



# Bridging Perceptions: Gender Equality in the Eyes of Faculty and Students at Initao College

**Sydney Jay B. Villarin**

Initao College

Initao, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

[sydneyvillarin1733@gmail.com](mailto:sydneyvillarin1733@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1346-0681>

**Divina Gracia C. Divino**

Initao College

Initao, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

[divine.divino.ed@gmail.com](mailto:divine.divino.ed@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7233-5457>

**Lily France J. Echavez**

Initao College

Initao, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

[lilyfrancea386@gmail.com](mailto:lilyfrancea386@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8646-3492>

**Kemski P. Lumahang**

Initao College

Initao, Misamis Oriental, Philippines

[kemski611@gmail.com](mailto:kemski611@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8646-3492>

**Abstract.** This study investigates the perceptions of gender equality in the classroom and academic environment at Initao College, focusing on the awareness of gender equality principles, the integration of gender equality concepts into teaching methods, and the influence of faculty members' practices on students. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining a survey and thematic analysis. The survey was administered to 27 faculty members and 305 students from various programs (BEED, BSHM, BSCRIM, and BSBA), and followed by an analysis of open-ended responses to gain deeper insights. Findings reveal that while both faculty and students are generally aware of gender equality principles, faculty members hold significantly more positive perceptions regarding the integration of these concepts into the curriculum and teaching methods compared to students, although perceptions were consistent across genders. Faculty members largely support gender equality through inclusive teaching practices, while students identified specific areas for improvement, including policies regarding dress codes and gender expression, and more consistent efforts to challenge gender stereotypes. The study highlights the need for continuous gender sensitivity training, policy revisions, and the promotion of inclusivity in institutional culture. Recommendations for enhancing gender equality include regular seminars, policy review, student involvement, and a consistent evaluation of gender equality practices within the college.

**Keywords:** *Gender Equality, Classroom Environment, Academic Environment, Mixed-Methods, Faculty, Students, Inclusivity, Gender Sensitivity, Institutional Policies, Initao College*

## Introduction

Gender equality in education remains a pressing concern globally, as institutions strive to cultivate inclusive and equitable academic environments. Higher education, in particular, carries the responsibility of not only disseminating knowledge but also modeling social justice and inclusivity for a diverse population of learners (UNESCO, 2015). While policies advocating gender fairness have gained traction, deeply rooted stereotypes and institutional norms continue to shape classroom dynamics in ways that may unintentionally disadvantage certain gender groups.

This study aims to investigate the perceptions of gender equality among faculty and students at Initao College, with a focus on the classroom and academic environment. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of gender equality in the classroom and academic environment as perceived by faculty and students at Initao College?
2. What is the level of awareness of gender equality principles among faculty and students at Initao College?
3. To what extent are gender equality concepts incorporated into the teaching methods and curricula at Initao College?
4. Is there a significant difference in these dimensions (perceptions, awareness, and integration) between male and female faculty members and students?
5. Is there a significant difference in these dimensions between faculty and students?
6. How do students perceive faculty members' teaching methods as supporting or hindering gender equality in the classroom at Initao College?
7. What specific improvements do students suggest to further promote gender equality at Initao College?

This study is anchored in three interrelated theoretical frameworks: Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), which explains how internalized beliefs shape gendered behavior; Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which recognizes the overlapping dimensions of identity and inequality; and Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), which explores how societal expectations influence individual behavior in academic settings. These frameworks collectively guide the investigation into how gender is perceived and enacted within the institutional context of Initao College.

Although previous literature underscores the importance of inclusive pedagogy and gender-responsive policies, limited research has explored how these are perceived and practiced in rural, community-based higher education institutions in the Philippines. This study aims to fill that gap by examining how gender equality is understood, experienced, and integrated by both faculty and students at Initao College. Initial insights suggest a disparity in how faculty and students perceive the integration of gender equality, as well as inconsistencies in institutional practices such as dress codes and gender expression policies.

By investigating these perceptions, this study not only identifies existing strengths but also highlights critical areas for improvement. The findings aim to inform policy



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development, enhance gender sensitivity training, and contribute to the ongoing national discourse on inclusive education.

### 1.1 Literature Review

Achieving gender equality in education remains a significant concern for institutions seeking to foster inclusive, equitable learning environments. In the context of higher education, the interplay between institutional culture, teaching practices, and policy structures plays a vital role in shaping how gender inclusivity is understood and practiced. This literature review draws on three theoretical lenses to examine these dynamics: Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), which explains how internalized schemas guide gendered behavior; Intersectionality Theory (Crenshaw, 1989), which highlights the multidimensionality of identity and marginalization; and Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), which underscores how societal expectations influence behavior in educational contexts.

Scholars argue that inclusive academic environments are foundational to educational success and social development. Fabes et al. (2019) and Siebert (2020) emphasize that a gender-responsive classroom promotes equal participation and fosters belongingness, while Vizcarra-Garcia (2021) stresses the value of open dialogue in reducing discomfort surrounding gender discussions. These findings resonate with the expectations of Social Role Theory, as they reflect the ongoing negotiation of expected behaviors within gendered social norms. However, the literature also indicates that such inclusivity may not always be fully realized in practice, especially in rural institutions where traditional roles may remain dominant.

Awareness of gender equality principles is frequently cited as a crucial precursor to effective implementation. Clavero and Galligan (2021) and Yarmolynska et al. (2021) find that faculty development programs significantly improve awareness and encourage the translation of knowledge into action. However, studies by Chuang (2019) and Kuppuswami & Ferreira (2022) caution that awareness alone is insufficient unless institutions embed these principles into ongoing programs and policies. Gender Schema Theory is particularly relevant here, as these studies suggest that without active reshaping of internalized beliefs and institutional practices, awareness may remain superficial.

The integration of gender equality into teaching practices and curricula has received increasing attention in recent years. Tarrayo and Potestades (2023) and Curaming and Curaming (2020) argue that inclusive curricula require both diverse content and faculty who are equipped to critically engage with gender issues. This aligns with Intersectionality Theory, which reminds educators that gender cannot be understood in isolation but must be considered alongside other identities. Despite widespread recognition of the importance of inclusive teaching, implementation is often inconsistent, and many institutions lack formal mechanisms to monitor and support such integration.

Across the reviewed literature, several recurring themes emerge: the need for comprehensive training, the value of inclusive policies, and the impact of faculty attitudes and behaviors on student experiences. These themes are often treated in isolation, but this study synthesizes them to understand how they interact within a specific institutional context. Notably, while numerous studies support the value

of gender equality training and inclusive teaching, few explore the faculty-student perception gap regarding the success and visibility of these efforts.

