

Attitudes Toward Gender Equality of Nursing Students in a University of Guayaquil

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Abstract

Gender equality is not only a human right but also a fundamental pillar for building a society with full equity in the social, political, and cultural spheres. The objective of this study was to determine the attitude of UCSG nursing students towards gender equality. The study population consisted of 154 university students who met the inclusion criteria. The study employed a virtual survey and a questionnaire of questions using a Likert scale of attitudes by García Pérez. The participants in the study were university students, with an average age of 23 years. The majority (73.5%) were women, while 26.3% were men. Of the men, 79.2% were single. The questionnaire of questions with the Likert scale of attitudes of García Pérez was applied to determine the students' sensitivity to the topic of gender equality. The results indicated that the women exhibited greater sensitivity than the men. The present study found that there is a global adaptive attitude in the three scales (sociocultural, relational, and personal). However, sexist attitudes are present, particularly in the relational level in relation to gender roles, gender violence, leadership, and affectivity. In contrast, in the sociocultural level, there are adaptive attitudes, while in the personal level, there are egalitarian attitudes.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Egalitarian Attitude, Adaptive Attitude And Sexist Attitude.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equity is not only a fundamental human right, but also an indispensable condition for achieving a peaceful, prosperous, and lasting environment. However, at present, one in five women and girls between the ages of 15 and 49 have experienced the latent consequences of existing inequalities in the form of physical, sexual, and psychological violence (1).

The topic of gender equality is of interest to a global audience, with numerous Latin American countries having assumed international commitments in line with the 2030 Agenda, a United Nations initiative with the overarching goal of eradicating poverty, injustice, and inequality.

Globally, women and men are not afforded the same rights and opportunities. Although there has been considerable progress in achieving gender equality, women continue to face disadvantages compared to men. In general, women earn lower salaries than men, and women are also the primary caregivers, which means that poverty affects them in greater numbers. There are many other interrelated elements that are found to be inequitable between men and women, although the magnitude of inequity varies widely across countries and contexts. However, the unequal position of women in contrast to men remains widespread.

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It is evident that gender equality is a crucial aspect that must be addressed to achieve comprehensive equity. Immediate action must be taken on all forms of intersectoral discrimination, including those based on ethnicity and gender, which have a significant and exacerbating impact. Similarly, men's commitment to gender equity is an essential factor (4). This equality is vital in family, social, and educational contexts, which is why universities have become ideal platforms for its promotion.

In light of the aforementioned considerations, it is crucial to ascertain the prevailing attitudes among UCSG nursing students with regard to gender equality. This is particularly pertinent given that UCSG is a member of the "Design and Attention to Gender Opportunities in Higher Education Network" (RDAOGES), which aims to advance Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with a gender perspective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Recognizing these inequalities, the World Health Organization has made several commitments to promote progress toward gender equity and the emancipation of women, young women, and girls, to eliminate sex discrimination, to promote good health, and to support health workers and feminist groups. These agreements represent a progressive advance in gender equality, health equity, human rights and the empowerment of women and girls worldwide (5).

Gender equality in Europe, defined as the extent to which men and women share equally in paid work, money, and decision-making power in society, differs markedly between European and North American countries, with northern countries tending to have higher rates of gender equality and eastern European countries having lower rates (6).

Outside of the United States, efforts are being made to promote gender equity through top-down approaches, such as the Athena Scientific Women's Academic Network (SWAN) program, which tracks and incentivizes healthcare institutions that demonstrate gender parity in their workforce. However, programs such as these invest their efforts and focus primarily on achieving parity to eliminate discrimination, but do not address the underlying reasons and rules that perpetuate gender inequalities and can lead to backlash or gender-based violence (7).

In Latin America, the social organization of care, which is linked to an informal and familialist welfare system, is doubly unjust and unequally distributed because of the unequal division of responsibilities and work among the different actors within the care issue that falls on households, and because of the unequal distribution of care work between men and women (8). These inequalities affect women's educational careers and employment opportunities by limiting their access to better jobs and are multiplied and intensified by various forms of discrimination based on socioeconomic status, age, race, sexual orientation or migrant status (8).

In countries such as Ecuador, there is no doubt about the problem of gender violence and its consequences, which go beyond the economic sphere and affect social and family interests; it is also important to mention that this problem is intrinsically linked to gender inequality and machismo. In the last decade, a series of progressive laws have been enacted with the aim of protecting girls and women against all forms of violence. The most recent of these efforts was the Comprehensive Organic Law for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women of 2018 (9).

