

Gender gaps in the perception of human labor rights among the staff of a Higher Education dependency

Brechas de género en la percepción de los derechos humanos laborales en el personal de una dependencia de Educación Superior

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Abstract

Objective: Explore the perception of the staff of a higher education unit regarding knowledge of Human Rights and gender, as well as their experience regarding them.

Methodology: a study was carried out with a cross-sectional design, with staff from a higher education unit. This work contributes to understanding gender gaps from the perception of the personnel with whom we work, since each approach contained in the questionnaire induces them to reflect and evaluate their current situation; In the medium and long term, it is expected that the results obtained will provide elements that can be translated into Public Policies so that Higher Education institutions can translate them into promoting a healthy work environment and thus contribute to the intention of mainstreaming the gender perspective. in college.

Resumen

Objetivo: Explorar la percepción del personal de una dependencia de educación superior sobre el conocimiento de los Derechos Humanos y género, así como su experiencia respecto a los mismos. **Metodología:** se llevó a cabo un estudio con un diseño transversal, con personal de una dependencia de educación superior. Este trabajo contribuye a entender las brechas de género desde la percepción del personal con el que se trabaja, ya que cada planteamiento contenido en el cuestionario los induce a reflexionar y valorar su situación actual; a mediano y a largo plazo se espera que los resultados obtenidos aporten elementos que puedan traducirse en Políticas Públicas para que las instituciones de Educación Superior los traduzca en acciones que fomenten un ambiente laboral saludable y de este modo se contribuya con la intención de transversalizar la perspectiva de género en la Universidad.

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Goals	Methodology	Contribution
Explore the perception of the staff of a higher education unit regarding knowledge of Human Rights and gender. 	Cross-sectional design, with staff from a higher education institution. 	Understand gender gaps from the perception of the personnel who work in a higher education institution and develop public policies that translate into actions for a healthy work environment.

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Objetivo	Metodología	Contribución
Explorar la percepción del personal de una dependencia de educación superior sobre el conocimiento de los Derechos Humanos y género. 	Diseño transversal, con personal de una dependencia de educación superior. 	Entender las brechas de género desde la percepción del personal que labora en una institución de Educación superior y se elaboren Políticas Públicas que se traduzcan en acciones para un ambiente laboral saludable.

Brechas de género, Derechos Humanos, Institución de Educación Superior

Gender Gaps, Human Rights, Higher Education Institution

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Introduction

Trejo Sánchez (2017) suggests that, in order to construct the concept of human rights from a gender perspective, it is important to analyse the national and international legal framework on labor human rights and gender equality in Mexico, in addition to studying the conceptual framework on gender, gender perspective and labor human rights. As early as 2015, Natividad Sánchez pointed out that in Mexico, gender equality gaps in labor matters still existed despite the reform to the Federal Labor Law that Felipe Calderón Hinojosa presented to the Chamber of Deputies on 1 September 2012 (Natividad, 2015).

Trejo Sánchez (2017: 141) defines labor Human Rights as "all those human rights linked to the world of work, whose purpose makes possible minimum satisfactory working conditions, that is, those that respect the dignity of people". "Human rights at work are rights to benefits, like all social human rights". Labor rights protect against discrimination and exploitation in the workplace; they require, for their realization in time and space, existing and viable legal instruments, whose regulation is based on national and international standards.

She also points out that, in order to represent human rights from a gender perspective, it is first necessary to point out her proposed concept of human rights from this perspective. Thus, she considers them to be: "Those prerogatives that ensure the protection of and respect for human dignity, which must be enjoyed without distinction based on gender, and which aim at substantive equality in order to favor the integral development of the person". To this end, it is necessary to address three elements that it encompasses, which are inescapable in human rights from a gender perspective, and these are: human dignity, the elimination of discrimination based on gender and substantive equality (Trejo, 2017: 164).

In this sense, the gender perspective constitutes a tool that seeks to show the differences between women and men that occur because of the cultural differences assigned to human beings, rather than because of their biological determination.

The gender perspective, although it is a tool of analysis that focuses on determining the differences between men and women, as well as their needs, should also be interested in improving the living conditions of both genders and, therefore, seek to transform the position of women in relation to that of men, their community and society in general (Trejo, 2017: 138).

