



Research Article

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Gender Equality in Municipal Management Positions in Amazonas, Peru

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Abstract

Gender equity is the equality of opportunities and rights between women and men, but inequality is one of the most latent problems today. Consequently, the study explores gender equity in managerial positions in the municipalities of Amazonas region, Peru. A descriptive study was conducted with a non-experimental design, using questionnaires, the research collected information on gender gaps in management positions in municipalities. The results revealed a gender inequality gap of 20%. The results also revealed that 60.4% of management positions are held by men and 39.6% by women, and all municipal managers are men. This proves the lack of gender equality policies and the existence of social and cultural biases that limit the development of women, so it is necessary to improve policies to generate equal opportunities for women in the exercise of professional development.

Keywords: Gender equality, management positions, labor gaps, labor policies, personal training

1. Introduction

Gender equality is opportunity equality between men and women (Unesco, 2020; López-Padilla et al., 2021), considered the situation in which both genders, regardless of age or size, enjoy the same rights and resources (Pérez et al., 2023; Villavicencio, 2019), The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) encompass gender equality as a crucial component, they serve as means to promote a life free from discrimination for both men and women, emphasizing the importance of freedom for all (Consolo & Bauger, 2023; Galbiati et al., 2022; Narváez & Cabrera, 2020; Rodríguez, 2023).

For years, society has struggled to combat inequality in various fields; gender inequality persists even more at workplace (Rodríguez et al., 2022), women continue to be ravished or stereotyped simply because they belong to female gender (Bauger, 2020; 2023; Regalado et al., 2022), in labor and economic sector, female population has been lagging behind for a long time compared to men (Colomina, 2020; Delgado et al., 2023).

It is also observed that, globally, in 146 countries, the reduced gender gaps are, in health and survival 95.8%, education 94.4%, economic and opportunities in 60% and political in 22% (World Economic Forum, 2022). The remaining countries with parity governments are Nicaragua, Liechtenstein, Chile, Belgium, Mozambique, Andorra, Colombia, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway (Forbes Staff, 2023). In the world ranking, Iceland is the country that ranks first in providing the highest gender equality with 0.908, which is closer to 1, meaning full equality (Statista, 2023). Gender inequality exists for about 3 billion women, including girls, living in countries with low and very low gender equality presence (Equal Measures 2030, 2023). There is a huge labor and economic gap by gender, with 80% male participation compared to only 53% for women (World Bank, 2022).

Currently, by the year 2023, there are 34 women holding the position of Head of State or Government (United Nations Women, 2023). In Europe, countries such as Spain and Portugal during the period 2006-2022, there has been no improvement in economic gender equality in the 15 years between 2006 and 2022 (Rivera-Mata, 2023); the theory of patriarchy has not been useful, companies where there is less presence of women, there is a greater amount of selfishness, affirming the existence of patriarchy (Suarez et al., 2019). The policy of conciliation-work was implemented in Spain, and this has limited effect on the problems faced by women to access high-level positions (Herrarte & Gómez-Salcedo, 2022). It is essential the incorporation of women in studies traditionally attended by men, allowing to supply the labor market equitably between both genders (Moreno, 2021), gender influences professional training, determines the orientation towards the decision to choose a professional career (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2023).

In Latin America, the participation of women in management positions is 8.6% in Argentina, 12.1% in Uruguay, 17% in Paraguay, 19.7% in Colombia and 24.2% in Bolivia (Solari, 2021a). In Argentina this percentage varies according to the size of the companies and the level of experience of women for management positions, 26.18% of women have held management positions and the highest participation in medium-sized companies with 27.35% unlike large companies (Solari, 2021b). There is no presence of women in higher hierarchical positions, which means that there is, in fact, a large percentage of women occupying important positions, but not high hierarchy (Marconi et al., 2020). In 2019, 117 million women are part of the labor force in the region, from being 20% of the population to 65% of the working female population (Bustelo & Marchionni, 2019).

