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Does the Faculty's Perception of Gender Discrimination Relate to Its Assessment of Organizational Democracy in the University?

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Abstract: This work aimed to study the relationship between the perception of organizational democracy and gender discrimination at a Chilean public university. It is known that organizational democracy is not only about organizational life but also about democratic perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors in social life, as found in academic contexts. The methodology used factor analysis and descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to analyze data from a survey administered to 704 university faculty members, with a response rate of 58.1%. The gender distribution of this respondent population was 67% male and 37% female, values equivalent to the Chilean public university system (60% and 40%, respectively). The results highlight the importance of gender perspective in higher education. Indeed, academics who perceive greater gender discrimination toward women appreciate the deployment of organizational democracy to a lesser extent. Moreover, a high perception of discrimination on the part of women is confirmed (46%), them being, in turn, the ones who show a greater predisposition toward gender equality. This research intends to contribute to the development of strategies to remove obstacles to gender equality and improve the commitment of the academic community to institutional progress.

Keywords: organizational behavior; university faculty; gender; organizational democracy; gender discrimination



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1. Introduction

The establishment of the gender perspective as part of the dynamics of institutions is related to the human rights approach. This approach plays an ambivalent role, which, on the one hand, is a theoretical–conceptual reference for its application in particular contexts and, on the other, is an expression of social relations, cultural interconnection, and ethical agreements on equity/equality. In this sense, environments that allow the exercise of these fundamental freedoms promote changes in all spheres of action and spaces for the deepening of democracy [1–3].

Chile has experienced important economic, social, cultural, and demographic transformations in the last decades. For example, poverty levels decreased by 17.2 percentage points between 2009 and 2022, reaching 10.2% today [4]. Access to higher education has also become more widespread due to public policies and support mechanisms for educational, labor, and political inclusion for the most disadvantaged socioeconomic sectors, such as indigenous peoples, who represent 12.8% of the Chilean population [5].