Still today, in both first world and underdeveloped countries, women continue to be socially and professionally segregated, and although they are already occupying high-level executive positions, there are still differences that separate men from women in terms of salary and representation in the political, social and economic structure at a global level that make discrimination towards women evident (Gómez et al., 2022).

Based on the above, it is pointed out that the use of a gender perspective raises the need to carry out actions such as: 1) the equitable redistribution of productive and reproductive activities between the sexes; 2) the fair valuation of the different jobs performed by women and men, especially those related to raising children, caring for sick people and domestic tasks; and 3) the modification of social structures, mechanisms, rules, practices and values that reproduce inequality; the strengthening of women's management and decision-making power (Trejo, 2017: 138).

Therefore, the search for gender equality should result in the integral development of the person, regardless of sex, race, culture or religion, which is expected to have an impact on the eradication of violence against women (Gómez et al., 2022).

Buedo (2015) states that gender inequality in the labor market is rooted in the collective construction of women and men, as well as in the links between production and reproduction, where gender is constructed. Based on these, an unequal collective allocation and a different value is placed on the roles played by men and women, which affects their chances of entering and remaining in the labor market. In addition, cultural perceptions of what women and men do, with regard to the valuation of their actions and capabilities, are transferred to the work environment.

Article

This results in the sexual segmentation of work, which is evidenced by the fact that women do not have the same possibilities of access to the labor market as men (Pasos and Asián, 2018).

In 2015, Buedo conducted a socio-critical analysis of the labor process in order to elucidate aspects related to the anticivilization that women have experienced and continue to experience throughout their lives. She tries to understand the masculine and feminine in different contexts or social conditions, "understanding that women and men are not collectives or groups, but subjects of analysis due to the fact that the historical process is understood from a gender perspective, from which the fundamental aspects for coexistence in society are understood" (Buedo, 2015; 65).

Buedo stresses that although we are in a society that shows progress, it still remains marked by patriarchy, and that, today, this situation of need and inequity is just beginning to change, because despite the shaping and updating of socio-political models, towards more humanitarian and egalitarian quotas, we continue to find a reality that biases, differentiates, and treats people differently depending on their origin, academic level, sex or gender" (Buedo, 2015: 74); or, as Yuan, F. et al. (2023) the presence of female executives and the employment relationship has been little researched.

The Centro de Investigaciones Regionales "Dr. Hideyo Noguchi" is a dependency of the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán; it has 145 basic and contract employees (Table 1).

Box 1**Table 1**

Staff working at the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales "Dr. Hideyo Noguchi"

Personal	Women	Men	Total
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Base	67 (57.3)	50 (42.7)	117 (100.0)
Contract	13 (46.4)	15 (53.6)	28 (100.0)
Total	80 (55.2)	65 (44.8)	145 (100.0)

Source: Retrieved from the archive of the Administrative Coordination of the Regional Research Centre

The Centro de Investigaciones Regionales "Dr. Hideyo Noguchi" is one of the units that seeks to position itself in the Health Sciences Campus. Its position within the Autonomous University of Yucatán has a lot to do with its growth, not only in terms of its involvement with schools and faculties, but also in terms of its staff (Andueza et al. 2016). For this reason, carrying out studies on Human Rights with a Gender Perspective within this agency is fundamental as it allows us to have an approach on the knowledge and perception that the staff has about Human Rights and gender, as well as their experience with respect to them, which is the objective of this work.

Methodology

The study was designed as a cross-sectional study in which all staff of the Unit were invited to answer a survey on Gender and Human Rights at the Autonomous University of Yucatan. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: 1) contextualization of the staff; 2) general data of the participant; 3) items for research purposes and 4) glossary of terms. The first section indicated the objective of the study; the second section collected information on the type of staff, type of contract and gender of the participants; the third section consisted of a total of 16 items and the fourth section was a glossary of terms to assist in the process of applying the questionnaire and to promote a better understanding of the information that was intended to be collected.