Men occupy a greater number of positions than women, due to the existence of discrimination (Bucaram-Leverone et al., 2023), gender bias and, above all, cultural barriers in Brazil (Da Costa et al., 2022). In Ecuador, 72.53% of the organizations are made up of women, and 57.99% of the top positions, such as the presidency, are held by men; this shows that it is mostly men who occupy positions of presidency and administration (Sigüenza et al., 2019). In Chile, 8.8% of women occupy some managerial position, during the period no woman was president of companies (Améstica et al., 2020), there are still scenarios of gender inequality in terms of the occupation of positions of high power between men and women (Caro et al., 2021), to occupy positions in the public sector, only 29% of women reached a managerial position, there is a large gap in terms of appointments of

competitions in the public sector (Gaete & Álvarez, 2020).

In Peru, gender inequality has been reduced from 0.43 to 0.39 points, ranking 87th out of 162 countries, with the most relevant gaps being in health, education, politics and economy (National Center for Strategic Planning, 2023). 13% of women hold managerial positions, and the goal is for women to reach a 30% participation level in both public and private entities (El Comercio, 2022). In Peru, in Peruvian companies, only 3 out of 10 board positions are held by women; 21.3% of companies have a woman as CEO leader, which is 1.6% lower than expected in Latin America (RPP, 2021). In the case of women, women do not reach high positions, due to the stereotypes of our society, prejudices that are harmful to the female gender in our society today (Regalado et al., 2022).

In the labor field of the public sector in Peru, only 23% of the organizations have women as managers, 77% of these positions are occupied by the male gender (Verástegui & Rojas, 2020), the preparation and access by meritocracy, 60% of women manage to occupy a managerial position as a matter of their own achievements and merits (Sánchez et al., 2021), in one of the literatures of the Enterprise Survey of the World Bank showed that 18% of the companies have the presence of a woman in a managerial position and the figure in Peru rises to 20% (The World Bank, 2020).

The salary gap arises from the undervalued work performed by women and the lower job opportunities in the market (Cerquera-Losada et al., 2020); both genders have the same opportunities and the positions they occupy should be previously evaluated based on their abilities (Bendezú et al., 2023), gender equity is an ongoing struggle for women, even so there are more men than women with positions of greater responsibility in journals and equal production of scientific articles (Alejo & Lopes, 2023; Aquino et al., 2022).

The importance lies in the benefit that the female gender can bring to the development of the country, more than 13 thousand companies in 70 different countries, it went from 5% to 20% benefit when women reached management positions (International Labor Organization, 2019). When there is greater participation of women in the labor market, the GDP of a country increases (El País, 2020; Ferre, 2020).

Therefore, the research aims to explore gender inequality in managerial positions in the municipalities of Amazon region, Peru. In order to identify compliance with policies on gender inclusion and equality in state institutions.

2. Gender Equality: Theoretical Considerations

In today's society, gender inequality is one of the most latent problems, families prepare both genders from childhood to assume roles according to their culture and beliefs (Feenstra et al., 2023; Regalado et al., 2022), there must be equal opportunities and rights between women and men, which provides and guarantees the possibility of achieving their goals (Jacob & Chandrasekhar, 2021; Zuleta, 2019), both genders should equally enjoy all rights, resources, opportunities and protections (Esparza, 2019). This implies that women can have the same level of opportunities and rights regardless their gender (Lobato, 2019; Peng & She, 2020). It is a problem that affects mostly women, and is leading our society not to develop economically and socially (Olaskoaga & Ruiz, 2020). It is inclined to prejudice against the female gender, which causes them to be victims of discrimination in various fields, such as labor (Corrales & Retamoza, 2022; García-Sánchez et al., 2023; Sánchez et al., 2022).

That is why, the gender gap is the result of ideologies and cultures, and society does not allow women to reach their potential, neither to have the same opportunities as individuals (Lee, 2022; Vázquez et al., 2016). These opportunities in relation to entry, permanence, continuity and recognition within an organization (Linthon-Delgado & Méndez-Heras, 2021), these differences are due to the low valuation and recognition of society (Arrobo & Arrobo, 2022), within them are wage gender gap, access to decision making and gender bias (Adongo et al., 2023; Cuellar & Moreno, 2022; Moreno et al., 2022).

