

The Challenges For Universities With A Cross-Cutting Gender Perspective: A Systematic Review

Consuelo Amparo Kanashiro-Santillan¹, Edwin Roger Esteban-Rivera²

¹ Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán, Huánuco, Perú

² Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizán, Huánuco, Perú

1st amparokanashirosantillan@gmail.com

2nd edroer@gmail.com

¹ <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7029-2588> ² <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4669-1268>

*Corresponding Author: amparokanashirosantillan@gmail.com

Abstract: Faced with the challenges of contemporary society, some universities, as important social agents of transformation, have incorporated a gender perspective into their educational policies to contribute to the holistic development of female students and to reverse the limitations that still exist in public and private spaces. The experiences of these universities deserve to be analyzed and systematized; therefore, the objective of this research is to reveal how universities incorporate a gender perspective. The study is framed within a qualitative methodological perspective, using a systematic review method. Based on the PRISMA Declaration, 28 articles were selected from the Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, PubMed, and Redalyc databases. The results indicate that some universities have guidelines and protocols for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, promote research and gender-related activities in STEM fields, and have programs, workshops, collectives, curricula, networks, and key female professors in their development. In conclusion, some universities have managed to mainstream a gender perspective in their documentation but still face limitations in its effective implementation.

Keywords: Gender perspective, incorporation, transversalization, patriarchal, challenges, desafios

I. INTRODUCTION

Historically, for women, achieving higher education has been a constant struggle. Simone de Beauvoir, in the 20th century, initiated the first questions about the female education system [1], stating that they were made invisible from the academic canon, reducing their role to an object rather than a subject [2]. In other words, she criticized the logic of sexual oppression as a symbolic, social, and structural mechanism sustained by patriarchal power.

Currently, gender mainstreaming in higher education is a key strategic trend, driven by multiple international organizations seeking to integrate a gender equality perspective [3]. This perspective promises to address inequalities and foster a culture of gender equity [4]. In this regard, several international organizations with global impact are leading significant efforts to develop cross-cutting guidelines and policies that facilitate its implementation in education. The UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESLAC) has published reports highlighting the elimination of barriers that limit access to and equitable participation of women and men in higher education [5].

Furthermore, gender mainstreaming is a global goal to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda, as detailed in SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and SDG 10.3: Ensure equal opportunities and reduce inequalities [6]. In response to this challenge, universities are making significant contributions. In accordance with global objectives, the UNDP adopted the Mainstreaming Acceleration and Policy Support approach, which enables governments to achieve the SDGs, incorporate the agenda into national development plans, accelerate

progress, and formulate guidelines for preparing SDG-related reports. University researchers are ideally positioned to analyze the SDGs [7].

Despite the presence of significant international programs, a weak articulation of guidelines between countries and universities for cooperation on gender equality is still evident. Only Nicaragua and Costa Rica are among the top 20 countries in the Americas out of 146 in the Global Gender Gap Index, highlighting structural problems [8]. Given their strategic position, political capacity, and academic and educational role within society, universities are the most suitable agents of social transformation and are best positioned to reduce inequality gaps.

In line with the gradual advancement of state policies, the institutionalization of the gender perspective in universities is also limited, with mainstreaming being the least addressed aspect. This is due to multiple factors such as the resistance and lack of interest from authorities, teachers, and researchers in mainstreaming the gender perspective in curricula [9]; rectors minimizing the disadvantages faced by female students [10]; the rigidity of curricular programs that do not value the social role of women [10]; and the androcentric patterns present in curricula [11]; Furthermore, decontextualized study plans that do not contribute to exploring the problematic realities faced by women [12].

On the other hand, female students also develop their professional training in an environment of violence both in their academic space and in their family environment, with cyberbullying, harassment in the university community, and the consequence of sexual abuse leaving scars that prevent their complete training [13]. Therefore, the studies [14] suggest that universities urgently guarantee a university culture free of gender violence and discrimination.

There are multiple factors that female students face that indicate the urgent need for mainstreaming a gender perspective. Studies show that universities have not yet overcome the underrepresentation of women and its effects on workplaces, funding, leadership, research, and academic mobility. Regarding the professional fields they pursue, research reveals that female students themselves perceive their chosen fields as stereotyped by their academic environment [15]. Similarly, Hernández's studies suggest that women's journey through STEM fields should be free from sexist environments that make them feel insecure and uncomfortable [16].