In the case of Initao College, these gaps are particularly relevant. While policies and practices exist to promote gender equality, their interpretation and perceived effectiveness may differ between faculty and students. Moreover, institutional norms—such as dress codes and grooming policies—may inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles, despite broader intentions of inclusivity. This research addresses a critical gap in the literature by examining how gender equality is both understood and enacted within a regional higher education institution, with specific attention to perceived discrepancies and overlooked institutional barriers.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to investigate perceptions and practices related to gender equality at Initao College. This design was chosen to effectively address the multidimensional nature of the research questions, which required both quantitative measurement and qualitative elaboration. In the first phase, a structured survey was administered to gather quantitative data from faculty and students regarding their perceptions of gender equality in the classroom and academic environment, their awareness of gender equality principles, and the extent to which these principles are integrated into teaching methods and curricula. The use of Likert-scale items allowed for the quantification of attitudes and facilitated statistical comparisons across gender and role groups. In the second phase, qualitative data were collected through open-ended survey responses and follow-up interviews with selected students. These data were analyzed using thematic analysis to explore in greater depth how gender equality is experienced, supported, or hindered in the classroom. This phase provided contextual insights that helped explain and elaborate on patterns observed in the quantitative findings. The sequential design was appropriate for this study as it enabled the researchers to first establish broad trends through survey data and then interpret those trends through the lived experiences and perspectives of students, thereby offering a comprehensive understanding of gender equality within the college setting.

While the sequential design enabled the researchers to first establish broad trends and then interpret them through the lived experiences of students, certain limitations are inherent in the chosen methodology. The reliance on self-reported data may be influenced by social desirability bias, and while the sample was drawn from multiple academic programs, the findings may not be generalizable beyond the institutional context. Additionally, the qualitative phase, though insightful, was limited in scope to a subset of participants due to time constraints. Despite these considerations, the design allowed for a comprehensive and layered understanding of gender equality within the college setting, aligning the breadth of survey data with the depth of qualitative perspectives.

### **Research Locale**

The research was conducted at Initao College, located in Initao, Misamis Oriental, a province in the Northern Mindanao region of the Philippines. Initao College is a public higher education institution that offers a variety of undergraduate programs, including courses in education, business administration, criminology, and



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hospitality management. It serves a diverse student body, with students coming from various backgrounds, including local residents of Initao and neighboring towns. The college is known for its commitment to academic excellence and the holistic development of its students, emphasizing values such as integrity, respect, and inclusivity. Situated in a rural setting, Initao College is central to the community's educational, social, and cultural activities. The research locale is particularly significant as it provides insights into how gender equality is integrated into the academic and social fabric of a regional higher education institution in the Philippines.

### **Research Participants**

The participants in this study comprised 27 faculty members and 305 students from various programs at Initao College. The faculty members included instructors and professors from different academic departments, with varying levels of teaching experience. They were selected through purposive sampling based on their active involvement in teaching and direct influence on the academic environment, making them well-positioned to provide insights into the integration of gender equality concepts into teaching methods, curricula, and classroom dynamics. For the student participants, stratified random sampling was employed to ensure adequate representation from each of the four undergraduate programs: Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED), Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM), Bachelor of Science in Criminology (BSCRIM), and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA). The total student sample size of 305 was determined using Slovin's formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, based on the total student population of the college. This sampling approach ensured a diverse and representative cross-section of students, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of their perceptions of gender equality in the classroom and broader academic environment. Both the faculty and student participants played a vital role in providing meaningful perspectives on the implementation and challenges of gender equality within the educational context at Initao College.

### **Research Instrument**

This study employed a mixed-methods research instrument consisting of a structured survey and qualitative interview protocols. The survey was developed based on a comprehensive review of related literature and existing tools assessing gender equality in educational settings. It underwent expert validation by three education and gender studies specialists, followed by pilot testing with a comparable group of 30 students and 5 faculty members. The reliability of the instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding high internal consistency for the three main constructs: perceptions of gender equality in the classroom ( $\alpha = 0.936$ ), awareness of gender equality principles ( $\alpha = 0.935$ ), and integration of gender equality concepts into teaching methods ( $\alpha = 0.950$ ). For the qualitative component, open-ended survey responses and semi-structured interview data were subjected to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis procedure. This included familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Coding was conducted manually by the researchers and verified through peer debriefing to ensure consistency and minimize bias. This detailed and triangulated approach allowed for a rich and credible exploration of gender equality at Initao College, combining quantifiable trends with contextualized narratives from both faculty and students.

### Statistical Treatment

Data analysis in this study involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data from the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, to assess the levels of awareness and perceptions of gender equality among faculty and students. Inferential statistics, such as Mann-Whitney U Test, were used to determine significant differences in perceptions between different groups (e.g., male vs. female, faculty vs. students). For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes from open-ended responses and interviews, providing deeper insights into how gender equality is supported or hindered in teaching practices. The combination of these methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of gender equality at Initao College.

### Data Gathering Procedure and Ethical Considerations

The data gathering procedure for this study involved the use of Google Forms to collect responses from both faculty and students at Initao College. A structured survey with both closed and open-ended questions was distributed to participants. The closed-ended questions allowed for the collection of quantitative data, while the open-ended questions provided qualitative insights into the participants' perceptions of gender equality in the academic environment. The participants were given a specific time frame to complete the survey, and reminders were sent to ensure adequate response rates.

In terms of ethical considerations, the study adhered to principles of confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study and assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. Consent was obtained before participants began the survey, and they were given the option to withdraw at any point without consequences. Additionally, the study ensured that no identifying information was collected to protect the privacy of participants. The findings were presented in aggregate form, ensuring that no individual's responses could be traced back to them.

## Results and Discussions

### I: What is the level of gender equality in the classroom and academic environment as perceived by faculty and students at Initao College?

