

Fostering Sustainability through Gender Equality: Perspectives of Lecturers and Students in Vietnamese Higher Education

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Abstract

Globally, higher education institutions face challenges in ensuring gender equality, particularly in creating inclusive teaching environments and equitable policies. Vietnam, with its rapidly evolving education system, also encounters issues in achieving gender equality, raising questions about the perspectives of key stakeholders on this important issue. This study investigates the views of students and lecturers on gender equality in Vietnamese higher education, focusing on teaching practices, institutional policies, and personal experiences. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through a structured survey, and analyses were conducted using Percentage and Frequency, Mean Item Score (MIS), Standard Deviation (SD), and the Mann-Whitney U test. The results reveal that most respondents agreed that Vietnamese universities promote gender equality, although notable differences were observed based on respondent categories, gender, and age groups. Students highlighted inclusivity in teaching practices, while lecturers emphasized institutional measures. Female respondents perceived stronger efforts in equality promotion compared to males, particularly in academic opportunities. Respondents over 20 years of age expressed higher awareness and appreciation of gender equality initiatives than their younger counterparts. This study emphasizes the need to bridge gaps in perceptions by enhancing teaching practices, fostering awareness campaigns, and implementing robust policies to promote inclusivity. These findings are significant for policymakers, educators, and administrators seeking to strengthen gender equality initiatives in Vietnam's higher education sector, contributing to global efforts toward inclusive and sustainable education systems.

Keywords: Education; Gender Equality; Sustainable Development Goals

Introduction

Gender inequality remains a global issue, impacting many aspects of society, including education [1]. In higher education, gender inequality can be seen in limited access for women to certain academic fields, leadership roles, and career advancement opportunities [2]. These inequalities not only hinder personal growth but also slow down efforts to build more inclusive and sustainable societies [3]. Education, being a key driver of gender equality, allowing individuals to gain the skills and opportunities needed to address challenges like poverty, climate change, and global development [4], faces significant challenges in many regions [5]. In Vietnam, gender disparities in higher education are shaped by cultural norms, institutional practices, and limited support systems for both men and women [6]. Thus, a need to address these issues, looking at both lecturers' and students' perspectives to gain a fuller understanding of the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and sustainability in Vietnamese higher education is essential. Understanding gender equality in education requires looking at multiple perspectives, particularly those of lecturers and students who play central roles in shaping the learning environment [7]. Lecturers influence curriculum design, teaching practices, and institutional culture, while students experience the outcomes of these efforts firsthand [8]. In Vietnam, both groups face unique challenges and opportunities related to gender and sustainability [9]. While lecturers often encounter barriers in leadership and career advancement, students deal with biases in academic fields and limited access to gender-sensitive support systems [10]. From the lecturers' perspective, issues like unequal representation in leadership roles, lack of gender-sensitive training, and societal expectations are common [2]. Female lecturers face structural barriers, such as limited access to professional growth opportunities, while male lecturers may encounter

bias when teaching in certain disciplines [11]. On the other hand, students' experiences reveal challenges such as unequal representation in STEM fields, gender stereotypes in curriculum content, and inadequate support for women pursuing advanced studies [12]. These challenges are not unique to Vietnam; they reflect broader trends in higher education worldwide [13]. However, Vietnam's cultural and institutional contexts make the situation more complex, as traditional values and limited resources often hinder progress [14]. By exploring how lecturers' and students' experiences intersect, this study provides new perspectives into the combined impact of gender dynamics on higher education and sustainability in Vietnam. Furthermore, this study addresses this gap by combining the perspectives of lecturers and students to provide a comprehensive understanding of gender equality in Vietnamese higher education. It explores three key areas: curriculum and teaching practices, institutional policies and culture, and personal experiences and perspectives. Examining these factors from both angles enables a balanced approach to how gender dynamics manifest at both the classroom and institutional levels. The findings highlight how these perspectives converge and diverge, revealing both shared challenges and unique experiences. This approach contributes to the originality of

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the study by integrating voices from both educators and students, which has been largely overlooked in existing literature. The study's relevance lies in its potential to inform more inclusive policies and practices that address the needs of all stakeholders in higher education. Furthermore, it aligns with global efforts to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality while offering specific insights into Vietnam's higher education context. Ultimately, this research provides valuable contributions to the literature on gender equality by showcasing the interplay between teaching practices, institutional policies, and personal experiences from both perspectives. It not only identifies gaps in existing gender-sensitive initiatives but also offers actionable recommendations to create more equitable and sustainable academic environments.

