



GRIFFITH COLLEGE DUBLIN

**FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN SENIOR POSITIONS WITHIN
PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS IN THE THIRD-LEVEL
EDUCATION SECTOR IN IRELAND.**

Research dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

MSc in International Business Management

Griffith College Dublin

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04th September 2024

Candidate Declaration

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I certify that the dissertation entitled: Female representation in senior positions within Private and Public institutions in the Third-Level Education Sector in Ireland,

submitted for the degree of **MSc in International Business Management** is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

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Dedication

To my husband, Luiz, whose love, patience, and belief in me have been an enormous source of strength and motivation. Your support and understanding have made this accomplishment possible.

To my parents, Marta and Alonso, for their enduring love, belief in me and support abroad. Your encouragement and sacrifices have laid the foundation for my success.

To my friends, Eleonora and Paolo, for their constant moral support and understanding. Your companionship has been a source of comfort and inspiration.

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Abstract

Thesis title: Female Representation in Senior Positions within Private and Public Institutions in the Third-Level Education Sector in Ireland

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In the past years, female representation in the work environment discussions have increased and become more prominent. This study investigates the representation of women in senior roles within third-level educational institutions in Ireland, with a particular focus on the barriers and enablers that influence gender diversity in leadership. Despite global advancements in gender equality, women remain significantly underrepresented in the highest levels of academia, a phenomenon often attributed to the "Glass Ceiling." This research aims to investigate the current extent of female representation within a localised context for leading positions in Irish colleges and universities and analyse the impact of existing gender diversity initiatives and the cultural and organisational challenges.

This research mainly adopted a positivist research philosophy integrated with a pragmatic view, allowing a value-free analysis of responses and comparison with literature and empirical data gathered from other sources, such as the Athena SWAN Charter, Central Statistics Office, and the HEA National Gender Equality Review. Through a mixed-methods approach, including an online survey and open comments, over 950 staff members from public and private institutions were invited to participate and contribute to this study, where 175 participants provided a 29% response rate. Based on findings, this study highlights gaps in the literature regarding the historical context, the cultural sphere and society, gender and diversity, the "Glass Ceiling" theory, ESG and CG for institutions, analysing the intersectionality of gender and the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives over time, offering recommendations for industry practitioners and researchers, providing a deeper insight into how Governance and initiatives impact the workforce perception and how this varies between genders.

This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in academia by providing empirical evidence from the Irish context and identifying critical areas for further exploration, such as a qualitative study and the extension of the sentiment analysis, underscoring the importance of sustained efforts to create an inclusive environment where women can thrive in senior leadership roles, enhancing the overall effectiveness, innovation of educational institutions, and efforts to close the gender gap in leadership roles, ensuring that the progress is not only maintained but accelerated.

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List of Acronyms

Abbreviation	Definition
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSO	Central Statistics Office
E	Environmental
EDI	Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
G	Governance
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GE	Gender Equality
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IUA	Irish Universities Association
NB	Non-Binary
S	Social
SWAN	Scientific Women's Academic Network
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USA	United States of America

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

In the past years, female representation in the work environment discussions have increased and become more prominent. This research will focus on exploring to what extent females are represented in senior roles in third-level colleges and universities among Irish Private and Public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)(HEA, 2024), as several pieces of research and statistics figures around the world demonstrated that women were underrepresented at the top of organisations (Kulik and Metz, 2017), although strongly advisable that structured boards should incorporate and encourage diversity of thought and background (Geletkanycz *et al.*, 2018).

The research aims to investigate the “Glass Ceiling” theory (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Loden, 2017), and thus far to analyse at which levels these invisible barriers and sex segregation reflected this global trend and to what degree that affects managerial roles within private and public Irish colleges and universities. This research also intends to investigate the relationship between gender heterogeneity and the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) activities, focusing on the Social and Governance aspects (Deckelbaum *et al.*, 2020), analysing the individual perception of outcomes for institutions in adopting gender diversity via instituted Corporate Governance (CG) policies that are considered strategically valuable (Mallin, 2019) to senior management roles in third-level colleges and universities.

Women have substantially changed their role in society over the past years and fought for the establishment of equality in several fields (Evans, 2016) and whilst there is an extensive academic contribution to the exploration of gender inequities and the formation of business “Best Practices”, hierarchy in academia seems to move at a slower pace over the Gender Equality (GE) Agenda (Powell *et al.*, 2018). While political and administrative environments are catalysts for change in inclusion and contraction of the gender gap (Zippel *et al.*, 2016) revealing the need for procedures and institutionalisation of changes to promote fairness and women’s empowerment, several other factors, such as work-life balance, flexibility, and supporting structures (Evans, 2016), also significantly impact women's ability to ascend into senior roles.

1.1 Research Purpose

This study will explore the extent of female representation in senior roles in public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland.

Representation of women in senior management roles, particularly in academia, is a topic that sparks interest among scholars, since despite the efforts to promote gender equality women continue to face barriers such as gender stereotypes, lack of mentorship, organisational culture, and work-life balance challenges, collectively referred to the "Glass Ceiling" (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Eagly and Carli, 2007).

Research performed in different settings suggests that even though women often surpass men in educational attainment, females remained underrepresented in senior positions in higher education (Winchester and Browning, 2015), raising a question on the Female representation extent in the Irish scenario, since over the past years studies on progressive policies suggested a favourable environment for gender equality (Powell *et al.*, 2018; O'Connor, 2020a).

Currently being a staff member in a third-level education institution, this study is also of particular relevance to the researcher, given that Ireland, through the Higher Education Authority (HEA), has an ongoing agenda to support Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and over the past years implemented initiatives to address disparities, in particular the Gender Equality Action Plan, collecting mixed results from initiatives like Athena SWAN Charter (Ovseiko *et al.*, 2017; HEA, 2022).

This research also intends to look beyond exploring the current female representation of women in senior roles and understanding the perception of individuals on whether institutional initiatives and policies contribute to advancing women in senior roles, or if other factors impact on whether positive or negative progress.

1.2 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of gender representation in senior management roles within third-level educational institutions in Ireland, as there have been significant global and national advancements in gender equality (UNDP, 2022), particularly in increasing female representation in leadership positions across various sectors, including education. As O'Connor (2019) and Shepherd (2017) have noted, the persistence of gender disparities in academia draws attention to the importance of examining these issues in a localised context.

As institutions and individuals are maintained anonymous for ethical reasons, in compliance with the application of this study, the expected outcome will not result in employing a particular solution but allow an analysis of the current overall perception of surveyed audience. The setting for this research is the third-level educational sector in Ireland, where public and private institutions' staff responses are analysed to understand the dynamics involved, being particularly important as it not only reflects broader societal trends but also plays a critical role in shaping future workforce, providing insights that could inform policy and practice not only in Ireland but other similar socio-cultural contexts globally (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

Although the proposed period of this study and data collection is constricted, given that its timescale runs over a period of 14 weeks, data collection and findings may contribute to examining the perception of individuals in Ireland relating to gender in Public and Private third-level institutions, the influence of programmes and initiatives, and non-gender-related factors on career advancement, with the underlying assumption that a deeper understanding of the mechanisms related to gender disparities in academia (Powell *et al.*, 2018; Silbert *et al.*, 2022) support capabilities to overcome any barriers and highlight enablers to address the lack of diversity in senior management roles.

1.3 Research Objective

While discussions on gender equality within literature highlight the importance of addressing the lack of gender diversity in leadership positions, these discussions alone are not sufficient to drive significant change or fully explain all reasons and factors contributing to representation (or underrepresentation) of women in senior management roles, hence this research intention to address the following research question:

- What is the current level of female representation in senior roles within public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland, and do institutes in Ireland lack female representation in senior roles?

Therefore, this study aims to address the following research objectives:

- To explore the extent of female representation in senior management roles and assess whether gender disparities remain prevalent in the 21st century among highly educated individuals.
- To evaluate the individual perception of barriers and enablers associated with the implementation of policies and initiatives within the third-level education sector.
- To ascertain the relevance of the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon in the context of academic management and its impact on gender disparities in Irish third-level education institutions.

1.4 Structure of the Study

This dissertation was organised into five chapters, the first section of this study introduces the research explaining its importance, objectives, and overall structure.

In Chapter 2 the Literature Review evaluates studies on gender representation in leadership, the Glass Ceiling theory, the role of ESG in promoting gender diversity and the cultural sphere, analysing how Ireland's socio-cultural context impacts gender equality in education.

Chapter 3 covers the Methodology and Research Design outlining the research philosophy and approach used for this study, where the adopted strategy of mixed methods with a focus on a Positivist approach that supports data collection and analysis of findings.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the research along with trends and data patterns of this study that encompasses 175 different points of view from respondents from all of Ireland, presenting an insightful analysis of these findings and providing a connection with existing literature to enhance understanding.

Finally, Chapter 5 offers concluding thoughts, contributions made by the study and suggestions for future research. In this section, research results are summarised to discuss implications, suggest ideas, point out the study's restrictions and future research directions, and assist the study in adding to the discussions about how several factors affect women's presence in leadership positions and higher-level roles in Ireland.

2 Literature Review

This literature review thoroughly examines the studies on gender diversity and issues, delving into how women are depicted in top managerial positions. Notable progress, both globally and nationally, has been made in advancing gender equality through various efforts made by governments, organisations, social movements and institutional changes (UNDP, 2022). Despite advancements made towards EDI goals, when it comes to the representation of women in leadership roles, females are often seen as not proportionally represented.

This review briefs the context of this study, introduces concepts like the "Glass Ceiling", which highlights obstacles rooted in both structure and culture that impede women from reaching higher positions (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Winchester and Browning, 2015) and explores initiatives to promote gender diversity that support women's progress in leadership roles (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Powell *et al.*, 2018).

2.1 Ireland and the historical impact

Understanding the cultural background of society is crucial in addressing gender imbalances. In Ireland, a country with a rich history shaped by Catholic traditions, societal norms, and gender roles have historically been influenced by conservative views on family and work (Inglis, 2005), views that often positioned men as the primary providers and women as caregivers and present effects on gender dynamics in the workplace.

Irish historical perspectives revealed a varying societal interest in diversity agendas due to the complex history of colonisation, nationalism, and emigration (Gilmartin and Migge, 2013), and the journey towards gender equality has been marked by significant milestones, for instance, the legalisation of divorce in 1996, the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in 2018 (Matty and Murphy, 2023) and the end of the Marriage Bar in 1973 (ICTU, 2023), which are relatively recent and support the evolving workplace culture and gender diversity and have been redefining social perceptions of women's roles.

Despite a patriarchal structure that created barriers for women aspiring to senior academic positions, the implementation of progressive policies aimed to address the historical burden that enabled these disparities. Ireland has made significant progress in gender equality through legislative and policy frameworks, and the Higher Education Authority's (HEA) Gender Equality Action Plan (HEA, 2017) is an example of commitment to addressing gender disparities in academia.

Irish higher education institutions demonstrated a commitment to gender equality, evidenced by initiatives like the Athena SWAN Charter, which aimed to advance gender equality in academia (AdvanceHE, 2024). Conducting this study in Ireland allows comparison with other countries that have different cultural, legislative, and policy environments, for example, Australia and the USA, producing a comparative advantage that enhances the study's relevance and applicability (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

2.2 The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon in Third-Level Education Institutes

The concept of the "glass ceiling" refers to artificial barriers to the advancement of qualified women and minorities (Cotter *et al.*, 2001) and first drew attention in the 1980s when researchers and advocates observed the issue of women being underrepresented in leadership positions despite their growing participation in the workforce (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Loden, 2017). Over time numerous studies have highlighted obstacles in different fields and industries with higher education being no exception. In the realm of education, the glass ceiling manifests through multiple layers as female academics often face hurdles in recruitment, advancement and other processes due to factors like limited access to mentorship opportunities, unequal resource allocation and professional growth challenges (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

According to Cotter (2001) and the Federal Glass Ceiling Commission (1991–1996), the criteria for the Glass ceiling were established as the following:

“A glass ceiling inequality represents:

... a gender or racial difference that is not explained by other job-relevant characteristics of the employee.”

“... a gender or racial difference that is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome.”

“... a gender or racial inequality that increases over the course of a career.”

“... a gender or racial inequality in the chances of advancement into higher levels, not merely the proportions of each gender or race currently at those higher levels.”

A recent study conducted at 130 universities in the United States in 2022 revealed that while women have been earning the majority of Bachelor', Masters' and Doctoral' degrees for many years, only 22% of university presidents were female (Silbert *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, a survey covering 27 countries in 2012 indicated that only 15.5% of higher education institutions and 10% of universities granting PhDs were headed by women (Shepherd, 2017). Despite efforts, including Athena SWAN and the UN Sustainable Development goals (Mohan Pandit and Paul, 2024), women's representation in leadership positions both in Ireland and globally (Maheshwari *et al.*, 2023) continues to be a subject of discussion.

The Glass Ceiling theory (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Loden, 2017), the Glass Cliff concept (Pasquarella and Clauss-Ehlers, 2017) and the Sticky Floor theory (Winchester and Browning, 2015) have similar concepts and offer insight into these discrepancies. These theories underscore the importance of implementing strategies that combine policy

measures with shifts within organisations. The Gender Equality Action Plan (HEA, 2017) and Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (HEA, 2021) put forth by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) serve as examples of endeavours to advance gender equality, in Irish higher education despite encountering ongoing obstacles (HEA, 2022).

Research studies consistently point out the presence of these obstacles. To illustrate, O'Connor (2020) discovered that by 2019 male individuals held the majority of academic positions in Ireland despite efforts to encourage equality. This pattern is similar to what has been observed in other areas like Australia, where initiatives, like the Athena SWAN Charter, have been implemented to tackle these differences though difficulties remain (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

Encouraging gender balance in leadership positions is not just about fairness or justice, since it also serves as a booster to the overall performance of organisations. Studies indicate that teams with diversity of gender tend to make better decisions and solve problems more effectively resulting in increased innovation (Page, 2008). In higher education, this diversity could be translated into better governance, more innovative research outputs, and improved student outcomes.

Despite these benefits, it is arguable that women continue to face significant barriers to reaching senior leadership positions in higher education and efforts to address these challenges must go beyond policy changes and include initiatives that actively promote cultural change within institutions.

2.3 Cultural Sphere and Society

Cultural aspects play a significant role in defining gender norms and expectations since traditional gender roles, deeply rooted in Irish society, have historically favoured male leadership, and created obstacles for women. Geraldine Healy (2015) explains that society's interest in defending the diversity agenda fluctuated at various points in history, often depending on broader socio-political contexts, for instance, periods of recession or political conservatism led to a reinforcement of traditional gender roles, which can weaken progress towards gender diversity in leadership roles.

Females often encounter challenges when ascending into managerial roles, such as increased workload, which are aggravated due to social expectations penalise women for behaviours that are tolerated or praised in men (Ibarra *et al.*, 2018). Assertiveness and decisiveness are often expected from leaders but may be perceived negatively when exhibited by women (Eagly *et al.*, 2014), this double standard is evident in leadership contexts, coming from cultural dynamics that not only delay women's advancement but contribute to the perpetuation of notable gender disparities in leadership roles.

Scholars have long been divided on how to approach diversity leading to different perspectives on addressing gender inequality (Hoobler *et al.*, 2018). Some focus on empowering individuals while others stress the importance of changes, within organisations. Recruitment and selection processes for managers in education are deeply influenced by societal norms that are constructed within the societal sphere, where particular traits of leadership are subjectively judged by selection boards (Grummell *et al.*, 2009) and often, these boards are composed of individuals who share similar cultural backgrounds, which can lead to the perpetuation of homosociality - where individuals prefer to select candidates who resemble themselves (Phillips *et al.*, 2018).

According to David Miller (2021) in the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, justice is centrally about how individuals are treated, raising questions about justice and injustice from social interactions. This research suggests that the GE agenda should be of interest to everyone, especially in academia, due to the gendered nature of academic leadership and organisations (O'Connor, 2020b). Human Resource Management (HRM) systems often endorse homogeneity by recruiting individuals similar to those who have succeeded previously (Castilla, 2016). In contrast, this research suggests that appointing and recruiting high-management positions could challenge gendered homogeneity in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (O'Connor, 2020b).

Fairness in academia goes beyond treatment to encompass larger societal issues of equality and rights (Lake, 2001; Miller, 2021) and highlighting the importance of the GE

agenda in academia can help deconstruct gendered-based frameworks and encourage more inclusive leadership practices (O'Connor, 2020b).

2.4 Gender & Diversity of Gender

The word “Gender” relates to the social, cultural, and psychological attributes and behaviours associated with being male or female, distinct from biological sex, while “diversity of gender” refers to a broad range of gender identities beyond the traditional binary understanding, including non-binary, genderqueer, and transgender identities (American Psychological Association, 2019). Embracing gender diversity means recognising and valuing the range of gender expressions and identities present within society and ensuring that all individuals have equal opportunities and rights, despite gender.

According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ireland ranked as the seventh highest of the EU member states on the overall Gender Equality Index, scoring above the EU average (Central Statistics Office, 2019), reflects Ireland's commitment to gender equality and success in implementing effective policies. Nevertheless, disparities in leadership positions within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) highlight the need for continued efforts.