Over the past few decades, there has been a notable increase in the number of girls attending school and a reduction in the prevalence of early marriage among young women. Additionally, there has been a significant rise in the number of women occupying leadership roles in various governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Despite these encouraging developments, several challenges remain. Discriminatory laws and social norms continue to hinder the advancement of women in various sectors. Moreover, women remain underrepresented at all levels of political leadership, and instances of violence against women persist.

These circumstances illustrate that there are still unequal attitudes that could be the basis of the problem of violence. This is because sexist behaviors among young people continue to be latent with a conceptual foundation of normalization and invisibilization.

Universities have become the appropriate spaces for the production and reproduction of knowledge that constitute the basis for the development of a country. They also serve as the setting for the formation of professionals who are not only intellectually and academically prepared, but also possess the values and principles that become the source of promoting a just, equitable, and supportive society. While it is true that university teachers face a significant challenge in integrating the teaching of gender equality into their curricula, it is the attitude they adopt that will contribute to the development of professionals who are aware, fair, supportive, committed to their profession, and humanistic in their approach (10).

The gender equality approach at the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil responds essentially to the need to align knowledge with reality. During the course of our student life, we have observed certain attitudes and situations in which gender inequality has been evidenced in the academic, professional, and personal spheres.

Research questions

What is the attitude of UCSG nursing students towards gender equality?

Are there sexist, adaptive and egalitarian attitudes among UCSG nursing students?

In the sociocultural, relational and personal scale of nursing students are there sexist, adaptive and egalitarian attitudes?

Objectives

General Objective

To determine the attitude of UCSG nursing students toward gender equality.

Specific objectives

- To identify the existing sexist, adaptive and egalitarian attitudes of UCSG nursing students.
- To define sexist, adaptive and egalitarian attitudes on the sociocultural, relational and personal scales of UCSG nursing students.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Level: Descriptive

Methods: Quantitative

Design: Cross-sectional

Temporality: Prospective

Population and Sample: The study population consisted of nursing students, sampled non-probabilistically by convenience, resulting in a total of 154 study subjects.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria are as follows:

The study population consisted of male or female university students of legal age who were legally enrolled in the nursing career and who gave their consent to participate in the study and complete the entire questionnaire.

The following individuals were excluded from the study: Students who are under the age of majority and enrolled in a university program other than nursing, who do not consent to participate in the study, and who do not complete the entire questionnaire will be excluded.

Procedures for Data Collection

The data collected in this study will be organized by the categories of the variables under study and presented in graphs and statistical tables. These data will be tabulated and presented using the statistical program SPSS and Excel.

Data processing and analysis techniques.

The instrument utilized in this study is a questionnaire comprising a series of questions. The García Pérez Attitude Scale is employed as the instrument for measuring the attitudes of the participants. The technique employed in this study is an online survey.

The data will be analyzed using the statistical software SPSS and the spreadsheet software Microsoft Excel.

Procedures to ensure ethical considerations in research involving human subjects.

The pertinent ethical considerations were taken into account in each of the stages of the study, with the following principles predominating:

The principle of respect for the individual is upheld throughout the application of the instrument, with students' confidentiality being respected. Prior to the administration of the instrument, a brief explanation is provided, and consent for participation in the study is obtained.

The principle of beneficence guides the conduct of the study. Its objective is to benefit the university student community by collecting relevant information about the topic of study, thereby raising awareness about it.

The principle of justice requires that the study not cause any harm or risk to the participants. It will be applied equally to all students.

RESULT AND FINDINGS

The study was conducted in the city of Guayaquil, with the nursing students at the Catholic University of Santiago de Guayaquil serving as the reference population. A simple random sample was utilized to obtain 154 students enrolled in the different cycles. The instrument applied was a self-administered survey of attitudes, administered via Google Forms. Prior to its administration, a brief explanation was provided, and informed consent was obtained.

The total number of university students surveyed was 154. Of these, 73.7% were women and 26.3% were men. The age range of the respondents was between 18 and 41 years (mean = 23.42, standard deviation = 4.941). Based on the sample size, a margin of error of 2% and a confidence level of 95% were calculated. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the sample.

Table 1: Sample data

		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Valid	Female	114	74,0
	Male	40	26,0
	Total	154	100,0
Valid	Married	15	9,7
	Divorced	4	2,6
	Single	122	79,2
	Unmarried	13	8,4
	Total	154	100,0

Source: Online survey. Attitude towards gender equality in the Catholic University Nursing Career 2022.

