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## **FEMALE EMPOWERMENT IN ACADEMIA: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF UKRAINIAN AND EU UNIVERSITIES**

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## **РОЗШИРЕННЯ ПРАВ І МОЖЛИВОСТЕЙ ЖІНОК В АКАДЕМІЧНОМУ СЕРЕДОВИЩІ: ПОРІВНЯЛЬНИЙ АНАЛІЗ УНІВЕРСИТЕТІВ УКРАЇНИ ТА ЄС**

*The article investigates the state of female empowerment in academic leadership by conducting a comparative analysis of university rectorship across 25 EU member states and Ukraine. The study highlights systemic disparities and supports evidence-based policy improvement by identifying the extent of gender representation gaps and contextualizing Ukraine's position within the European academic landscape.*

*The research is based on a cross-national comparative method using quantitative secondary data from official EU sources and national statistical databases. Three indicators were analyzed: percentage of female rectors, female-to-male ratio, and performance relative to the EU average. Countries were then clustered into three groups (Leaders, Adopters, and Laggards) based on their alignment with the EU average.*

*The study reveals wide variation in female leadership across the EU, with countries like Latvia, Ireland, and the Netherlands outperforming the average, while others, including Ukraine, demonstrate minimal progress. The classification framework provides a valuable tool for identifying systemic strengths and weaknesses. The findings suggest that national policy environments, recruitment transparency, and institutional accountability are key drivers behind leadership parity.*

*The main limitation of this research is its exclusive focus on rectorship due to the unavailability of comparable statistical data for other leadership roles such as deans and provosts. Additionally, the use of static data from 2022 limits the analysis to a single point in time, preventing longitudinal assessment. The qualitative dimensions of empowerment, such as organizational culture or informal barriers, were also not captured. Future research should expand the scope of leadership positions, incorporate time-series data, and adopt mixed-method approaches.*

*The results offer actionable insights for policymakers, university administrators, and international education bodies to benchmark progress, design interventions, and align national frameworks with EU equality standards.*

*This study provides a novel, data-driven classification of academic leadership gender parity across EU states and Ukraine, introducing a comparative framework not previously applied in this regional context.*

*Метою статті є представлення концепції, спрямованої на забезпечення фінансової безпеки держави в сучасному інформаційному суспільстві. Це дослідження робить внесок у теорію, представляючи цілісний інтегративний підхід до фінансової безпеки держави в цифрову епоху. На відміну від попередніх досліджень, які часто зосереджуються на ізольованих аспектах фінансової безпеки, ця стаття пропонує комплексну концепцію, що охоплює регуляторні, технологічні та стратегічні заходи. Новизна цього підходу полягає в його міждисциплінарній перспективі та застосовності до різних фінансових контекстів, що робить його цінним ресурсом для науковців і практиків у сфері фінансової безпеки.*

*Результати дослідження підкреслюють невід'ємні елементи, необхідні для забезпечення фінансової безпеки держави в інформаційному суспільстві. Ці елементи охоплюють надійну нормативно-правову базу, ефективні органи фінансового нагляду, всеосяжну інфраструктуру кібербезпеки та продумані стратегії управління ризиками. Крім того, у дослідженні підкреслюється важливість функціонування підрозділів фінансової розвідки, розробки нормативно-правових актів, що стосуються фінансових технологій (FinTech), реалізації ініціатив з інформування громадськості, міжнародного співробітництва, систем економічного моніторингу та протоколів реагування на надзвичайні ситуації. Разом ці компоненти створюють стійку фінансову систему, здатну протистояти сучасним викликам.*

*Практичні висновки цього дослідження мають важливе значення для політиків, регуляторних органів і фінансових установ. Прийнявши запропоновану концепцію, ці зацікавлені сторони можуть підвищити свою здатність захищати фінансові системи від цифрових загроз, забезпечувати*

дотримання регуляторних норм і підтримувати довіру споживачів. Крім того, результати дослідження дають цінну інформацію для реалізації кампаній з підвищення обізнаності громадськості та сприяння міжнародному співробітництву для вирішення глобальних проблем фінансової безпеки.