Gender diversity in leadership is associated with greater creativity and innovation. Women often bring different leadership styles and approaches that can complement those of their male counterparts and this diversity of thought can lead to new ideas and approaches that may not emerge in less diverse settings (Ely *et al.*, 2011). In academic institutions, where innovation is key to research and teaching, gender diversity can be particularly beneficial. Studies have found that companies with gender-diverse boards tend to have better financial performance, which is likely due to the variety of perspectives and ideas that come from having a more diverse leadership team (Hunt *et al.*, 2014), suggesting that institutions with higher levels of gender diversity in leadership perform better across a range of metrics. In higher education, this translates to better governance, more innovative research outputs, and improved student outcomes.

An inclusive culture is crucial in enhancing experiences for staff and students in the higher education industry. Female presence in leadership positions can positively impact the organisational culture, supporting a more inclusive atmosphere for all employees and encouraging a collaborative working environment, with higher levels of job satisfaction and lower turnover rates (Desvaux *et al.*, 2017). Women bring unique strengths to leadership roles that can significantly benefit organisations, these include:

- Relational Leadership Style: Women are more likely to adopt a relational leadership style, focusing on collaboration, communication, and consensus-building (Eagly and Carli, 2007), which can be particularly effective in higher

education environments, where leadership often requires navigating complex relationships.

- **Emphasis on Ethical Leadership:** Women in leadership are often associated with a strong focus on ethical behaviour and social responsibility, being critical where leaders are expected to uphold academic integrity, fairness, and equity (Groysberg and Connolly, 2013).
- **Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion:** Female leaders are typically more committed to promoting diversity and inclusion, which facilitates a more equitable academic environment and ensures that policies and practices are inclusive of all community members (Sandberg, 2013).

Despite the progress indicated by Ireland's high ranking, the representation of women in senior academic roles underscores an ongoing challenge within the sector. An approach to address these barriers includes policy interventions, and institutional reforms, such as the Gender Equality Action Plan by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) that aim to fight these disparities, promoting inclusive practices and setting targets for gender balance (HEA, 2022). Achieving gender diversity in leadership positions is not only a matter of equity but also enhances the decision-making processes within institutions when incorporating diverse perspectives.

2.5 ESG and CG for the Third-Level Education Institutes

ESG, which stands for Environmental, Social and Governance, encompasses a set of standards used to evaluate how well a company manages its governance practices and manages its social responsibilities.



Figure 1: ESG (Khan, 2024)

ESG criteria emerged as a critical factor in assessing the sustainability and societal impact of companies and institutions, encompassing three components to measure the ethical impact and sustainability of an investment in a company or business (Crowther and Seifi, 2020) and although progress can vary depending on the institution and context, significant improvements over the past two decades were motivated by increased awareness of corporate responsibility and the ongoing benefits of sustainable practices.

The environmental component of ESG, which will not be considered for this study, examines how a company performs in managing the natural environment, including considerations such as energy use, waste management, pollution, natural resource conservation, and animal treatment (Viehs *et al.*, 2015).

Social criteria look at the company's relationships with employees, suppliers, customers, and communities where it operates, considering also (but not exclusively) policies on gender and diversity, employment practices, and human rights (Khan *et al.*, 2016). For example, a company that prioritises diversity and inclusion in its workforce, engages in fair trade practices, and invests in community development is seen as meeting high social standards (Khan *et al.*, 2016) and companies with strong social practices are often rewarded with higher employee satisfaction, customer loyalty, and community support, all of which can contribute to better financial performance (Porter and Kramer, 2011).

Governance relates to the internal system of practices, controls, and procedures a company adopts, making effective decisions, complying with laws and regulations, and

meeting stakeholders' needs. Governance encompasses board diversity, executive pay, audits and internal controls (Sustainability Accounting Standards Board, 2018; McCaffery, 2018) and while effective governance practices are essential for mitigating risks and ensuring long-term business success (Gompers *et al.*, 2003), institutions with solid governance frameworks are more likely to avoid scandals, legal issues, and inefficient financial management, which can harm reputation (Shattock, 2006; Sustainability Accounting Standards Board, 2018).

Further to ESG framework and under the third component of Governance (G), Corporate governance (CG) plays a significant role in addressing gender representation and diversity in third-level institutions and academic administration.

Governance mechanisms and policies for gender balance have been extensively studied and can encourage compliance with the GE agenda, although their implementation faces challenges due to persisting issues, like the pay gap (O'Connor, 2020b). Research from Australia suggests that since 2007, there has been more rapid progress in increasing the number of women leading research portfolios in universities, contributing to cultural changes in educational institutions (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

The following charts, developed in 2021 and updated in 2023 by HolonIQ, highlight Global CEO trends by gender and how significant women's leadership is in education and healthcare, where it was possible to note the growth of 2% from 2021 to 2023 relating to female representation in university leaders:

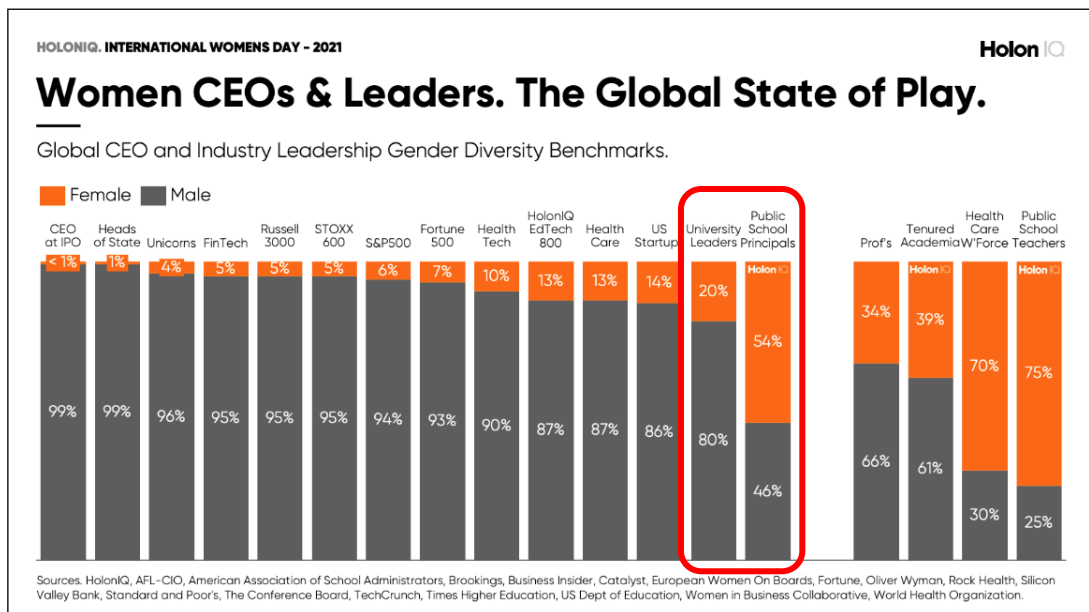


Figure 2: Women CEOs & Leaders (HolonIQ, 2021)

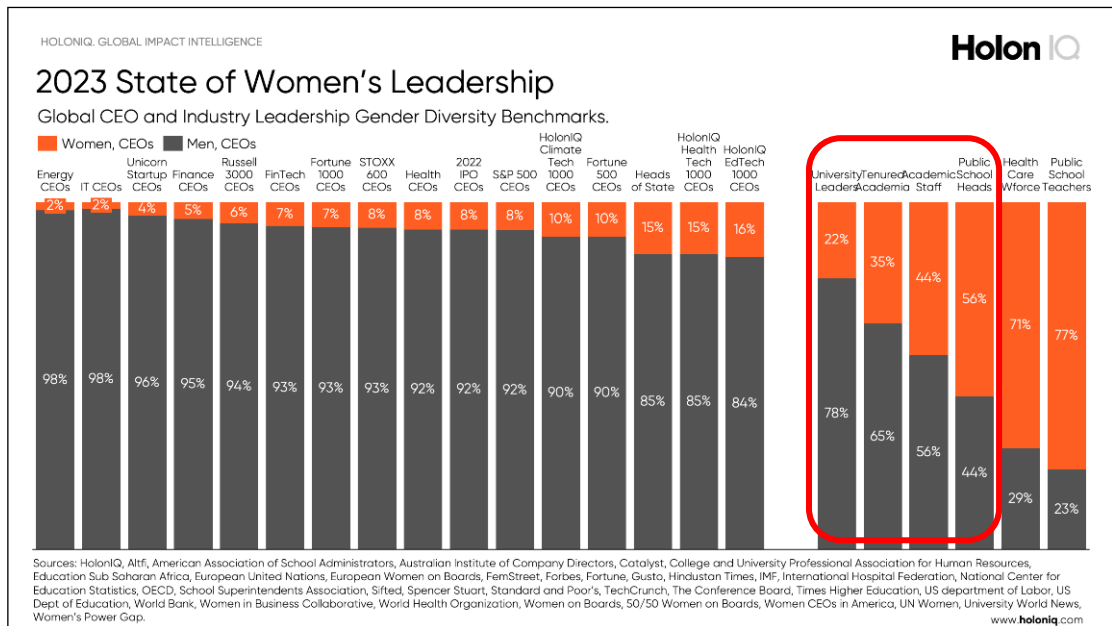


Figure 3: Women CEOs & Leaders (HolonIQ, 2023)

This proposal suggests that corporate governance (CG) could play a significant role in addressing the lack of female representation in third-level institutions and academic administration. Statistics revealed that in 2014, while 44% of full-time students in Australian universities were women, only one-third held tenure-line positions, and just one-quarter were professors (Winchester and Browning, 2015). Considering Corporate Governance, which is one aspect of Governance from ESG, most higher education institutions in Ireland have established Codes of Conduct that outline the expected standards of behaviour, ethics, and responsibilities for their staff, faculty, and management, emphasising integrity, respect, and fairness (TCD, 2021).

Inclusion of gender diversity within these Codes of Conduct typically manifests in commitments to prevent discrimination and promote an inclusive environment, often linked to broader ethical responsibilities, ensuring that all members of the institution are treated with dignity, irrespective of their gender (UCD, 2024). While Codes of Conduct set out high-level commitments, the effectiveness of these measures often depends on how rigorously they are enforced and whether there are clear procedures for addressing violations related to gender discrimination or bias (IUA, 2021)

Corporate governance codes in Irish higher education institutions are influenced by broader national and international governance frameworks, such as those recommended by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the United Nations (UN) and the UN Human Rights Council, aiming to ensure transparency, accountability, and strategic oversight within institutions (HEA, 2022).

“Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

(United Nations, 1948)

A growing emphasis on incorporating gender diversity into governance structures is noted and several governance codes now include specific provisions for female representation on governing boards and senior management positions, which aligns with the HEA’s Gender Equality Taskforce and sets targets for gender balance in leadership roles within higher education (HEA, 2022). Institutions are increasingly required to monitor and report on their progress toward achieving gender diversity in governance, including gender balance data publication and development of action plans (HEA, 2022).

As a result of changes in society, ESG prominence, HEA’s Gender Equality Taskforce work and other cultural aspects, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies are now a central part of strategic priorities for most Irish colleges and universities, targeting to create an inclusive environment where all individuals, regardless of gender, can succeed. Gender diversity is a key focus within these frameworks (AdvanceHE, 2024) and many institutions have adopted initiatives like the Athena SWAN Charter, which is designed to promote gender equality in academia and lead the development of action plans to increase the representation of women, particularly in senior academic and administrative roles. The implementation of EDI policies, in theory, led to some positive changes in gender diversity, particularly in middle management and academic positions and this study aims to explore the practical results and perceptions of staff in the sector.

Even with progress in increasing female representation within the governance structures of Irish colleges and universities, women’s underrepresentation in most senior positions up to 2022 was evident in roles of university presidents, vice-chancellors, and chairs of governing boards according to HEA National Review of Gender Equality in Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEA, 2022). Common barriers to greater female representation include unconscious bias (Eagly *et al.*, 2014), lack of mentorship opportunities (Ibarra *et al.*, 2018), and the persistence of traditional gender norms (Heilman, 2012). In addition to the presented barriers, the “glass ceiling” effect may hinder women’s advancement into top-tier roles (O’Connor, 2020b). In response to these challenges, many institutions implemented gender quotas, mentorship programmes, leadership development initiatives aimed at women and removal of structural barriers to women’s advancement, which are supported by ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess their effectiveness in promoting gender diversity (HEA, 2022; AdvanceHE, 2024).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research integrates ESG, cultural contexts, and the Glass Ceiling concept to analyse gender representation in third-level higher education senior roles and guide the examination of institutional practices and societal influences in shaping leadership opportunities for women, addressing the previously presented research question:

- What is the current level of female representation in senior roles within public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland, and do institutes in Ireland lack female representation in senior roles?

And following research objectives:

- To explore the extent of female representation in senior management roles and assess whether gender disparities remain prevalent in the 21st century among highly educated individuals.
- To evaluate the individual perception of barriers and enablers associated with the implementation of policies and initiatives within the third-level education sector.
- To ascertain the relevance of the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon in the context of academic management and its impact on gender disparities in Irish third-level education institutions.

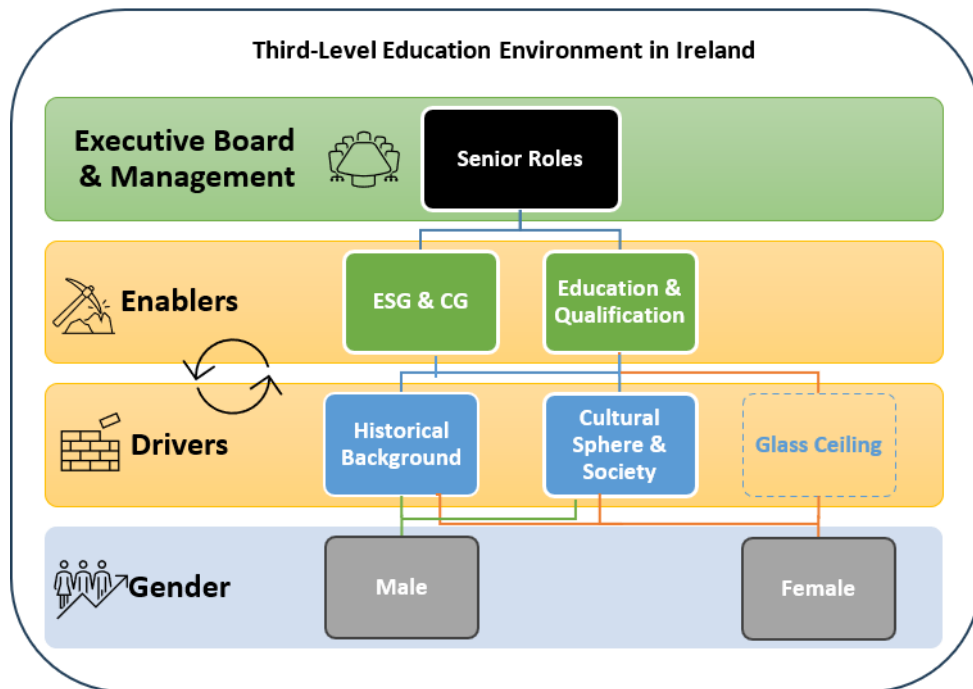


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework: "Female Representation in Senior Roles in Irish Third-Level Educational Institutions".

Highlighting drivers and enablers considered during this research:

- I. Ireland and the historical impact
- II. ESG and CG for the Third-Level Education Institutes
- III. The Glass Ceiling Phenomenon
- IV. Cultural Sphere and Society
- V. Gender & Diversity of Gender

The Glass Ceiling theory (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Loden, 2017) was assessed, alongside additional drivers that corroborate challenges in gender ascendance, which could be addressed through corporate governance, ESG, cultural changes, and societal impacts.

Peer-reviewed articles extensively discussed gender (Essanhaji and van Reekum, 2024) and gender gaps in academia (Winchester and Browning, 2015). This conceptual framework integrates the previously mentioned elements to provide a holistic view of the factors influencing gender representation in senior academic positions and analyse barriers and facilitators of gender equality in third-level HEIs. This integrated approach was essential to develop an understanding of female representation in senior roles.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review explored gender representation in higher education leadership through three pillars: Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) in the business environment, Cultural and Societal spheres, and Historical Impact. The persistent gender imbalance noted in the past highlighted significant barriers that women faced in ascending to senior positions (Shepherd, 2017) and despite advancements disparities seemed to remain in gender diversity (O'Connor, 2020b; Silbert *et al.*, 2022) in studies performed previous to 2022.

Ireland's socio-cultural context provided a unique background, reflecting traditional values and modern gender equality initiatives. The Irish high ranking on the Gender Equality Index (Central Statistics Office, 2019) and commitment to progressive policies offered a case for examining the effectiveness of gender equality strategies in higher education, on the other hand, the heteronormative nature of Irish HEIs presented challenges, requiring comprehensive and sensitive approaches (O'Mullane, 2021).

Integration of CG and ESG is considered a mechanism to promote gender equality, and while effective governance structures can support the implementation of diversity and inclusion policies (O'Connor, 2020b), the Glass Ceiling theory (Cotter *et al.*, 2001) highlights barriers women face in leadership roles (Pasquarella and Clauss-Ehlers, 2017; Loden, 2017). Empirical evidence from numerous studies in diverse contexts underscored the complexity of achieving gender equality in higher education.