**Table 1.**

*Level of Gender Equality in the Classroom and Academic Environment as Perceived by Faculty and Students at Initao College*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. The classroom environment at Initao College is welcoming to all genders.	3.50	0.59	SA
2. I feel that all students regardless of gender are treated equally by faculty members.	3.34	0.63	SA
3. Classroom discussions are conducted in a gender-neutral and inclusive manner.	3.28	0.59	SA
4. Faculty members address gender-based issues fairly in their teaching.	3.28	0.62	SA



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5. The academic environment at Initao College supports gender equality in all aspects.	3.28	0.64	SA
6. There is equal participation from all genders in group activities.	3.37	0.60	SA
7. Gender stereotypes are addressed and challenged in classroom settings.	3.19	0.62	A
8. Students feel comfortable voicing concerns about gender equality in the academic environment.	3.22	0.62	A
9. Faculty members encourage equal opportunities for all genders in academic projects.	3.29	0.60	SA
10. Gender equality is a priority in the classroom management practices at Initao College.	3.20	0.64	A

**Overall Mean**      **3.29**    **0.49**      **VH**

**Legend:** 1.00-1.74 = Strongly Disagree (Very Low); 1.75-2.49 = Disagree (Low); 2.50-3.24 = Agree (High); 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (Very High)

The table on perceptions of gender equality at Initao College provides insights into how faculty and students view gender equality in the classroom and academic environment. The highest mean score of 3.50 (SD = 0.59) reflects that respondents strongly agree that the classroom environment at Initao College is welcoming to all genders. This suggests a broad consensus on the inclusive nature of classroom spaces, highlighting that the institution is fostering an environment that feels open and accepting to students of all gender identities. In contrast, the lowest mean of 3.19 (SD = 0.62) relates to the perception that gender stereotypes are addressed and challenged within the classroom. This indicates a slightly lower agreement level, suggesting that while the college promotes a welcoming environment, actively confronting and addressing gender stereotypes might require further emphasis or support. The overall mean of 3.29 (SD = 0.49) indicates that respondents view the academic environment's support for gender equality very highly, with a consistent perception that the college prioritizes inclusivity across various dimensions.

The high mean scores across most indicators suggest a general consensus among respondents that Initao College actively supports gender equality, particularly in creating a welcoming classroom environment. However, the relatively lower mean scores in areas like challenging gender stereotypes and prioritizing gender equality in classroom management practices suggest potential areas for growth. The narrow range in standard deviations indicates that most respondents share similar views on these issues, pointing to a cohesive perception across the faculty and student body.

These findings imply that while Initao College has made significant strides in fostering gender equality, additional efforts could be directed toward challenging stereotypes and integrating gender equality into classroom management practices. By addressing these areas, the institution can reinforce its commitment to inclusivity, helping students feel more comfortable voicing gender-related concerns and encouraging open dialogues on gender equality issues. Ensuring faculty training on handling gender stereotypes and refining classroom management policies to prioritize gender equality may enhance these perceptions further.

The results align with research by Fabes, et. al. (2019), which emphasizes that an inclusive classroom environment is foundational to gender equality in education. Similarly, Siebert (2020) highlight the importance of addressing stereotypes to

foster an equitable academic setting. Additionally, Vizcarra-Garcia (2021) suggest that encouraging open discussions about gender equality increases student comfort in addressing these issues, promoting a more supportive learning environment. These studies support the interpretation that while creating a welcoming environment is crucial, actively addressing gender biases and stereotypes is equally essential for comprehensive gender equality in academic settings.

## II: What is the level of awareness of gender equality principles among faculty and students at Initao College?

**Table 2.**  
*Level of Awareness of Gender Equality Principles*

Indicators	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. I am aware of the key principles of gender equality.	3.35	0.57	SA
2. Faculty members at Initao College are knowledgeable about gender equality principles.	3.31	0.60	SA
3. I have received training or education on gender equality principles.	3.12	0.61	A
4. Gender equality is adequately covered in faculty development programs.	3.17	0.54	A
5. I understand how gender equality principles apply to classroom interactions.	3.30	0.55	SA
6. Awareness of gender equality issues is promoted among students at Initao College.	3.21	0.58	A
7. Faculty members frequently incorporate discussions about gender equality in their teaching.	3.16	0.58	A
8. Gender equality principles are integrated into academic policies at Initao College.	3.18	0.58	A
9. I am aware of the resources available at Initao College for addressing gender equality concerns.	3.20	0.60	A
10. Students are encouraged to learn about gender equality through academic and extracurricular activities.	3.30	0.58	SA
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.23</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<b>H</b>

**Legend:** 1.00-1.74 = Strongly Disagree (Very Low); 1.75-2.49 = Disagree (Low); 2.50-3.24 = Agree (High); 3.25-4.00 = Strongly Agree (Very High)

The table on the level of awareness of gender equality principles among faculty and students at Initao College highlights both strengths and potential areas for improvement in understanding and incorporating these principles within the institution. The highest mean score of 3.35 (SD = 0.57) indicates strong agreement among respondents that they are aware of the key principles of gender equality, suggesting that the basic understanding of gender equality concepts is well-established among both faculty and students. In contrast, the lowest mean score of 3.12 (SD = 0.61) corresponds to respondents' perceptions of their training or education on gender equality principles. This indicates that while respondents recognize the importance of gender equality, they may feel less confident in the adequacy or frequency of their formal education or training on these principles. The overall mean score of 3.23 (SD = 0.46) shows a high level of awareness of gender equality principles, reflecting a generally positive awareness but also indicating room for more robust integration of these principles into educational programming and policies.



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The data reveals that while faculty and students possess a general awareness of gender equality principles, there is variability in terms of exposure to formal training and integration of gender equality into policies and faculty development programs. This suggests that knowledge is largely theoretical, with less emphasis on practical training or policy application. The relatively low standard deviations indicate consistency in these perceptions, reinforcing that the community as a whole shares similar views on the current state of gender equality awareness at the college.

The findings imply that while Initao College has established a foundational awareness of gender equality principles, further efforts could enhance this awareness by expanding faculty training programs and ensuring that gender equality principles are explicitly incorporated into both academic policies and classroom practices. Increasing opportunities for faculty and students to engage in discussions and activities focused on gender equality could further solidify their understanding and promote greater application of these principles in daily academic interactions. Offering more comprehensive training in gender equality could help bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical implementation.

These findings align with research by Condron, et. al. (2022), Kollmayer, et. al. (2020), and Kuppuswami & Ferreira (2022), which emphasize the need for comprehensive training programs to move beyond basic awareness toward practical understanding and application of gender equality principles. Similarly, Yarmolynska, et. al. (2020) and Chuang (2019) highlight that while general awareness is a positive starting point, institutions benefit from structured programs that embed gender equality more deeply into organizational policies and practices. Further, Clavero and Galligan (2021) suggest that consistent inclusion of gender equality in faculty development can significantly enhance both awareness and application of these principles, thereby creating a more inclusive and equitable academic environment.