Results

The distribution of participants by category type and gender is shown in Table 2:

Box 2**Table 2**

Distribution of participants by category and sex

Sex	Category			Total
	Academic	Administrative	Manual	
Men	22 (62.9%)	5 (14.3%)	8 (22.9%)	35 (100.0%)
Women	30 (65.2%)	13 (28.3%)	3 (6.5%)	46 (100.0%)
Total	52 (64.2%)	18 (22.2%)	11 (13.6%)	81 (100.0%)

Source: Survey on Gender and Human Rights at the Autonomous University of Yucatán. sample=81

From the information obtained it can be seen that the participation of staff by category was distributed as follows: 64.2% (52) academic, 22.2% (18) administrative and 13.6% (11) manual, which made a total of 81 people, i.e. 55.86% agreed to participate in the study. In the gender distribution, there were 46 women (56.8%) and 35 men (43.2%); in both the men's and women's groups, the highest percentage was of academic staff. It should be noted that all staff at the Research Centre are full time. To the question: "Do you know what your human rights are in the workplace? 62.5% said yes. By gender, 30 (66.7%) women and 20 (57.1%) men indicated that they were aware of them; by category, it was the female administrative and academic staff who said they were more aware of them, while among manual staff the situation was reversed, with more men (75%) indicating that they were aware of them. It is striking that more than a third (37.5%) do not know about human rights in the workplace (Table 3).

Box 3

Table 3

Gender and Human Rights

Participants	Yes No. (%)	No No. (%)	Total
Men	20 (57.1)	15 (42.9)	35 (100.0)
Women	30 (66.7)	15 (33.3)	45 (100.0)
Total	50 (62.5)	30 (37.5)	80 (100)

Source: Survey on Gender and Human Rights at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. sample=80

Likewise, from a list of options, they were asked to select the three main ones they associate with the word "Human Rights in the workplace" and the most frequent were: "non-discrimination" with 70%, "equality" with 53.1% and "equity" with 51.9%. On the other hand, the words: fight against impunity and justice were chosen with 5% or less, in all three staff categories.

For the study, the association with Discrimination, Equality and Equity shows that there is knowledge or at least an idea of what Human Rights are.

To evaluate the perceptions, items were applied focused on knowing the Guarantees (4,5,13), the exercise, (6,8,9) and obstacles (7,10,11,12) that the institution offers to maintain a healthy working environment.

The World Health Organisation's (2010) definition of a "healthy work environment" was used as a basis, which states that it is one in which workers and managers collaborate in a process of continuous improvement to promote and protect the health, safety, well-being of workers, the sustainability of the work environment and gender equality, in their physical, psychosocial and physical health space.

They were asked about their perceptions of the guarantees that the institution offers to maintain a healthy work environment through three questions, question 4 was: Do you consider that in your unit there is a healthy work environment? the answers are shown in table 4:

Box 4

Table 4

Healthy work environment

Sexo	Always No. (%)	Generally No. (%)	Sometimes No. (%)	Never No. (%)	Total No. (%)
Men	5 (14.3)	18 (51.4)	9 (25.7)	0	32 (100.0)
Women	10 (21.7)	25 (54.3)	11 (23.9)	0	46 (100.0)
Total	15 (18.5)	43 (53.1)	20 (24.7)	0	78 (100.0)

Source: Survey on Gender and Human Rights at the Autonomous University of Yucatán. sample=78

The results show that 54.3% of women and 51.4% of men consider the working environment to be generally healthy; however, 24.7% said sometimes. Analysis of the data by category shows similar percentages for academic staff, 54.5% for men and 53.3% for women.

Among administrative staff, the perception is higher among men (80%) than among women (53.8%) who answered the option generally; however, among manual staff the opposite is true, with 25% of men and 66.7% of women indicating this option. It seems that for manual men the environment is less favorable than for the others. In question 5 they were given a list of Human Rights to indicate the ones they consider to be the most important. 90.1% considered the right to just, fair and satisfactory working conditions, 88.9% indicated dignified and respectful treatment, 80.2% indicated health and safety at work, 77.8% indicated freedom of religion.

Article

They were also asked to indicate, from a list of options, those in which they consider that there are equal opportunities for women and men in their workplace.

The top three options selected were: benefits with 63%, opportunities for advancement in management positions with 60.5% and promotion with 58.8%, followed by equal pay with 58%, scholarships with 51.9%, income with 44.4% and none with 8.6%. It is worth noting that 90.9% of academics consider that there are equal benefits, but 56.7% of female academics do not; likewise, 69.2% of administrative women and 66.7% of manual women agree with academics on equal benefits.