Literature Review

Overview of Gender Equality

Gender equality is about ensuring that everyone, regardless of their gender, has equal access to opportunities, rights, and resources [15]. In higher education, achieving gender equality is crucial for building inclusive and sustainable learning environments [16]. However, progress remains uneven, with challenges persisting globally, including in Vietnam [10]. For lecturers, gender equality often means access to leadership roles, fair promotion practices, and professional growth opportunities [9]. For students, it focuses on equal participation in various academic fields, particularly STEM disciplines, where women are often underrepresented [17]. In Vietnam, cultural norms and traditional roles influence how gender equality is perceived and implemented [13]. Male and female lecturers may face different challenges, such as biased recruitment processes or societal expectations that limit career advancement for women [18]. Similarly, male and female students may experience varying levels of encouragement to pursue certain courses or engage in leadership activities [16]. Research has shown that gender inequality affects not just individual experiences but also institutional sustainability [12]. By addressing these inequalities, higher education institutions can promote a culture of fairness, foster innovation, and contribute to global development goals [19]; therefore, the perspectives of both lecturers and students are essential for understanding the progress and gaps in gender equality efforts.

Curriculum and Teaching Practice

Curriculum design and teaching practices play a key role in shaping gender equality in higher education. Lecturers influence what and how students learn, which can either reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes [20]. A gender-sensitive curriculum ensures that learning materials, teaching methods, and classroom interactions are inclusive and fair to all students [21]. For example, avoiding biased language or images in textbooks and encouraging equal participation in class discussions can make a big difference [1]. In Vietnam, male and female lecturers often bring different perspectives to their teaching (Huong et al., 2020). Female lecturers may be more aware of the barriers faced by women in education, while male lecturers might focus on addressing broader societal norms [22]. Students, on the other hand, experience teaching practices directly. Male students might feel more encouraged to participate in STEM courses, while female students may face challenges like a lack of role models or lower confidence in traditionally male-dominated fields [23]. By combining these perspectives, institutions can better understand how curriculum and teaching practices impact gender equality.

Institutional Policies and Culture

Institutional policies and culture are central to promoting gender equality and sustainability in higher education [14]. Policies that ensure equal access to opportunities, such as scholarships, leadership roles, and mentorship programs, are essential for creating a level playing field [14]. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends on how they are implemented and whether they align with the institution's culture [18]. In many Vietnamese universities, cultural norms continue to influence how policies are perceived and applied. For lecturers, institutional policies can either support or hinder professional development [24]. Female lecturers may benefit from policies that promote work-life balance, but they often face challenges like unequal access to leadership positions or limited opportunities for research funding [25]. Male lecturers, too, can encounter biases, especially when teaching fields traditionally dominated by women [6]. On the part of students, female students may feel less supported in pursuing careers in STEM fields, while male students might encounter stereotypes in non-traditional areas like education or social sciences [26]. By addressing these cultural and policy gaps, institutions can create an environment that supports all genders equally, fostering long-term sustainability and inclusivity [27].

Personal Experiences and Perspectives

The personal experiences of lecturers and students provide valuable insights into the realities of gender equality in higher education. Lecturers' experiences often reflect systemic challenges, such as unequal workloads, limited mentorship opportunities, and societal expectations. Female lecturers, for instance, might face additional pressure to balance professional responsibilities with traditional family roles [28]. Male lecturers, on the other hand, might feel restricted by stereotypes that discourage them from addressing gender issues in the classroom. Students' perspectives also highlight the barriers they face in pursuing their academic goals [29]. Female students often report feeling excluded or underrepresented in certain fields, while male students might struggle with expectations to conform to traditional roles [30]. In Vietnam, these personal experiences are shaped by cultural values, institutional practices, and societal norms [31]. Combining the perspectives of both lecturers and students helps to uncover how these factors intersect and influence gender equality [32]. This approach not only deepens understanding but also supports the development of targeted strategies to address gender-related challenges [33]. By focusing on personal experiences, this study contributes to creating more inclusive and sustainable educational environments.