To ascertain the scale's reliability, a statistical analysis will be conducted using the optimal scaling procedure for ordinal data, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.936. This indicates that the scale is highly reliable, as it is very close to one (Table 2).

Table 2: Reliability statistics

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha based on standardized items	N of elements
,936	,940	30

Source: Online survey. Attitude towards gender equality in the Catholic University Nursing Program 2022.

Considering the construct validity, the relational scale presents high saturation indexes and likewise in most of the items of the sociocultural scale; however, item № 7 of the personal scale presents a negative correlation which would allow us to consider the suppression of this item thus increasing our cronbach's alpha that we initially obtained from 0.936 to 0.942 (Table 3).

Table 3: Construct validity

Articles	Total correlation of corrected elements	Cronbach's alpha if the item has been deleted
Sociocultural 1	,465	,936
Sociocultural 2	,647	,933
Sociocultural 3	,743	,932
Sociocultural 4	,206	,938
Sociocultural 5	,444	,936
Sociocultural 6	,599	,934
Sociocultural 7	,226	,937
Sociocultural 8	,599	,934
Sociocultural 9	,118	,939
Sociocultural 10	,320	,937
Relational 1	,640	,933
Relational 2	,562	,934
Relational 3	,562	,934
Relational 4	,708	,933
Relational 5	,669	,933
Relational 6	,669	,933

Relational 7	,702	,933
Relational 8	,779	,932
Relational 9	,753	,932
Relational 10	,726	,933
Staff 1	,751	,933
Personnel 2	,791	,932
Staff 3	,754	,932
Staff 4	,778	,932
Staff 5	,782	,932
Staff 6	,596	,934
Staff 7	-,044	,942
Staff 8	,800	,931
Staff 9	,473	,935
Staff 10	,218	,938

Source: Online survey. Attitude towards gender equality in the Catholic University Nursing Career 2022.

The mean saturation of the global scale items is 0.567, with a standard deviation of 0.228. This allows us to conclude that the correlation of the items with the global scale is high. The scale allows us to identify the diverse perspectives of students on the issue of gender equality on campus. Table 4 presents the empirical scores of the scales and the cut-off points that will enable us to delineate the attitudes (sexist, adaptive, and egalitarian) of university students towards the gender approach and their degree of sensitivity to this topic of study.

Table 4: Empirical scores and scale cut-off points.

		Sociocultural	Relational	Personal	Global
Empirical Scores	N	10	10	10	30
	Ítem	(01-10)	(11-20)	(21-30)	(all :01-30)
	V. Scale	From 10 to 50 points			30-150
	Median	37	40	41	118

Cut-off points	Sexist	≤29	≤89
	Adaptive	30-39	90-119
	Egalitarian	≥40	≥120

Source: Adapted from García Pérez. Student attitudes towards gender equality [Internet]. Journal of Educational Research. 2010. Available from: <https://revistas.um.es/rie/article/view/98951/109441>

It can be observed that the university students participating in the study demonstrate an awareness of the principles of gender equality, as evidenced by the overall average obtained, which is 118 on a scale of 30 to 150 points (Table 4).

Table 5: Descriptive statistics by scales

		Sociocultural Map	Relational Plane	Personal	Global
N	Valid	154	154	154	154
	Lost	0	0	0	0
Mean		38,10	38,25	39,40	115,75
Median		39,00	40,00	41,00	118,00
Standard deviation		6,524	8,569	7,451	20,370
Variance		42,559	73,429	55,510	414,935
Minimum		20	10	14	50
Maximum		50	50	50	146

Source: Online survey. Attitude towards gender equality in the Nursing Career Catholic University 2022.

In the detailed analysis by scales, we can observe that the global median obtained of 118 on a scale of (90-119) shows that the university students denote an adaptive attitude to the subject of gender equality, finding this value with a tendency to egalitarian attitudes since the median is located in the upper margin of the cut-off point.

At the sociocultural level, the university students present adaptive attitudes to the topic of study, however, personal concepts of gender ideology still prevail, since we see contrasting answers, as in the case of question number 7 (median not very high) in which it is asked if housework can be done well by both men and women, and the majority coincide in an egalitarian and positive answer. However, we can observe that despite the fact that they agree with this approach in question number 1 on whether housework is better done by women and in question number 2 on whether pink clothes and things are more for girls than for boys, we still evidence sexist attitudes based on social stereotypes since the answers of most of the respondents are that they agree. In more social questions such as question number 9 on whether soccer is a sport for boys and girls or question

number 10 on whether gays and lesbians are as normal and respectable as me, we found more sensitivity to the topic of study (Table 6).