In conclusion, this literature review provides a comprehensive framework that supports the research methods applied and explained in the following chapter, understanding drivers and enablers of gender equality in senior management roles at third-level education institutions and aims to contribute to the understanding the existence of such disparities and effect of gender equality initiatives.

3 Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Overview

The methodology and research design employed in this dissertation sought to explore female representation, from the wider topic of gender diversity, in senior roles and positions within the third-level educational sector in Ireland. The study survey used a specially designed Google Forms questionnaire, targeting primarily managerial and senior roles of all genders from third-level education institutions in Ireland that was distributed to over 950 prospective participants across several Irish public and private colleges and universities. The survey included thirty-nine questions categorised into Demographics, Educational Background & Work Profile, Environment, and Individual Perception, with an open comment section for additional insights.

3.2 Research Philosophy and Approach

The research philosophy and approach form the foundational paradigms guiding this study and influence all methodological choices. According to the Research Onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2018), this section addresses the outer layers: research philosophy and approach to theory development.

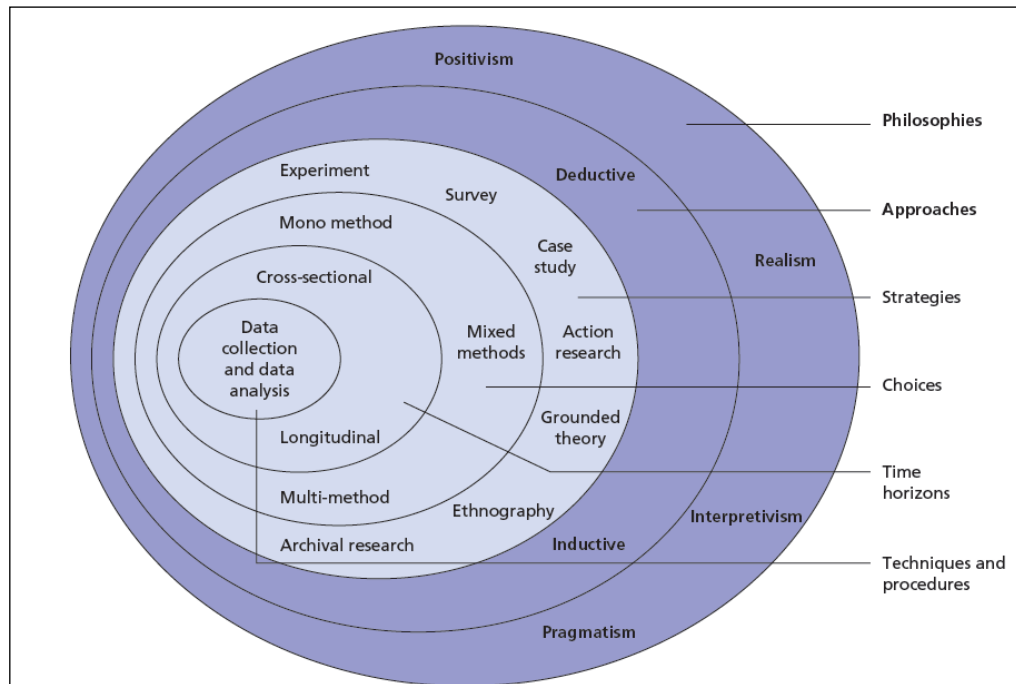


Figure 5: The research onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2018)

3.2.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy initially adopted for this study was positivism. This approach was deemed suitable since it allowed answering the research questions using objective, measurable, and quantifiable data. Positivism is based on the idea that we can gain knowledge about social phenomena through observable and empirical evidence, making it ideal for analysing survey responses while addressing the research question. The researcher also adopted a pragmatic approach to complement data observation, as mixed methods were considered appropriate within this study (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). A Positivist Philosophy complemented by Pragmatism's flexibility and suitability were considered to address the complexity of research questions involving both objective and subjective aspects, enabling the analysis of quantifiable data and additional insights from the enriched content gathered within the open comment section of the survey.

Ontology: While a positivist approach asserted that reality was objective and allowed gender diversity representation in management positions to be measured and analysed objectively, a pragmatic perspective embraced a pluralistic view of reality, which

recognised both subjective experiences and objective realities. In the context of this study, this meant acknowledging lived experiences and perceptions of managers alongside quantifiable aspects of gender representation in management positions, also considering observations that were meaningfully provided by respondents and brought additional insights not covered in the quantifiable data collected and enabled answering of this research question.

Epistemology: Positivism advocated that knowledge was best obtained through observable and measurable facts. In this study, knowledge about gender diversity in management is derived from quantitative data collected through a structured survey, which can be analysed statistically to draw conclusions. Pragmatism, on the other hand, focuses on practical outcomes and real-world applications of research findings. Knowledge was derived from the interaction between subjective experiences and work environment, making it particularly appropriate for exploring how gender diversity was perceived and manifested in management roles within the educational sector.

Unlike interpretivism, which is suited for smaller, in-depth studies, positivism was considered more appropriate to this research as the philosophical approach supported statistical analysis and broader generalisations. While realism acknowledges underlying structures to address the complexity of social phenomena, this study's objectives were to explore and analyse gender diversity in terms of demographics, educational background, and the institutional environment. Interpretivism and realism were not deemed suitable for this research since the study aimed to objectively explore the extent of female representation in senior roles within third-level HEIs, as a smaller part of the broader topic of Diversity and Inclusion, by surveying all genders in a large sample of staff from Colleges and Universities, allowing for a value-free analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2018), which required an empirical approach best facilitated by positivism.

3.2.2 *Research Approach*

Given the research philosophy, a mixed methods approach was adopted for the purpose of this study, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data which provided a comprehensive understanding of gender in senior roles based on the theoretical proposition.

The deductive approach in this study started with existing theories and literature on gender representation and management, from which the research question was derived. The main thrust of this research was to analyse qualitative insights using quantitative data collected through the survey, ensuring that the research was grounded in

established knowledge and sought to verify or refute these theoretical frameworks through empirical evidence.

3.2.2.1 Deductive Approach:

The study begins with a comprehensive review of existing literature on gender diversity, representation in managerial roles, and institutional practices promoting gender equality. Key theories and models from previous research were identified.

Based on the literature review, a specific research question was formulated. For instance:

- What is the current level of female representation in senior roles within public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland, and do institutes in Ireland lack female representation in senior roles?

Following research objectives:

- To explore the extent of female representation in senior management roles and assess whether gender disparities remain prevalent in the 21st century among highly educated individuals.
- To evaluate the individual perception of barriers and enablers associated with the implementation of policies and initiatives within the third-level education sector.
- To ascertain the relevance of the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon in the context of academic management and its impact on gender disparities in Irish third-level education institutions.

Data Collection: The survey was designed to collect quantitative data relevant to the research question and objectives. This included Likert scale questions that measure respondents' perceptions and experiences regarding gender diversity initiatives, mentorship, and institutional practices.

Data Analysis: Statistical analysis was conducted to explore the data gathered, which included calculating means, percentages, and correlations between variables. For example, comparing the average scores of perceived gender-related decisions across different genders or analysing the correlation between the educational background and the number of women in managerial positions. Based on the statistical analysis, conclusions were drawn about the validity of the research question, providing an understanding of the extent to which existing theories hold in the context of the surveyed institutions.

3.2.2.2 Inductive Approach

This approach involved analysing qualitative data from both survey questions and the open comment section of the survey to generate new insights regarding the unique experiences and perceptions of individuals. This approach was exploratory and aimed to build understanding based on the collected data.

Data Collection: Open-ended survey question invited respondents to share experiences and perceptions.

Data Analysis: Qualitative responses were analysed using thematic analysis, identifying common themes and patterns. Each response was coded by identifying keywords, phrases, and concepts. Codes were grouped into broader categories or themes that captured the essence of the responses. For example, themes included "diversity" and "barriers". These themes generated insights into individual experiences and challenges, informing effective practices and areas for improvement.

3.2.2.3 Integration of Both Approaches

Combining deductive and inductive approaches provided a comprehensive understanding of gender representativity in senior roles. While the deductive approach assessed existing theories and provided statistical validation, the inductive approach offered deeper, qualitative insights into individual experiences and perceptions, and the mixed-method approach ensured that the research is both theoretically grounded and richly descriptive, capturing the complexities of gender representation in the Colleges and Universities in Ireland.

3.3 Research Strategy

The research strategy targeted a group of 950 staff from all genders across 25 private and public colleges/universities across the twenty-six counties of Ireland, which required planning and coordination. Contact details were obtained from publicly available information and prospective participants received electronic invitations, emphasising voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. Perceived anonymity in surveys is believed to increase response rates and encourage honest feedback, enhancing both the quantity and quality of data collected (Singer and Couper, 2017; Larson, 2019).

Quantitative Component: Structured survey distributed to over 950 staff from 25 private and public colleges/universities across the twenty-six counties of Ireland, achieving a 29% response rate from 603 reachable participants. From 950 staff invited to this study:

- 198 Invites did not reach the prospective respondent.
- 109 Out of Office Responses
- 35 Prospective respondents did not feel the survey was relevant to their role.
- 05 Prospective respondents had Privacy Concerns and did not wish to share personal perspectives.
- 175 Responded to the survey (29% from the remaining 603)

Although publicly available information allowed the collection of an expressive sample of data from staff of all genders in senior roles collecting individual perception for an overall statistical examination, constraints on the database for prospective respondents were noted, as information available through research was outdated or prospective respondents were not reachable (annual leave, parental leave, sabbatical year, other reasons).

Qualitative Component: Analysis of open-ended survey responses and qualitative insights interpreted from quantitative data, providing deeper insights into individual perceptions and experiences.

The primary research strategy was a cross-sectional survey study, supplemented by content analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The survey method was chosen for its efficiency in collecting substantial amounts of data from a diverse sample, in which the survey included thirty-nine questions designed to capture both factual information and subjective views on gender diversity covered:

- Demographics: Information on nationality, age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, and children.

- Educational Background and Work Profile: Data on education, work region, contract type, role, and team management.
- Environment: Perceptions of female representation and gender diversity initiatives.
- Individual's Perception: Likert scale questions capturing personal views on gender diversity and institutional practices.

Although the targeted audience invited to take the survey were under the profile of managerial roles and senior management positions, participants were invited to share the survey with colleagues which contributed to a small number of non-managers having responded to the research survey (22 respondents not in a managerial role at the time of the survey).

The study adopted a cross-sectional time horizon, capturing a snapshot of the current state of gender diversity representation in management positions at a specific point in time, in which responses were gathered from 21st May 2024 to 07th June 2024. Adopting a cross-sectional time horizon was suitable for this study as it allowed for an efficient, timely, and detailed examination of gender representation in senior positions within third-level education institutions. This approach facilitated the exploration of contemporary status and perceptions, providing valuable insights into current practices and attitudes towards gender diversity in the educational sector during the specified period.

3.4 Collection Primary Data

When carefully selecting and applying these sources, the study ensured a robust and credible exploration of gender diversity representation in managerial positions within the third-level educational sector in Ireland. Data collection took place by using a Research Questionnaire set up via Google Forms, followed by individual invitations (available in the appendices) issued to participate in the study sent to a database containing 950 contact details from staff of all genders in senior roles from third-level institutions, public and private, in Ireland (26 counties). The survey was designed to be comprehensive yet accessible, ensuring high response rates and diverse participation. The demographic section collected basic information such as age, gender, and educational background. The Education Background and Work Profile section gathered details on academic qualifications and type of institution and working arrangements. The Environment section assessed organisational culture and practices related to gender diversity. The Individual's Perception section explored personal views and experiences regarding gender diversity and representation.

Identifying and utilising appropriate sources was a crucial aspect of this study, which ensured the data collected was reliable, valid, and relevant. Primary sources were direct evidence concerning the topic under investigation, derived from the survey conducted among staff in Irish public and private colleges/universities.

The primary source for this research was data collected from 175 respondents through a survey that included thirty-nine questions, which provided both qualitative and quantitative data, analysed to determine patterns and correlations. In addition to structured questions, the survey included an open comment section where participants provided additional insights. These qualitative responses offered refined perspectives and subjective experiences that enriched the quantitative data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject under analysis.

3.4.1 Other Sources

Secondary sources, to name a few, governmental and institutional reports on gender diversity in higher education institutions, were crucial to this study. These documents offered statistical data and recommendations that helped frame the research within the institutional contexts of Ireland. Examples include reports from the Higher Education Authority (HEA), AdvanceHE Annual Equality in Higher Education Statistical Reports and Athena SWAN Ireland award holders report (AdvanceHE, 2024)(Athena SWAN is a framework used across the globe to support and transform gender equality in higher

education). Databases such as the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and Eurostat provided relevant statistical data on demographics and employment patterns in Ireland, used to contextualise the survey findings and compare them with national trends.

The selection of sources ensured the relevance and reliability of this study, since preference was given to sources from academic journals, and well-established statistical databases from recognised institutions. Only sources related to the research topic were included to ensure all information used was relevant to address the research questions and objectives. Given the evolving nature of diversity and inclusion issues, recent publications and data were prioritised while a diverse range of sources was used to provide a holistic view of the research topic.

The variety of sources was applied strategically throughout the research process, as the survey design relied on insights from the literature review and previous studies, ensuring they were relevant and comprehensive. Quantitative survey data were analysed using statistical methods, while qualitative comments were subjected to thematic analysis, while findings were compared with existing research to identify similarities, differences, and implications.

3.4.2 *Access and Ethical Issues*

Ethical considerations were central to this research, ensuring integrity and credibility for the 175 respondents. Electronic invitations provided an overview of the study, emphasising voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality. The survey, hosted on Google Forms, was user-friendly, ensuring a robust and representative sample.

Participants were informed about the study's purpose, their involvement, and rights. Data were collected anonymously, with no personal details requested. Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, an Ethics Plain Language Statement was provided, but a consent form was unnecessary.

To protect privacy, data were anonymised, and only aggregate data were reported. Participants were informed of their rights to access, correct, or withdraw their data at any point. The study complied with data protection regulations, including GDPR, ensuring secure data handling, storage, and disposal. Participation was voluntary, with the option to withdraw at any time without penalty.

The ethics committee of Griffith College – Graduate Business School Faculty reviewed and approved the research proposal, ensuring compliance with ethical standards. Survey questions were designed to be respectful and non-intrusive, avoiding distressing

topics. Participants were given contact information for further queries or support, ensuring respectful and responsible treatment, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings.

3.5 Approach to Data Analysis

Data analysis was a crucial phase, where raw data was transformed into findings that addressed the research questions and objectives. The quantitative data collected through the structured survey were analysed using Excel, percentages, statistical methods and means calculations. This approach allowed for the systematic examination of numerical data to disclose patterns, relationships, and trends.

Descriptive statistics summarised demographic characteristics and provided an overview of the sample profile while inferential statistics assessed the research question and identified predictors of gender diversity representation.

In addition to quantitative analysis, qualitative insights were provided from the survey and open comment section and subjected to thematic analysis. This approach allowed for the exploration of perspectives and experiences related to participants. The identified themes were interpreted considering findings and existing literature. This integration helped to provide a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative and quantitative insights and their implications. The integrated approach was adopted to synthesise quantitative and qualitative findings, connecting quantitative variables (e.g., demographic characteristics) with qualitative themes (e.g., perceptions of gender diversity) to explore how they intersected and complemented each other.

3.6 Conclusion

While employing a comprehensive approach to data analysis that integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods, this study aimed to provide an understanding of gender diversity representation in senior positions within Irish third-level HEIs. The next chapter will present the findings derived from this analysis and discuss their implications for theory, practice, and policy.

4 Presentation and Discussion of the Findings

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents data collected through an online survey held between May 2024 and June 2024, that resulted in 175 responses from individuals working in the third-level education sector in Ireland.

Thanks to the high rate of responses, the presentation and discussion of findings enabled exploration and analysis from data collection through a structured survey conducted across public and private third-level educational institutions in Ireland, focusing on the representation and advancement of women in senior management roles and that was supported by theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence discussed in the literature review.

4.2 Findings

Findings were categorised into different areas, namely, demographic characteristics, educational background, institutional environment, and individual perceptions; examined from the viewpoint of existing literature and providing insights into how findings addressed this study's research question and the understanding of gender and female representation in the context of Irish third-level educational private and public institutions.

4.2.1 Demographic Analysis

4.2.1.1 Gender and Age Distribution

Most respondents identify as female (101), followed by male (72), with a small number identifying as non-binary (2). Most of the respondents fall under the age group of 45-54 years (44%), followed by 26.3% who are between 55-64 years old.