The gradual progress of universities should not only focus on measuring the entry of more women into universities but also promote comprehensive attention such as research productions [17], as suggested by the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, which states that universities should invest more in research [18]. Therefore, it is essential to develop and consolidate instruments, programs, and policies that promote women's access to all professional careers and to scientifically oriented research, development, and innovation projects.

Some universities have successfully mainstreamed a gender perspective; while this is an understudied topic, it is crucial for understanding the social structures that still place women at multiple disadvantages in both the public and private spheres. In this regard, this systematic review aims to uncover the main challenges universities face in mainstreaming a gender perspective, considering both the significant progress achieved and the limitations reported in the scientific literature. The study strengthens the scientific evidence base for future research on the design and formulation of more effective university policies with a gender perspective.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study is framed within a qualitative methodological perspective, which allows for a flexible approach to reality [19], identifying, analyzing, and interpreting relevant

qualitative information that is theorized, categorized, and coded [20]. The systematic review of scientific literature was employed, considering consistency, quality, quantity, and synthesis [21], highlighting the accumulated data. Furthermore, the study presents an interpretive paradigm that guides researchers in understanding the particularities of reality [22].

Search strategy

The articles selected for the systematic review were published between 2020 and 2025. The initial search for articles was conducted using the Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT. The search was operationalized in the databases SciELO, Scopus, Web of Science (WOS), PubMed, and Redalyc, yielding 9,326 documents: 610 in Scopus, 130 in Web of Science, 5,250 in SciELO, 2,251 in PubMed, and 1,085 in Redalyc. Of these 9,326, the following were excluded: 622 records removed before the projection, 4,305 due to duplication, 1,629 because they were outside the educational scope, 2,084 because they did not correspond to the university context, 602 because they were published before 2020, and 84 because they were published in languages other than English and Spanish. This left 28 articles as the sample for the systematic review.

TABLE I SEARCH RESULTS IN THE DATABASES

Ecuación de búsqueda	Scopus	WOS	Scielo	PubMed	Redalyc	Total
Desafíos AND universidad	7	4	7	2	513	533
desafíos AND universidad AND mujeres	10	5	12	5	66	98
Lineamientos ADN universidad AND mujeres	3	5	9	2	4	23
Transversalización AND género	5	3	48	5	10	71
Universidad AND género	178	0	1846	787	14	2825
Género AND educación AND universitaria	6	0	120	3	1	130
Género AND Educación	332	50	2285	63	64	2794
Estrategia AND género AND Universidad	2	0	59	13	4	78
Currículo AND mujeres	2	0	40	420	119	581
Currículo AND Feminismo	1	0	5	654	91	751
Feminismo AND Universidad	2	2	55	6	144	209
Transversalidad AND género	1	3	40	0	1	45
Igualdad AND transversalización AND género	2	1	11	0	12	26

Género AND incorporación	26	7	332	6	8	379
Género AND mecanismo	11	17	241	5	6	280
Universidad AND género AND pedagogía	5	1	36	2	4	48
Políticas AND educativas AND de AND género	6	11	59	12	6	94
Universidad NOT machismo	5	16	33	5	8	67
Patriarcal NOT universidad	6	5	12	261	10	294
	610	130	5250	225	108	932
				1	5	6