У статті досліджено стан розширення прав і можливостей жінок в академічному лідерстві шляхом проведення порівняльного аналізу ректорського складу університетів у 25 країнах-членах ЄС та Україні. У дослідженні висвітлено системні диспропорції та наведено докази на користь зміни політики, виявлено масштаби гендерного розриву в представництві та контекстуалізовано позицію України в європейському академічному ландшафті.

Дослідження базується на міжнаціональному порівнянні з використанням вторинних кількісних даних із офіційних джерел ЄС та національних статистичних баз. Було проаналізовано три показники: відсоток жінок-реktorів, співвідношення жінок до чоловіків у керівництві та показники відносно середнього значення по ЄС. Країни було згруповано у три кластери (лідери, прихильники змін і аутсайдери) залежно від ступеня їх відповідності середньоєвропейському рівню.

Дослідження виявило значну варіативність участі жінок у вищому керівництві в ЄС: Латвія, Ірландія та Нідерланди демонструють результати, що перевищують середні показники, тоді як інші країни, зокрема Україна, демонструють мінімальний прогрес. Запропонована класифікаційна модель є цінним інструментом для виявлення системних сильних і слабких сторін. Результати свідчать про те, що ключовими чинниками досягнення гендерного паритету в керівництві є національна політика, прозорість процедур найму та інституційна підзвітність.

Основним обмеженням дослідження є його зосередженість виключно на ректорських посадах через відсутність зіставних статистичних даних

щодо інших керівних позицій, таких як декани чи проректори. Крім того, використання статичних даних за 2022 рік обмежує аналіз однією часовою точкою, що унеможливорює простеження динаміки. Якісні аспекти розширення можливостей, такі як організаційна культура чи неформальні бар'єри, також не були охоплені. Майбутні дослідження повинні розширити обсяг посад, охоплених аналізом, включити дані динамічного ряду та застосовувати змішані методології.

Отримані результати формують практичні орієнтири для розробників політики, адміністрацій університетів і міжнародних освітніх структур щодо оцінювання прогресу, проєктування інтервенцій і узгодження національних підходів зі стандартами гендерної рівності ЄС.

Це дослідження є новаторським завдяки створенню класифікації гендерного паритету в академічному лідерстві на основі кількісних даних, що вперше застосовується в цьому регіональному контексті.

**Keywords:** *academia, EU, female empowerment, Ukraine, university.*

**Ключові слова:** *академічне середовище, ЄС, посилення прав і можливостей жінок, Україна, університет.*

**General statement of the problem and its connection with important scientific or practical tasks.** Gender equality remains a fundamental principle of the European Higher Education Area, yet the persistent underrepresentation of women in academic leadership roles highlights the need for targeted analysis and policy action. Despite increasing female participation at entry and mid-level academic positions, significant disparities continue to exist at the highest decision-making levels across universities in both EU member states and associated countries like Ukraine. Understanding the scope and structure of these disparities is essential for promoting inclusive and effective governance within higher education institutions. This publication is part of the project “European Female Empowerment for the Union of Equality” (EUFEUE), funded by the European

Union under the ERASMUS-JMO-2022-HEI-TCH-RSCH call (topic: ERASMUS-JMO-2022-MODULE, project number 101077151), with the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) as the granting authority. By offering a cross-national comparative assessment, this study aims to identify performance patterns, evaluate gaps in gender representation, and provide a foundation for evidence-based reforms in academic leadership.

***Analysis of recent studies and publications.*** A substantial body of literature investigates gender equality and female empowerment in academia, examining institutional barriers, representation gaps, and policy efforts across national and regional contexts. For instance, Lone, Lone, and Ali conduct a systematic review assessing the role of higher education in advancing women's empowerment. They emphasize how tertiary education enhances women's socio-economic status, fosters political participation, and promotes personal growth [11, pp. 1050-1051]. However, the review lacks comparative depth, especially in regional or national contexts, and remains overly general in its policy recommendations.

Melnychenko investigates the underrepresentation of women in top leadership roles in Ukrainian higher education institutions, despite the feminization of the education sector. The article identifies structural and cultural barriers, including internalized gender roles, lack of institutional encouragement, and societal expectations [14, pp. 19-20]. Nonetheless, the article remains largely descriptive and lacks comparative statistical modeling or international benchmarking.