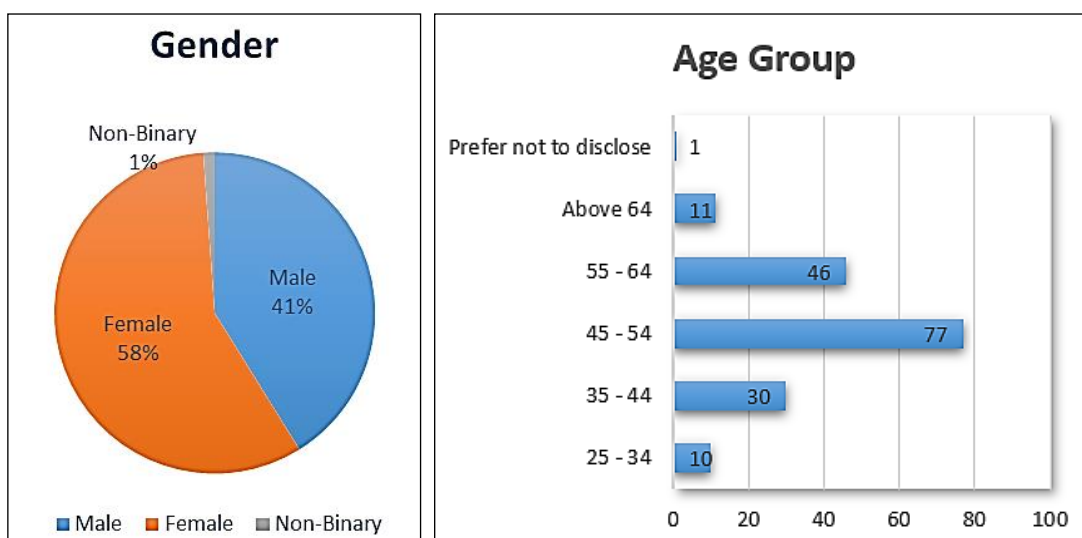


Figure 6: Responses - Gender
Figure 7: Responses - Age Group

4.2.1.2 Nationality and Ethnicity Distribution

The survey respondents predominantly identified as Irish nationals, making up 85.7% of the total, followed by British respondents at 4.6% and American respondents at 2.9%. Of 175 respondents, 95.4% identify as White, highlighting a predominant representation of those identifying as White.

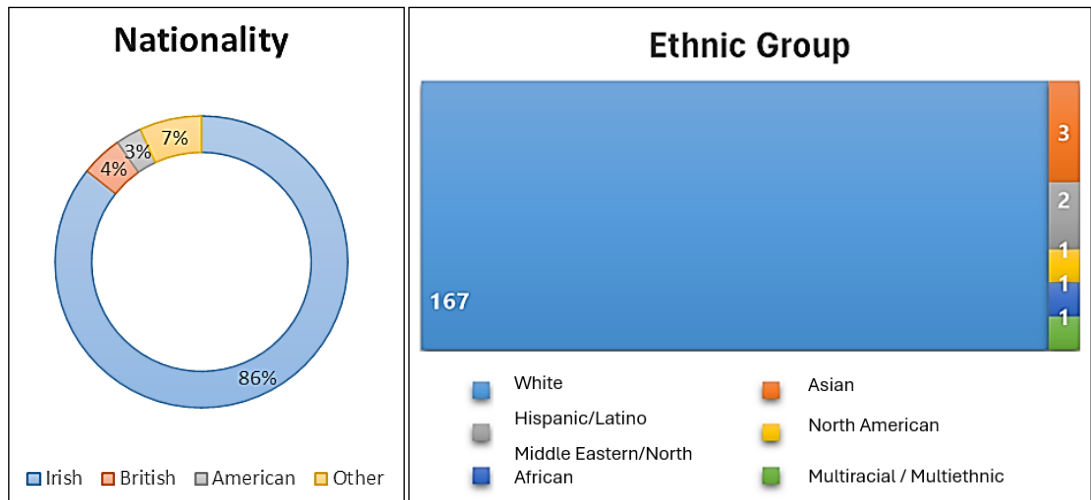


Figure 8: Responses - Nationality
Figure 9: Responses - Ethnic Group

Among twenty-five non-Irish respondents declared, 52% have been living in Ireland for over 15 years, followed by 28% of respondents who have been in Ireland for between 1 and 5 years. The homogeneity reflected a broader societal trend discussed (O'Connor, 2020a), where the representation of women in senior roles was affected by a lack of diversity in other areas, such as ethnicity. Existing literature suggested the importance of diversity in leadership to facilitate innovation and inclusivity (Ely *et al.*, 2011), yet findings indicated that the area remained without much ethnical diversity within Irish higher education institutions.

4.2.1.3 Language Skills

Of all respondents, approximately 44.6% spoke only one language and 55.4% more than one. Although this distribution highlights a diverse multilingual capability, a sizeable portion of respondents only spoke one language, as 160 respondents described them as native English speakers.

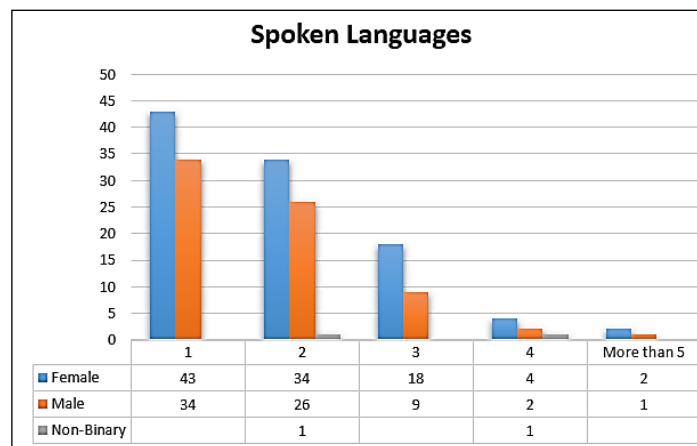


Figure 10: Responses - Spoken Languages by Gender

The proportion analysis by gender reveals that:

- Female respondents: 43.6% speak only one language, while 33.7% speak two languages, 17.8% speak three languages.
- Male respondents: 47.2% speak only one language, 36.1% speak two languages, 12.5% speak three languages.

This analysis indicated that a higher proportion of male respondents spoke only one language compared to female respondents, while female respondents are more likely to speak multiple languages, aligned with the broader trend where women often acquire additional skills, such as multilingualism, to enhance their career prospects (Williams and Dempsey, 2014), and despite these additional qualifications, women may encounter barriers to reaching senior management positions, reflecting the “Glass Ceiling” (Loden, 2017) and "Sticky Floor" (Winchester and Browning, 2015) phenomena discussed in the literature.

4.2.1.4 Marital Status and Dependants

According to collected data, 74% of respondents were married (129), most self-described as managers. Respondents who described as single accounted for 14% (24 respondents).

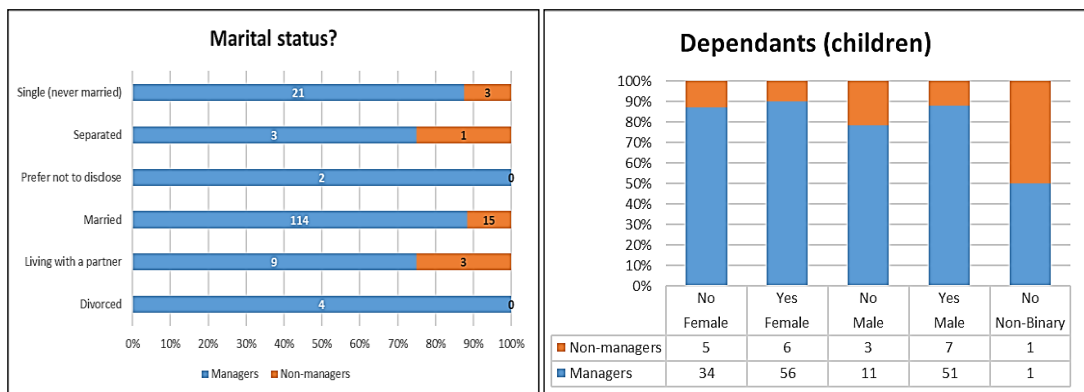


Figure 11: Responses - Marital Status
Figure 12: Responses - Gender with Dependants

Interestingly, respondents who were divorced or separated were predominantly females who held managerial roles, suggesting strong career progression despite potential personal challenges. In contrast, married men were more likely to hold managerial roles, reflecting a traditional career advancement pattern.

Considering parenthood (as in respondents self-declared as a parent), while 82% of male managers were parents, only 62% of female managers had children, indicating that having children is more associated with career advancement for men and suggesting that fewer women who have children reach managerial positions, or that those without children may be compensating for the "Motherhood Penalty" by advancing in their careers (Williams and Dempsey, 2014), since there are additional challenges in balancing work and family life.

4.2.2 Education Background and Work Profile

4.2.2.1 Managers in Numbers

Considering the pool of respondents, 153 out of 175 surveyed individuals self-identified as managers, 59% females, and 41% males. A considerable number of both female (48) and male (42) respondents manage over ten people, indicating a strong presence in senior managerial roles. Female respondents managing 1-5 people (32) are significantly more than their male counterparts (9), suggesting a higher proportion of females in middle management roles.

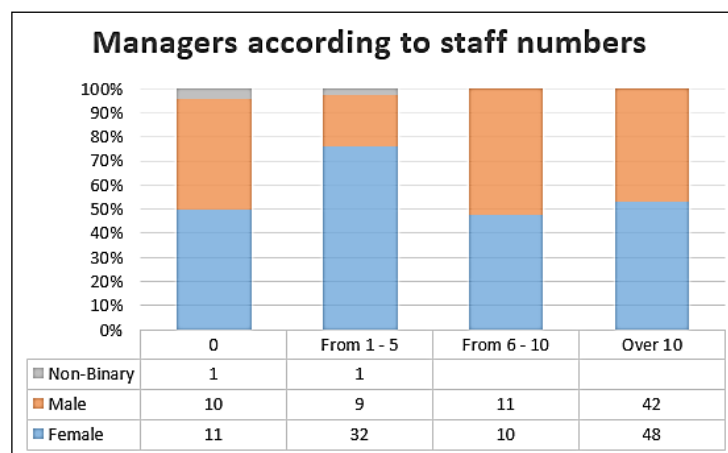


Figure 13: Responses - Managers according to staff numbers.

When it comes to senior management roles, proportionally more male respondents declared to manage larger teams in comparison to females, reflecting ongoing gender disparities, where women were less represented in the highest levels of management, despite significant presence in the workforce (Shepherd, 2017). The literature suggested that this disparity may be due to persistent institutional barriers and gender disparity issues that favour men in senior roles (Cotter et al., 2001).

4.2.2.2 Level of Education

Among female respondents, 40.6% completed a Doctoral Degree and 38.6% have completed a Master's Degree, indicating an educational background notably high. Male respondents showed a similar trend, with 49.3% having completed a Doctoral Degree and 38.4% having completed a Master's Degree.

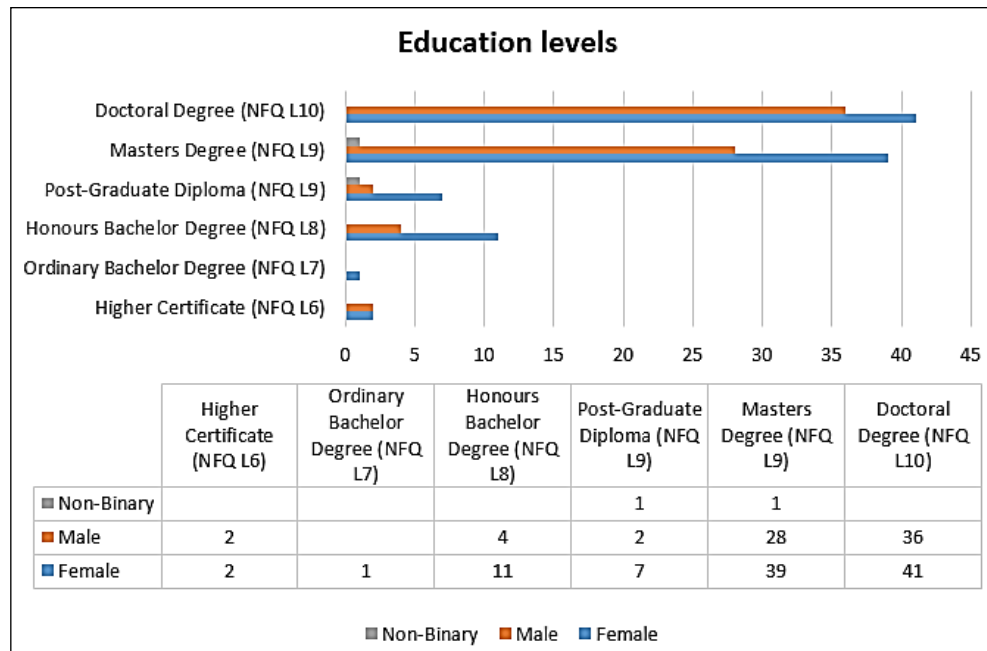


Figure 14: Responses - Education levels.

The contrast between educational attainment and career progression suggests that even with advanced qualifications, women may face barriers to entering leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Despite their high level of education, women appear to be represented in senior management roles in a different capacity in comparison to their male counterparts, supporting the "Sticky Floor" concept, which describes how women's educational achievements do not always lead to equivalent career advancement (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

4.2.2.3 Residential Area, Working Area, and Commuting

Most respondents live and work in Dublin, with 52.5% of females and 52.8% of males, given that Dublin serves as the primary working region for 64.4% of female and 63.9% of male respondents. This concentration in Dublin reflected the city's status as a hub for third-level education institutions in Ireland (ICEF, 2023). The second most common working region is Leinster (except Dublin), with thirteen females (12.9%) and fifteen males (20.8%).

Region	Residence			Work		
	Female	Male	NB	Female	Male	NB
Connaught	6	5		6	4	
Dublin	53	38	2	65	46	2
Leinster (Except Dublin)	23	20		13	15	
Munster	17	7		16	6	
Ulster	1	1				
Other	1	1		1	1	
Total	101	72	2	101	72	2

Commuting time	Female	Male	Non-Binary
No commuting	1	1	
Less than 30 min	43	29	
30 to 60 minutes	34	24	1
1 to 2 hours	16	12	
Above 2 hours	7	6	1
Total	101	72	2

Figure 15: Responses - Residence, Work & Commuting

Considering the commuting aspect of respondents, most commuted for less than 30 minutes or between 30 to 60 minutes, suggesting a relatively manageable commute. A notable minority, particularly females, report commuting for over 1 hour, which could impact work-life balance and potentially influence career progression (Williams and Dempsey, 2014).

4.2.2.4 Employee Profile

The employee profile data indicated a substantial number of respondents having extensive managerial experience since only twelve individuals reported never having worked as a manager. Among females, 36.6% have over 10 years of experience, compared to 56.2% of male managers. Those with 5 to 10 years of experience represented 20.8% of females and 16.4% of males, while those with 2 to 5 years of managerial experience, accounted for 25.7% of females and 12.3% of males (12.3%), indicating that most participants had substantial managerial experience, with a proportionally higher concentration of extensive experience among males.

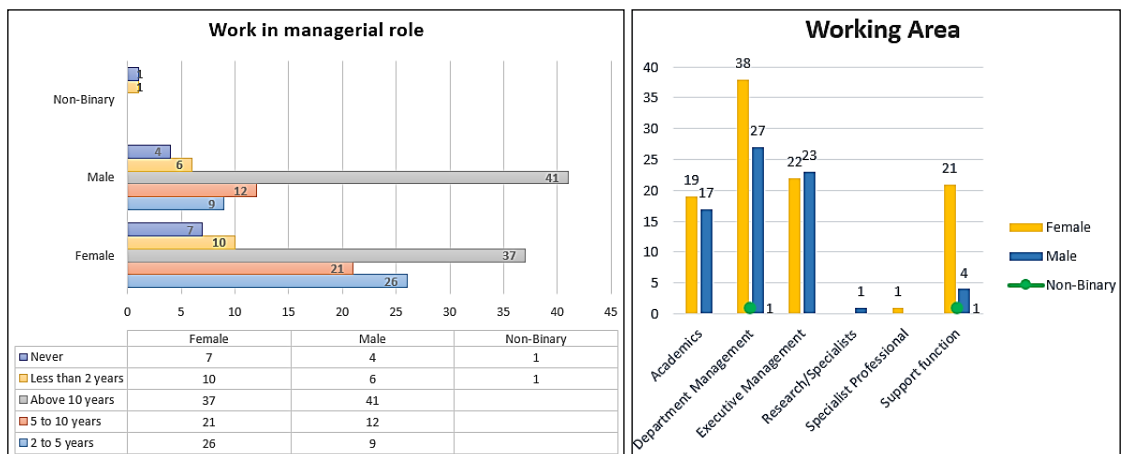


Figure 16: Responses - Managers by Experience and Gender

Figure 17: Responses - Managers by Working Area

Although females displayed high levels of experience, of all 163 reported managers, women were more concentrated in department management roles, while men are more

frequently found in executive management positions, suggesting that while women are present in management, they may encounter barriers when trying to advance to the highest levels of leadership supporting existing literature on the Glass Ceiling theory (Loden, 2017) and indicating that the current social and organisational structures may prevent women from ascending to top management roles, even when they have comparable experience to males.

Data on working models revealed that respondents mostly work in a hybrid model, with 69.3% of females and 54.8% of males reporting this arrangement, reflecting the growing flexibility in work environments. Trends indicated that women were slightly more likely than men to work fully remotely, which could be indicative of the need for greater flexibility to balance work and personal commitments (Sandberg, 2013).

