Perception Of Gender Equity: An Approach In The Context Of Higher Education.

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ABSTRACT

Perception of Gender Equity: An Approach in the Context of Higher Education" explores the challenges and opportunities surrounding gender equity in academic institutions, particularly within the framework of higher education. The article highlights the critical role of universities in shaping future leaders and professionals while emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive and diverse environments. It discusses persistent barriers and innovative initiatives aimed at promoting equitable participation and examines gender equity policies in Colombia, focusing on social protection measures to enhance women's economic autonomy and alleviate poverty. However, it notes the absence of a gender approach in social protection laws, limiting the recognition of women's roles beyond their status as workers or recipients of assistance. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative approach, including desk research, data analysis, and case studies, to delve into knowledge, attitudes, and actions related to gender equity in higher education. In discussing these findings, the article advocates for the integration of gender equity into university policies, teacher training, and educational practices to foster equality and inclusion at all levels of the university.

Keywords: Gender, equity, higher education, Colombia, policies.

INTRODUCTION

In the constant quest to build fairer and more inclusive societies, gender equality has been a fundamental principle. In the context of higher education institutions, this principle is becoming increasingly important, as these institutions play a critical role in shaping the leaders, professionals and citizens of the future. This article takes a close look at the challenges academic institutions face on their path to gender equity, as well as the opportunities to transform these spaces into inclusive and diverse environments. This article examines persistent barriers and innovative initiatives that seek to break down traditional structures, and highlights tactics to foster equitable participation, leading to significant change in gender equality in higher education.

Gender equity policies in Colombia seek to promote women's economic autonomy and reduce poverty through two main approaches: independent labor insertion and state assistance programs. These measures seek to guarantee equal access to resources and opportunities for women, although the country's social protection laws do not contemplate a gender approach, which limits the recognition of women beyond their role as workers or subjects of assistance, without considering their unpaid care work. (Estrada, 2022).

Protection in the university environment encompasses various areas to ensure the safety and well-being of the academic community. It includes measures such as physical safety, violence and harassment prevention, mental health services, data protection, and promoting diversity and inclusion. These actions are essential to creating a safe, inclusive, and conducive university environment for learning and personal development for all involved.

The methodology used to address this topic was based on a qualitative approach that combines desk research, data analysis and case studies. For the present study, a semi-structured interview was designed that focused on aspects such as knowledge, attitudes, and actions related to gender equity in the higher education environment. subsequently, an analysis of the information was performed using NVIVO.

The conclusion emphasizes the importance of implementing practices to promote gender equity in university education, in order to promote equality and inclusion in the educational field. It highlights the need for teachers and educational institutions to commit to the creation of inclusive and gender-friendly environments. It also highlights the importance of raising awareness about gender biases and eliminating stereotypes in higher education.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Gender Equity in University Environments

The issue of gender has been the subject of discussion for an extensive period. This is due to the influence it exerts on the lives of individuals who, being part of a society with pre-established cultural, moral and social norms, are guided by stereotypes passed down from generation to generation.

The term gender refers to the "ordering principle of social relations based on sexual difference, which produces different effects such as hierarchies, distinctions and differential categories for people" (Palomar Verea, 2005, p. 8). In addition, the close link between power relations and this principle leads to its habitual reaffirmation, naturalization and invisibilization in various social institutions, including those of higher education. The assimilation of this concept leads to the emergence of inequalities, discrimination and various forms of violence, as well as the evident lack or ignorance of methods to prevent, address, punish and eliminate these problems (Ortega Ayala, 2019).

According to (García Guevara, 2021) The structural support for gender disparities originates in an economy that advocates gender-differentiated controls, such as different wages and benefits, the division of labor, the influence of a patriarchal culture, educational and sports trajectories, as well as the presence of prescriptive or normative gender content in fields such as science.

As the (Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, 2016) Gender equity is achieved when women and men enjoy equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all aspects of life. Thus, many institutions and writers are dealing with gender equality at the international level, proposing guidelines for reforming the State and strengthening the position of women, as well as for claiming their rights.