Table 6: Medians of university students in the sociocultural sphere

Sociocultural level	<i>Media</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Media</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Global</i>
1. Household chores are better done by women.	2,81	2,78	2,80
2. Pink clothes and things are more for girls than for boys.	3,61	3,20	3,51
3. Soccer is a boy's sport	4,04	3,60	3,92
4. It's normal for a boy and a girl to play the same things.	3,96	3,93	3,95
5. A girl alone should be afraid if she meets a group of boys. 6.	3,55	3,58	3,56
6. Mothers are the ones who should take care of their sons and daughters.	3,61	3,63	3,61
7. Household chores can be done well by both men and women.	4,66	4,63	4,65
8. Men are better drivers than women.	3,61	3,63	3,61
9. Soccer is a boys' and girls' sport.	4,34	4,35	4,34
10. Gays and lesbians are as normal and respectable as I am.	4,22	3,93	4,14

Source: Online survey Attitude towards gender equality in the Catholic University School of Nursing 2022.

In the relational plane we can determine that students present egalitarian attitudes with a median of 40 on a scale of ≥ 40 (cut-off point), we can also observe that in this scale the lowest averages are presented in relation to the other planes, that is, that, in issues of leadership, gender violence and roles there is less sensitivity to gender equality especially by the male gender, so sexist attitudes are evidenced (see Table 7).

Table 7: Medians of university students in the relational level.

Relational Plane	<i>Media</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Media</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Global</i>
1. It is impossible to get along with a woman	3,85	3,35	3,72
2. Men are always stronger than women	3,46	2,83	3,29

3. A girl should not go out with a guy other than her boyfriend.	3,73	3,18	3,58
4. Girls who don't date boys are narrow (difficult).	3,92	3,63	3,84
5. In teamwork, it is usually a boy who is in charge.	4,04	3,73	3,95
6. It is normal for boyfriends to take revenge on their girlfriends if they cheat on them.	4,11	3,55	3,97
7. Lesbians are less trustworthy than a woman.	3,87	3,43	3,75
8. Guys who cheat on their girlfriends are more macho.	4,33	4,10	4,27
9. With a partner, it is better to pretend to agree so as not to argue.	3,86	3,38	3,73
10. It's easier to insult a homosexual than a man.	4,25	3,75	4,12

Source: Online survey Attitude towards gender equality in the Nursing Career Catholic University 2022.

On a personal level, the responses of university students are oriented towards egalitarian attitudes, especially in women, in relation to issues such as the labor sphere, we can see that the freedom and the right to equal work without restriction of profession or any exclusion is widely accepted, and these approaches are supported equally by both sexes, as can be seen in the averages obtained in question 7, question 2 and/or question 4, in which the results reflect that university students agree with the egalitarian exercise of gender in the labor sphere. We also observe these egalitarian attitudes in more personal areas such as question 7, which asks if I believe that a kitchenette or a doll is a game for boys and girls; this question presents the highest degree of acceptance towards gender equality, while in question 9 (I believe that being a man is preferable to being a woman has its advantages), we see indecision in the students' answers, placing it in a medium value on the scale (Table 8).

Table 8: Mean scores of university students on a personal level.

Personal Level	<i>Media</i>	<i>Media</i>	<i>Media</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Global</i>
1. I would be ashamed to admit or say that my father cooks or sweeps at home.	4,33	4,45	4,36
2. I believe that women should not be bullfighters or soccer players.	4,16	3,95	4,10
3. Women who dress like men bother me.	4,14	4,03	4,11

4. I like that it's only my father who works outside the home.	4,12	3,93	4,07
5. I prefer women to work at home.	4,19	4,03	4,15
6. I believe that a woman should get married and be a mother.	3,84	3,73	3,81
7. I believe that a kitchenette or a doll is a boy's and girl's game	2,86	3,08	2,92
8. It is understandable to be ashamed of homosexual friends and brothers or sisters.	4,12	3,80	4,04
9. I think it is preferable to be a man rather than a woman, it has its advantages.	3,63	3,25	3,53
10. I believe that women can be firefighters, policemen, bullfighters or soccer players.	4,32	4,28	4,31

Source: Online survey Attitude towards gender equality in the Nursing Career Catholic University 2022.