Manna provides a comprehensive critique of persistent gender inequality in higher education and research, emphasizing how entrenched patriarchal norms, neoliberal academic culture, and institutional inertia perpetuate disparities. Using an intersectional and feminist institutionalist lens, Manna calls for structural reform, inclusive policymaking, and recognition of caregiving as academic labor, proposing transformative gender mainstreaming in academia [12, pp. 647-648]. The absence of quantified comparative data limits its utility for benchmarking institutional progress across national contexts.

Correa, Glas, and Opara adopt a multi-method approach to examine female participation and leadership in higher education across Europe, Central Asia, and Latin America. The authors advocate for gender-sensitive reforms, inclusive leadership development, and institutional policy improvements aligned with SDG 4 and 5 targets [3, pp. 13-15]. The article's strength in combining quantitative and qualitative methods is somewhat limited by its reliance on regional case studies, which restricts generalizability.

Forman-Rabinovici, Mandel, and Bauer explore the effects of state-mandated gender quotas in European academia using panel data from 25 countries (2003–2018). Contrary to some fears, they found no consistent evidence of a backlash effect, concluding that quotas serve as effective tools to promote gender equality, though their long-term impact may depend on complementary structural reforms and time-sensitive variables [5, p. 1145-1147]. The study's reliance on relatively short-term data and regional focus limits its global applicability.

Nassar, Abbas, and Al-Sify emphasize the need for inclusive leadership, outlines societal and institutional barriers, and proposes practical strategies – such as identity development, specialized training, and family support – to foster female leadership. The authors argue that increasing women's representation contributes to innovation, sustainability, and better academic outcomes across universities [6, p. 14]. Despite the article's strategic insights and comprehensive framework, it remains largely conceptual and based on secondary sources.

Bondar, Telychko, Tovkanets, Shcherban, and Kobal present a comparative analysis of higher education trends across ten countries in the European Higher Education Area, contrasting EU and non-EU members. The study finds EU countries generally demonstrate higher performance in terms of funding, doctoral enrollment, academic staff balance, and international mobility, while non-EU countries lag in data transparency, R&D spending, and gender-disaggregated staffing [2, pp. 90-91]. The article is heavily data-driven yet lacks thematic cohesion concerning gender dynamics in academia.

Tsymbaliuk, Kurchenko, Tokar, Vinska, and Shkoda investigate how gender influences professional development in academia through a case study at Kyiv National Economic University. Based on a survey of 285 faculty members, the article reveals substantial gender differences in self-confidence, perceived recognition, mentoring needs, and leadership ambition [17, pp. 402-403]. Even though the study presents detailed gender-disaggregated data, its single-institution focus limits generalizability.

Godara examines the current state of gender equality in educational institutions from a global perspective, emphasizing the persistent disparities in access, participation, and outcomes for different genders [7, p. 1856]. The article takes a broad international view and does not delve into region-specific or higher education-focused data.

Kapoor analyzes the presence of women in administrative leadership roles in Indian higher education as a key indicator of empowerment. Despite high female enrollment and growing participation at entry-level academic positions, the study highlights persistent underrepresentation of women in senior roles such as deans and vice-chancellors [9, p. 31]. While the paper provides a detailed account of India's context and cites important leadership theories, it is heavily focused on the Indian higher education system without comparative benchmarking.

Araneda-Guirriman, Sepúlveda-Páez, Pedraja-Rejas, and San Martín conduct a scoping review of 129 peer-reviewed articles published between 2012 and 2022 to map the landscape of research on women in academia. The study emphasizes the persistence of structural inequalities, despite expanded female participation, and highlights a gap in research addressing success factors for female academics [1, pp. 7-8]. The article's broad scope comes at the expense of actionable policy recommendations, limiting its direct utility for addressing empowerment mechanisms at the institutional level.

Gahan and Nayak explore the critical link between gender equality and women's education, emphasizing its foundational role in sustainable development, family welfare, and national progress. The authors argue for differentiated but equitable



education approaches for men and women to enhance societal well-being and intergenerational knowledge transfer [6, p. 6]. The article's arguments lean heavily on normative claims and philosophical quotations without empirical validation.