In fact, in recent years, the gender approach has been widely integrated as a crucial tool for analysing society. The inclusion of gender equality has emerged from an extensive social and political process, being an essential result of the efforts of the women's movement. However, the acceptance of this issue in the public debate by other actors is influenced by the global political context and prevailing visions and values (Baute Rosales et al., 2017).

Gender equity in university environments is a crucial issue that has received increasing attention, it is broad and multifaceted that addresses equal opportunities, access and treatment for all people, regardless of gender, in the academic field.

By linking higher education with gender equity, the importance of training professionals and citizens so that, in various environments, both professional and daily, they can be individuals who promote an environment characterized by respect and equal rights between men and women. In the event of any form of mistreatment or violation of rights, these individuals are expected to take a leading role in the defense of others, ensuring peace, respect, and solidarity (Mayorga, 2018)

As he points out (Rosa & Clavero, 2022) The discussion of initiatives to address gender inequality in higher education and research is relevant for two fundamental reasons. First, despite the fact that men continue to occupy predominant positions in academia, gender binary systems are being challenged in unprecedented ways from the political arena in favor of the rights of gender minorities, implying a subversion of hegemonic gender patterns.

In another aspect, the Covid-19 pandemic and the prevention measures implemented have intensified the already present gender disparities, accentuating the persistent advantages and disadvantages in society as a whole, including in the field of higher education and research (Gewin, 2020)

The establishment of centres and programmes of studies on women and gender in universities has led to institutional recognition of the relevance of the analysis of relations between women and men. This recognition has allowed the decomposition and reconfiguration of categories that, throughout history, favored partiality in the generation and dissemination of knowledge, a task that academics from various disciplines had already been carrying out (Buquet Corleto, 2011).

From the premise that an egalitarian university is one in which, in practice, each individual has the possibility of advancing in his or her professional career according to his or her merits and efforts, without facing interference of any kind, ensuring equity in treatment and opportunities, it is revealed that the university does not fully comply with this ideal in all aspects. Although on the surface all members of the university community appear to be subject to a merit-based evaluation system, the university still experiences obstructions of various kinds, which may be political, linked to vested interests, or based on prejudice. The latter, although not exclusively, are the ones that have a special impact on women (Pastor Gosalbez & Acosta Sarmiento, 2016).

Increasing the presence and participation of women not only involves supporting individual goals, progress and achievements, but also implementing measures at the systemic level to identify and eliminate organizational constraints that generate gender bias in institutional policies and processes (Laursen et al., 2015).

The transversal incorporation of the gender perspective in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) has been established as a fundamental objective for sustainable development according to UNESCO, both public and private institutions have assumed the commitment to work towards this goal "inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning for all"(UNESCO, 2015, p. 20)

In the 1990s, a group of feminist academics in Colombia led the creation of the Gender, Women, and Development Studies Program (PGMD) at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the National University of Colombia. Subsequently, in 2001, this program evolved into the School of Gender Studies (EEG), becoming the first academic unit of its kind in the country (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2014).

At the same time, at the Universidad del Valle, the Center for the Study of Gender, Women and Society was established in the early 1990s as an interdisciplinary space for professors interested in addressing feminist studies and the gender perspective. In 2017, this center was recognized as a center for research and gender studies, incorporating the gender perspective in intersection with social class, ethnicity, race, and other aspects of oppression and discrimination(Universidad del Valle, 2024).

The purpose of official educational institutions in proposing the inclusion of the gender perspective in higher education is to promote an ethical transformation in these institutions. They seek to incorporate in their principles respect for diversity and the promotion of equity, with special emphasis on gender equity (Palomar Verea, 2005)

According to (Palomar Verea, 2005) In a general sense, addressing the issue of gender in relation to Higher Education Institutions may imply, at least, the following obvious meanings:

The demographic aspect addresses issues such as the presence of both genders in the university environment, considering aspects such as enrollment, distribution in different disciplines, academic efficiency, opportunities and representation in various areas within the higher education system

The creation of new academic disciplines arises from the advancement of gender and women's studies within higher education institutions. These new areas can manifest themselves both as taught subjects, as specific fields for research and teaching, or even as more comprehensive programmes.

At the institutional level, in terms of integrating a critical view of the unjust hierarchies and gender disparity present in educational institutions, in the development of educational policies and in the decision-making process.