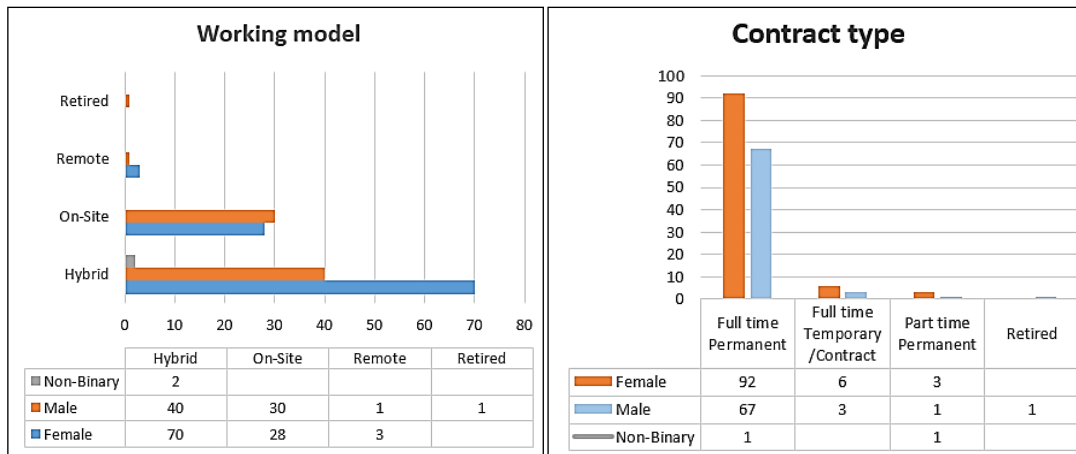


Figure 18: Responses - Working Model

Figure 19: Responses - Contract Type

Participants holding full-time permanent positions comprised 91.1% of females and 93.1% of males, highlighting the strength of full-time permanent positions among male and female participants. Despite flexible arrangements, the traditional model of on-site work remains significant, especially among males, who are less likely to work remotely compared to females, which may reflect gendered expectations around workplace presence, productivity, and influence career progression (Williams & Dempsey, 2014) suggesting a greater need of flexible arrangements among female respondents.

4.2.2.5 Employer Profile

A significant representation of respondents worked in public third-level education institutions, with 77.2% of women and 75.0% of men, reflecting the importance of public

sector jobs in Ireland’s higher education landscape. The smaller proportion of respondents working in private institutions suggested differences in career progression opportunities between public and private sectors, as existing literature indicated that public institutions may offer more structured career paths (Powell *et al.*, 2018), which could impact women’s advancement, particularly where institutional inertia and traditional gender roles are more entrenched (Heilman, 2012).

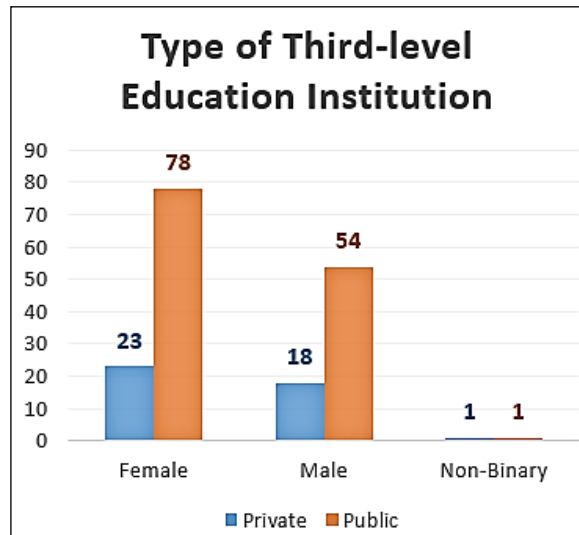


Figure 20: Responses - Type of Institute

4.2.3 Institutional Environment

4.2.3.1 Gender Diversity perception in managerial roles

According to the survey results, most participants view gender diversity in managerial and senior positions positively, with 37.6% of females and 47.2% of males rating it as "Good," and 26.7% of females and 31.9% of males rating it as "Very Good". Respondents’ perceptions of gender diversity revealed a complex picture, although some perceive a positive trend towards greater diversity, 35% of female and 21% of male respondents remain uncertain or sceptical about the true extent of female representation in senior roles, especially among female respondents.

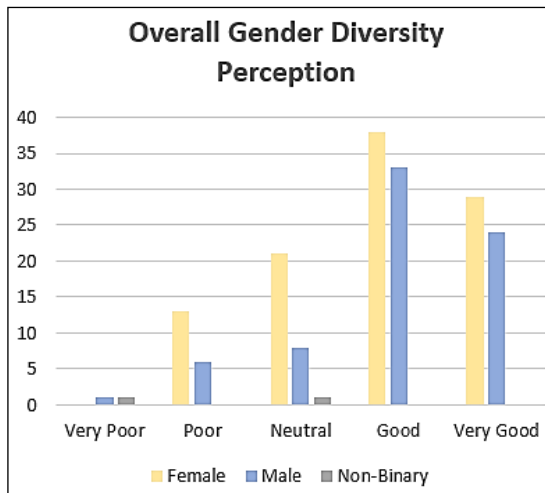


Figure 21: Responses – Overall Gender Diversity Perception

Findings suggested that while institutions may be promoting gender diversity, these efforts are not always visible or perceived as effective by staff, indicating a potential gap between policy and practice, which corroborates the research question by highlighting a perceived lack of diversity, as a third of respondents do not view gender diversity positively within their institutions.

4.2.3.2 Environment Perception

The analysis of the survey results regarding gender diversity in distinct roles revealed important trends and perceptions about female representation within institutions, underscoring a permeating uncertainty among respondents regarding the current levels of female representation in leadership roles:

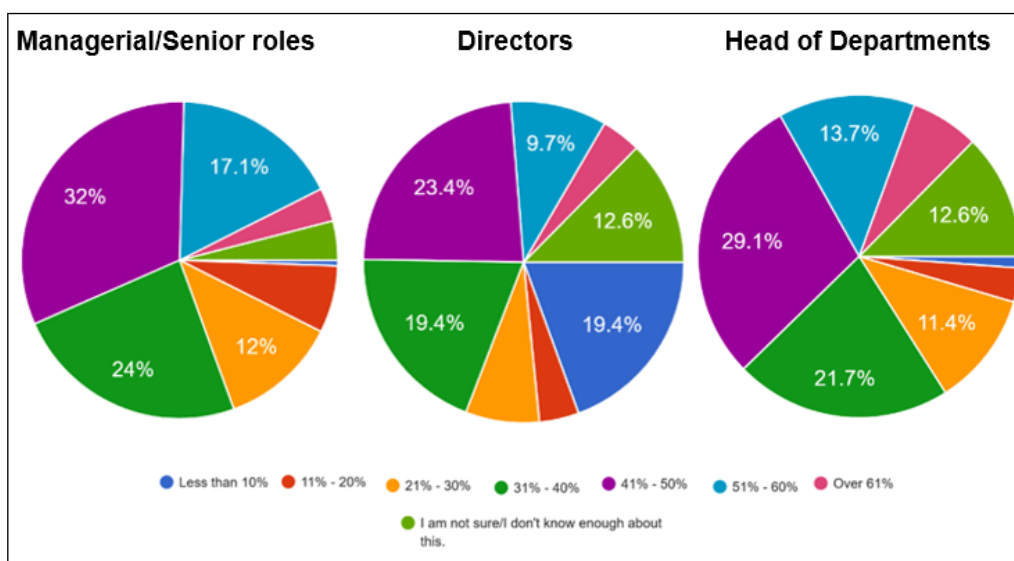


Figure 22: Responses - Gender Perception in Managerial Roles

Notably, only 4% of respondents were unsure about the percentage of managerial roles held by women. This perception differs slightly, where 12.6% of respondents, indicated they were unsure about the levels of female representation in both Directors and Head of Departments roles, suggesting that respondents are less certain about gender diversity in higher roles.

Among those who did provide estimates, a substantial number believed that less than 40% of these roles are held by women:

- Around 20% of respondents estimated gender diversity to be exceptionally low - under 30% or less - and 24% perceived a female representation between 31-40% of managerial roles. As 52% of respondents considered that institutes had over 41% female representation, the analysis indicated that gender diversity in managerial and senior roles is more prominent.
- Nearly 20% of respondents estimated that less than 10% of director roles are occupied by females at their workplace, while another 20% believed that less than 30% of positions were held by women. Around 40% of individuals surveyed responded to estimates of female representation among directors being higher than 41%, which posits that third-level education institutes in Ireland lack female representation in Director roles according to 40% of surveyed individuals.
- Estimates on Head of Department representation by women showed that around 50% of respondents believed that this role was occupied by over 41% of females, as opposed to nearly 38% estimating a female representation under 40%, indicating mixed views among respondents.

These findings align with existing literature on the "Glass Ceiling", which described persistent barriers preventing women from reaching senior leadership positions despite qualifications (Cotter et al., 2001; Loden, 2017), mostly seen among directors and heads of departments. The high level of uncertainty among respondents suggested a lack of transparency and visibility regarding gender diversity efforts that can prevent progress toward gender equality, as it may signal that gender diversity initiatives are not effectively communicated or implemented (O'Connor, 2020a; Powell et al., 2018), directly reinforcing that some institutions have not achieved adequate gender diversity in all senior levels.

Furthermore, the literature review emphasised the importance of visible female role models in leadership as a way of empowering other women (Sandberg, 2013), since lack of diversity can perpetuate a cycle of underrepresentation, in which fewer females pursue or are considered for leading positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

4.2.3.3 Initiatives Perception

The survey results relating to the initiatives perception highlight various initiatives and policies implemented to promote gender diversity at the respondent's institutes. Diversity training programmes were the most frequently cited initiative, selected by 133 respondents aligning with literature that emphasises the role of programmes in raising awareness and promoting inclusive workplace culture (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006).

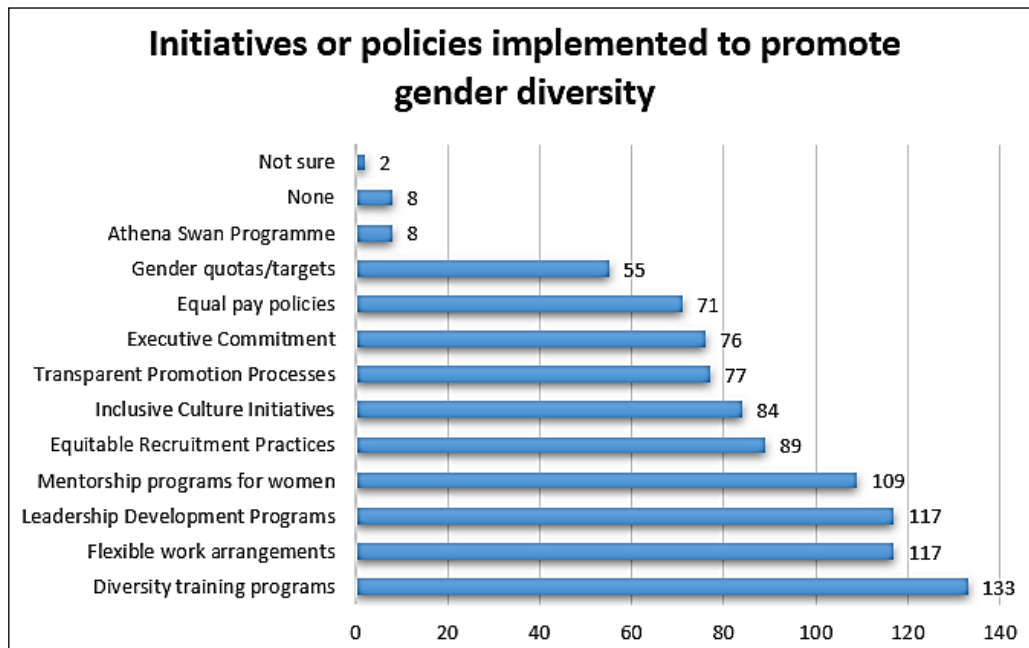


Figure 23: Responses - Initiatives to promote gender diversity.

The strong presence of flexible work arrangements and leadership development programmes, each noted by 117 respondents, reflected the ongoing efforts from institutes to address work-life balance and equip women with skills for leadership roles highlighted in research discussing barriers like the "Glass Ceiling" (Cotter et al., 2001).

Mentorship programmes were mentioned by 109 respondents, showing that institutes consider mentorship to influence the progress of women by offering guidance and networking chances (Eagly & Carli 2007). Fair hiring strategies and efforts towards building a culture, mentioned by 89 and 84 individuals respectively, seem to be highly considered by institutions to establish a just and encouraging atmosphere needed to overcome obstacles to women's leadership. Transparent promotion processes and executive commitment were recognised by 77 and 76 respondents respectively, suggesting a high percentage of respondents noted these efforts within their workplace.

All these findings support the respondent's perception of enablers, or initiatives, implemented at their workplace to the effectiveness of gender diversity and how these can support gender diversity, thus far greater female representation, by broader institutional support and transparent policies (Powell et al., 2018). The emphasis on equal pay policies (71 respondents) and gender quotas or targets (55 respondents) further underscores the importance of concrete measures in advancing gender equality, considering that these strategies are increasingly seen as necessary to accelerate progress (O'Connor, 2020a).

Nevertheless, the fact that a small number of respondents were not aware of any initiatives (8) or unsure (2) highlights a gap in communication and visibility, especially in private institutions that encountered 9 out of 10 responses, suggesting more needs to be done in private settings to ensure initiatives are effectively implemented and recognised.

4.2.3.4 Perception of efficiency of initiatives

Perceptions of the effectiveness of initiatives and policies in promoting gender diversity in managerial and senior positions were predominantly rated as "Moderately effective" by 39% of respondents, followed by 31% of respondents who considered them "Very effective." "Slightly effective" was the choice of 16% of respondents, while "Extremely effective" received only 5% of responses.

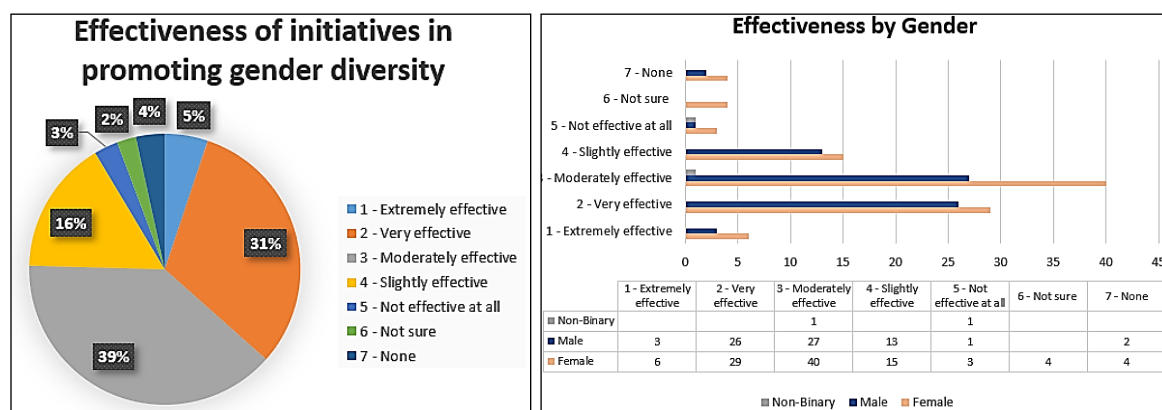


Figure 24: Responses - Effectiveness of Initiatives
 Figure 25: Responses - Effectiveness of Initiatives by Gender

Only 36% of respondents perceived initiatives effectiveness as very effective or extremely effective, when comparing responses by gender, many women acknowledged the existence of programmes but questioned their effectiveness, suggesting that there

may be room for improvement in the application of initiatives. Gender diversity initiatives are a positive step, but effectiveness requires more efforts to address structural barriers, since these initiatives on their own may have limited impact, leading to a persistent perception of inequality.

The literature emphasises a critique of real progress in gender diversity and the need for a holistic approach that includes not only initiatives but also executive commitment, transparent processes, continuous assessment and evaluation to ensure that these programmes lead to change (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Powell *et al.*, 2018).

The findings from this study reflect these concerns, with respondents indicating that while the initiatives are a step in the right direction, they may not be sufficient on their own to address barriers women face in advancing to senior roles. In summary, despite gender diversity programmes being viewed as advantageous their actual impact is mainly perceived as moderate.