### **III: To what extent are gender equality concepts incorporated into the teaching methods and curricula at Initao College?**

**Table 3.**

*Extent of Gender Equality Concepts Incorporated into the Teaching Methods and Curricular*

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1. Gender equality concepts are included in the curriculum for all subjects.	3.15	0.57	A
2. Faculty members actively use teaching methods that promote gender equality.	3.16	0.57	A
3. Course materials reflect diverse perspectives on gender issues.	3.13	0.55	A
4. Gender equality is considered when designing academic assessments.	3.14	0.55	A
5. The integration of gender equality concepts into teaching is regularly evaluated.	3.11	0.56	A
6. Faculty members receive support for incorporating gender equality into their teaching practices.	3.12	0.57	A

7. There are specific guidelines for integrating gender equality into the curriculum at Initao College.	3.15	0.57	A
8. The teaching methods used at Initao College cater to the needs of all genders.	3.20	0.58	A
9. Students are exposed to diverse gender perspectives through the curriculum.	3.17	0.58	A
10. The effectiveness of gender equality integration in teaching methods is assessed and improved regularly.	3.21	0.57	A
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>0.47</b>	<b>H</b>

The table examining the extent to which gender equality concepts are integrated into teaching methods and curricula at Initao College provides insights into current practices and areas where further incorporation could be beneficial. The highest mean score of 3.21 (SD = 0.57) indicates that respondents generally agree that the effectiveness of gender equality integration in teaching methods is assessed and improved regularly, suggesting an openness to evaluation and improvement in this area. Conversely, the lowest mean score of 3.11 (SD = 0.56) corresponds to the perception that the integration of gender equality concepts into teaching is regularly evaluated. This result suggests there may be inconsistencies or limitations in how regularly gender equality integration is formally assessed within the curriculum and teaching practices. The overall mean of 3.15 (SD = 0.47) shows a high level of agreement that gender equality concepts are present in teaching methods and curricula at Initao College, though there is potential for further reinforcement in practice.

The data suggests that while gender equality is recognized and present within the curriculum, it may not be consistently embedded in all subjects or methods. The relatively consistent standard deviations across indicators point to a shared perspective among respondents that gender equality is integrated into the educational approach but may lack depth in certain areas. Indicators like course material diversity, faculty support, and guidelines for curriculum integration reflect a need for more explicit resources and regular evaluations to ensure a more comprehensive approach.

These findings imply that Initao College has made progress in integrating gender equality concepts but may benefit from strengthening guidelines, resources, and periodic evaluations to support faculty and ensure consistent application across subjects. Providing faculty with clearer guidelines and more targeted support for embedding gender equality principles into teaching methods could enhance these efforts. Consistent evaluation frameworks can also help in refining gender equality integration and ensuring that curriculum and assessment practices align with institutional values on inclusivity.

These results align with research by Tarrayo (2021) and Simeon (2022), who advocate for explicit guidelines and regular evaluations as essential for integrating gender equality concepts effectively into curriculum and teaching methods. Additionally, Tarrayo, et. al. (2021) and Curaming and Curaming (2020) emphasize that diversity in course materials and support for faculty are critical to creating a truly inclusive curriculum. Further, Tarrayo and Potestades (2023) highlight the importance of assessing the impact of gender equality concepts

within teaching, noting that ongoing assessments help ensure these concepts remain relevant and effectively integrated across academic disciplines.

**IV: 4. Is there a significant difference in these dimensions (perceptions, awareness, and integration) between male and female faculty members and students?**

**Table 4.**

*Difference in the Dimensions (Perceptions, Awareness, And Integration) between Male and Female Faculty Members and Students*

Profile		Perception of Gender Equality		Test Statistic-value	p-value	Remarks
		Mean	QI			
Sex	Male	3.28	VH	12677	0.564	NS
	Female	3.30	VH			
Profile		Awareness of Gender Equality Principles		Test Statistic-value	p-value	Remarks
		Mean	QI			
Sex	Male	3.21	H	12628	0.522	NS
	Female	3.25	VH			
Profile		Integration of Gender Equality Concepts		Test Statistic-value	p-value	Remarks
		Mean	QI			
Sex	Male	3.12	H	12411	0.358	NS
	Female	3.18	H			

The table explores whether there are significant differences between male and female faculty members and students regarding their perceptions of gender equality in the classroom, awareness of gender equality principles, and the integration of gender equality concepts into teaching methods and curricula at Initao College. The table reveals that female respondents had slightly higher mean scores across all three dimensions: perception of gender equality (Mean = 3.30), awareness of gender equality principles (Mean = 3.25), and integration of gender equality concepts (Mean = 3.18) compared to their male counterparts, whose mean scores were 3.28, 3.21, and 3.12, respectively. However, none of these differences are statistically significant, as indicated by the p-values (p = 0.564, 0.522, and 0.358, respectively), all above the 0.05 threshold. This lack of statistical significance (NS) suggests that both male and female respondents perceive gender equality in similar ways across these three dimensions.

These results suggest a general consensus among male and female faculty and students regarding gender equality in the academic environment, indicating that perceptions of gender equality, awareness, and curriculum integration are aligned across genders. The high consistency in these perceptions points to a shared understanding of gender equality principles and their application within Initao College, reinforcing that the college community views gender equality in a relatively unified manner, regardless of gender. This alignment can enhance collaborative efforts to further embed gender equality in academic practices.

The findings imply that Initao College has fostered a relatively equitable environment in which perceptions of gender equality are consistent across genders. This unified perception can serve as a strong foundation for advancing

gender equality initiatives, as the lack of significant disparity suggests that both male and female faculty and students would likely support further efforts to integrate gender equality principles into the curriculum and teaching methods. Additionally, the consistent high scores indicate that gender equality is perceived positively within the academic environment, though continuing to address nuanced differences may further strengthen inclusivity.

These results are consistent with research by Valencia (2017), which found that when educational institutions implement gender equality training and policies effectively, differences in gender-related perceptions among faculty and students tend to diminish. Similarly, Sumadsad and Tuazon (2016) suggest that a shared understanding of gender equality is a critical outcome of comprehensive gender inclusivity programs, leading to higher levels of cooperation in fostering equitable educational environments. Lastly, Villegas (2021) highlight that the perception of gender equality within an institution positively correlates with the support for inclusive policies, underscoring the importance of institutional alignment across genders in advancing equity and inclusion initiatives.

Though the differences in perception between male and female respondents were not statistically significant, the marginally higher ratings from female participants suggest a subtle trend. This may stem from heightened sensitivity or personal encounters with gender bias, which influence how policies and practices are internalized. Drawing again on Intersectionality Theory, women, particularly those who may experience compounded marginalization (e.g., by socioeconomic status or gender expression), are more likely to be attuned to subtle institutional signals of inclusivity or exclusion. Gender Schema Theory further explains how early conditioning might influence how differently gendered individuals evaluate the same educational environment.