Research Methodology

The study investigated gender equality in Vietnam, using curriculum and teaching experience, institutional policies and culture, and personal experience and perspective of students and staff in Vietnamese universities. A survey was adopted to understand a target population's characteristics and compare the results from different groups of respondents [34]. From the population of students and staff, a sample size of 399 was computed using Yemane's formula (refer to equation (1)) where N is the population, e is margin of error at 5%, and n is the sample size. A total of 500 copies of questionnaire were distributed to account for potential non-responses. In addition, a snowballing approach was deployed in the study, i.e., the respondents were asked to forward the link to the questionnaire to their colleagues and friends within the same faculties of the selected universities to obtain a larger number of responses. A total of 603 responses were received, of which 584 were found valid for data analysis, comprising

of 452 students and 132 lecturers. The high response rate is suitable for achieving the aim of this study.

$$n = N / ((1 + N(e^{-2}))$$
 (1)

The survey was designed to elicit data from the respondents, which comprised (i) the background information and (ii) the constructs of curriculum and teaching experience, institutional policies and culture, and personal experience and perspective elicited from extant literature. The background information comprises gender, age, year of study, and. The questions on the second part of the survey were asked using the 5-Likert scale in which one implied ‘strongly disagree’, to five which represented ‘strongly agree’ [35]. All the participants read and indicated their consent to ethical notes before filling out the survey and assured confidentiality of the data received and voluntary to withdraw at any point in the survey. The background information of the respondents was analysed using frequency and percentage. The constructs of curriculum and teaching experience, institutional policies and culture, personal experience and gender equality were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics using the mean score, standard deviation, and Mann-Whitney U test. The normality of the dataset was analysed using the Shapiro-Wilk test and the Mann-Whitney U test to determine significant differences for two groups of respondents [36].

Data Analysis

Background Information of the Respondents

Table 1 presents the background information of 452 students and 132 lecturers who participated in the study. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents were female (72.6%), while males accounted for 26.7%, and a very small percentage (0.7%) preferred not to disclose their gender. Regarding age, most respondents (57.7%) were between 20-24 years, followed by 18.3% who were under 20 years. Those aged 25-29 constituted 13.7%, while 10.3% were 30 or older. For lecturers,

teaching experience varied, with 38.6% having over 20 years of experience and 28% having 16-20 years. Others had 11-15 years (19.7%), 6-10 years (8.3%), and 0-5 years (5.3%). Regarding academic positions, 51.5% were lecturers, 34.1% were senior lecturers, 9.8% were associate professors, and 4.5% fell into the “others” category. Among students, the distribution by year of study revealed that most were in their third year (39.2%) or fourth year (29.9%). Second-year students comprised 22.3%, while first-year and postgraduate students accounted for 3.5% and 5.1%, respectively. This demographic diversity across gender, age, teaching experience, academic position, and year of study provides a broad and balanced perspective, essential for understanding gender equality within Vietnamese higher education.

Cross-tabulation of Age and Gender

Table 2 shows the relationship between the age and gender of the 584 respondents. Among males, most were aged 20-24 years (62 respondents), followed by 25-29 years (46 respondents), under 20 years (18 respondents), and 30 years or older (30 respondents). For females, the majority were also aged 20-24 years (272 respondents), with smaller groups under 20 years (88 respondents), 25-29 years (34 respondents), and 30 years or older (30 respondents). A very small number (4 respondents) preferred not to disclose their gender, with most in the 20-24 age group (3 respondents) and one under 20 years. Overall, the largest group across genders was aged 20-24 years, showing that most respondents were young adults.

Opinion on Gender Equality in the Vietnamese Higher Education Based on Categories of Respondents

Table 3 compares students’ and staff’s opinions on gender equality across curriculum and teaching practices, institutional policies, and personal experiences. For curriculum and teaching practices, students generally agreed that course content and discussions were gender-inclusive, with a mean score of 3.64, while staff rated this aspect

Table 1: Background information of the respondents.