In the epistemological field, it seeks to question in an academic and profound way the non-critical transmission of patriarchal and androcentric perspectives present in knowledge and in traditional teaching-learning methodologies. These various aspects or levels related to gender issues in Higher Education Institutions are common in all areas where the analysis of the development of gender studies in higher education has begun. However, the different contexts in which these studies have been developed generate different perspectives linked to their particular characteristics.

According to (Bothwell et al., 2022) Universities play a critical role in addressing gender equality through their three core missions:

In the formation of human capital through teaching and learning
In the creation of new knowledge through research and innovation
In the impact on society through community engagement or public outreach.

Through the execution of each of these missions, as well as through their administration, management and governance systems, universities can play a crucial role in reducing gender disparities and empowering women on a global scale.

From the point of view of (Fuentes Vásquez, 2015) Three elements that are recognized as essential advances in the implementation of an Inclusive Higher Education Policy are:

Initially, this policy adopts the gender perspective and the differential approach of rights, placing special emphasis on providing care to women impacted by the armed conflict. It also clearly highlights the urgent need to collaborate with the LGBTI community.

In another perspective, according to this model, educational excellence focuses on the integral growth of individuals, considering their various dimensions and requirements, since each person is unique and singular.

In general terms, the challenges associated with the differential approach to rights and inclusive education can be summarized as follows: a) Creating inclusive educational processes involves carrying out various actions, such as the development and constant review of curricular programs and content. b) Training "inclusive teachers" implies preparing those educators who can carry out the pedagogical process considering the diversity of students with an equitable and respectful approach to interculturality (Ministry of Education, 2013). c) Promote research, innovation and artistic and cultural expression through inclusive education perspectives. d) Establish and strengthen administrative and financial structures in HEIs to support and sustain strategies and actions aimed at promoting inclusive education. (e) Develop institutional policies that demonstrate an effective commitment to the implementation of inclusive higher education(Ministry of Education, 2013)

METHODOLOGY

The methodology to address is as follows:

Desk Review: conducting an exploration of academic research and literature reviews related to gender equity in higher education institutions.

Institutional Policies are identified from the analysis of existing policies and measures in institutions to promote gender equity.

Case Studies: Case studies of institutions that have implemented successful gender equity programs were examined. The data instrument is designed for a semi-structured interview

Data Analysis:

Institutional Data:

Collection and analysis of institutional data on gender participation in various areas, such as enrollment, academic programs, faculty, and leadership positions.

Surveys and Interviews:

Design and administration of surveys and interviews to obtain direct perceptions from students, faculty, and administrative staff.

Case Studies:

Identification of Exemplary Cases:

Selection of institutions that have implemented effective strategies to improve gender equity.

Awareness-raising campaigns

DIMENSION	QUESTION
KNOWLEDGE	Definition Challenges Stereotypes Culture and the media Strategies or initiatives
ATTITUDE	Steps You Can Take to Create an Inclusive Environment Inequality or some form of Harassment Challenges Wage gap
ACTIONS	Awareness-raising campaigns Alliances or movements Information Resources Tools for Mainstreaming Gender Equity

Subsequently, an analysis was carried out in the Nvivo program yielding the following results

RESULTS

A total of 17 interviews were conducted with students from the Pedagogical and Technological University of Colombia in order to develop the results of the research, using content analysis as a sampling method.

Among the results are the following:'

The research was developed based on three categories according to the theory of perception, being the knowledge, attitudes and actions that students have regarding gender equality, this graph is attached in the following image.