Rastrygina and Ivanenko present a conceptual framework for implementing gender equality in Ukraine's education system through a pedagogy of freedom. They advocate for redesigning educational spaces, reforming teacher training, and promoting democratic dialogue to dismantle rigid gender roles and cultivate a gender-sensitive learning environment [16, pp. 167-170]. Despite its philosophical depth and normative appeal, the article is predominantly theoretical, lacking empirical validation or comparative data.

Hurtado-Reina, Meza, and Velasco analyze 794 teaching guides from Spanish universities' Primary Education degrees to assess female representation in course leadership and bibliographic references. They find that while women are nearly equally represented in course coordination (47%), their visibility in the academic literature remains disproportionately low – only one-third of cited works are authored by women [8, pp. 6-7]. Despite the study's valuable dataset and clear findings, it lacks cross-country comparisons and generalizability beyond Spain.

Khraban and Vyhivska conduct a systematic literature review on women's leadership in higher education, focusing on gender disparities in managerial roles in Ukrainian universities. The authors advocate for feminist-informed leadership appointments, gender assessment mechanisms, and institutional reforms to unlock the leadership potential of women in academia [10, p. 33]. The article is limited by its reliance on qualitative synthesis and national sources without comparative EU-wide data.

While the existing literature provides valuable insights into women's academic leadership, further research is needed to deepen cross-national comparisons and clarify the institutional factors that shape varying levels of female empowerment in higher education systems.

***Formulation of the objectives of the article (task statement).*** The article aims to develop a comparative framework for assessing female empowerment in

academia across Ukraine and EU member states by identifying key indicators of gender representation, classifying countries by performance, and highlighting institutional disparities to support evidence-based policy improvements.

*Summary of the main research material.* Table 1 provides a detailed overview of female representation in academic leadership, namely rectors of universities, across 25 EU member-states and Ukraine, focusing on three key indicators: the percentage of female heads of higher education institutions, the female-to-male leadership ratio, and the relative performance of each country compared to the EU average.

**Table 1. Women in higher education leadership (rectors of universities): EU member states and Ukraine (2022)**

| Country        | Female rectors, % | Female-to-male ratio | Ratio to average, % |
|----------------|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Latvia         | 48.2%             | 0.93                 | 179%                |
| Ireland        | 47.1%             | 0.89                 | 175%                |
| Netherlands    | 46.0%             | 0.85                 | 171%                |
| Lithuania      | 37.8%             | 0.61                 | 141%                |
| Belgium        | 36.8%             | 0.58                 | 137%                |
| Slovenia       | 35.5%             | 0.55                 | 132%                |
| Finland        | 31.6%             | 0.46                 | 118%                |
| Denmark        | 31.2%             | 0.45                 | 116%                |
| Germany        | 29.2%             | 0.41                 | 109%                |
| Italy          | 28.7%             | 0.40                 | 107%                |
| Austria        | 28.6%             | 0.40                 | 106%                |
| Portugal       | 26.7%             | 0.36                 | 99%                 |
| Malta          | 25.0%             | 0.33                 | 93%                 |
| Spain          | 24.4%             | 0.32                 | 91%                 |
| Poland         | 23.6%             | 0.31                 | 88%                 |
| Bulgaria       | 23.5%             | 0.31                 | 87%                 |
| Croatia        | 23.3%             | 0.30                 | 87%                 |
| Estonia        | 21.1%             | 0.27                 | 78%                 |
| France         | 19.6%             | 0.24                 | 73%                 |
| Czechia        | 18.8%             | 0.23                 | 70%                 |
| Slovakia       | 18.2%             | 0.22                 | 68%                 |
| Hungary        | 15.9%             | 0.19                 | 59%                 |
| Greece         | 12.0%             | 0.14                 | 45%                 |
| Cyprus         | 10.9%             | 0.12                 | 41%                 |
| Romania        | 10.3%             | 0.11                 | 38%                 |
| Ukraine        | 10.0%             | 0.11                 | 37%                 |
| <b>Average</b> | <b>26.9%</b>      | <b>0.38</b>          | —                   |

*Source: elaborated by the authors based on [4; 13, p. 42]*

Latvia, Ireland, and the Netherlands demonstrate the strongest levels of gender parity, with close to or above 45% of leadership positions held by women.