Background Information	Category	Frequency		Total	Percentage
		Students (N=452)	Lecturers (N=132)		
Gender	Male	84	72	156	26.7
	Female	364	60	424	72.6
	Prefer not to disclose	4		4	0.7
Age	Less than 20 years	107		107	18.3
	20-24 years	326	11	337	57.7
	25-29 years	10	70	80	13.7
	30 years and above	9	51	60	10.3
Year of teaching experience	0-5 years	—	7	7	5.3
	6-10 years	—	11	11	8.3
	11-15 years	—	26	26	19.7
	16-20 years	—	37	37	28.0
	More than 20 years	—	51	51	38.6
Academic position	Lecturer	—	68	68	51.5
	Senior lecturer	—	45	45	34.1
	Associate professor	—	13	13	9.8
	Others	—	6	6	4.5
Year of Study	First-year	16	—	16	3.5
	Second year	101	—	101	22.3
	Third year	177	—	177	39.2
	Fourth-year	135	—	135	29.9
	Postgraduate	23	—	23	5.1

Table 2: Cross-tabulation of age and gender of the respondents.

		Age				Total
		Less than 20 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	30 years and above	
Gender	Male	18	62	46	30	156
	Female	88	272	34	30	424
	Prefer not to disclose	1	3	0	0	4
Total		107	337	80	60	584

Table 3: Opinions of respondents on gender equality based on respondent category.

	Code	S-W (Sig)	Overall		Students (N=452)		Staff (N=132)		M-W (Sig)
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Curriculum and Teaching Practices									
The content and assignments in my courses are gender inclusive.	C1	0.000**	3.62	1.01	3.64	0.99	3.53	1.07	0.360
Vietnamese education promotes gender equality effectively.	C2	0.000**	3.74	0.93	3.81	0.95	3.54	0.87	0.002**
My teachers address gender equality in their lessons.	C3	0.000**	3.58	1.05	3.69	0.99	3.23	1.15	0.000**
Gender equality is a topic of discussion in my classes.	C4	0.000**	3.41	1.05	3.47	1.07	3.19	0.93	0.004**
Both male and female students are equally encouraged to participate in classes.	C5	0.000**	4.11	0.94	4.15	0.93	3.95	0.97	0.020**
My teachers treat male and female students equally.	C6	0.000**	4.18	0.92	4.14	0.94	4.33	0.81	0.059
The university takes effective measures to address gender-based discrimination.	C7	0.000**	4.02	0.94	3.92	0.96	4.34	0.80	0.000**
Institutional Policies and Culture									
My University has clear policies on gender equality.	E1	0.000**	3.83	0.94	3.84	0.95	3.78	0.89	0.480
I am aware of gender equality initiatives at my university.	E2	0.000**	3.60	1.03	3.56	1.04	3.74	0.97	0.061
There are equal opportunities for male and female students in extracurricular activities.	E3	0.000**	4.20	0.89	4.17	0.91	4.28	0.85	0.195
My University supports female leadership in student organizations.	E4	0.000**	4.04	0.96	4.02	0.99	4.14	0.83	0.434
Gender bias is not an issue in my university.	E5	0.000**	3.96	0.96	3.95	0.96	3.99	0.97	0.518
Gender equality training should be mandatory for all students.	E6	0.000**	4.02	0.89	4.01	0.91	4.04	0.84	0.855
The university administration supports initiatives to promote gender equality.	E7	0.000**	3.91	0.92	3.95	0.93	3.77	0.87	0.014**
My University promotes gender equality in all its programs.	E8	0.000**	3.90	0.93	3.87	0.95	4.04	0.87	0.055
Gender equality is a priority in my university's strategic goals.	E9	0.000**	3.72	0.92	3.73	0.93	3.67	0.88	0.428
Personal Experience and Perspective									
I have witnessed gender discrimination among students or staff.	P1	0.000**	2.82	1.39	2.99	1.40	2.21	1.18	0.000**
I feel safe and respected regardless of my gender.	P2	0.000**	4.15	0.88	4.15	0.89	4.11	0.83	0.389
Male and female students have equal opportunities to excel in all subjects.	P3	0.000**	4.00	0.97	4.18	0.92	3.39	0.85	0.000**
My University actively works to promote gender equality.	P4	0.000**	4.00	0.94	3.94	0.95	4.17	0.87	0.008**
I feel supported by my university in addressing gender-related issues.	P5	0.000**	3.96	0.91	3.97	0.92	3.89	0.87	0.302