Note. Original work

Fig. 1 PRISMA Statement

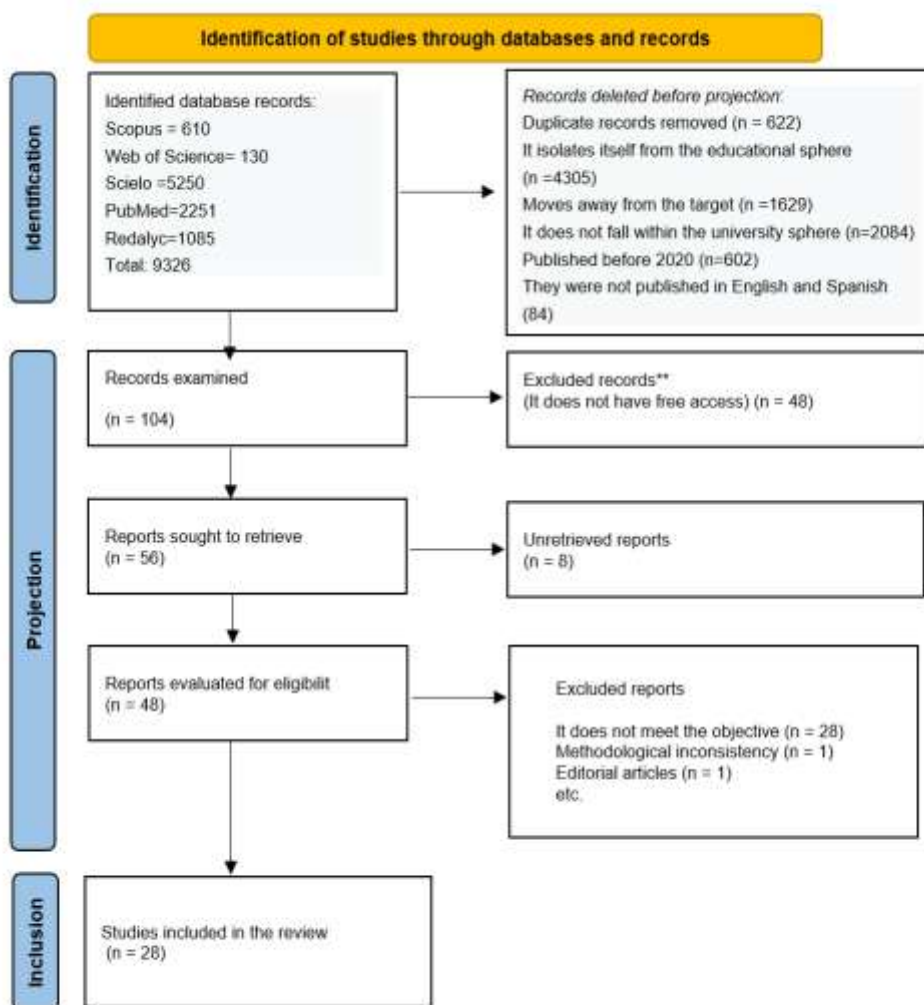


Fig. 1 systematization of scientific articles

III. RESULTS

Feminist Pedagogy: Structural Challenges for Universities

Studies indicate that universities should offer feminist pedagogy to students and faculty as a crucial and cross-cutting tool [23], since feminist pedagogy can weaken patriarchal structures [24]. Along the same lines, studies [25] suggest that feminist pedagogy promotes new masculinities in faculty practices. For example, the National Autonomous University of Mexico offers courses such as Sociology of Minorities [26], but feminist pedagogy is mostly limited to female professors and faces some resistance from male professors

Feminist pedagogy conveys emotional experiences that transcend traditional pedagogy. For example, professors at the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) recognize that students experience their own lives and needs reflected in their professional academic training. However, significant challenges remain in universities because other studies, such as those by Villar [27], attribute the idea of feminist pedagogy as a utopian desire, as it requires philosophical proposals from the entire university community. Another challenge for universities to implement feminist pedagogy is related to content, which implies including researchers, authors, and activists in the resources of study programs [28].

The Challenge of Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective in Curricula

Mainstreaming and intersecting the Gender Perspective is fundamental to contributing to an equitable society. However, due to its complexity, some universities only address it in a documented way. Studies by Epifanio and Calvo-Iglesias [29] consider that diagnostics evaluating the mainstreaming of the Gender Perspective in 54 Spanish universities fail to achieve mainstreaming because, in most cases, students are unaware of the role of equality offices. Achieving the institutionalization of the mainstreaming of the gender perspective reflects more limitations than achievements, since most of the Gender Perspective courses offered by certain universities are electives. For example, studies [30] reveal that the National University of La Plata offers special courses on gender perspective but the classes are carried out on an optional basis, which indicates that the optional offer constitutes challenges for universities because it limits gender equity practices among community agents.

Challenges of University Structure in the Pursuit of Gender Equality

The studies selected for this systematic review reveal that gender-sensitive university infrastructure is one of the greatest challenges for universities worldwide. However, there are exemplary universities, such as the University of Alicante in Spain, which has incorporated gender-sensitive architecture as a result of interdisciplinary work with researchers, faculty, and students [31]. Similarly, the studies also suggest that the construction of gender-sensitive sports facilities on university campuses is vital for holistic education [32]. Traditionally, the numerous areas built in universities dating from the 19th and 20th centuries have been designed from an androcentric perspective. However, it is now necessary to rethink areas that also promote the holistic development of female students, since gender-sensitive infrastructure also educates the general public.