Fig 1. Perception of equity. In original language: Spanish
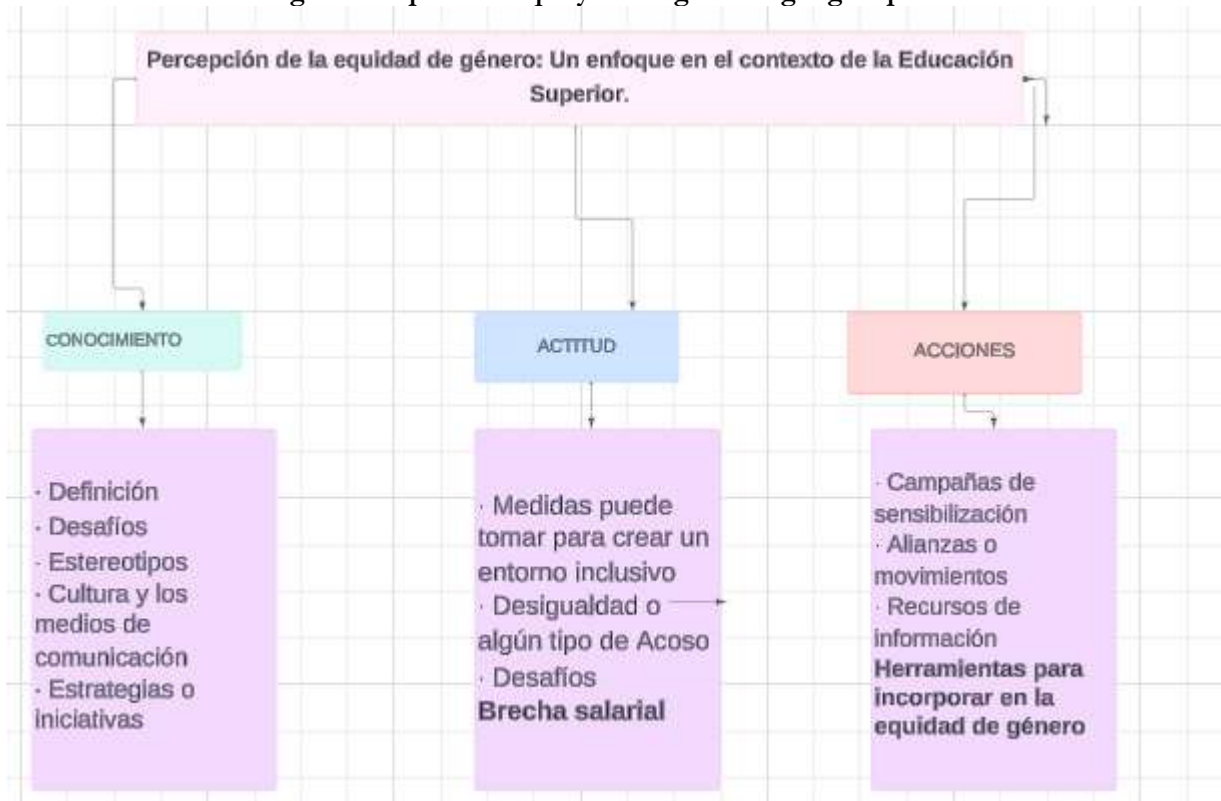
A total of 17 students were interviewed using a content analysis sample, showing the following information: Knowledge Category.

For the sub-node definition of gender equity, the interviewees relate to the importance of "rights" and "equality" with the aim of obtaining social opportunities without taking into account the stereotypes that are presented in society such as "Women and girls dress in a feminine way and are polite, accommodating and maternal, men are strong, aggressive and fearless, women and men have different interests and hobbies, women are assigned to private space and care tasks, while men are assigned to public space and political, social, and economic decisions" (Figueroa et al., 2023).

On the other hand, in the Challenges, the research participants emphasize that it is essential to control segregation, violence and discrimination, wage gaps, cultural customs and professional inequalities. These findings emphasize the urgency of addressing gender inequities in a comprehensive and priority manner as stated by Puga et al. (2022) highlighting the persistence of entrenched gender stereotypes, which limit opportunities and perpetuate inequality between men and women, discrimination and gender biases that hinder equal access to educational opportunities, and social issues.

Persistent pay gap, where women are often paid less than men for the same work, posing a significant challenge to gender equity.

Underrepresentation of women in leadership and decision-making roles in various arenas, such as politics, business, and academia, making it difficult to achieve gender equity, Gender-based violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual violence against women, as well as a lack of resources and support for victims, being an important challenge in the fight for gender equality, and barriers in the reconciliation of work and family, together with the

absence of policies to support maternity and paternity, can affect equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace.