4.2.3.5 Perception of Barriers

The survey results highlighted various perceived barriers hindering gender diversity in managerial and senior positions within institutions:

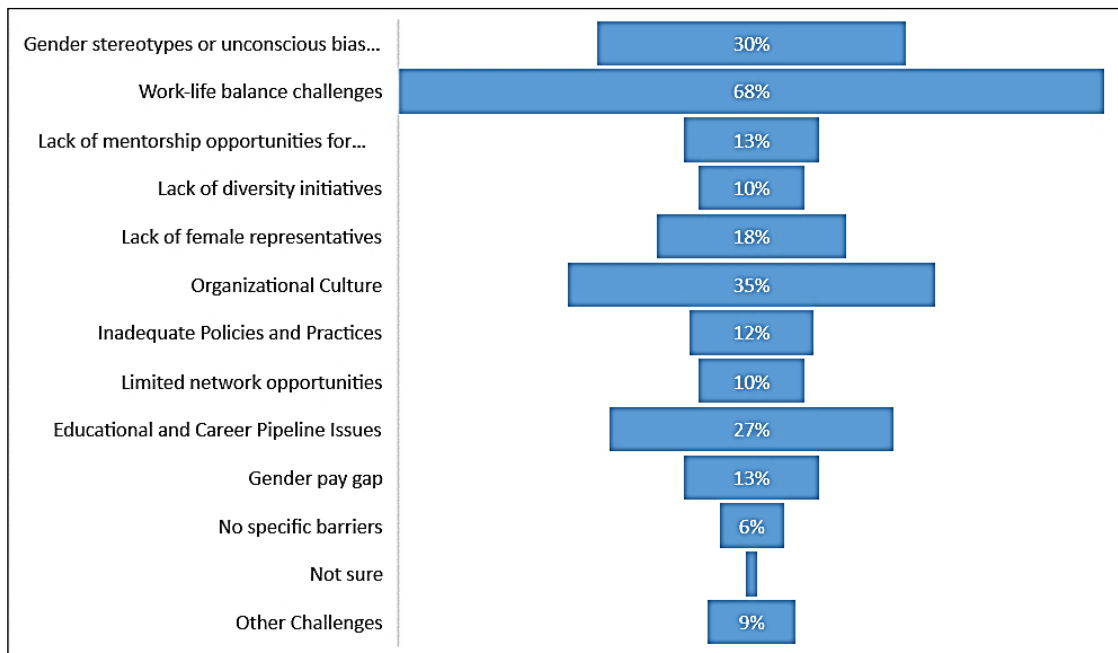


Figure 26: Responses - Perception of Barriers

The most frequently mentioned obstacles include work-life balance challenges (68% of respondents), organisational culture (35%) and gender stereotypes or unconscious bias in hiring/promoting (30%). Educational and career pipeline issues were noted by 27%,

while the lack of female representatives was mentioned by 18% and 13% highlighted the lack of mentorship opportunities for women.

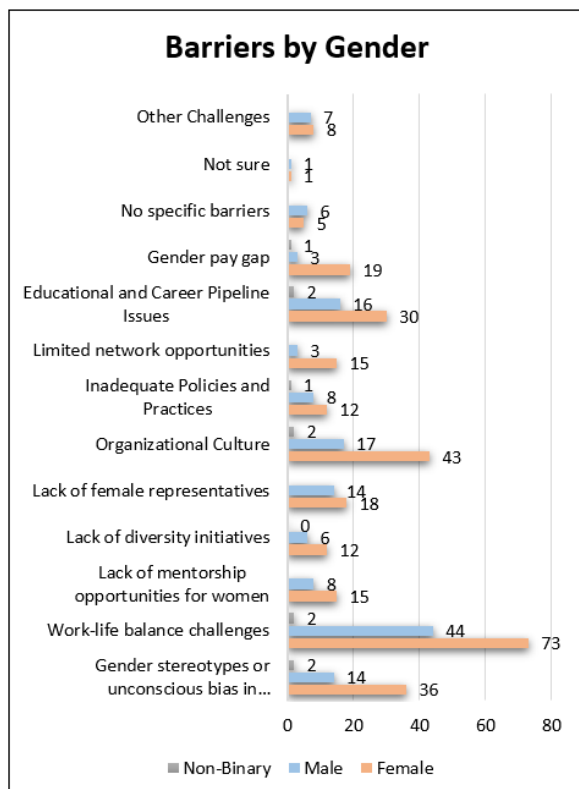
- **Female Respondents:**

Work-life balance challenges were the most cited barrier (73). Organisational culture (43), gender stereotypes or unconscious bias in hiring/ promoting (36) and educational and career pipeline issues (30) were also significant concerns.

- **Male Respondents:**

Work-life balance challenges were also a significant barrier for male respondents (44). Organisational culture (17) and educational and career pipeline issues (16) were the next most cited. Gender stereotypes or unconscious bias in hiring/promoting (14) and lack of mentorship opportunities for women (15) were also notable.

Figure 27: Responses - Perception of Barriers by gender.



Survey data indicated that work-life balance challenges were perceived as the primary barrier to gender diversity in managerial and senior positions, supporting literature that discusses the "Motherhood Penalty", and the difficulties women face in balancing career and family responsibilities. Organisational culture and Gender stereotypes or unconscious bias in hiring/promoting are significant barriers across all gender groups, highlighting the societal norms' impact (Eagly *et al.*, 2014). Educational and career pipeline issues, lack of female representation, lack of mentorship opportunities for women and the gender pay gap are

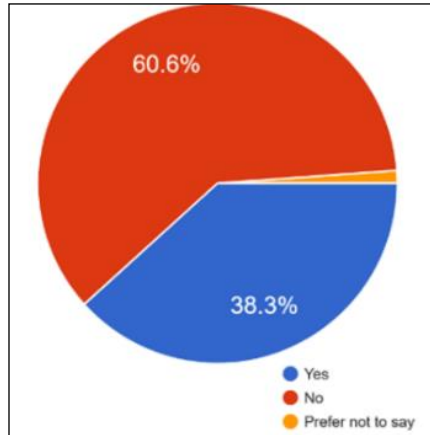
particularly notable for females, aligning with a perceived impact related to the concept of the Sticky Floor (Winchester and Browning, 2015).

4.2.3.6 Gender-related experiences

Survey data shows that 60.6% of respondents did not perceive gender-related impacts in their work, while over 38% did. This analysis indicated that gender-related challenges

in the workplace were significantly perceived, and the fact that over a third of respondents experienced gender-related issues highlighted a perception of gender inequality in the workplace, even in environments that may be seen as generally equitable.

Ensuring an inclusive and supportive work environment where employees feel



comfortable discussing and addressing such issues is important in promoting gender equality and diversity. These findings align with the literature on gender dynamics, which suggests that while some employees may not directly perceive gender-related challenges, others are acutely aware of these issues, particularly those who may be more directly affected, such as women (Ely and Meyerson, 2000a).

Figure 28: Responses – Gender-related experiences in work.

4.2.4 Individual's perception

4.2.4.1 Likert Scale Responses

Further to this survey, a Likert Scale of responses was provided to participants, allowing a range of answers from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) or zero if unknown or no opinion. Then, a mean score was calculated by averaging the numerical values assigned to each response on the Likert scale. Mean scores closer to one indicated negative perceptions, while Mean scores closer to five reflected positive perceptions on the Likert scale.

Statement		Unknown / No opinion	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		Mean Score		
			0	1	2	3	4	5	All	Male
I	Gender diversity in managerial and senior positions at my institution is reflective of the gender diversity in the broader educational sector.	5.7%	5.7%	20.6%	31.4%	28.6%	8.0%	2.95	2.82	3.05
II	Women are underrepresented in senior and managerial positions at my institution.	16.0%	22.9%	14.3%	21.1%	14.3%	11.4%	2.29	1.97	2.50
III	There is a transparent and fair promotion process at my institution that equally benefits all genders.	6.3%	10.3%	8.0%	17.7%	30.3%	27.4%	3.38	3.81	3.13
IV	My institution actively implements initiatives to reduce gender disparities in leadership roles.	6.3%	6.3%	13.7%	22.3%	34.3%	17.1%	3.23	3.53	3.06
V	There is sufficient mentorship and support for women to advance to senior and managerial positions at my institution.	6.3%	8.0%	18.3%	27.4%	29.7%	10.3%	2.97	3.15	2.88
VI	Flexible working arrangements to accommodate for family and personal responsibilities are adequately provided at my institution.	2.3%	7.4%	17.7%	24.0%	33.7%	14.9%	3.24	3.56	3.04
VII	Gender bias affects the hiring and promotion processes at my institution.	25.7%	29.7%	17.7%	14.9%	8.0%	4.0%	1.62	1.31	1.85
VIII	Equal pay for equal work is strictly enforced at my institution regardless of gender.	7.4%	4.0%	9.7%	13.1%	25.1%	40.6%	3.66	4.28	3.25
IX	Leadership training opportunities are equally accessible to all employees regardless of their gender at my institution.	2.9%	4.0%	6.9%	14.9%	27.4%	44.0%	3.92	4.21	3.72
X	The current gender diversity initiatives at my institution are sufficient to create a balanced representation in senior and managerial roles.	4.6%	10.9%	19.4%	20.6%	29.1%	15.4%	3.05	3.50	2.72

Table 1: Likert Scale responses for individual perception of gender diversity

I. Perception of Gender Diversity in Managerial and Senior Positions

Mean Scores: Overall: 2.95 | Male: 2.82 | Female: 3.05

While female respondents perceived gender diversity in leadership roles as slightly reflective of the broader educational sector, male respondents had a more neutral perception suggesting a lack of awareness or differing experiences regarding gender diversity challenges. Previous research suggested men are less likely to perceive challenges related to gender disparities, reflecting visibility issues and awareness of diversity challenges (Eagly and Carli, 2007), which was also noted during this study, but in contrast to literature that highlights significant gender disparities in leadership positions (Cotter *et al.*, 2001), females perceived slight improvement indicating a gap between the literature’s emphasis on persistent disparities and the perceptions of incremental progress within Irish institutions.

II. Perception of Underrepresentation in Leadership Roles

Mean Scores: Overall: 2.29 | Male: 1.97 | Female: 2.50

Data suggested that women were more likely to acknowledge the underrepresentation of females in leadership roles, consistent with research indicating that women were more aware of gender disparities in workplace (García-González *et al.*, 2019), supporting the idea that gender diversity in workplace can be less visible to those who are less affected (Ely and Meyerson, 2000b).

III. Perception of Promotion Transparency and Fairness

Mean Scores: Overall: 3.38 | Male: 3.81 | Female: 3.13

Views of promotion fairness varied, with disparity between male and female respondents regarding promotion fairness aligning with findings that promotion processes are often seen as less transparent by women, who may experience barriers such as (Kalev *et al.*, 2006), perhaps because male respondents are less directly affected.

IV. Effectiveness of Initiatives to Reduce Gender Disparities

Mean Scores: Overall: 3.23 | Male: 3.53 | Female: 3.06

Although respondents viewed the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives positively, male respondents rated them slightly higher. Perceived effectiveness suggested that women might not feel these initiatives are addressing the core issues as effectively as men believed. Data suggested a general acknowledgement of initiatives' presence, but literature noted effectiveness being contingent upon addressing deeper structural issues (Powell *et al.*, 2018). Studies indicated that gender diversity initiatives, while important, are often perceived as less effective by women, if they are not paired with institutional changes and programmes that address systemic issues, these initiatives may have limited impact (Kalev *et al.*, 2006).

V. Mentorship and Support for Women

Mean Scores: Overall: 2.97 | Male: 3.15 | Female: 2.88

While women perceived mentorship and support as only neutral, male respondents viewed them more positively, indicating that mentorship programmes may not be suited to address women's career advancement needs (Ibarra *et al.*, 2018), which supports the literature but also highlights a possible underestimation of how mentorship effectiveness is perceived across different genders.

VI. Flexible Working Arrangements

Mean Scores: Overall: 3.24 | Male: 3.56 | Female: 3.04

Considering flexible working arrangements, these are crucial in supporting women's presence in the workforce, especially in balancing work and family responsibilities. Literature denotes that while policies may be in place, women often feel penalised for using them, which might explain their more neutral scores (Williams and Dempsey, 2014). As arrangements were perceived more positively by men than women, this indicated that while policies may be in place, women seemed to face challenges in using them, pointing to a gap in understanding the true impact of these policies.

VII. Gender Bias in Hiring and Promotion

Mean Scores: Overall: 1.62 | Male: 1.31 | Female: 1.85

Although gender bias in hiring and promotion is not viewed negatively since respondents mostly disagreed with this statement, females acknowledged some level, while men perceived it less. While studies highlighted how unconscious bias affected hiring and promotion processes, disproportionately affecting women (Eagly and Carli, 2007), data in this research displayed a contrast with the literature that emphasised the persistent nature of these biases.

VIII. Equal Pay for Equal Work

Mean Scores: Overall: 3.66 | Male: 4.28 | Female: 3.25

Even though studies suggested the gender pay gap persisted in many sectors, including higher education (Blau and Kahn, 2017), equal pay enforcement in Irish institutions was mostly perceived positively across genders, though males expressed it more positively than females.

IX. Accessibility of Leadership Training Opportunities

Mean Scores: Overall: 3.92 | Male: 4.21 | Female: 3.72

Access to leadership training was perceived positively, with men rating it higher which suggested that leadership development was seen as more accessible by men. Although opportunities are available, accessibility or perceived value differed in views when comparing gendered perception, potentially influencing leadership diversity as women may face barriers that reduce their perception of accessibility and effectiveness (Ely *et al.*, 2011) while accessing these opportunities.

X. Sufficiency of Current Gender Diversity Initiatives

Mean Scores: Overall: 3.05 | Male: 3.50 | Female: 2.72

Women viewed gender diversity initiatives to create a balanced representation in senior and managerial roles as insufficient compared to men, which aligned with a critique that diversity initiatives often fail to address systemic barriers comprehensively (Kalev *et al.*, 2006), as the disparity in perception suggested that while programmes exist, these may not be addressing all causes of gender inequality as effectively.

4.2.5 *Open Comments*

Qualitative data collected from respondents regarding gender representation in senior positions within third-level education institutions in Ireland was analysed to present sentiments, key themes, and areas of concern or positivity expressed in the respondents' comments, which was crucial for the understanding of current perceptions and potential areas for improvement in gender diversity initiatives and has been an area of increasing focus as highlighted in recent studies and reports on gender disparity in academia (O'Connor 2020; Shepherd 2017).

Using TextBlob, a library for processing textual data, sentiment analysis of the qualitative data assessed the overall tone of the comments provided, available on the appendices, categorising sentiments as positive, neutral, or negative based on the language used. Analysis revealed that 52% of comments reflected a positive sentiment, suggesting a generally favourable view of gender diversity within institutions. However, 18% of the comments were negative, indicating areas of dissatisfaction or concern, while the remaining 30% were neutral, pointing to either a balanced perspective or indifference.

A prevailing positive sentiment suggested that many respondents perceived progress in gender diversity, aligning with the findings of previous studies that have noted improvements in female representation in leadership roles in certain sectors (Winchester and Browning, 2015). On the other hand, the existence of neutral and negative comments was consistent with broader research on gender equity in academia (Silbert *et al.*, 2022).

To identify recurring topics and concerns, a keyword extraction was performed and supported by earlier research that emphasised the importance of leadership roles in advancing gender equality within organisations (Eagly and Carli 2007). Data revealed that the most frequently mentioned terms included "leadership," "representation," "equality," "positions," and "opportunities", and suggested respondents were particularly focused on issues related to leadership roles, presence and impact of gender diversity initiatives, and opportunities available for women in senior positions.

4.3 Discussion

Findings from this study provided a comprehensive view of gender diversity in senior roles within third-level education institutions in Ireland, emphasising both progress and challenges and highlighting a significant gap in the perception of gender diversity. Responses were analysed to explore female representation in senior management to answer the research question:

- What is the current level of female representation in senior roles within public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland, and do institutes in Ireland lack female representation in senior roles?

In trying to address this question, the following topics for discussion derived:

- Disparity of Gender Representation in Senior Roles
- A Gap of Perceptions of Gender Diversity and Institutional Efforts
- Barriers to Gender Equality and The Persistent Challenge of Work-Life Balance
- Organisational Culture and Unconscious Bias, a Lingering Barrier
- Limited Impact and Mixed Perceptions of Gender Diversity Initiatives
- Discrepancy in Public and Private Institutions

Disparity of Gender Representation in Senior Roles

Results indicated that while women were present in managerial roles, they were underrepresented in the most senior positions, such as Directors and Heads of Departments, as data revealed that a significant proportion of female respondents managed smaller teams compared to their male counterparts, who are more often found in executive management roles. This finding aligned with the existing literature on the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon, which suggests that women, despite being highly educated and qualified, may encounter barriers when trying to ascend to the highest levels of leadership (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Loden, 2017), and that women face additional challenges in advancing their careers, a reflection of the "Motherhood Penalty" discussed by Williams and Dempsey (2014).

This study uncovered a subtle disparity with some contemporary literature that suggested a gradual erosion of barriers, for instance, the findings indicated that despite progress perceived towards the EDI agenda, it may be overstated or not fully developed within the context of Irish higher education. Despite women's significant presence in management roles, data showed they remain concentrated in positions with limited scope for further advancement, a trend also noted by Shepherd (2017). This suggested

that institutional barriers identified in earlier literature are still strong, and progress towards gender parity at the most senior levels still needs to be developed.

A Gap of Perceptions of Gender Diversity and Institutional Efforts

Considering the perceptions of gender diversity within institutions to the effectiveness of initiatives, a critical disparity arose as much of the literature, including Powell et al. (2018), emphasised the importance of gender diversity initiatives, this study suggested that initiatives in place may not be as impactful. Literature frequently highlighted the success of mentorship programmes, leadership development, and flexible working arrangements in fostering gender diversity (Eagly and Carli, 2007), but findings revealed hesitation, particularly among female respondents.