According to the data already obtained in the statistical analysis of the scales in Table 5 we determine that the participating university students denote an adaptive attitude to the subject of study; however, in the detailed analysis by gender we observe that men present less sensitivity to the subject than women and in a more marked way in the relational plane, that is, in the roles and topics of leadership, gender violence and, affectivity in which they present a sexist attitude while in the sociocultural and personal plane they present an adaptive attitude (See Table 9). In contrast, women tend to be more sensitive to the subject matter and exhibit a greater degree of sensitivity than the average, as evidenced by their responses falling above the cut-off point. This suggests a proclivity towards an egalitarian attitude, particularly in terms of personal gender ideologies. Expectations and identity regarding the subject, as well as an adaptive attitude on a relational and socio-cultural level, i.e., in the expectation of domestic responsibilities and social stereotypes already established ancestrally on the roles of women in society (Figure 1).

Table 9: Descriptive statistics by scale and gender.

Genre	Scales	N	Media	Standard deviation
Female	Sociocultural Plane	114	38,40	6,751
	Relational Plane	114	39,42	8,091
	Personal Plane	114	39,72	7,324
	N valid (per list)	114	39,18	
Male	Sociocultural Plane	40	37,23	5,820

	Relational Plane	40	34,90	9,103
	Personal Plane	40	38,50	7,825
	N valid (per list)	40	36,88	

Source: Online survey Attitude towards gender equality in the Nursing Career Catholic University 2022.

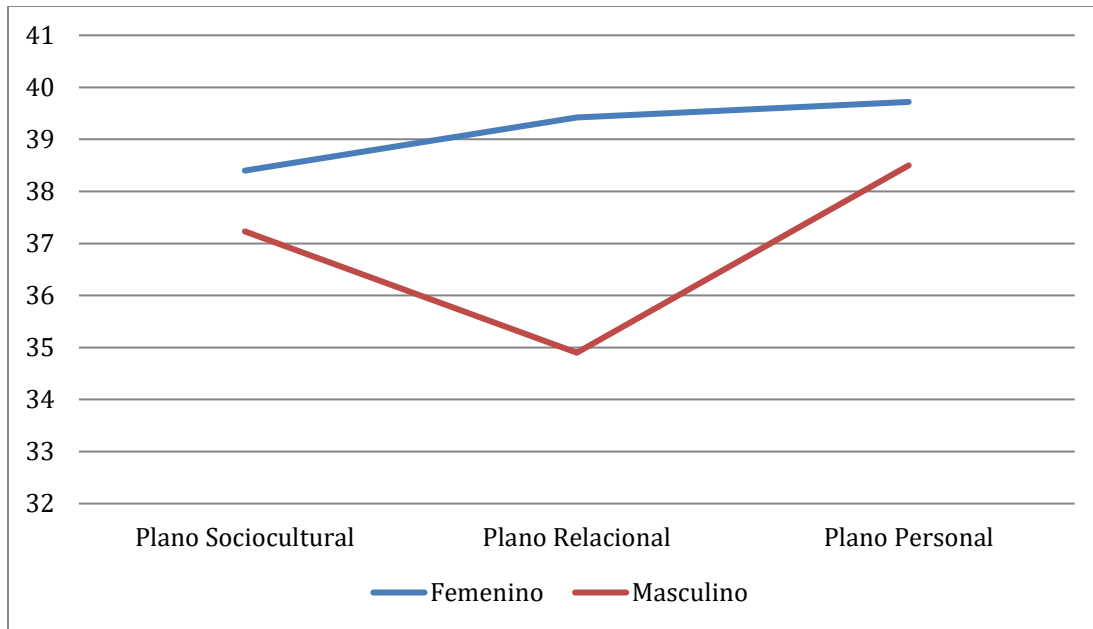


Figure 1: Attitude averages by scale and gender

Source: Online survey Attitude towards gender equality in the Catholic University School of Nursing 2022.

DISCUSSION

The issue of gender equality is not limited to the concerns of women, adolescents, and girls. It also encompasses the rights of the LGBT community, which has become a highly contentious topic due to its challenge to long-held cultural stereotypes.

As reported by ECLAC in 2018, women are responsible for the majority of domestic work and unpaid caregiving, amounting to an average of 75% of their time. These inequalities are further compounded by the inclusion of various forms of discrimination based on economic status, age, or sexual orientation (8). This approach allows us to conclude that unpaid work has been widely accepted in the community as an exclusive duty of women, and that these stereotypes prevail over time. In comparison to the study conducted with university students, we found that at the sociocultural level, despite the existence of a global adaptive attitude, certain sexist attitudes related to issues such as domestic roles and tasks are present. This is evident in the context of Latin America.