Challenges in Addressing Gender Violence in Universities

Studies reveal that universities that have developed protocols to prevent and punish gender violence have made considerable progress in their documentation. However, most

universities still face challenges in sanctioning and following up with victims of violence. For example, the University of Buenos Aires has had its Institutional Action Protocol for the Prevention and Attention to Gender Prejudice and Violence in place since 2015, but cases are not reported effectively [33]. Similarly, the Psychology program at the Catholic University of Temuco uses gender perspective perception tests in its pre-professional practices. However, a limitation in both studies is that the protocol is applied as a test or reported, but the challenge both universities face is the lack of specialized professionals to assist victims in cases of sanctions. Universities need to develop more specific violence protocols that are appropriate to the context and help students recognize the types of violence [34].

On the other hand, there are universities that house students who are victims of violence and who, lacking professional support, form their own support networks. This is evidenced in studies that report that female students at Chilean universities abused by their partners [35], received support from these networks and were able to overcome their problems [36]. Therefore, it is not enough for universities to design and implement protocols; specialized follow-up for victims, both within and outside the university setting, is essential.

Between advances and challenges, women's research production

The implementation of research offices aimed at women and the promotion of scientific production with a gender perspective in universities constitute a key strategy to challenge the structural inequalities that have historically limited women's participation. Therefore, studies report that the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) has the Institute for Research in Gender Studies [37], the University of Granada designed the Equality Plan for the period 2020-2024 based on nine fundamental axes that guide the research commitment of the academic community towards gender equality [38], and the Veracruzana Intercultural University where active feminist leaders produce research with a gender perspective [39]. The limited scientific output of women is an indicator that research equity remains a challenge for universities; therefore, it is necessary for universities to design and implement institutional policies with a gender perspective so that women can achieve scientific output with methodological guidance, continuous quality support, sustainability, funding, and recognition.

IV. CONCLUSIONES

Sexist language is also one of the most common forms of violence in universities, and rigorous compliance with protocols is one of the greatest challenges universities faces [40]. On the other hand, female professors have joined forces to promote programs, workshops, and feminist pedagogy to combat sexist language, but resistance is still evident among male professors, who assume sexist language is normal and commonplace.

The incorporation of a gender perspective into study plans and curricula represents important progress, but it should not be applied optionally, but rather mandatorily and across all subjects [41]. This mandatory approach will compensate for the social and ethical competencies needed by the entire university community and the contribution from universities to the SDGs [42]. Gender-sensitive curricula are crucial because they determine the theoretical and scientific knowledge, training, and actions of people in the university setting as well as in other contexts.

The connections established between university faculty and schools are significant because this collaborative work helps students become more aware of structural inequalities and the need for relationships and experiences based on respect and equity from an early age.

Universities play a strategic role in promoting gender equality, making it essential that they establish systematic links with schools for collaborative work. Links that promote a gender perspective strengthen society [43]. This collaboration not only facilitates the transfer of knowledge and critical approaches developed within the university setting but also contributes to the early development of educational communities that are more aware of structural inequalities and the need for relationships based on equity and respect.

Despite the efforts made, the limitation of this article is that it has not found universities that reveal successful experiences of full and complete overcoming of the challenges. However, the article reports the partial challenges that are being overcome and achieved, and the limitations that still persist in different areas and aspects, whether in pedagogical documents, institutional policies, protocols, curricula, equality offices, infrastructure, among others. In conclusion, the studies that make up the systematization that has been worked on in this article for universities show that effective mainstreaming is still a challenge.