Based on the word cloud provided by nvivo for this subcode, we can infer that these words highlight the importance of actions on multiple fronts: education from an early age, knowledge sharing, open and effective communication, the influence of parenting, and the implementation of legal policies that foster equality and diversity. These means are essential to combat stereotypes and promote a more inclusive and equitable society. In this regard, it is crucial that all social actors commit to working together to create an environment in which differences are respected and valued. Awareness and education are powerful tools that can help break down barriers and build bridges between people. There is a need to promote empathy and solidarity, as well as to foster tolerance and mutual respect in all areas of society. Only through a joint and continuous effort will we be able to move towards a more inclusive and diverse future for all.

ATTITUDE CATEGORY

For this space, measures to take an inclusive environment, inequality or some type of harassment, challenges and wage gap were investigated, yielding the following information.

These measures include the implementation of gender equality policies, awareness and training programs for the university environment, the creation of diversity and inclusion committees, and the promotion of a safe and respectful work environment for all. Additionally, it is important to conduct pay gap analyses and take steps to correct any disparities that may exist. Only through a comprehensive and proactive approach can a truly inclusive and equitable work environment be achieved.

As stated by Rosales et al. (2017) In general terms, it is anticipated that university students, being part of a generation more aware and informed about gender issues, will show a more receptive and open disposition towards gender equity. This disposition can be reflected in their participation in initiatives related to gender equality, in the defence of women's rights and in the promotion of equality both in the university environment and in society as a whole.

To obtain a more detailed analysis of students' attitudes towards gender equality in the university environment, it would be advisable to conduct surveys, interviews or specific research that examines students' perceptions, beliefs and behaviors in relation to this topic.
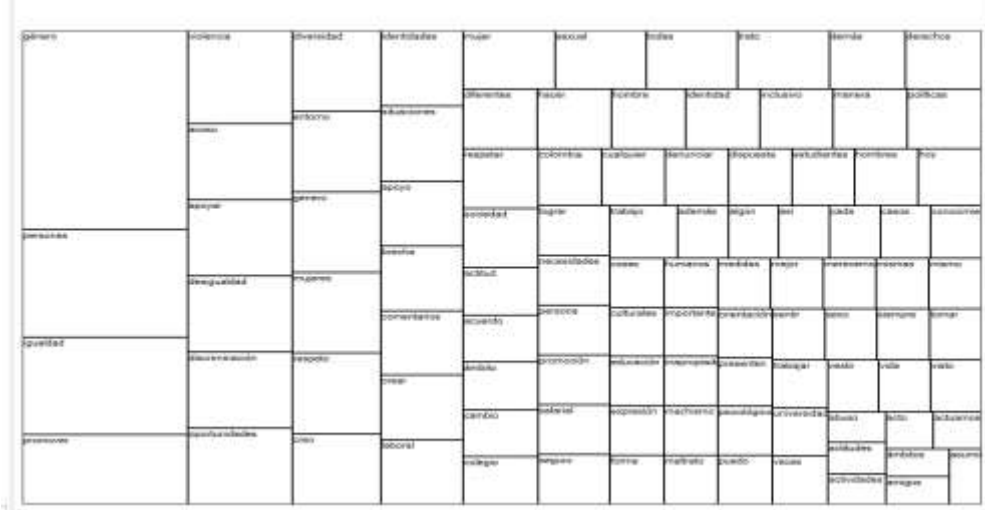
For the most exhaustive analysis, it is visualized by means of a branched map, giving the following context.

The analysis of the ratified map shows different aspects related to gender equality and the promotion of rights, according to the interviews, a greater importance of "gender, people, equality, promote" is presented. All people, regardless of gender, should have equal rights and opportunities in all aspects of life.