In the present study, the lowest means were also found in the relational plane, specifically in the indicators focused on describing gender violence, its possible acceptance, tolerance, and/or justification. These results could be alarming since they indicate that there are sexist attitudes regarding partner behaviors and points of view, action, and reaction to daily sentimental situations that could potentially lead to situations that evidence gender violence. Research conducted by Ana Maria Buller (2021) in Ecuador revealed that male romantic

jealousy is a commonly cited driver of intimate partner violence against women. This jealousy was found to be associated with controlling behaviors and sexual and physical violence (31).

In Mexico and Argentina (2016), a study was conducted with the aim of determining the development of gender role attitudes in the dating relationships of young university students. The results revealed that, in both countries, there is a two-dimensional distribution (transcendental and sexist attitudes), which is significantly related to the components of violence and acceptance of abuse. Similarly, women's attitudes are considerably sexist. In Mexico, a higher percentage of women exhibited both egalitarian and sexist attitudes. There is a significant correlation between egalitarian attitudes and neuroticism, and between sexist attitudes and psychoticism and conformity (36). This information corroborates that obtained in our analysis, which indicates that sexist attitudes are most prevalent among women. This is evidenced by the observation that they exhibit the highest average scores on the relational plane that correlates gender violence and roles.

With regard to the sensitivity of the topic by gender, as evidenced by the study conducted by Sonya G. Smith in 2022, it was found that women exhibited the highest averages in the correlation between gender violence and roles. In the year 2022, Smith's study revealed the most significant discrepancies between men and women in the health sector with regard to leadership perception. Women represented only 40% of leadership positions in G7 countries (United States, Great Britain, Italy, France, Germany, Japan, and Canada). In low-income countries, such as ours, they occupied only [...] The proportion of women in leadership positions among people aged 18 to 34 years is 1%. This is in contrast to the findings of this study, which indicate that women are more progressive with respect to leadership and gender equality. There is a certain similarity between the two studies, as leadership is an indicator of scale at the relational level. However, there is a very marked difference between men and women in many of the indicators, which can be attributed to sexist attitudes.

Finally, at the individual level, the results indicate that with regard to gender beliefs, identity, and expectations, there is evidence of an adaptive attitude. Furthermore, in the indicators related to the perception of homosexuality, we observe more reasonable averages towards equality and tolerability in contrast to studies of previous years. In the case of the research conducted by García Pérez (2010) in Spain, which serves as a reference for our study, we observe that in the indicators where homosexuality is considered, the averages are lower, indicating a rejection of the subject and a lack of tolerability (32). In contrast to the results of our study regarding the perception of homosexuality, there has been a notable evolution towards social acceptance and a discernible trend towards egalitarian attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The mean age of the participants was 23 years. The majority were women and single. The results indicated that university students exhibited an adaptive attitude in the three scales (sociocultural, relational, and personal) with a tendency towards an egalitarian attitude. This was evidenced by the global median being situated in the upper margin of the scale's cut-off point.

On the relational level, the students exhibited an adaptive attitude on a global scale, although certain sexist attitudes were evident. On the sociocultural and personal levels, egalitarian and adaptive attitudes were registered.

A detailed analysis by scales and gender reveals that men exhibit less sensitivity to gender equality than women. This is evidenced by the lowest averages observed in all indicators of the scale. In the relational plane, men demonstrate sexist attitudes, while in the other planes, adaptive attitudes are evident. However, women demonstrate greater sensitivity to the subject of study, exhibiting an adaptive attitude on the relational and sociocultural levels and an egalitarian attitude on the personal level.

Recommendations

The findings of this study permit the delineation of the contemporary circumstances of university students and the implementation of awareness campaigns on the subject, with a particular focus on men and social and personal issues that challenge traditional gender roles.

It is imperative to disseminate the findings of the study on gender equality in order to prevent the perpetuation of sexist attitudes on university campuses.

It is recommended that gender policies or programs be implemented on university campuses that are focused on the LGTB community. This is to avoid inequality that is focused on each of the scales analyzed, especially at the relational level.

It is recommended that existing policies related to the topic of study be strengthened and publicized in order to ensure their application and that they be followed up on periodically.

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