, K. (2018). University culture and sustainability: Designing and implementing an enabling framework. *Journal of cleaner production*, 171, 434-445.
2. Baily, S., & Holmarsdottir, H. B. (2015). The quality of equity? Reframing gender, development and education in the post-2020 landscape. *Gender and Education*, 27(7), 828-845.
3. Bowleg, L. (2020). We're not all in this together: On COVID-19, intersectionality, and structural inequality. *American journal of public health*, 110(7), 917-917.
4. Bustamante-Mora, A., Diéguez-Rebolledo, M., Hormazábal, Y., Valdés, Y., & Vidal, E. (2024). Policies, projects, and initiatives for sustainable higher education with gender equity: Literature review and case study—Universidad de La Frontera. *Sustainability*, 16(12), 5038.
5. Carey, P. (2018). The impact of institutional culture, policy and process on student engagement in university decision-making. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, 22(1), 11-18.
6. Eyben, R. (2015). Promoting Gender Equality in the changing global landscape of international development cooperation. In *The Routledge handbook of gender and development* (pp. 515-526). Routledge.
7. Fazal, S., Nazir, F., Khan, M. I., & Khan, S. I. (2025). Gender Equity in Higher Education in Pakistan: Bridging Dreams and Realities. *Australian Feminist Studies*, 1-19.
8. Ferlie, E., Musselin, C., & Andresani, G. (2009). The governance of higher education systems: A public management perspective. In *University governance: Western European comparative perspectives* (pp. 1-19). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
9. Hengelaar, A. H., Wittenberg, Y., Kwekkeboom, R., Van Hartingsveldt, M., & Verdonk, P. (2023). Intersectionality in informal care research: a scoping review. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 51(1), 106-124.
10. Kamau, L. W. G. (2017). Effect of monitoring and evaluation in stakeholder participation on the extent of accountability of Umande Trust projects. *International Academic Journal of Information Sciences and Project Management*, 2(1), 401-414.
11. Larson, S. J., & Guy, M. E. (2024). The contribution of feminist theory to policy implementation analysis. In *Handbook of Public Policy Implementation* (pp. 91-101). Edward Elgar Publishing.
12. Lester, J., Sallee, M., & Hart, J. (2017). Beyond gendered universities? Implications for research on gender in organizations. *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 10(1), 1-26.
13. Levy, D. C. (2011). Public policy for private higher education: A global analysis. *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice*, 13(4), 383-396.
14. Liu, X. (2018). How government policy is implemented in the private university: A case study from China. *Frontiers of Education in China*, 13(3), 426-447.
15. López, A. M., Llavador, J. B., & Gabaldón-Estevan, D. (2020). Gender and Higher Education in Spain: A Changing and Hopeful Landscape. In *International Perspectives on Gender and Higher Education* (pp. 115-133). Emerald Publishing Limited.
16. Mahmoud Saleh, F. I., & Karia, N. (2024). Management of Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning. In *Value-driven Management for International Development and Aid Projects* (pp. 73-91). Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore.
17. Masinire, A. L. F. R. E. D., & Sanchez-Cruz, E. (2020). Perceptions of male professors and male students towards gender equity policies and practices in a Mexican higher education science and engineering graduate program. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 34(3), 164-181.
18. Moreira, J. A., & Sales Oliveira, C. (2022). Quantifying for qualifying: A framework for assessing gender equality in higher education institutions. *Social Sciences*, 11(10), 478.
19. Myers, R. M., & Griffin, A. L. (2019). The geography of gender inequality in international higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 23(4), 429-450.
20. O'Connor, P., & White, K. (2021). Gender Equality in Higher Education: The slow pace of change. In *Gender, power and higher education in a globalised world* (pp. 1-23). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
21. Rabossi, M. (2011). Differences between public and private universities' fields of study in Argentina. *Higher Education Management and*

Policy, 23(1), 1-20.

22. Rodriguez, J. K., & Guenther, E. A. (2022). Gendered organization theory.

23. Rosa, R., & Clavero, S. (2022). Gender equality in higher education and research. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 31(1), 1-7.

24. Worthman, S. S., Palma-Cornejo, M., & Rueda-Barrios, A. (2022). Increasing access but not

equity: higher education policy and participation in Mexico. *International Journal of Education Economics and Development*, 13(4), 343-363.

25. Yuval-Davis, N. (2015). Situated intersectionality and social inequality. *Raisons politiques*, 58(2), 91-100