For the second level, there are aspects such as violence, harassment, support, inequality, discrimination and opportunities. These issues reflect the importance of addressing gender equality in different areas, such as the workplace, the prevention of harassment and discrimination, the promotion of equal opportunities, and respect for the diversity of gender identities. The presence of these issues on the ratified map indicates the need to take measures to promote gender equality and ensure the full exercise of rights for all people, regardless of their gender Aspects in the ratified map also highlights the importance of education and awareness of gender equality, as well as the need to promote policies and programs that promote equity in society. It is essential to work together to remove the barriers that prevent people, especially women and gender minorities, from reaching their full potential and enjoying a dignified life free from discrimination. Gender equality is a fundamental human right that must be upheld and promoted at all levels of society.
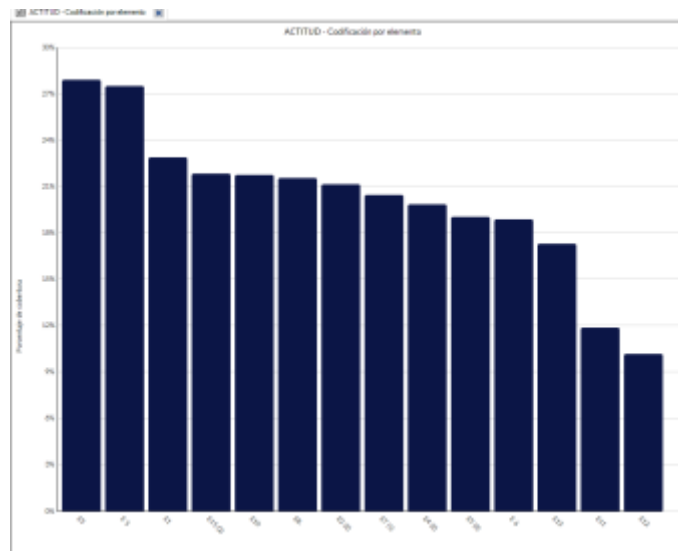

Fig 2. Element Coding. In original Spanish language

As can be seen in the graph, the interview that had the highest interaction was number 3, with a percentage of 28, which represents a higher percentage compared to the other interviews. Interview 3 evidences the attitude that the interviewees adopt in the face of challenges and circumstances in which a gender disparity is evidenced, as well as the willingness to assist in the current wage gap, it is important to highlight the review article by (Soares, 2021) where the governments of Paraguay and Brazil have taken measures to address gender disparity in their societies. In Paraguay, the United Nations Women's programme stands out, focusing on political leadership, economic empowerment, violence prevention and intergovernmental support. In Brazil, throughout history, women have fought for rights such as the vote and education, achieving the right to vote in 1932 and its implementation in 1946. These actions reflect the efforts of both countries to promote equal rights and opportunities for women.

ACTION CATEGORY
Different graph analyses were carried out for this category, resulting in

The word cloud highlights equity as one of the main words. Equity refers to equal opportunities for both men and women, eliminating all forms of discrimination that may arise, as stated (Trujillo, 2023) , Equity refers to ensuring equal rights and opportunities between men and women, taking into account and valuing individual differences. In the area of gender, equity means ensuring that

Fig 3. Campaigns. In original language: Spanish

both men and women can access the same resources, benefits and opportunities, without suffering discrimination on the basis of gender. The aim is to eliminate inequalities entrenched in the social structure and promote justice in order to achieve a balance in power relations and in the equitable distribution of resources.

On the other hand, in the coding by element, it can be observed that the most interaction of the awareness campaigns was the E6 interview, with almost 3% compared to the others, with the aim that people have greater interaction and education about this problem. Interview E1, with less than 1%, specified what action people take regarding gender equality and what they would be willing to do to solve this problem.

Likewise, it can be seen that gender equality is a problem that arises throughout human evolution, where the majority of women are affected. It is essential to seek equality in society, as we all have the same rights today.

Next, it can be seen that the alliance graph shows a higher proportion of 4%, which is highly beneficial, while the interview that presents a percentage of less than 1% is an interview referring to this issue.

It is located in relation to E6.

Fig 4. Code Comparison Diagram
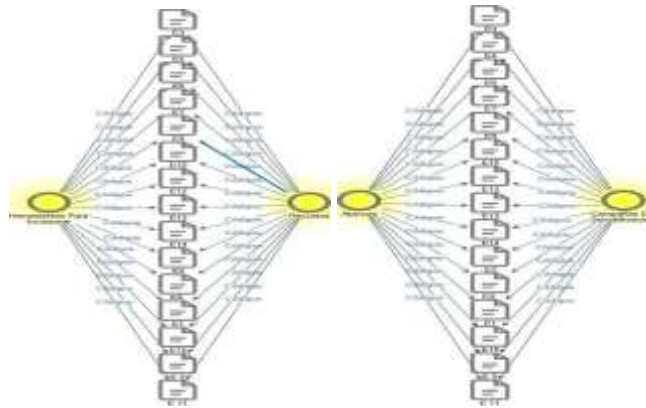
In the code diagram you can see how the tools to incorporate along with the various resources are classified according to the most prominent codes. Among them, E3, E4, E6 are the three main interviews, which indicates that they are the interviews with the most interaction, while E15, E5 and E11. They are the ones that were incorporated with the most interaction.