Perceptions of gender diversity within institutions were mixed, and whilst some respondents viewed gender diversity efforts positively, a substantial number remained doubtful, which contrasted with the generally positive tone in the literature regarding the potential of initiatives. Moreover, many respondents, especially women, questioned whether these initiatives were sufficient to address the deep-rooted structural barriers, echoing findings in the literature that emphasise the need for a holistic approach to gender diversity that goes beyond initiatives and addresses institutional culture (Powell *et al.*, 2018), societal behaviour and invisible barriers.

Barriers to Gender Equality and The Persistent Challenge of Work-Life Balance

The issue of work-life balance emerged as a significant barrier to gender diversity in top roles, with findings reinforcing the concept of the "Motherhood Penalty" (challenges mothers experience in career development and advancement opportunities) discussed by Williams and Dempsey (2014). However, this study introduced a disparity with more recent literature, which suggested that flexible working arrangements have become more effective in supporting women's careers (Sandberg, 2013), in contrast, this study indicated that while flexible work options were noted as available, they were perceived differently, particularly by female respondents.

This finding challenges the more optimistic views in the literature that point to the positive impact of flexible work arrangements on women's career advancement. The data suggests that rather than empowering women, these arrangements may reinforce traditional gender roles, reflecting a broader issue of cultural resistance within institutions, where the presence of policies does not equate to effective implementation or acceptance, as also noted by Ely and Meyerson (2000a).

Organisational Culture and Unconscious Bias, a Lingering Barrier

Findings on organisational culture and unconscious bias highlighted a gap between literature and practice, particularly Eagly et al. (2014), which emphasised the influence of gender stereotypes and unconscious biases. While initiatives to combat biases were noted to be implemented, findings indicated that these efforts were perceived as superficial or insufficient, particularly evident in the perception disparity between male and female respondents. Male respondents tended to view processes more favourably, which may indicate a lack of awareness or acknowledgement of biases that women experience, which underscored the literature assertion that those not directly affected by gender disparities are less likely to recognise or address them (Eagly and Carli, 2007).

Some key barriers to gender equality in senior management roles were noted, such as the work-life balance challenges cited most frequently by respondents, underlining difficulties women face in balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Organisational culture, gender stereotypes, and unconscious bias in hiring and promotion processes also emerged as significant obstacles, consistent with the literature on the "Sticky Floor" and "Glass Ceiling" phenomena (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Winchester and Browning, 2015; Loden, 2017).

Curiously, survey results revealed that gender-related challenges were not universally perceived, with over 60% of respondents not acknowledging any gender-related experience impacting their work, enhancing the layers of difficulty in addressing issues effectively.

Limited Impact and Mixed Perceptions of Gender Diversity Initiatives

As literature emphasises the potential of initiatives to bring change (Kalev *et al.*, 2006), the perception and impact of gender diversity initiatives also displayed disparities. Contrary to the literature, data revealed a more complex perception of reality, where the initiative's impact was seen as moderate, and female respondents most expressed ambiguity towards the sufficiency and effectiveness of programmes, despite their widespread implementation.

Many respondents seemed to believe these programmes were a step in the right direction, but not sufficient to address female representation or gender diversity complexities. This perception was prevalent among female respondents, who felt initiatives implemented did not fully tackle all barriers, supported by literature that indicated initiatives alone could have limited impact without addressing underlying institutional (Powell *et al.*, 2018).

Discrepancy in Public and Private Institutions

This study also reported differences in gender diversity experiences and perceptions between workers in Irish public and private third-level education institutions. Public institutions seemed to have made more visible efforts towards promoting gender diversity, which could be driven by government and public accountability, resulting in higher female representation in senior roles compared to private institutions, however, women in both sectors reported barriers to reaching higher levels of leadership.

Employees in public institutions generally perceived gender diversity initiatives as more effective and better implemented, contrary to those in private institutions, which could be an effect of stronger regulatory frameworks, public funding, and greater emphasis on equality in the public sector. In contrast, workers in private institutions expressed more concerns, particularly about the sufficiency of these initiatives in addressing issues.

Public institution employees reported a slightly better work-life balance, with more accessible and effective flexible working arrangements. While Private institutions, offering similar policies, were perceived to implement them in ways that might inadvertently limit career advancement, particularly for women.

Unconscious bias and organisational culture challenges were also reported in both sectors, but they appear more entrenched in private institutions. Public institutions, subject to more public scrutiny, seemed to have made more progress in addressing these issues. Still, the study suggested that biases were still significant barriers to gender equality in both sectors.

Overall, while both public and private institutions faced challenges in achieving gender diversity in senior roles, the public sector seemed to display better outcomes and more positive perceptions. Private institutions, on the other hand, exhibited deeper systemic barriers that may require stronger interventions to achieve similar progress.

4.4 Conclusion

While men generally viewed efforts favourably, women were more likely to perceive programmes as insufficient or more neutrally, reflecting experiences with systemic barriers. Some considerations relating to data analysis noted that:

- Female respondents felt women were underrepresented in senior positions more strongly than male respondents.
- Male respondents rated the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives higher than females.
- While all genders agreed on the importance of fair promotion and equal pay, males rated their institutions more favourably than female individuals.
- Men perceived more accessibility to leadership training and support than women.

The underrepresentation of women in higher positions followed the perceived inefficacy of gender diversity initiatives. Overall, findings suggested that while there were strides towards gender diversity in senior roles within third-level education institutions in Ireland and significant changes were noted over time, especially in public institutions where funding and programmes were commendable, challenges in EDI remain and female representation still seems to be of concern, and more notably in higher roles.

This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on female representation and gender diversity while highlighting gaps between policy and practice and marking the importance of continuous evaluation and improvement of gender diversity initiatives.

5 Concluding Thoughts on the Contribution of this Research, its Limitations, and Suggestions for Further Research

This research motivation started with the intention to explore and understand the representation of women in senior roles within public and private third-level educational institutions in Ireland. Despite global and national advancements in gender equality, women in leadership positions, particularly in academia, became a subject of interest personally and professionally. During this study, I also understood that public interest in this subject was prominent and supported a good rate of survey responses among the targeted audience, propelling appeal, meaning, and contribution of this research.

This chapter integrates key findings and implications for addressing the research question: “What is the current level of female representation in senior roles within public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland?” Critically evaluating contributions, highlighting its role in filling gaps in existing literature while acknowledging limitations.

In addition to addressing the research question, this chapter intends to offer practical recommendations for the education sector, supporting a culture of diversity and inclusion at all levels, and presenting suggestions for future research that could be further explored. Finally, the chapter aims to provide a comprehensive view of how this research has contributed to the understanding of female representation in senior roles within the third-level education sector, while also identifying areas where further exploration is needed to drive change.

5.1 Implications of Findings for the Research Questions

This study aimed to explore the extent of female representation in senior roles within public and private third-level education institutes in Ireland, with findings indicating that while women were present in managerial roles, they remained underrepresented in the most senior positions, such as Directors and Heads of Departments, supporting the "Glass Ceiling" theory and suggesting that despite high levels of education and qualifications attainment, women were not perceived to advance to the highest levels of leadership at the same rate and speed as men. This perception also varied between Public and Private institutions, where public colleges and universities apparently addressed the lack of female representation, as part of the EDI agenda, more comprehensively and already harvested some results from changes in policies and initiatives implemented over the past years.

The study also highlighted disparities in perceptions of gender diversity initiatives. While some progress has been made towards gender equality, the impact of these initiatives appeared to be moderate, with significant room for improvement.

While analysing the research objectives of this study:

- I. **“To explore the extent of female representation in senior management roles and assess whether gender disparities remain prevalent in the 21st century among highly educated individuals.”**

The findings of this study have shown that while there has been some progress in increasing the representation of women in managerial roles, significant disparities persist, particularly in the most senior positions such as Directors and Heads of Departments. The data indicates that women continue to face barriers, including the "Glass Ceiling" and organisational cultural challenges, which prevent them from ascending to the highest levels of leadership.

- II. **“To evaluate the individual perception of barriers and enablers associated with the implementation of policies and initiatives within the third-level education sector.”**

The research uncovered a range of perceptions regarding the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives. While some initiatives, such as mentorship programmes and leadership development opportunities, are recognised as positive steps, there is a significant perception, particularly among female respondents, that these initiatives are insufficient to overcome all barriers. Furthermore, this objective revealed a mixed perception of the effectiveness of policies and initiatives in promoting gender equality.

III. “To ascertain the relevance of the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon in the context of academic management and its impact on gender disparities in the Irish third-level education institutions.”

This study confirmed the relevance of the "Glass Ceiling" in the context of Irish academia, with many women noting challenges in advancing to senior leadership roles despite their qualifications and experience. The persistence of gender stereotypes, unconscious biases, and organisational cultures that do not fully support gender diversity were highlighted as critical factors that contribute to this phenomenon.

To conclude, drawing attention to the contributions this study made to understanding the complexities of gender representation in higher education leadership within Ireland, this study provided empirical evidence to support ongoing discussions about gender equality and identified areas where further efforts are needed.

5.2 Contributions and Limitations of the Research

This research expects to contribute to the discourse on gender equality in higher education by providing a localised perspective on the representation of women in senior roles within Irish third-level education institutions, bringing additional details to the understanding of the effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives in this context, offering insights that could inform policy and practice not only in Ireland but in similar socio-cultural environments.

The chosen methodology also has limitations that must be acknowledged:

- **Response Bias:** Self-reported data were subject to response bias, where participants may have provided socially desirable answers rather than truthful responses.
- **Cross-Sectional Design:** The cross-sectional design captures a single point in time and may not reflect changes over time.
- **Validity and general applicability:** While the sample was comprehensive, findings may not apply to all institutes or beyond the context of Irish public and private Colleges/Universities.

Going forward, organisations must evolve looking to deepen the development of goals for gender diversity, while fostering an environment that genuinely empowers women in their professional journeys, which requires moving beyond mere compliance with EDI policies to implementing meaningful changes that transform organisational culture and actively promote inclusion and equity.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

Based on this study's findings, some practice recommendations to promote gender diversity and ensure the advancement of women into senior roles within third-level educational institutions are:

Enhanced Visibility and Communication: A recommendation that institutions ensure gender diversity initiatives are not only implemented but also visible and well-communicated to all staff. This includes regular updates on the progress of initiatives and their impact on gender equality. Making these efforts visible can reinforce the organisation's commitment to gender equality, which can positively influence the organisational culture and inspire further action from all levels of staff (Kalev *et al.*, 2006).

Targeted Leadership Development Programmes: To address the underrepresentation of women in senior roles, institutions are suggested to implement targeted leadership development programmes that focus on preparing women for executive positions. These programmes should include mentorship, networking events, and training in leadership skills, assisting and supporting women in building the confidence and skills needed to succeed in senior roles (Ely *et al.*, 2011), designed to address the unique challenges faced in the workplace, such as balancing assertiveness, navigating organisational politics, and developing resilience.

Cultural Change Initiatives: Practitioners are advised to support/develop a culture of diversity and inclusion at all levels, challenging gender stereotypes and promoting equity in hiring and promotion practices, diverse leadership and ensuring that women are represented in key decision-making roles. Providing visible role models for other women in the organisation (Sandberg, 2013) and encouraging an open dialogue about diversity and inclusion (Ely and Meyerson, 2000b) may stimulate a culture where diversity is not just a goal, but a core value that is reflected in everyday practices and interactions.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

As this research concludes, the following topics are suggested to be considered moving forward to address issues and expand the findings of this study. Some key areas of focus emerged as particularly important for advancing gender equality in senior roles within third-level educational institutions in Ireland and beyond. Future research could rest on this study when exploring areas such as Longitudinal Studies, Qualitative Research, Comparative Studies, Broader Scope, and Deeper Analysis of Negative Sentiment.

- Conducting longitudinal studies can provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of gender diversity initiatives on female representation in senior roles, allowing researchers to track changes over time and assess the effectiveness of different strategies.
- Future studies could incorporate qualitative research methods, such as interviews and focus groups, to gain a nuanced understanding of the experiences of women in senior roles, to complement data and provide a richer context for understanding the barriers and enablers.
- Research that compares the experiences of women in senior roles across different countries or regions may be valuable to identify best practices and strategies that could be adapted to diverse cultural and institutional contexts.
- Expanding the scope of research to include other sectors beyond education would provide a more comprehensive view, examining the intersectionality of gender with other factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status.
- Investigate the specific concerns or barriers mentioned in the negative comments to identify areas for improvement.

The journey towards gender equality in academia, as in many other sectors, seems to be ongoing and complex, and while this research contributes with insights that may assist on this journey going forward, it also highlights the need for continued studies, vigilance, innovation, and commitment to addressing gender disparities.

5.5 Final Conclusion and Reflections

The pursuit of gender diversity in senior roles within third-level educational institutions in Ireland is not just a matter of fairness, but a strategic imperative that has significant implications for the quality of leadership, decision-making, and institutional success via ESG and Corporate Governance. This research has pointed out the importance of an environment that genuinely empowers women to reach leadership roles, and even though findings highlighted progress made, particularly through the implementation of various diversity initiatives such as the Gender Equality Action Plan (HEA, 2017) and Gender Equality Enhancement Fund (HEA, 2021) or Athena Swan Charter (AdvanceHE, 2024), substantial challenges remain, particularly in the form of cultural or invisible barriers, such as the "Glass Ceiling" phenomenon (Cotter *et al.*, 2001; Winchester and Browning, 2015; Loden, 2017).

This study provided a clear response to the primary research question concerning the current state of female representation in senior roles within Ireland's higher education sector, which was perceived as lacking women at the top of institutions. While the research objectives were largely met, the complexities surrounding the implementation and effectiveness of gender diversity initiatives suggest that further research is needed. Specifically, the study has shown that while initiatives are beneficial, their impact is often moderated by organisational and cultural dynamics that are not easily addressed.

One key contribution of this research was the identification of gaps in the existing literature, particularly concerning the practical application of gender diversity initiatives and their effectiveness in breaking barriers to women's advancement in academia. This research paves the way for future studies to explore issues in greater depth, particularly through longitudinal or comparative analyses across various sectors/regions.

Although this dissertation was limited to the context of third-level educational institutions in Ireland, research findings were relevant to offer clear recommendations that can be applied more broadly, which emphasise the need for visible, well-communicated diversity initiatives, targeted leadership development, and cultural change, with potential to contribute on gender diversity in leadership across various sectors.

Looking ahead, as the demand for EDI in leadership grows and as institutions recognise the value of diverse perspectives, the focus on creating environments that support gender diversity will become significant. All lessons learned from this research may serve as a guide for both practitioners and researchers in their efforts to close the gender gap in leadership roles, ensuring that the progress is not only maintained but accelerated.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Invitation to potential participants

To: © [REDACTED]

Tue 21/05/2024 18:03

Dear [REDACTED]

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Karina Martins and I am currently pursuing a Master's in International Business Management at Griffith College. As part of my dissertation, I am conducting a study that seeks to explore gender diversity representation (as one part of the broader Equality, Diversity & Inclusion topic) in managerial roles in higher education institutions in Ireland.

Time invested: 5 minutes.

Link: [Gender Diversity Representation Survey](#)

Open until: 07th June 2024

Your Contribution: Invaluable

Your expertise and experience within the higher education sector in Ireland will provide insights that are crucial for the depth and relevance of this study. To this end, I would be immensely grateful if you could spare approximately 5 minutes to complete a survey that aims to gather perspectives from leaders in your field.

Participation in this survey is anonymous. All responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used exclusively for academic purposes. No personal data will be collected or disclosed. The results will be presented in aggregate form in my dissertation research project and will be permanently deleted upon the completion of the research.

I am confident that your contributions will not only enrich my research but also potentially offer new insights into policy-making and strategy development for educational institutions like yours and I would appreciate your participation.

Thank you very much for considering this invitation. Should you have any questions or require further details about the study or its implications, please do not hesitate to contact me at [REDACTED]. I am looking forward to your invaluable input, which will undoubtedly enhance the quality and impact of my research.

Warm regards,

Karina Martins
Master's Candidate in International Business Management
Griffith College Student



P.S. If you know of other colleagues who might also be interested in participating in this study, I would be grateful if you could forward this invitation to them. Thank you!

Appendix B1 – Survey Form and Responses



Gender Diversity Representation Survey

Research conducting a study that seeks to explore to gender diversity representation (as one part of the broader Equality, Diversity & Inclusion topic) in managerial roles in higher education institutions in Ireland.

Time invested: 5 minutes

Open until: 07th June 2024

Your Contribution: Invaluable

Disclaimer:

Participation in this survey is anonymous and voluntary. All responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used exclusively for academic purposes. No personal data will be collected or disclosed. The results will be presented in aggregate form in my dissertation research project and will be permanently deleted upon the completion of the research, in full compliance with GDPR regulations.

Before participating, please be aware that this study has received ethical approval, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If you have any concerns about the ethics of this study or need the Ethics Plain Language Statement, please contact karina.defreitasfernandesmartins@student.griffith.ie.