The gender gap is disadvantages between men and women in accessing areas such as employment, education, health care, and participation in politics (Jackman, 2022). The gap is usually

very insignificant in areas where there is a greater female presence (Molina & Usui, 2023; Taylor et al., 2019), cultural background, parental discrimination between sons and daughters is part of the gap (Chenxu et al., 2022; Inam et al., 2020).

But it also has value and importance in the labor gap, it exists when women of working age do not have access to equal employment and economic opportunities, it is a severely unequal constraint (Espinell, 2022; Hua-Tang et al., 2023). Both men and women should and can count on equal access to employment, as well as the same wage level, especially to reach higher-level positions (Ilieva & Wrohlich, 2022; Maubrigades, 2020). However, the level of discrimination of women persists, even more so in backward societies (Paz, 2019). In this sense, it is necessary for organizations to ensure gender equality as much as possible (Bloch et al., 2021; Güezmes et al., 2022).

Labor policies play a very important role in gender equality, around the world it is desired that the differences between men and women are reduced; the State together with society do hard work to achieve this goal (Amore & Garofalo, 2021; Furlin & Graupe, 2023; Medina-Gamero & Regalado-Chamorro, 2021). Policies must be properly designed, executed and above all must give the expected results and for this, first the reality of the population as a whole must be known (di Paola et al., 2022; Espinosa & Bustelo, 2019). In Peru, the National Policy on Gender Equality was approved by Supreme Decree with N° 008-2019-MIMP, with the intention of promoting the participation of both men and women in the development of society, providing equal access to opportunities and respect for their rights (El Peruano, 2019).

Faced with this, professional training in both genders have vital importance. There is a gender stereotype in certain professions, 9 out of 10 are men are trained in "Masculine" careers noting the low presence of women (Sánchez et al., 2023), it is necessary to know that women are prepared to assume the management of an entity, but present difficulties to ascend to management positions causing the loss of human capital in organizations (Jain et al., 2022; Rodrigues et al., 2020), the knowledge and skills obtained by women in their professional training influences their insertion in the labor field decreasing gender inequality (Felix & Inzunza, 2019).

As described, Peru is one of the countries that has an integrated system of free education, with access to both women and men, without any discrimination (Arroyo-Corahua & Ruiz-Ruiz, 2023; Ugarte, 2019), both men and women need to be in constant training to acquire new competencies, more skills and better knowledge (Olgarenko et al., 2019; Vieyra & Ortega, 2021).

3. Methodology

The research has a quantitative approach and a descriptive scope with a non-experimental design. The investigation was carried out with the management officials of the Provincial Municipalities that are part of the Amazonas Region of Peru.

The study population was made up of 115 managers (Municipal Managers and Sub Unit Managers) from the 07 Provincial Municipalities of the Amazonas Region, which were the following: Provincial Municipality of Chachapoyas; Provincial Municipality of Utcubamba; Provincial Municipality of Bagua; Provincial Municipality of Condorcanqui; Provincial Municipality of Rodríguez de Mendoza; Provincial Municipality of Bongará and Provincial Municipality of Luya. To obtain data from the research population, a technique known as convenience sampling was used, that is, only managers and sub-managers of each municipality were considered as part of the sample, making a total of 48 officials of both sexes.

The questionnaire was designed in online format and distributed by email. It consisted of 18 items distributed in 03 dimensions of 06 items each. For the dimensions "Labor Gaps", "Labor Policies" and "Professional Training" they were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1-Not at all, 2- A little, 3- Medium, 4- A lot, 5- Quite a bit).

The results of this study were evaluated using the SPSS statistical software packages. The gender gap analysis of the study was performed with SPSS using descriptive statistics grouped into levels.

There were limitations in the application of the survey, due to having very distant

municipalities, opting for a virtual questionnaire to survey all the municipalities in the region.