slightly lower, with a mean score of 3.53. Similarly, students felt that teachers addressed gender equality in lessons (mean = 3.69), but staff rated this significantly lower at 3.23. Students also perceived that both genders were equally encouraged to participate in class (mean = 4.15), compared to staff (mean = 3.95). In terms of institutional policies and culture, both groups agreed that universities have clear policies on gender equality, with an overall mean score of 3.83. Staff slightly rated university support for female leadership initiatives higher, with a mean score of 4.14, compared to students' mean of 4.02. However, students perceived stronger administrative support for equality initiatives (mean = 3.95) than staff (mean = 3.77). For personal experiences, students reported witnessing more gender discrimination, with a mean score of 2.99, compared to staff, who reported a lower mean of 2.21. Both groups felt safe and respected regardless of gender, with students scoring 4.15 and staff scoring 4.11. While students believed that male and female students had equal opportunities to excel (mean = 4.18), staff rated this aspect lower, with a mean of 3.39. This indicates that students perceived greater inclusivity in teaching practices and stronger institutional support for gender equality than staff, who emphasized female leadership and reduced discrimination more. Both

groups highlighted safety and respect for all genders. Hence, significant differences emerged in views on class participation, equality initiatives, and opportunities to excel.

Opinions of Respondents on Gender Equality Based on Gender

Table 4 presents a comparison of male and female respondents' opinions on gender equality in curriculum and teaching practices, institutional policies, and personal experiences. The analysis was conducted using the Mann-Whitney U test to identify statistically significant differences in their perceptions. For curriculum and teaching practices, both male and female respondents generally agreed that content and assignments were gender inclusive, with females slightly rating this higher (mean = 3.64) than males (mean = 3.54). Female respondents also perceived greater attention to gender equality in lessons (mean = 3.66), compared to males (mean = 3.37), a difference found to be statistically significant (Sig = 0.023). Both groups rated class participation encouragement highly, but females scored this higher (mean = 4.17) than males (mean = 3.93), though the difference was not statistically significant. Regarding institutional

Table 4: Opinions of respondents on gender equality based on gender.

	Code	Male (N=156)		Female (N=424)		M-W (Sig.)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Curriculum and Teaching Practices						
The content and assignments in my courses are gender inclusive.	C1	3.54	1.14	3.64	0.96	0.731
Vietnamese education promotes gender equality effectively.	C2	3.73	1.00	3.75	0.91	0.739
My teachers address gender equality in their lessons.	C3	3.37	1.21	3.66	0.97	0.023**
Gender equality is a topic of discussion in my classes.	C4	3.38	1.16	3.42	1.00	0.988
Both male and female students are equally encouraged to participate in classes.	C5	3.93	1.11	4.17	0.86	0.054
My teachers treat male and female students equally.	C6	4.08	1.08	4.22	0.85	0.431
The university takes effective measures to address gender-based discrimination.	C7	3.99	1.11	4.03	0.88	0.559
Institutional Policies and Culture						
My University has clear policies on gender equality.	E1	3.83	1.04	3.83	0.90	0.511
I am aware of gender equality initiatives at my university.	E2	3.67	1.09	3.57	1.00	0.140
There are equal opportunities for male and female students in extracurricular activities.	E3	4.16	1.01	4.20	0.85	0.799
My University supports female leadership in student organizations.	E4	3.99	1.07	4.06	0.92	0.879
Gender bias is not an issue in my university.	E5	3.96	1.07	3.96	0.92	0.461
Gender equality training should be mandatory for all students.	E6	3.94	1.01	4.04	0.85	0.535
The university administration supports initiatives to promote gender equality.	E7	3.87	1.02	3.92	0.89	0.875
My University promotes gender equality in all its programs.	E8	3.96	1.01	3.88	0.90	0.165
Gender equality is a priority in my university's strategic goals.	E9	3.67	1.03	3.73	0.88	0.908
Personal Experience and Perspective						
I have witnessed gender discrimination among students or staff.	P1	2.80	1.43	2.81	1.38	0.939
I feel safe and respected regardless of my gender.	P2	4.04	1.01	4.18	0.83	0.298
Male and female students have equal opportunities to excel in all subjects.	P3	3.78	1.03	4.08	0.93	0.000**
My University actively works to promote gender equality.	P4	3.97	1.07	4.01	0.89	0.733
I feel supported by my university in addressing gender-related issues.	P5	3.91	1.01	3.98	0.86	0.830