#### V: Is there a significant difference in these dimensions between faculty and students?

**Table 5.**  
*Difference in the Dimensions Between Faculty and Students*

Profile		Perception of Gender Equality		Test Statistic-value	p-value	Remarks
		Mean	QI			
<b>Group</b>	Students	3.24	H	645	0.001	S
	Faculty	3.96	VH			
Profile		Awareness of Gender Equality Principles		Test Statistic-value	p-value	Remarks
		Mean	QI			
<b>Group</b>	Students	3.18	H	977	0.001	S
	Faculty	3.83	VH			
Profile		Integration of Gender Equality Concepts		Test Statistic-value	p-value	Remarks
		Mean	QI			
<b>Group</b>	Students	3.09	H	719	0.001	S
	Faculty	3.86	VH			

The table examines whether there are significant differences between faculty and students regarding their perceptions of gender equality in the classroom and



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academic environment, awareness of gender equality principles, and integration of gender equality concepts into teaching methods and curricula at Initao College. Faculty members reported higher mean scores across all three dimensions: perception of gender equality (Mean = 3.96), awareness of gender equality principles (Mean = 3.83), and integration of gender equality concepts (Mean = 3.86). By comparison, students reported lower mean scores in each area, with perception of gender equality at 3.24, awareness of gender equality principles at 3.18, and integration of gender equality concepts at 3.09. Each comparison shows a significant difference, with p-values of 0.001, indicating a statistically significant difference (S) between faculty and students in all dimensions.

The substantial difference in responses suggests that faculty at Initao College perceive the institution's gender equality measures more positively than students. Faculty members feel more strongly that the academic environment supports gender equality, that awareness of gender equality principles is high, and that these principles are well integrated into teaching methods and curricula. Conversely, students appear to perceive a gap in these areas, indicating that they may not experience or observe the same level of gender equality or integration as faculty members do.

The findings suggest that while faculty perceive gender equality as well-supported and integrated into the curriculum, students do not share this perception to the same extent. This discrepancy points to a need for Initao College to address any communication gaps or inconsistencies in the application of gender equality practices. Bridging this perception gap could involve increasing student involvement in gender equality initiatives or providing more visible, accessible gender equality resources and training to students. Ensuring that students feel gender equality is adequately represented and integrated could lead to a more unified, inclusive academic environment.

These findings align with Hebl and King's (2019) study, which showed that faculty often rate institutional gender inclusivity efforts more positively than students, particularly in areas related to curriculum and teaching practices. Furthermore, similar results were found by Lei, et. al. (2018), who reported that discrepancies in gender equality perceptions can stem from different roles within an institution, with faculty having more awareness of internal policies than students. Additionally, Gumba (2013) emphasizes that engaging students directly in gender equality initiatives helps mitigate perception gaps, creating a more cohesive environment that equally reflects the principles of inclusivity for both faculty and students.

The significant differences between faculty and student perceptions reflect an important institutional gap. Faculty members, by virtue of their participation in development programs and policy discussions, may have greater exposure to gender inclusivity frameworks, thereby rating integration more positively. Conversely, students experience these initiatives primarily through classroom interactions and are thus more sensitive to inconsistencies or omissions. Social Role Theory contextualizes this divergence: as authority figures, faculty are positioned as implementers of policy, which can foster a more optimistic self-assessment. Students, lacking this institutional role, may perceive gaps more acutely, particularly if faculty intentions are not clearly translated into daily practice. This disparity highlights the need for improved communication and engagement strategies that align perception and practice.

**VI: How do students perceive faculty members' teaching methods as supporting or hindering gender equality in the classroom at Initao College?**

**Table 6.**  
*Students' Experience on How Faculty Members either Support or Hinder Gender Equality in Their Teaching Methods*

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Significant Statements	General Description of the Theme
Faculty Support for Gender Equality	Faculty participation in gender equality seminars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Faculty members are able to attend/participate a gender and development seminar." (Participant 2)</li> </ul>	Faculty actively support gender equality by attending relevant seminars that promote awareness.
	Use of inclusive teaching practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Faculty members support gender equality by incorporating diverse perspectives into their curriculum and actively challenging gender stereotypes in class discussions." (Participant 10);</li> <li>- "Faculty members play a crucial role in shaping students' perspectives and fostering an inclusive learning environment." (Participant 15)</li> </ul>	Faculty foster an inclusive learning environment through their teaching methods and use of gender-neutral language.
	Respect and fair treatment for all genders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Faculty members treat all students in Initao College equally regardless of one's gender." (Participant 86);</li> <li>- "The faculty are aware of gender equality and they do support of every individuals matters." (Participant 40);</li> <li>- "Faculty members support gender equality by creating a safe space for all students to share their ideas that fosters an equal learning environment." (Participant 60)</li> </ul>	Faculty members demonstrate respect and equal treatment for all students, regardless of gender, and create safe spaces for expression.
	Acceptance of LGBTQ+ students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "They support student belong to LGBTQ." (Participant 19);</li> <li>- "For instance, in our TLE subject, we had carpentry; we women were also included in the activity." (Participant 63);</li> <li>- "The faculties are supportive and they understand the student situations." (Participant 33)</li> </ul>	Faculty accept and support students from the LGBTQ+ community, integrating them fully into class activities and recognizing their identity.
	Challenging gender stereotypes in teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Faculty members support gender equality by using inclusive language and examples that appeal to different genders." (Participant 88);</li> <li>- "They promote gender equality in every discussion." (Participant 9)</li> </ul>	Faculty actively challenge gender stereotypes through their teaching methods and class discussions.
Faculty Hindering Gender Equality	Reinforcement of traditional gender roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "For example, teachers might assign roles to students in role plays based on their biological gender or influence student dress codes." (Participant 53);</li> <li>- "My classmate was discouraged to continue his studies here in Initao College because one of the faculty members told him to cut his hair. He is a gay." (Participant 26)</li> </ul>	Some faculty hinder gender equality by enforcing traditional gender roles or by not accommodating the expressions of LGBTQ+ students.
	Biases in classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Some of faculty members treated equally. However, I'd experience also</li> </ul>	Some faculty members show biases, such as favoritism,



	dynamics and participation	<p><i>the biases like favoritism.</i>" (Participant 55);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "Faculty can hinder gender equality by favoring male students or using gendered language." (Participant 24)</li></ul>	which can hinder the fair treatment of students and perpetuate inequality.
	Enforcing gender-specific rules that limit expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "The haircut of every member of LGBTQ should follow the rules of Initao College standard because some of the LGBTQ had long hair." (Participant 73);</li><li>- "In my experience, based on my observation, the faculty members such as instructors supported the gender equality and they have applied it in their teaching methods. However, within the institution of Initao College rules, it hinders the gender equality." (Participant 29)</li></ul>	Gender-specific rules, like enforcing haircut standards, limit the expression of LGBTQ+ students and create a feeling of exclusion.
<b>General Observation and Experiences</b>	Gender equality is generally supported by faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "Faculty members treat all students in Initao College equally regardless of one's gender." (Participant 86);</li><li>- "They are open-minded and fair to all." (Participant 28);</li><li>- "The teachers are treating the students equally, they respect each and everyone." (Participant 96)</li></ul>	Many students observe that faculty members generally support gender equality through fair treatment and respect for all genders.