4. Results and Discussion

This section shows the results on gender equality in municipal management positions in the 48 public servants of the municipalities of the provinces of the Amazon region, on its three dimensions, labor gaps, labor policies and professional training, expressed below.

Table 1: Gender equality in management positions

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	1	2.1%
Medium	40	83.3%
Under	7	14.6%
Total	48	100.0%

Taking as a reference 48 public servants in managerial positions in the different provincial municipalities of the Amazonas region - Peru, 83.3% of those surveyed perceive a medium level of gender inequality in the occupation of managerial positions, 14.6% perceive a low level and only 2.1% consider that there is a high level, according to the number of respondents, there are 19 women and 29 men occupying municipal positions, which means that there is a gender gap of 20%.

The gender disparity in municipal positions in the region can be attributed to various interrelated factors, such as cultural norms that limit women's access to leadership roles, disparities in education and training, gender stereotypes that influence perceptions and selection process. The lack of professional networks for women, discrimination and institutional barriers in the selection and promotion processes, disproportionate family responsibilities, the absence of specific gender equality policies in municipalities, and the lack of role models for young women. Addressing this gap requires a comprehensive approach that includes policies to promote gender equality, equitable access to education and training opportunities, as well as measures to challenge gender stereotypes and create inclusive work environments that support the advancement of women in the workplace.

In the 7 provincial municipalities of the Amazonas region, only 39.6% of women occupy a managerial position, but none have occupied a position as municipal manager; coinciding with the situation in Buenos Aires, (Marconi et al., 2020) affirms that there is a large number of women occupying important positions, but not high hierarchy positions, (Aquino et al., 2022) state that there are more men than women occupying positions of greater responsibility; when it comes to high hierarchy, gender inequality increases, as stated by (Caro et al., 2021), there is gender inequality in terms of occupying positions of high power between men and women. This shows that there are gender gaps in managerial positions, even more so in high-ranking positions. This also shows that policies on gender equality in public entities are not being complied with; in view of this, the characteristics of the positions must be restructured in order to give women opportunities to occupy managerial positions within state entities. In particular, they confirm the continuing importance of the gender gap in labor participation, documented by (Clark et al., 2021; Cuberes et al., 2023; Cuberes & Teignier, 2016; Fang & Norman, 2006) who show a problem that needs to be addressed with actions that allow important implications for policy and future research.

Table 2: Labor gaps in management positions

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	1	2.1%
Medium	26	54.2%
Under	21	43.8%
Total	48	100.0%

In Amazonas region, 54.2% of the 7 municipalities surveyed consider that there is a medium level of labor gaps, 43.8% a low level and 2.1% perceive that there is a high level; 94% consider that the number of women in managerial positions is increasing, but there are still limitations and barriers that hinder the development of the female gender in the workplace. As stated by (Da Costa et al., 2022), there are gender biases and especially limiting cultural barriers. This is a problem when applying gender equality policies, since it shows limitations on women's professional practice.

In support of this, (Bucaram-Leverone et al., 2023), 62% perceive that there is a salary disparity between men and women for the same management position, salaries vary in favor of men and women's work is considered less valued because they are women, due to the fact that there is a lot of discrimination.

In addition, 80% state that there are obstacles to reach managerial positions, culture and society displace women to occupy these positions, corroborate this statement (Cerquera-Losada et al., 2020), who evidenced that the presence of obstacles is due to the undervaluation of the work done by women; on the other hand, 78% indicate that there is discrimination for a woman to occupy a managerial position, based on the thought that this position should be occupied by a man. Similarly, (Regalado et al., 2022) mention that this problem is explained by the presence of stereotypes in hierarchical positions, this being a cultural issue in the institutions.

Table 3: Labor policies in management positions

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	2	4.2%
Medium	37	77.1%
Under	9	18.8%
Total	48	100.0%

In Amazonas region, the perception of public servants in the different municipalities of the region with respect to labor policies for gender equality in management positions is high in 4.2%, medium in 77.1% and low in 18.8%, which means that the national reality is growth above the medium level, to mitigate such statistics labor policies must be properly structured and implemented, with the participation of the institutions and population involved, as stated by (Afacan et al., 2021), norms that promote gender equality should be adopted in collaboration with the institutions with the creation of policies to promote the inclusion of women in the labor market.