Their female-to-male ratios approach or exceed 0.85, placing them well above the EU average of 0.38. These statistics suggest sustained national commitment to gender equality in higher education, likely supported by legal frameworks, transparent hiring practices, and accountability mechanisms.

Further down the table, countries such as Finland, Germany, and Austria show percentages ranging between 28% and 32%. These results, while still above average, point to a more gradual progression and potential bottlenecks in leadership pipelines. At or just below the average are countries like Portugal and Malta, where moderate gender inclusion exists but may not yet be institutionalized across all levels.

The lower tier of the table includes countries with female headship rates under 20%, including Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania. These nations have female-to-male ratios between 0.11 and 0.22 (less than two-thirds of the EU average) signaling deep-rooted gender imbalances in access to decision-making positions. Ukraine, listed for comparative purposes, has one of the lowest levels of female leadership in academia, reflecting structural barriers and the urgent need for reform in alignment with EU norms.

The absence of data from certain EU countries, most notably Sweden and Luxembourg, limits the comprehensiveness of the analysis, particularly as Sweden is typically regarded as a frontrunner in gender equality. This highlights the continued challenge of harmonizing data collection and reporting mechanisms across the European Higher Education Area.

Table 2 introduces a cluster analysis of the countries using the percentage of female heads relative to the EU average as the basis for classification. Countries are grouped into three clusters: Leaders, Adopters, and Laggards, according to their performance as a percentage of the EU average (26.9%).

The Leader cluster comprises countries where the percentage of female academic heads exceeds 90% of the EU average (i.e., above 24.21%). This group includes 17 countries, such as Latvia, Ireland, the Netherlands, and also newer member-states like Lithuania and Croatia. The wide inclusion of countries from

both Western and Eastern Europe suggests that high female representation in leadership is not solely tied to economic development or EU accession timing, but also to national policies and institutional reforms aimed at fostering gender inclusivity.

**Table 2. Clustering of EU member-states and Ukraine by female leadership in education (2022)**

| Cluster  | Interval (% of EU average) | Countries                                                                                                                                                |
|----------|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leaders  | >90% (>24.21%)             | Latvia, Ireland, Netherlands, Lithuania, Belgium, Slovenia, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Austria, Portugal, Malta, Spain, Poland, Bulgaria, Croatia |
| Adopters | 75–90% (20.18%–24.21%)     | Estonia, France, Czechia                                                                                                                                 |
| Laggards | <75% (<20.18%)             | Slovakia, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Ukraine                                                                                                      |

*Source: elaborated by the authors based on [18, p. 377]*

The Adopter group includes countries with female representation between 75% and 90% of the EU average (20.18%–24.21%). Estonia, France, and Czechia fall into this category, signaling transitional systems. These countries have taken some steps toward gender-balanced leadership but have yet to institutionalize consistent progress. Their inclusion in this middle tier underscores the presence of potential, albeit uneven, implementation of gender equity strategies within higher education.

The Laggard cluster includes six countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Greece, Cyprus, Romania, and Ukraine) where female leadership remains below 75% of the EU average (i.e., under 20.18%). These countries are characterized by notably low female-to-male ratios and minimal advancement toward parity. Their position reflects systemic challenges, including cultural resistance to women in leadership, insufficient policy enforcement, or lack of supportive institutional structures. Ukraine’s inclusion here emphasizes the critical need for alignment with European gender equality frameworks, especially in the post-war reconstruction of its educational and governance systems.

***Conclusions and prospects for further research in this area.*** The article presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of female representation in academic leadership across 25 EU member states and Ukraine, revealing considerable disparities in gender parity. The key value-added lies in the development of a performance-based classification framework (Leaders, Adopters, Laggards) grounded in relative alignment with the EU average. This framework allows for a nuanced understanding of systemic differences and facilitates benchmarking for institutional and national reform. Policy implications include the urgent need for Ukraine and other underperforming countries to adopt transparent recruitment procedures, enforce gender equality frameworks, and invest in leadership training programs for women. Further research should expand this analysis to additional countries, integrate longitudinal data to capture trends over time, and examine qualitative factors such as organizational culture, mentoring systems, and gender-sensitive leadership models to deepen understanding and inform targeted interventions.

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