REFERENCIAS

- [1] Le Bouhellec, L. (2021). Simone de Beauvoir, filósofa. *Inventio*, 9(19), 47–50.
<https://inventio.uaem.mx/index.php/inventio/article/view/341>
- [2] Femenías, M. L. 2008. Simone de Beauvoir: contribuciones de una filósofa, 3 (2), 7-15.
<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8892918>
- [3] C. Y. Lin, M. Wu, J. A. Bloom, I. J. Cox y M. Miller, “Marcas de agua públicas resistentes a la rotación, la escala y la traducción para imágenes”, *IEEE Trans. Image Process.*, vol. 10, n.º 5, págs. 767-782, mayo de 2001.
- [4] Bhowmik, D. (2023). Gender Inequality in Higher Education and Research. *Business Ethics and Leadership*, 7(3), 108-119. [https://doi.org/10.61093/bel.7\(3\).108-119.2023](https://doi.org/10.61093/bel.7(3).108-119.2023)
- [5] IESLAC. (2021). Mujeres en la educación superior: ¿la ventaja femenina ha puesto fin a las desigualdades de género?
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377183>
- [6] Hipólito Ruiz, N. & Martínez Martín, I. (2021). Dialogues between Buen Vivir, Epistemologies of the South, Decolonial Feminism, and Feminist Pedagogies: Contributions to Transformative Education. *Advanced Studies*, 35, 16–28.
<https://doi.org/10.35588/estudav.v0i35.5321>
- [7] Espinoza G, M. (2017). Contribution of the university to the Sustainable Development Goals. For *Universitario de la Calidad*, Fourth Edition 2017
- [8] The World Economic Forum. (2023). Informe sobre la brecha de género.
<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>
- [9] Montes-de-Oca-O'Reilly, A. (2019). Difficulties in Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective in a Higher Education Institution. *Latin American Journal of Inclusive Education*, 13(1), 105–125. <https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-73782019000100105>
- [10] Castañeda-Rentería, L. I., Contreras, T.K. & Parga, J. F. (2019). Women in Ibero-American Universities: the search for the necessary work-family balance (1st edition). University of Guadalajara.
- [11] Cosciuc, L. P. (2021). Triple combination of roles: women-mothers-university students: Contributions to (re)cognizing the political notion of their trajectories. *Cátedra Paralela*, 18, 93–116. <https://doi.org/10.35305/cp.vi18.276>
- [12] Solís-Salazar, R. M., Hernández-Contreras, R. G., & Báez-Martínez, M. E. (2024). Incorporation of gender equality in a university study program in Mexico. *Revista Científica Retos de la Ciencia*, 8(17). 29-44.
<https://doi.org/10.53877/rc.8.17.20240101.3>

- [13] Flores, H. A. & Espejel, R. A. (2021). Sexism as a practice of violence in the university. *Journal of Social Education*, (21), 128-142. https://eduso.net/res/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/sexismo_res_21.pdf
- [14] García Luján Ávila, G. del S., & Albareda Tiana, S. (2024). Gender equality and sustainable development. Progress and challenges in the global agenda and in the university. *Feminismo/s*, 43, 213-243. <https://doi.org/10.14198/fem.2024.43.09>
- [15] Cervera Delgado, C., Martí Reyes, M., & de la Sancha Villa, E. O. (2023). Forbidden fields: Testimonies of female university students on gender inequality. Retrieved from: <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8999785>
- [16] Del Río, M. F., Strasser, K., & Susperreguy, M. I. (2016). Are mathematical skills a matter of gender? Gender stereotypes about mathematics among kindergarten boys and girls, their families, and educators. *Quality in Education*, 45, 20–53. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-45652016000200002>
- [17] Chávez, G. A, Chávez, G. R. & Ramírez, D. E. (2009). Gender and work in universities. University of Guadalajara.
- [18] UNESCO. (2019). Gender Report 2019: Building Bridges to Gender Equality. <https://www.buenosaires.iiep.unesco.org/es/publicaciones/informe-sobre-genero-2019>
- [19] Flick, U. (2007). *Qualitative research design*. Morata Editions.
- [20] Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (2002). *Basics of qualitative research. Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. (Second edition). Editorial Universidad de Antioquia.
- [21] Berra, S. (2020). Fundamentals and methods of systematic reviews. *Areté*, 20(2), 73-82. <https://doi.org/10.33881/1657-2513.art.20208>
- [22] Piñero, M. M., Esteban, R. E., Vanga, A. M. & Rivera, M. M. (2022). Towards a reconceptualization of qualitative research. *Revista De Filosofía*, 39, 524-536. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7312693>
- [23] García-Huidobro-Munita, R. & Montenegro-González, C. (2020). Artistic practices with feminist approaches as educational experiences that promote social transformation. *Educare Electronic Journal*, 24 (1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.15359/ree.24-1.23>
- [24] Bonavitta, P., Trad Malmood, G., & Johnson, M. C. (2022). Education and feminisms: Extension practices and transformative communication. *+E: Journal of University Extension*, 12(16), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.14409/extension.2022.16.Ene-Jun.e0009>
- [25] Alvarado, U. A., Rivera, M. F. & Suazo, G. F. (2022). Non-sexist education in gender protocols at Chilean universities: diagnostic evaluation and critical perspective. *Revista Pedagogía Universitaria y Didáctica del Derecho*, 9(2), 291–322. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-5885.2022.68257>
- [26] Buquet, C. A., López, G. O., & Moreno, E. H. (2019). Relevance of gender studies in universities: The creation of the Center for Gender Research and Studies at UNAM. *Educational Profiles*, 42(167), 178–196. <https://doi.org/10.22201/iissue.24486167e.2019.167.59037>
- [27] Ramallo, M. de L. Á. & Ronconi, L. (2023). Pedagogy and didactics with a gender perspective: How do feminists teach at the Faculty of Law of the University of Buenos Aires? *Revista pedagogía universitaria y didáctica del derecho*, 10 (1), 215–248. <https://doi.org/10.5354/0719-5885.2023.69368>
- [28] Villar, V. M., Méndez-Lois, M., Barreiro, F. & Permuy, M. A. (2023). Feminist pedagogies in the university: reality or utopia? An analysis of the training of professionals in the educational field. *Educare*, 59(1), 49-64. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.1571>