In order to find out the main rights that are exercised freely in the department, they were asked to indicate from a list of options, those that they consider that they exercise freely in their work environment; the data are shown in Table 5.

Box 5**Table 5**

Human rights exercised in the work environment

Human Rights	Sex	Yes no. (%)	NO no. (%)	Total no. (%)
Dignified and respectful treatment	Men	24 68.6%	11 31.4%	35 100.0%
	Women	31 67.4%	15 32.6%	46 100.0%
	Total	55 67.9%	26 32.1%	81 100.0%
Right health	Men	19 54.3%	16 45.7%	35 100.0%
	Women	30 65.2%	16 34.8%	46 100.0%
	Total	49 60.5%	32 39.5%	81 100.0%
Religious freedom	Men	19 55.9%	15 44.1%	34 100.0%
	Women	28 60.9%	18 39.1%	46 100.0%
	Total	47 58.8%	33 41.3%	80 100.0%

Source: Survey on Gender and Human Rights at the Autonomous University of Yucatán sample=80

According to the results, dignified and respectful treatment is the most freely exercised in the unit (67.9%); men 68.6% and women 67.4%.

By category and sex, more academic (81.8%), administrative (60%) and manual (37.5%) men reported this, compared to women in the three categories, 73.3%, 61.5% and 33.3% respectively.

The Human Right to Health was the second most recognized option with 60.5%; men reported it at 54.3% and women at 65.2%. By category and gender, female academics and administrative staff indicated it the most, 70% and 61.5%, respectively, compared to male academics and administrative staff who indicated it at 63.6% and 40% respectively. In contrast, 37.5% of male manual workers and 33.3% of female manual workers reported it.

As for religious freedom, although it was the third most recognized option with a total percentage of 58.8%; 60.9% of women and 55.9% of men reported it; it is striking that, by category and sex, among manual staff, 71.4% of men and 66.7% of women indicated that this right is not exercised.

The third question regarding the guarantees was to indicate how the exercise of human rights is promoted in the workplace:

It is striking that the perception of the majority of the staff, regardless of sex, indicated that the options provided in the study are NOT promoted; the percentages above 90% were: they are not considered as a transversal part of the planning and budgeting processes, there are no protocols for urgent attention to workers, a culture of reporting human rights violations is not promoted, friendly solutions are not promoted in the case of human rights violations as a form of reparation for damages, they are not promoted through dissemination campaigns, there are no mechanisms for expressing disagreement without fear of reprisals.

All staff agree on the perception that these human rights are not promoted in the workplace, regardless of category and gender (Table 6).

Box 6**Table 6**

Human Rights that are NOT promoted in the workplace

Promoting human rights in the workplace	Women no. (%)	Men no. (%)	Total no. (%)
Unmet needs of workers are identified.	37 (80.4)	29 (82.9)	66 (81.5)
c It is promoted through outreach campaigns	44 (95.7)	30 (85.7)	74 (91.4)
It is promoted through training.	34 (73.9)	31 (88.6)	65 (80.2)
They are expressly incorporated into employment contracts	38 (82.6)	26 (74.3)	64 (79)
They are considered as a cross-cutting part of the planning and budgeting processes.	45 (97.8)	35 (100)	80 (98.8)
Protocols are in place for the urgent care of workers.	44 (95.7)	35 (100)	79 (97.5)
Promoting a culture of reporting human rights violations	42 (91.3)	33 (94.3)	75 (92.6)
Promoting gender equality	28 (60.9)	13 (37.1)	41 (50.6)
Non-discrimination on the basis of status is promoted.	33 (71.7)	21 (60)	54 (66.7)
The University is promoted as a safe space free of violence for the university community.	28 (60.9)	20 (57.1)	48 (59.3)
Mechanisms are in place for people with disabilities (hearing, audiovisual, motor or intellectual), older adults, sexual diversity, or any other condition, to exercise their rights as university employees.	37 (82.2)	30 (85.7)	67 (83.8)
The work-life balance is promoted.	37 (80.4)	26 (74.3)	63 (77.8)
Amicable solutions are promoted in cases of human rights violations as a form of reparation.	44 (95.7)	31 (88.6)	75 (92.6)
Mechanisms exist for expressing dissent without fear of reprisals.	41 (89.1)	33 (94.3)	74 (91.4)
None of the above	36 (78.3)	33 (94.3)	69 (85.2)

Source: Survey on Gender and Human Rights at the Autonomous University of Yucatan

From a list of options, the staff selected those that could hinder the exercise of human rights in the workplace. Ignorance had the highest percentage (61.7%), followed by indifference (58.0%), fear (38.3%) and social pressure (27.2%).