In Peru, gender policy does not have the expected effect at the rate that the population expects, there is a great gender inequality in the Amazon region, the gender equality policy implemented in different countries and in Peru does not have the expected effect as mentioned (Herrarte & Gomez-Salcedo, 2022). The policy of reconciliation of work and family life, was implemented in Spain, this has a limited effect on the problems faced by women to access high level positions. This is a problem that not only affects local institutions, but also nationally and internationally.

Table 4: Professional training for management positions

Level	Frequency	Percentage
High	14	29.2%
Medium	31	64.6%
Under	3	6.3%
Total	48	100.0%

In favoring men over women to access management positions, the existence of women with a professional profile, the influence of this to access management positions, and the consideration of the abilities of both genders equally, the perception is high in 29.2%, medium in 64.6% and low in 6.3%, which means that the perception is above the expected average, referring to gender equality.

A country should have applications from professionals of both genders in equal numbers for a job position, as well as studying a career in equal numbers leaving aside and overcoming gender stereotypes, as mentioned by (Moreno, 2021), in Spain it is essential to incorporate women in studies that traditionally men attend, allowing to supply the labor market equally between both genders, in Peru as in Amazon region, gender influences professional training, gender determines the orientation towards the decision to choose a professional career (Sánchez-Martín et al., 2023). Therefore, professional careers are stereotyped, which is reflected in the professionals and in the number of applicants to a job position. This affects the labor field where women have to face difficulties to enter the labor market, which affects the development of policies to close gender inequality gaps in Peru. According to (Cunningham, 2008; Gueltzow et al., 2023; Hargrove et al., 2020; Leupp, 2017; Oksuzyan et al., 2010) the U.S. gender gap can be explained by unequal labor market opportunities. This suggests that policies that attempt to equalize labor market opportunities have the potential to reduce the gender gap. Decreasing labor market inequalities, especially in employment opportunities, reduces the gender gap most in the groups with the largest gender depression gap, i.e., Hispanics and groups with low educational attainment.

5. Conclusions

Women live in a constant struggle to have the same level of opportunities as men, gender inequality exists due to discrimination, stereotypes and above all cultural ideologies that prevent women from reaching their goals and occupying high positions; society as a whole must change its perspectives and focus on creating an environment of equity and gender equality between men and women.

The implementation of policies and labor standards on gender equality is intended to ensure that men and women have the same rights and opportunities in various aspects of their lives, particularly on labor field. These policies should be constantly evaluated within both public and private institutions and entities to ensure their correct application and, most importantly, to achieve the objective of gender equality. If this is not the case, failures should be identified, and strategies should be implemented to help meet the goals.

Labor policies for gender equality in the country are perceived to be growing steadily, but society believes that this growth is insufficient. Labor policies serve as a pillar for fostering growth and reducing the gender gap. Therefore, the work and commitment of the State are essential for their implementation and improvement.

In the training and professional profile, it is concluded that there are qualified personnel to assume managerial positions, with many cultural and social limitations. This is the starting point to improve the hiring policies of public servants in municipalities and other State entities, on the part of society, it is essential to eliminate gender stereotypes in professional careers, both genders can develop in any profession they wish.

6. Implications

With its academic contributions, this research will broaden knowledge to contribute to improve policies on reducing gender inequality. This research studies inequalities in positions within provincial municipalities as a basis that can be strengthened to analyze inequality in state entities in all sectors. The analysis of inequalities in managerial positions reinforces the importance of the study, finding gaps that should be strengthened through the implementation of policies.

The study is of enormous importance for the development of policies to close gaps in gender inequality. The report provides regulators with important recommendations for improvement in policy implementation. The report recommends that regulators develop strategies to improve country applications so that the government can ensure equal opportunity. The research helps regulators to develop procedures for gender inclusion, which would be achieved through conditions for each managerial position.

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