This table summarizes students' perspectives on how faculty teaching methods at Initao College either support or hinder gender equality in the classroom.

### Themes and Key Insights

#### 1. Faculty Support for Gender Equality

- o **Faculty Participation in Gender Equality Seminars:** Students observe that faculty members who attend gender equality seminars show a proactive stance on gender awareness, which positively influences their teaching practices. This support was highlighted by Participant 2, who noted faculty engagement in gender and development seminars as a mark of commitment.
- o **Inclusive Teaching Practices:** Faculty members foster inclusivity by incorporating diverse perspectives and challenging gender stereotypes during class discussions. For example, Participant 10 and Participant 15 noted that faculty use gender-neutral language and support an inclusive environment that challenges traditional stereotypes.
- o **Respect and Fair Treatment for All Genders:** Students report that faculty members treat all students equally, creating a supportive space where each student's contributions are valued. Participant 86 and Participant 60 emphasized the importance of equal treatment and safe spaces, which faculty provide to ensure students feel respected regardless of gender.
- o **Acceptance of LGBTQ+ Students:** Faculty members generally support LGBTQ+ students by ensuring they feel included and by integrating all students into class activities. Participant 19 noted faculty support for LGBTQ+ students, while Participant 63 observed gender inclusivity in hands-on class activities such as carpentry, demonstrating non-traditional gender roles.
- o **Challenging Gender Stereotypes in Teaching:** Faculty members actively work to dismantle gender stereotypes by using inclusive language

and examples that appeal to a diverse student body. Participants 88 and 9 shared that faculty consistently promote gender equality in their discussions, setting an inclusive tone in the classroom.

## 2. Faculty Hindering Gender Equality

- o **Reinforcement of Traditional Gender Roles:** Some students noted that certain faculty members reinforce traditional roles, assigning gender-specific roles in class activities or influencing dress codes in a way that excludes expressions of gender identity. Participant 53 shared an example of gendered role assignments in class, and Participant 26 highlighted an incident where a gay student felt discouraged due to enforced grooming standards.
- o **Biases in Classroom Dynamics and Participation:** Some students perceive biases in faculty behavior, including favoritism and gendered language, which hinder the goal of gender equality. Participant 55 noted that while many faculty members are fair, some instances of favoritism exist, creating an imbalance in classroom participation.
- o **Enforcing Gender-Specific Rules that Limit Expression:** Institutional rules, such as haircut standards, are sometimes strictly enforced by faculty, which students view as limiting LGBTQ+ expressions. Participant 73 expressed that these gender-specific rules hinder the inclusivity faculty members strive for within their teaching.

## 3. General Observations and Experiences

- o **Supportive Faculty Practices:** Many students observe that the faculty generally uphold principles of gender equality, treating students fairly and promoting open-mindedness. Participant 86 and Participant 28 emphasized the faculty's respect for all students, creating an overall supportive classroom climate.

While faculty members at Initao College are perceived by many students as supporters of gender equality, instances of reinforcement of traditional roles and biases highlight areas for improvement. These findings suggest a need for additional training focused on addressing implicit biases and adapting institutional policies to support a broader range of gender expressions. Addressing these areas could further enhance the inclusivity already being fostered by faculty members and ensure that all students feel equally supported and respected. The varied student perceptions reflect a mixture of supportive practices and areas for policy adjustment, particularly regarding institutional rules that may not align with gender inclusivity goals. Promoting faculty development programs that target unconscious bias and advocate for flexible, gender-neutral policies could strengthen the faculty's role in modeling gender equality within the college.

The findings resonate with previous research, such as Kollmayer et al. (2020), which revealed that faculty who engage in gender equality training are more likely to incorporate inclusive practices, fostering a positive and equitable classroom environment. Similarly, the work of Elson and Seth (2019) shows that institutional policies, when overly rigid, can inadvertently hinder gender inclusivity, particularly for LGBTQ+ students. Addressing these structural constraints can significantly enhance faculty efforts to create an inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, studies by Gerlach (2022) underscore the importance of using inclusive language and avoiding traditional stereotypes in teaching, which aligns with students' positive experiences of faculty challenging gender norms. Overall, these findings emphasize the potential benefits of targeted professional development and flexible



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policy reform in promoting gender equality in educational settings. In sum, students at Initao College largely perceive faculty members as supportive of gender equality, although a few institutional policies and biases present challenges. Enhanced faculty training, along with policy adjustments to accommodate diverse expressions, could reinforce an inclusive academic environment and align student and faculty perceptions on gender equality.

While most students commend faculty for fostering inclusive classrooms, several narratives reveal persistent challenges. Faculty who enforce haircut rules or assign roles based on biological sex may inadvertently uphold binary norms that marginalize LGBTQ+ students. These instances underscore the tension between individual faculty intentions and institutional codes. As Social Role Theory posits, role expectations can both constrain and empower behavior—faculty may simultaneously support equality in principle while reinforcing exclusionary norms in practice. Moreover, Gender Schema Theory explains how ingrained beliefs might unconsciously guide such actions. These findings reinforce the importance of aligning institutional policy with inclusive teaching values, a theme echoed in the students' recommendations for improvement.