Note: SD = Standard deviation, M-W = Mann-Whitney U test

policies and culture, respondents shared similar perceptions about clear gender equality policies (mean = 3.83 for both genders) and the promotion of female leadership in student organizations (mean = 4.06 for females, 3.99 for males). Both groups rated extracurricular equality opportunities positively, with a slight edge for females (mean = 4.20 vs. 4.16 for males). For personal experiences, females reported higher perceptions of equal opportunities to excel in subjects (mean = 4.08) than males (mean = 3.78), a statistically significant difference (Sig. = 0.000). Both genders agreed they felt safe and respected regardless of gender, with females scoring higher (mean = 4.18 vs. 4.04 for males). Thus, this analysis revealed that female respondents perceived stronger efforts to promote gender equality in teaching practices and greater equality in academic opportunities, particularly in excelling across all subjects. However, perceptions of institutional policies and overall safety and respect were similar between both groups. Significant differences emerged in views on gender inclusion in lessons (Sig. = 0.023) and opportunities to excel in subjects (Sig. = 0.000).

Opinions of Respondents on Gender Equality Based on Age Group

Table 5 examines respondents' opinions on gender equality based on their age groups, using the Mann-Whitney U test to identify statistically significant differences. It compares perceptions between those under 20 years of age and those above 20 years, focusing on curriculum and teaching practices, institutional policies and culture, and personal experiences. For curriculum and teaching practices, respondents above 20 years of age generally rated gender equality more positively. They perceived course content and assignments as more gender inclusive (mean = 3.66) compared to those under 20 years (mean = 3.41), with the difference being statistically significant (Sig. = 0.019). Similarly, another significant result of 0.011 was

indicated in the respondents' view of the university's effectiveness in addressing gender-based discrimination, with respondents above 20 years rated higher (mean = 4.07) than their younger counterparts (mean = 3.79). Both age groups agreed that male and female students were equally encouraged to participate in classes (means = 4.11 and 4.08), with no significant difference. Regarding institutional policies and culture, respondents above 20 years consistently perceived more proactive gender equality measures. They scored significantly higher for awareness of gender equality initiatives (mean = 3.67 vs. 3.33) and for university support of female leadership in student organizations (mean = 4.08 vs. 3.86). They also rated mandatory gender equality training (mean = 4.06) and university promotion of gender equality across programs (mean = 3.98) significantly higher than those under 20 years. In terms of personal experiences, respondents above 20 years rated their university's active efforts to promote gender equality higher (mean = 4.05) compared to younger respondents (mean = 3.75), with the difference being significant. They also felt more supported by their university in addressing gender-related issues (mean = 3.99) than those under 20 years (mean = 3.79). However, both age groups shared similar views on feeling safe and respected regardless of gender (means = 4.16 and 4.10, respectively). These results revealed that older respondents have broader exposure or a more critical perspective on institutional efforts to address gender equality.

Discussion

Opinions of Respondents on Gender Equality Based on Respondent Category

The study revealed differing perspectives between students and lecturers regarding gender equality in Vietnamese higher education. Students perceived greater inclusivity in teaching practices, reporting

Table 5: Opinions of respondents on gender equality based on age group.