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Answers	# Responses
What is your nationality?	
American	5
Argentinean	1
Brazilian	2
British	8
Chinese	1
French	1
German	2
Indian	1
Irish	150
Romanian	1
Spanish	2
Tunisian	1

Appendix B2 – Survey Form and Responses

How long have you been living in Ireland?	
Between 1 and 5 years	7
Between 11 and 15 years	2
Between 6 and 10 years	2
Over 15 years	13
Prefer not to disclose	1
Irish Born	150
Which age group would you fall under?	
25 - 34	10
35 - 44	30
45 - 54	77
55 - 64	46
Above 64	11
Prefer not to disclose	1
Which gender do you identify yourself?	
Female	101
Male	72
Non-Binary	2
Which of these best describes your ethnic group?	
Asian	3
Hispanic/Latino	2
Middle Eastern/Nort African	1
Multiracial/Multiethnic	1
North-American	1
White	167
How many languages do you speak?	
1	77
2	61
3	27
4	7
More than 5	3
What is your primary/native language?	
Arabic	1
English	160
French	1
German	2
Gujarati	1
Irish	1
Mandarin Chinese	1
Portuguese	2
Romanian	1
Romanian	1
Russian	1
Spanish	3

Appendix B3 – Survey Form and Responses

What is your marital status?	
Divorced	4
Living with a partner	12
Married	129
Prefer not to disclose	2
Separated	4
Single (never married)	24
Do you have child/children?	
No	55
Yes	120
How many children?	
1	25
2	49
3	32
4 or More than 4	13
Prefer not to disclose	1
None	55
What is your highest level of education completed?	
Doctoral Degree (NFQ L10)	77
Higher Certificate (NFQ L6)	4
Honours Bachelor Degree (NFQ L8)	15
Masters Degree (NFQ L9)	68
Ordinary Bachelor Degree (NFQ L7)	1
Post-Graduate Diploma (NFQ L9)	10
Which region of Ireland do you work?	
Connaught	9
Connaught and Ulster	1
Dublin	113
Leinster (Except Dublin)	28
Munster	22
Remote	2
Which region of Ireland do you live?	
Connaught	11
Dublin	92
Dublin and Galway	1
Leinster (Except Dublin)	43
Munster	24
Prefer not to disclose	1
Ulster	2
USA	1
What is your current working model?	
Hybrid	112
On-Site	58
Remote	4
Retired	1

Appendix B4 – Survey Form and Responses

How long do you spend on commuting to work?	
1 to 2 hours	28
30 to 60 minutes	59
Above 2 hours	14
Less than 30 min	72
No commuting	2
What type of third-level education institution do you work for?	
Private	42
Public	133
Which relates the most to your current position?	
Academics	36
Department Management	66
Executive Management	45
Research/Specialists	1
Specialist Professional	1
Support function	26
What is your contract type?	
Full time Permanent	160
Full time Temporary/Contract	9
Part time Permanent	5
Retired	1
How long have you worked in a managerial position?	
2 to 5 years	35
5 to 10 years	33
Above 10 years	78
Less than 2 years	17
Never	12
Are you currently in a managerial position?	
No	22
Yes	153
How many people do you currently manage?	
From 1 - 5	42
From 6 - 10	21
Over 10	90
(blank)	22
How would you rate the overall gender diversity in managerial and senior positions within your institution?	
Good	71
Neutral	30
Poor	19
Very Good	53
Very Poor	2

Appendix B5 – Survey Form and Responses

Based on the current organizational structure of the institution you work for, what percentage of Directors are female?	
11% - 20%	12
21% - 30%	21
31% - 40%	42
41% - 50%	56
51% - 60%	30
I am not sure/I don't know enough about this.	7
Less than 10%	1
Over 61%	6
Based on the current organizational structure of the institution you work for, what percentage of Directors are female?	
11% - 20%	7
21% - 30%	13
31% - 40%	34
41% - 50%	41
51% - 60%	17
I am not sure/I don't know enough about this.	22
Less than 10%	34
Over 61%	7
Based on the current organizational structure of the institution you work for, what percentage of Heads of Department are female?	
11% - 20%	6
21% - 30%	20
31% - 40%	38
41% - 50%	51
51% - 60%	24
I am not sure/I don't know enough about this.	22
Less than 10%	2
Over 61%	12
How effective do you think these initiatives or policies have been in promoting gender diversity in managerial and senior positions?	
No	106
Prefer not to say	2
Yes	67
Gender diversity in managerial and senior positions at my institution is reflective of the gender diversity in the broader educational sector.	
0	10
1	10
2	36
3	55
4	50
5	14
Women are underrepresented in senior and managerial positions at my institution.	
0	28
1	40
2	25
3	37
4	25
5	20

Appendix B6 – Survey Form and Responses

There is a transparent and fair promotion process at my institution that equally benefits all genders.	
0	11
1	18
2	14
3	31
4	53
5	48
My institution actively implements initiatives to reduce gender disparities in leadership roles.	
0	11
1	11
2	24
3	39
4	60
5	30
There is sufficient mentorship and support for women to advance to senior and managerial positions at my institution.	
0	11
1	14
2	32
3	48
4	52
5	18
Flexible working arrangements to accommodate for family and personal responsibilities are adequately provided at my institution.	
0	4
1	13
2	31
3	42
4	59
5	26
Gender bias affects the hiring and promotion processes at my institution.	
0	45
1	52
2	31
3	26
4	14
5	7
Equal pay for equal work is strictly enforced at my institution regardless of gender.	
0	13
1	7
2	17
3	23
4	44
5	71

Appendix B7 – Survey Form and Responses

Leadership training opportunities are equally accessible to all employees regardless of their gender at my institution.	
0	5
1	7
2	12
3	26
4	48
5	77
The current gender diversity initiatives at my institution are sufficient to create a balanced representation in senior and managerial roles.	
0	8
1	19
2	34
3	36
4	51
5	27

Appendix C – Likert Scale Analysis Based on % Rate of Respondents

My institution actively implements initiatives to reduce gender disparities in leadership roles.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 15%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 10%
2: 20%
3: 25%
4: 20%
5 (Strongly Agree): 10%

There is sufficient mentorship and support for women to advance to senior and managerial positions at my institution.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 20%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 15%
2: 20%
3: 20%
4: 15%
5 (Strongly Agree): 10%

Flexible working arrangements to accommodate for family and personal responsibilities are adequately provided at my institution.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 10%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 5%
2: 20%
3: 25%
4: 30%
5 (Strongly Agree): 10%

Gender bias affects the hiring and promotion processes at my institution.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 25%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 35%

2: 20%
3: 10%
4: 5%
5 (Strongly Agree): 5%

Equal pay for equal work is strictly enforced at my institution regardless of gender.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 10%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 5%
2: 10%
3: 20%
4: 35%
5 (Strongly Agree): 20%

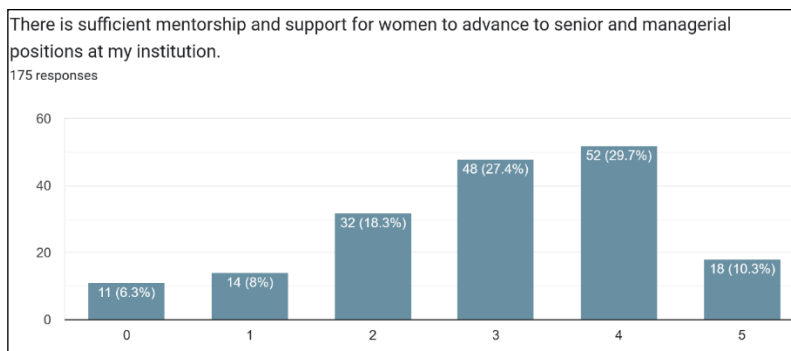
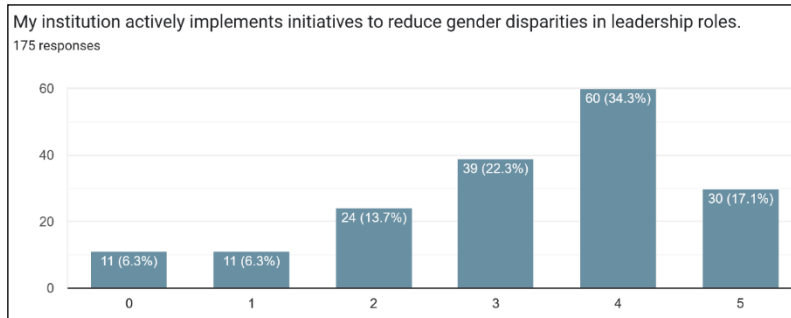
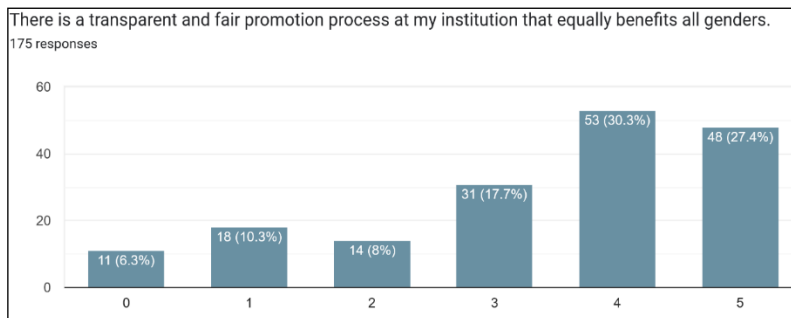
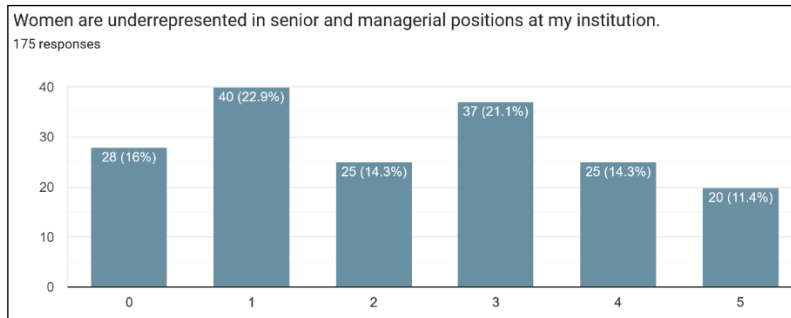
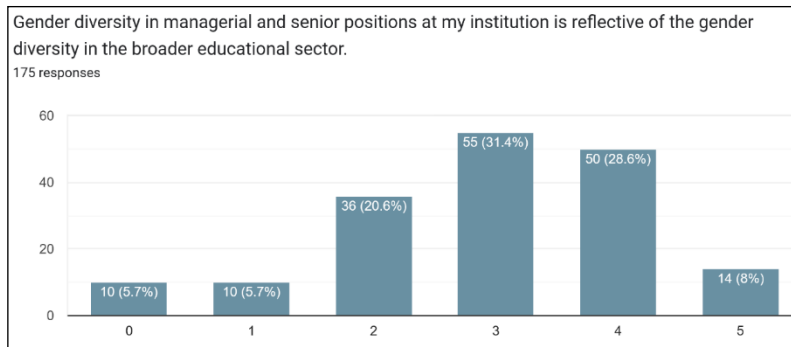
Leadership training opportunities are equally accessible to all employees regardless of their gender at my institution.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 5%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 5%
2: 10%
3: 20%
4: 35%
5 (Strongly Agree): 25%

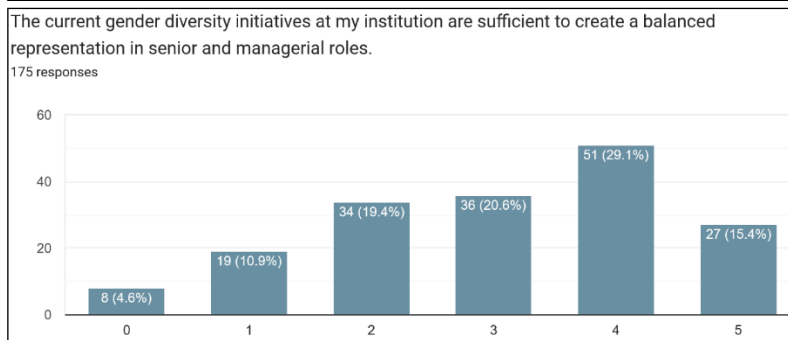
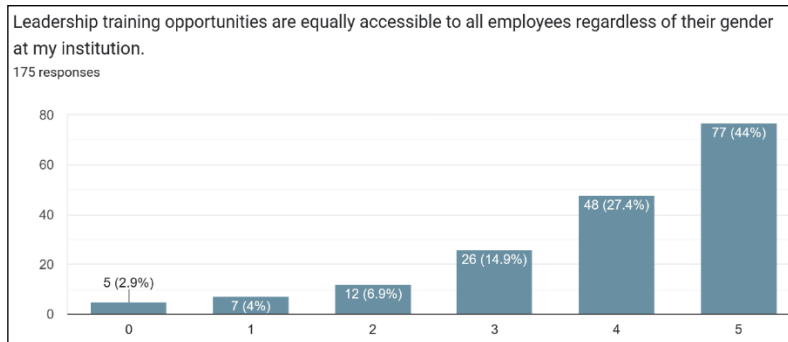
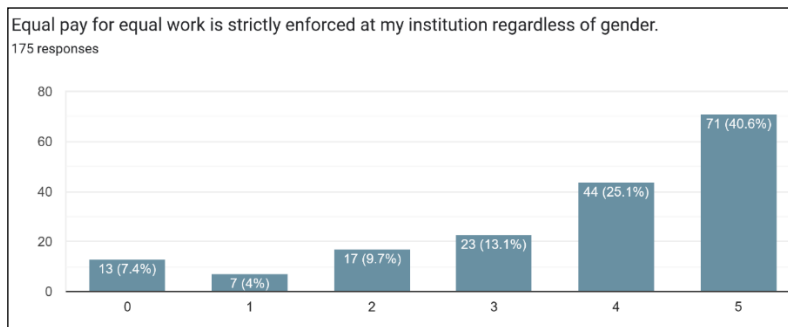
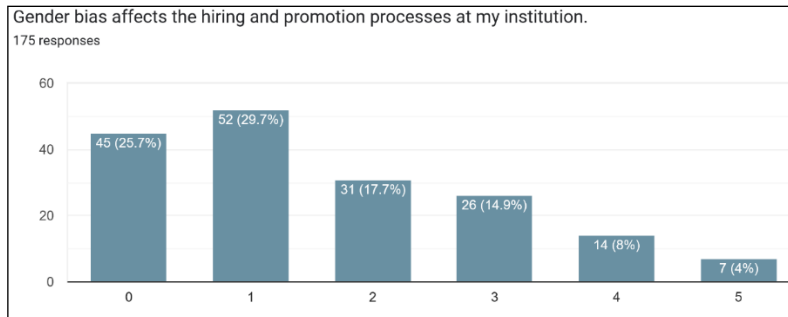
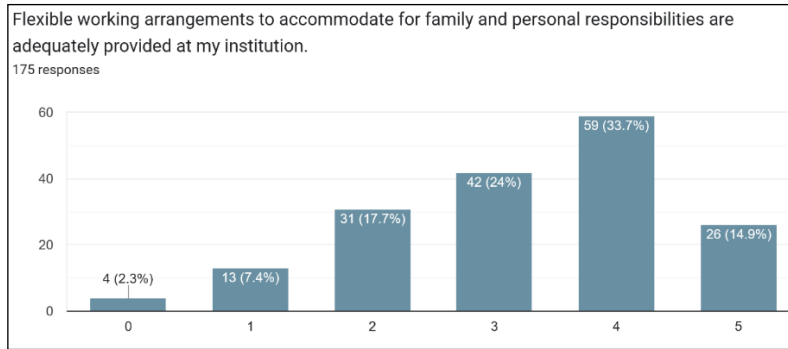
The current gender diversity initiatives at my institution are sufficient to create a balanced representation in senior and managerial roles.

0 (Do not know or no opinion): 15%
1 (Strongly Disagree): 10%
2: 25%
3: 25%
4: 15%
5 (Strongly Agree): 10%

Appendix D1 – Likert Scale Graphs



Appendix D2 – Likert Scale Graphs



Appendix E – Language Skills

Gender	Primary language	Spoken Languages	Respondents	%
Female	English	1	43	42.6%
Female	English	2	30	29.7%
Female	Portuguese	2	2	2.0%
Female	Spanish	2	2	2.0%
Female	Russian	2	1	1.0%
Female	English	3	13	12.9%
Female	Romanian	3	2	2.0%
Female	Gujarati	3	1	1.0%
Female	Mandarin Chinese	3	1	1.0%
Female	English	4	4	4.0%
Female	English	More than 5	2	2.0%
Male	English	1	34	47.2%
Male	English	2	23	31.9%
Male	French	2	1	1.4%
Male	Irish	2	1	1.4%
Male	Spanish	2	1	1.4%
Male	English	3	7	9.7%
Male	Arabic	3	1	1.4%
Male	German	3	1	1.4%
Male	English	4	2	2.8%
Male	German	More than 5	1	1.4%
Non-Binary	English	2	1	50.0%
Non-Binary	English	4	1	50.0%

Appendix F – Marital Status

Marital status	Gender	Managers	Non-managers	Respondents
Divorced	Female	4	-	4
Living with a partner	Female	7	2	9
Living with a partner	Female	59	7	66
Living with a partner	Female	2	1	3
Married	Female	18	1	19
Married	Male	2	-	2
Prefer not to disclose	Male	55	8	63
Separated	Male	2	-	2
Separated	Male	1	-	1
Single (never married)	Male	2	2	4
Single (never married)	Non-Binary	-	1	1
Single (never married)	Non-Binary	1	-	1