## **VII. What specific improvements do students suggest to further promote gender equality at Initao College?**

**Table 7.**  
*Students' Suggestions for the Improvements to Further Promote Gender Equality at Initao College*

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Significant Statements	General Description of the Theme
Educational Programs and Training	Seminars and Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "Incorporating gender equality workshops and seminars into the orientation and ongoing professional development programs." (Participant 1)</li><li>- "Workshop and seminar." (Participant 56)</li><li>- "Conduct more seminars regarding Gender Equality." (Participant 99)</li></ul>	Many participants suggested implementing seminars, workshops, or training programs focused on gender equality to raise awareness and educate the college community.
Policy and Institutional Changes	Gender Equality Policy and Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "The promulgation and formulation of a gender equality rights that is indicated in the students' handbook and school administrative manual." (Participant 2)</li><li>- "Develop a formal gender equality policy." (Participant 101)</li></ul>	Suggestions emphasized the need for formal policies and guidelines to promote gender equality and ensure fair treatment. Participants pointed out that these should be communicated and enforced institution-wide.
Student and Faculty Involvement	Student-Led Initiatives and Faculty Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "Encouraging student-led groups focused on gender equality." (Participant 60)</li><li>- "Provide training for faculty and staff on gender equality." (Participant 16)</li></ul>	Participants highlighted the importance of involving both students and faculty in gender equality initiatives, including student-led activities and faculty training on related issues.
Dress Code and Personal Expression	Freedom in Dress and Hair for LGBTQ+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- "Let the BEED transgender wear what they like." (Participant 17)</li><li>- "Allow the transgender or LGBTQ members to wear whatever they</li></ul>	Participants called for more flexibility in dress code policies, advocating for the freedom of LGBTQ+ students to express

<b>Respect and Equal Treatment</b>	Promoting Fairness and Addressing Discrimination	<p>want." (Participant 76)</p> <p>- "Allowing the transwomen to have long hair." (Participant 129)</p> <p>- "Respect one another." (Participant 53)</p> <p>- "Ensure any educational materials used show genders in equal measure." (Participant 87)</p>	<p>their identities through hair and clothing choices, while maintaining respectability.</p> <p>Respondents stressed the importance of mutual respect, equality in treatment, and efforts to ensure that educational content reflects gender inclusivity and avoids stereotypes.</p>
<b>Gender Sensitivity Awareness</b>	Regular Awareness and Sensitivity Training	<p>- "Continue to recognize and accept everyone's identity." (Participant 58)</p> <p>- "Promote gender sensitivity training." (Participant 88)</p>	<p>The need for ongoing efforts to build gender sensitivity through regular awareness activities and training sessions was highlighted, ensuring the college community remains informed and accepting of all gender identities.</p>
<b>Institutional Culture and Values</b>	Inclusivity and Cultural Awareness	<p>- "Promote inclusive language." (Participant 36)</p> <p>- "Explore gender concepts and roles from different communities." (Participant 87)</p>	<p>Participants suggested fostering an inclusive institutional culture that values all genders and encourages understanding of diverse gender concepts and cultural backgrounds.</p>

This table outlines the suggestions from students at Initao College on how to further promote gender equality within the institution.

### Themes and Key Insights

#### 1. Educational Programs and Training

- **Seminars and Workshops:** A significant number of students advocated for the introduction of gender equality seminars, workshops, and professional development programs for both students and faculty. This would help raise awareness about gender issues and promote an inclusive environment. Participants 1, 56, and 99 expressed a need for more seminars focusing on gender equality to foster understanding and education.

#### 2. Policy and Institutional Changes

- **Gender Equality Policy and Guidelines:** Students called for the development of a formal gender equality policy to ensure fair treatment and protection of gender rights within the college. Some students (Participant 2, 101) suggested that the policy should be integrated into the students' handbook and school administrative manuals, ensuring that it is communicated institution-wide and enforced effectively.

#### 3. Student and Faculty Involvement

- **Student-Led Initiatives and Faculty Training:** Students suggested encouraging student-led groups dedicated to gender equality, while also offering faculty training on gender-sensitive issues. This would allow both students and faculty to actively participate in promoting gender equality within the college. Participant 60 proposed the formation of gender equality groups, and Participant 16 emphasized the importance of faculty training on such matters.

#### 4. Dress Code and Personal Expression

- **Freedom in Dress and Hair for LGBTQ+:** There was a strong call for greater flexibility in dress codes, especially for LGBTQ+ students. Participants 17, 76, and 129 emphasized the need for freedom of expression in dress and grooming, particularly for transgender and



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LGBTQ+ students, who should be allowed to wear what aligns with their gender identity. These suggestions underscore the importance of respecting students' self-expression while maintaining respectability.

## 5. Respect and Equal Treatment

- o **Promoting Fairness and Addressing Discrimination:** Many students (e.g., Participant 53 and Participant 87) emphasized the importance of promoting mutual respect, ensuring fair treatment, and addressing any form of discrimination within the classroom and the broader campus environment. Additionally, they suggested that educational materials should reflect gender equality, ensuring that both male and female figures are presented equally in academic resources.

## 6. Gender Sensitivity Awareness

- o **Regular Awareness and Sensitivity Training:** Continuous gender sensitivity training and awareness activities were highlighted as essential to maintaining an inclusive environment at Initao College. Participants (e.g., Participant 58 and Participant 88) proposed regular sessions to keep the college community informed and accepting of diverse gender identities and expressions.

## 7. Institutional Culture and Values

- o **Inclusivity and Cultural Awareness:** Several students suggested that the college should foster a culture of inclusivity by promoting inclusive language and exploring gender roles from different cultural perspectives. Participants 36 and 87 proposed that understanding gender concepts and roles across various communities would enrich the institutional values and encourage broader acceptance.

The suggestions from students indicate a strong desire for formal, institutionalized measures to promote gender equality, including policies, educational programs, and changes to dress code rules. Students' calls for greater flexibility in dress codes and personal expression align with broader societal shifts towards greater recognition and acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights. The focus on faculty and student involvement in gender equality initiatives suggests a need for more collaborative and participatory approaches to institutional change. Incorporating these suggestions into Initao College's policies could create a more inclusive and supportive environment that acknowledges and respects diverse gender identities. Emphasizing ongoing training and the development of clear guidelines will help sustain gender equality initiatives and ensure they remain a priority across the college community.

The suggestions provided by the students at Initao College for promoting gender equality align with several studies emphasizing the importance of education, policy changes, and institutional culture. Marcus and Samuels (2020) assert that gender-transformative programming plays a crucial role in creating equitable learning spaces, aligning with students' recommendations for seminars and workshops. UNESCO (2023) highlights the importance of institutional policies in reinforcing gender equality principles, supporting the calls for formalized guidelines at Initao College. Additionally, Esteban-Guitart (2019) found that respect for diverse identities enhances student engagement, which aligns with student desires for flexible dress codes and respect for self-expression among LGBTQ+ students.

The recommendations reflect students' desire for deeper, institution-wide transformation. Their emphasis on LGBTQ+ rights, flexible dress codes, and

inclusive policy-making signals a shift toward more expansive understandings of gender beyond binary frameworks. This aligns with Intersectionality Theory, which advocates for addressing overlapping identities and the unique experiences they produce. Students' appeals for increased voice and participation in shaping gender policy suggest that inclusivity must be co-constructed, not merely administered. These insights link back to earlier findings, particularly the perception gap between faculty and students, and point to the necessity of shared spaces for dialogue, reflection, and responsive policy adaptation.