	Code	Less than 20 years of age		Above 20 years of age		M-W (Sig)
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Curriculum and Teaching Practices						
The content and assignments in my courses are gender inclusive.	C1	3.41	1.06	3.66	0.99	0.019**
Vietnamese education promotes gender equality effectively.	C2	3.60	1.03	3.78	0.91	0.098
My teachers address gender equality in their lessons.	C3	3.51	1.13	3.60	1.03	0.588
Gender equality is a topic of discussion in my classes.	C4	3.23	1.12	3.45	1.03	0.093
Both male and female students are equally encouraged to participate in classes.	C5	4.08	0.98	4.11	0.93	0.908
My teachers treat male and female students equally.	C6	4.16	0.98	4.19	0.90	0.966
The university takes effective measures to address gender-based discrimination.	C7	3.79	1.07	4.07	0.90	0.011**
Institutional Policies and Culture						
My University has clear policies on gender equality.	E1	3.72	0.98	3.85	0.93	0.192
I am aware of gender equality initiatives at my university.	E2	3.33	1.09	3.67	1.00	0.004**
There are equal opportunities for male and female students in extracurricular activities.	E3	4.07	1.03	4.22	0.86	0.288
My University supports female leadership in student organizations.	E4	3.86	0.99	4.08	0.95	0.017**
Gender bias is not an issue in my university.	E5	3.81	1.00	3.99	0.95	0.070
Gender equality training should be mandatory for all students.	E6	3.80	0.95	4.06	0.87	0.005**
The university administration supports initiatives to promote gender equality.	E7	3.71	1.00	3.95	0.90	0.016**
My University promotes gender equality in all its programs.	E8	3.58	0.95	3.98	0.91	0.000**
Gender equality is a priority in my university's strategic goals.	E9	3.51	0.96	3.76	0.91	0.011**
Personal Experience and Perspective						
I have witnessed gender discrimination among students or staff.	P1	2.60	1.40	2.86	1.39	0.071
I feel safe and respected regardless of my gender.	P2	4.10	0.97	4.16	0.86	0.845
Male and female students have equal opportunities to excel in all subjects.	P3	4.12	0.95	3.98	0.97	0.117
My University actively works to promote gender equality.	P4	3.75	1.00	4.05	0.91	0.002**
I feel supported by my university in addressing gender-related issues.	P5	3.79	0.98	3.99	0.89	0.049**

that course content and assignments addressed gender equality. However, lecturers highlighted the role of administrative support in reducing gender-based discrimination, focusing on institutional policies and strategic goals. Significant differences also emerged in perceptions of classroom discussions on gender equality and opportunities for participation, where students felt more optimistic about inclusivity. Female respondents rated gender equality initiatives higher than males, indicating a gendered perception gap. These findings align with a study in Vietnam by [14], which found that while students generally viewed their universities as gender-inclusive spaces, faculty often stressed the challenges of translating policy into action. Compared to Southeast Asia, some countries like Thailand report similar progress, emphasizing gender-inclusive policies but encountering gaps in implementation [37]. In contrast, African regions like Kenya face challenges in institutionalizing gender equality due to cultural and financial constraints, while countries like Germany and Finland demonstrate higher integration of gender equality in educational practices, driven by robust policies, monitoring mechanisms and implementation strategies [38].

Opinions of Respondents on Gender Equality Based on Gender

The analysis showed that female respondents perceived stronger efforts in promoting gender equality within teaching practices and equal academic opportunities, such as excelling across all subjects. Females consistently rated inclusivity in lesson content and fairness in classroom participation more positively. However, perceptions of institutional policies on safety and gender-based discrimination were relatively similar across genders. A significant difference was found in views about gender inclusion in academic lessons, reflecting a stronger belief among females that such inclusivity exists. These findings

correspond with a study by Vu and Yemanda (2024) in Vietnam, which emphasized females' higher satisfaction with universities' initiatives but highlighted that males often undervalued gender-related barriers. Comparing this with South Asia, particularly Bangladesh, similar efforts have been noted to integrate gender equality in education; however, societal norms often limit progress [39]. In the Middle East, countries like Jordan still face barriers to gender equality, as cultural norms heavily influence academic and policy-level advancements [40]. In contrast, countries like Australia and New Zealand have achieved significant strides by enforcing mandatory gender equality training, and addressing biases more comprehensively [41].