- [29] Díaz-Guijarro, H. (2025). Feminist Pedagogies. More Democracy: A Feminist Perspective in Education.
<https://docpublicos.ccoo.es/cendoc/071014PedagogiaFeminista.pdf>
- [30] Epifanio, I., & Calvo-Iglesias, E. (2024). Actions for gender equality in the science and technology fields of Spanish universities. *Educación XX1*, 27(2), 19–36.
<https://doi.org/10.5944/educxx1.38279>
- [31] Díaz-Guijarro, H. (2025). Feminist Pedagogies. More Democracy: A Feminist Perspective in Education.
<https://docpublicos.ccoo.es/cendoc/071014PedagogiaFeminista.pdf>
- [32] Chávez, C. I. (2023). Gender and Higher Education: A Look at the Peruvian University System from the Perspective of Student Trajectories. *SUNEDU*
- [33] Castañón, L. (2010). Simone de Beauvoir and the feminine condition. *Melibea Journal*, 4 (1), 67–80. https://bdigital.uncu.edu.ar/objetos_digitales/9505/articulo-3-castaon.pdf
- [34] Gutiérrez-Mozo, M.E., Parra-Martínez, J. & Gilsanz-Díaz, A. (2020). Gestión de infraestructuras con perspectiva de género. Caso: El Campus de la Universidad de Alicante. *Ciudad y Territorio, Estudios Territoriales*, 52 (203), 103-120.
<https://recyt.fecyt.es/index.php/CyTET/article/view/78365/48402>
- [35] García-Taibo, O., Ferriz-Valero, A., Boned-Gómez, S. & Baena-Morales, S. (2024). Effects of cooperative learning on gender equality education in university students. *Challenges*, 54, 581-590. [10.47197/retos.v54.103491](https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v54.103491)
- [36] Páez, L. D. & Vílchez Vivanco, M. (2022). Gender policies in Higher Education. A proposal for the University of Pinar del Río in Cuba. *Nomadías*, (31), 75–93.
<https://revistas.uchile.cl/index.php/NO/article/view/69432>
- [37] Cuenca-Soto, N., Santos-Pastor, M. L., Chiva-Bartoll, O. & Martínez-Muñoz, L. F. (2024). Desafiando paradigmas: integrando el Aprendizaje-Servicio Crítico Feminista en programas de Actividad Física y Deporte en Educación Superior. *Retos*, 52, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.47197/retos.v52.101474>
- [38] Trujillo-Cristoffanini, M., & Pastor-Gosalbez, I. (2023). Gender instances in Chilean higher education institutions: Characteristics of their implementation. *Gender Issues: Equality and Difference*, (18), 503–517.
<https://doi.org/10.18002/cg.i18.7519>
- [39] Ramos, G. A. (2022). Interculturality and feminisms at the Veracruzana Intercultural University to counteract discrimination and gender violence. *Praxis educativa*, 26 (2), 1–18. <https://dx.doi.org/10.19137/praxiseducativa-2022-2602>
- [40] Ríos, E. M. (2015). Feminist pedagogy for equity and good treatment. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, SOCIOTAM*, 25(2), 123-143.
<https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/654/65452536007.pdf>
- [41] Rivera, S. M. (2016). Interseccionalidad e inclusión en la educación superior: Consideraciones sobre la Universidad Nacional de Colombia. *Pedagogía y Saberes*, (44), 105–118. <https://doi.org/10.17227/01212494.44pys105.118>
- [42] Romero, Ch. C. (2005). Categorization: A crucial aspect of qualitative research. *Cesmag Research Journal*, 11(11), 113-118. <https://goo.su/xrH0>
- [43] Bergallo, P., Magnelli, M. & Cerra, M. E. (2022). Manual for mainstreaming the gender perspective. <https://goo.su/M85qsN>