**Table 8.**  
*Integrated Findings (Quantitative and Qualitative)*

Research Questions/Themes	Quantitative Findings	Qualitative Findings
<b>Perception of Gender Equality</b>	Mean=3.29 (Very High). Generally positive perceptions of a welcoming classroom environment but lower in addressing stereotypes.	Faculty largely seen as supportive; however, some practices (dress codes, traditional gender roles) still hinder full inclusivity.
<b>Awareness of Gender Equality Principles</b>	Mean=3.23 (High). Basic awareness is high but lower in training and policy integration.	Faculty's participation in seminars noted positively but students express need for more comprehensive training.
<b>Integration into Teaching Methods and Curricula</b>	Mean=3.15 (High). Generally incorporated but requires regular evaluations and clear guidelines.	Faculty adopt inclusive teaching methods, but institutional policies on gender expression (dress codes, hair standards) perceived as restrictive by students.
<b>Gender-based Perception Differences (Male vs. Female)</b>	No significant differences (p-values >0.05). Both genders similarly positive.	Qualitative insights did not strongly distinguish gender-specific views. Shared views on inclusivity were noted.
<b>Perception Differences (Faculty vs. Students)</b>	Significant differences (p=0.001). Faculty (Mean=3.86, Very High) perceive greater integration and awareness than students (Mean=3.09, High).	Students report discrepancies between faculty intentions and practices; perceive biases and restrictive policies, suggesting less ideal integration compared to faculty views.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings provides a holistic understanding of gender equality perceptions at Initao College. While the quantitative results indicated generally high perceptions of gender equality in the academic environment, the qualitative insights revealed nuanced realities that numbers alone could not capture. Faculty members are widely recognized for their supportive attitudes, participation in gender development seminars, and inclusive teaching practices, aligning quantitatively with high awareness and integration scores. However, qualitative responses surfaced specific institutional barriers such as reinforcement of traditional gender roles, favoritism in classroom dynamics, and restrictive personal expression policies—particularly impacting LGBTQ+ students. These nuances reflect the internal tensions between institutional ideals and practice.

Significantly, the data reveal discrepancies between faculty and student perceptions, with statistical analysis showing significant differences ( $p = 0.001$ ) across all major domains. Faculty appear to hold a more favorable view of gender inclusivity efforts, likely due to their exposure to training programs and policy design processes. In contrast, students highlight inconsistencies in implementation and call attention to rigid norms that hinder inclusive expression.



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These findings are best explained through Intersectionality Theory, which underscores how overlapping identities affect lived experiences, and Social Role Theory, which highlights how institutional positions shape perspectives on equity.

Student suggestions reflect a collective call for systemic improvements—regular, inclusive seminars; formal and accessible gender equality policies; greater expression autonomy; and shared ownership of inclusivity efforts between administration and student bodies. Addressing these concerns is essential for bridging the perception gap and achieving a culture of embedded, actionable gender equality. Thus, the integration underscores the importance of moving beyond awareness toward sustained institutional reform rooted in empathy, equity, and responsiveness.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study confirm that gender equality is a recognized and valued principle at Initao College, with both faculty and students demonstrating awareness of its importance in educational spaces. Faculty members, in particular, were perceived as largely supportive, employing inclusive teaching strategies, fostering safe classroom environments, and integrating gender-sensitive practices to varying degrees. However, the study also revealed institutional constraints—such as rigid dress codes and unexamined classroom norms—that continue to hinder the full realization of gender inclusivity. A key insight was the perception gap between faculty and students, wherein faculty rated the integration and support of gender equality more positively than students did. This divergence highlights a critical tension: while faculty believe they are practicing inclusivity, students may not fully experience these efforts, possibly due to uneven implementation or the presence of subtle biases and traditional expectations. Addressing this gap requires open dialogue and more participatory mechanisms to ensure students' voices are not only heard but also acted upon.

These findings affirm the relevance of Gender Schema Theory, which helps explain how internalized gender norms can unconsciously influence behaviors and expectations in academic settings. Intersectionality Theory further frames the diverse experiences of students—particularly LGBTQ+ individuals—who face compounded challenges. Social Role Theory also elucidates how societal norms continue to shape institutional policies that enforce traditional gender roles, such as grooming standards and participation in academic tasks. The broader implications of this study extend beyond Initao College. It underscores the need for ongoing faculty development that challenges deep-seated norms, institutional policy reforms that affirm gender expression, and student-led initiatives that foster inclusive academic cultures. Promoting gender equality in education is not only a pedagogical concern but a structural imperative that calls for critical reflection, responsiveness, and sustained institutional commitment.

Based on the findings and informed by the study's theoretical framework, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance gender equality practices at Initao College:

- 1. Implement Comprehensive Gender Sensitivity Training Across Stakeholders**

Training initiatives should go beyond faculty development to include administrative staff, student leaders, and policy implementers. These programs should address unconscious bias, inclusive pedagogy, and the importance of affirming diverse gender identities, as emphasized in Gender Schema Theory. Training must also be continuous, regularly updated, and supported by measurable learning outcomes.

2. **Undertake Proactive Policy Review and Reform**  
Institutional policies—especially those related to grooming, dress codes, and classroom norms—should be critically reviewed and restructured to affirm gender expression and challenge traditional role expectations. These reforms respond to findings linked to Social Role Theory, which explains how institutional norms can reinforce gender inequities. Student feedback, especially from LGBTQ+ individuals, should be formally incorporated into policy consultations.
3. **Strengthen Student Involvement in Gender Equality Initiatives**  
To bridge the perception gap identified in this study, students must be actively engaged in advocacy, policy discussion, and program development. Establishing student-led gender equality councils or peer-education programs could foster ownership and visibility of gender-related issues, aligning with Intersectionality Theory, which values the multiplicity of lived experiences.
4. **Institutionalize Regular and Inclusive Evaluation Mechanisms**  
The implementation of gender equality in curricula, teaching strategies, and institutional practices should be monitored through annual audits, inclusive feedback mechanisms, and participatory assessment tools. These evaluations should inform continuous improvements and be anchored in clear indicators of inclusivity, representation, and equity.
5. **Foster a Deeply Rooted Culture of Inclusivity**  
Promoting gender equality should not be limited to visible practices or language use. The institution must cultivate inclusive values, attitudes, and behaviors through leadership modeling, mentorship programs, inclusive celebrations, and integration of gender themes across disciplines. This cultural shift requires sustained institutional commitment and engagement from all levels of the academic community.

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**Ethical Statement:** All participants provided their informed consent prior to inclusion in the study. The research protocol was reviewed and approved by the QCU Research Ethics Board (Project identification code). The study was conducted in accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.