Opinions of Respondents on Gender Equality Based on Age Group

The study revealed that respondents above 20 years of age viewed institutional efforts to promote gender equality more favorably than their younger counterparts. Older respondents rated initiatives like leadership support, awareness programs, and mandatory gender equality training significantly higher, reflecting their broader exposure and critical perspective. In contrast, those under 20 showed lower awareness of institutional measures, indicating a potential disconnect between policy and communication efforts for younger students. A comparable study in Vietnam by Do et al. (2020) highlighted that younger students often lack awareness of institutional initiatives due to limited exposure to administrative processes. Similar patterns are seen in South Korea, where younger respondents report gaps in awareness despite robust university-level policies [42]. In Latin America, countries like Mexico face challenges in bridging generational gaps in perceptions, often due to inconsistent communication strategies [43]. Conversely, South African higher education exemplifies effective engagement across age groups through student-led initiatives and

inclusive programs that emphasize intergenerational dialogue on gender equality [44-48].

Recommendations and Managerial Implications

This study highlights areas where Vietnamese universities can improve gender equality in higher education. First, universities should strengthen their teaching practices to ensure that all courses are gender inclusive. Training programs for lecturers could help them incorporate gender equality into lessons and address gender-sensitive topics effectively. Additionally, creating open platforms for discussions about gender equality in classrooms can encourage student participation and awareness. Universities should also improve awareness campaigns about existing gender equality policies and initiatives. This could include workshops, seminars, or online campaigns targeting students and staff to increase understanding and participation in these programs. Leadership roles in student organizations should actively promote female participation to encourage gender balance. Moreover, universities should establish a clear feedback system where students and staff can report gender-based discrimination without fear. Managers and administrators should enforce policies that address any form of inequality while regularly monitoring and evaluating progress. These measures can help universities create a more inclusive and supportive environment, benefiting not only students and staff but also the broader academic community. Ultimately, fostering gender equality will improve university culture, enhance learning experiences, and contribute to global efforts toward sustainable education practices.

Theoretical implications

The findings of this study contribute to understanding gender equality in higher education from both theoretical and contextual perspectives. By examining perceptions based on respondent categories (students and instructors), gender, and age groups, this research provides evidence of how personal experiences and institutional practices shape views on gender inclusivity. These insights help expand theories on gender equality in education, particularly in emerging economies like Vietnam. This study also adds value to gender equality literature by incorporating a sustainability perspective. It highlights the importance of aligning teaching practices and policies with inclusivity goals, suggesting that theories of equity in education must consider both institutional frameworks and individual experiences. Further, the study's focus on Vietnam offers localized evidence that may support or challenge broader theories of gender equality in global higher education. By using quantitative analysis tools like the Mann-Whitney U test, the research strengthens methodological approaches for analyzing gender-related issues in educational settings. Future research could build on these findings by exploring the longitudinal impacts of implemented policies or comparing Vietnam's progress with other countries. This study thus lays the foundation for new theoretical frameworks and practical strategies that emphasize the intersection of gender, education, and sustainability.

Conclusion and future studies

Gender inequality remains a challenge in Vietnam's higher education system despite progress in recent years. This study explored how students and lecturers view gender equality in Vietnamese universities, focusing on teaching practices, institutional policies, and personal experiences to understand gaps and opportunities for improvement. Using surveys and statistical tools like the Frequency, Percentage, Mean Item Score, Standard Deviation, and Mann-Whitney U test, the study analyzed responses based on respondent categories,

gender, and age groups. The results showed that while most respondents agreed that universities promote gender equality, differences in perception exist. Students found teaching practices more inclusive, while staff highlighted administrative efforts. Female respondents rated equality efforts higher than males, especially in academic opportunities, but both groups reported similar views on safety and respect. Older respondents perceived stronger institutional support for gender equality compared to younger ones. This study is significant because it shows where Vietnamese universities are doing well and where they need to improve. It calls for more inclusive teaching practices, stronger policies, and better awareness of gender equality initiatives. These findings can help policymakers and educators develop strategies to create a fairer and more sustainable education system in Vietnam. Future studies should explore the role of cultural factors in shaping perceptions of gender equality in education. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess how institutional efforts impact perceptions over time to guide long-term improvements, which is also encouraged.

Ethics

The ethics for the below project was approved on 21st May 2024 by the Ethics Panel at the University College of Estate Management - approval number 2419.

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