The most prominent research source among the various interviews was the E9 survey, which evidences greater interaction compared to the others.

In this research, it can be seen that people have a constant connection to find resources for the effective implementation of gender equality in various areas such as universities, public spaces, among others.

Awareness campaigns are important for the correct knowledge of problems, information on new issues, debates, etc. in this specific case, awareness campaigns on the correct interaction that exists in gender equality and what consequences it has in society, thanks to this, spaces are made for the correct awareness of society where the importance of equality is made known, in this case we see how the interviews that had the greatest impact were E3, E4 and E6 while the one that had the least impact were E1, E15, E5, what is sought is that those that had less interaction manage to overcome the difficulties to reach a higher level

Fig. 5 Elements Conglomerates by Word Similarity

When items are grouped by a similarity of words, it means that they are organized or classified according to the similarities in their names or descriptions. The words that show similarity in their relationship structure are: stereotypes, definition, support, aptitude, measures, alliances, tools, strategies, campaigns, environment and challenge. The content of the elements is fundamental to the acquisition of knowledge. The clusters, due to similarity of words, allowed us to develop the search and retrieval of relevant information based on terms related to the analysis of qualitative surveys carried out with their respective evaluative analysis.

CONCLUSION

Universities have a responsibility to provide a comprehensive education to individuals, fostering sensitivity to gender issues and promoting equality in all areas of society. Likewise, educational institutions are ideal spaces to sensitize and raise awareness among students about the importance of gender equality, stimulating reflection and promoting changes in attitudes.

By promoting gender equality, universities contribute to the formation of leaders capable of making fair and equitable decisions, promoting the active participation of women in leadership roles.

In addition, higher education institutions can establish policies and programs to prevent gender discrimination, creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all members of the educational community.

The conclusion of this article underlines the importance of introducing practices to promote gender equity in university education as a means of fostering equality and inclusion in education. It highlights the need for both teachers and educational institutions to actively engage in the creation of educational environments that are inclusive and respectful of gender diversity. In addition, the importance of raising awareness of gender biases and working on the elimination of stereotypes in higher education is emphasized.

DISCUSSION

The review of the regulatory framework on women's social protection in Colombia is crucial, as it makes it possible to detect current policies and actions aimed at promoting gender equality and women's social protection in the country. This analysis provides relevant information on how women's specific needs are addressed in terms of access to social protection, economic autonomy and the reduction of female poverty. Likewise, by exploring the regulatory framework, it is possible to identify possible gaps, challenges and areas for improvement in public policies related to gender equality and women's social protection, which can contribute to the formulation of more effective and fair policies in the future.

Gender equity policies in Colombia incorporate social protection measures with the purpose of fostering women's economic autonomy and alleviating poverty through two key approaches. On the one hand, it promotes the integration of women into the labour market, generally independently. On the other hand, State assistance programmes are being implemented, especially those of a "family-oriented" nature aimed at supporting women in vulnerable situations. These actions seek to ensure that women have equal access to resources, benefits and opportunities, without suffering gender discrimination. However, it is relevant to note that social protection laws in Colombia do not incorporate a gender approach, which implies that women are mostly recognized as "workers" or "subjects of assistance", without considering their roles in unpaid and care work.

The article addresses a theoretical discussion on the importance of gender equity in university education. It highlights the need to review university policies to ensure the integration of gender equity and the eradication of discrimination. The relevance of teacher training in the promotion of practices free of discrimination and gender stereotypes, as well as the implementation of inclusive methodologies in the classroom, is highlighted. It also underlines the importance of continuous teacher training in gender competencies in order to transmit these values to students and society in general. In summary, the theoretical discussion focuses on the need to transform educational practices to foster gender equality and equity at all levels of the university.

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