Of the responses regarding lack of knowledge by category and sex, the highest percentage was among administrative and manual women (61.5% and 100%) compared to men (40% and 37.5%), respectively.

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Indifference was reported by 40% of men and 69.2% of women administrators. In the case of manuals, 75% of men and no women reported it, which shows a different perception according to category and gender.

Of the participants who said that fear is an obstacle to the exercise of human rights, more than 45% of academics and administrative staff said that fear is an obstacle to the exercise of human rights, with no difference by sex. Manual staff, regardless of gender, reported it in less than 15%.

Social pressure maintains a similar trend to fear, in terms of category and gender.

Conclusions

The Centro de Investigaciones Regionales is a unit made up mostly of women, both in the academic and administrative staff, which is reversed in the manual staff, where the majority are men; this can be explained by the functions themselves or by uses and customs linked to the forms of organization of the institutions, therefore, the knowledge and perception of Human Rights are not the same in all circumstances of space and time as stated by Gómez et al.

Although the workplace is a space where people spend a considerable part of their time, and labor institutions should provide minimum satisfactory working conditions, as Trejo Sánchez (2017) points out, we continue to find a reality that biases, differentiates, and treats people differently depending on their origin, academic level, sex or gender.

In this regard, the perception of equal opportunities between men and women in the workplace showed that just over 60% perceive equality in benefits and opportunities for promotion in management positions; however, by category and gender, the percentages are notoriously different, with men reporting this much more than women, both academic and administrative. It seems that equal opportunities are different for women.

This situation is an area of opportunity that needs to be addressed in order to promote equal opportunities regardless of gender.

In relation to the perception of guarantees, more than 80% indicated that they have heard about human rights in the workplace, only slightly more than 60% reported knowing their rights and slightly more than 50% considered that the working environment is generally healthy. The perceptions by gender and by category were also different, which gives rise to the opportunity to implement strategies to raise awareness of human rights and improve the working environment as a space of respect for human dignity, as one of the elements referred to by almost 90% of the staff was dignified and respectful treatment, and more pointed out by women. Regarding the exercise of human rights, the most frequent were dignified and respectful treatment, the right to health and religious freedom; however, the percentages were less than 70%, with different proportions between men and women; the procedures to follow when any of the human rights are violated are to report it to the superior, and those who reported it the most were women, in particular, those of the administrative staff.

The promotion of the exercise of human rights in the workplace is an issue that is not promoted in the workplace, as a very high percentage of participants pointed out. In this respect, it will be necessary for the authorities to carry out a thorough review of the conditions that give rise to this perception and to contribute to planning actions aimed at reversing the perception and achieving a healthy working environment where human rights can be exercised.

Ignorance, indifference, fear and social pressure are conditions that can hinder the exercise of human rights, especially for female academic and administrative staff. Likewise, academic degree, job position, opinions and the fact of being a man or a woman were considered as a reason for discrimination, the latter referred to more by women from manual and academic staff, which is in agreement with authors such as Trejo Sánchez (2017) and Natividad (2015) who point out the differences between men and women due to cultural differences.

The interest in receiving training in gender and human rights is a positive aspect to plan actions such as workshops, conferences, courses aimed at all the staff of the unit and thus contribute to the University's interest in mainstreaming the gender perspective.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that might have appeared to influence the article reported in this paper.

Authors' contribution

Andueza-Pech, María Guadalupe: Contributed with the idea of the paper, responsible for the research and organization of the data collection.

Rodríguez-Angulo, Elsa María: Contributed with the analysis of the information and search for bibliographic material.

Ojeda-Rodríguez, Ricardo: Contributed to the analysis of the information and preparation of the results.

Cambranes-Puc, Luis Humberto: Contributed to the analysis of information and elaboration of results.

Availability of data and materials

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Background

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