

Getting ahead versus getting along: Investigating how gender stereotypes are contributing to gender inequality in HEIs. – TU Dublin, DCU, UL.

The aim of this project is to examine the stereotyping ‘female’ and ‘male’ roles in academia, and how it contributes to women’s underrepresentation in senior levels in higher education institutions (‘HEIs’). Traditionally, excellence in academia has held a gendered quality influenced by the “male-as-normal” stereotype that associates tasks that involve academics “getting ahead” with men and those that involve “getting along” with women.

Understanding the prevalence and influence of such stereotyping is essential to gender-proofing recruitment and promotion practices in academia. We proposed that ‘getting ahead’ performance criteria are emphasized to a greater extent in academic performance and promotion and thus may inherently disadvantage women.

Two studies were conducted with participants working as academics in HEIs in Ireland and the UK. In both studies, the most significant results were differences in ratings for advancement depended, not on the gender of the academic, but that of the evaluator. Consistently across both studies, female academics (Study 1) and female HEI decision makers (Study 2) evaluated candidates consistently more highly than their male colleagues.

Outputs:

1. Results and findings were disseminated in a series of workshops/presentations including Kemmy Business School lunchtime seminar and as part of TU Dublin’s women’s day. All staff and students were involved including senior HEI leaders, managers and HR professionals.
2. An initial report with overview of research, its findings and practical recommendations was developed, with presentation of the findings conducted internationally at academic conferences including European Association of Work and Organisational Psychology stream on gender and diversity in Poland, as well as, G-Versity conference in Switzerland which focused on gender issues in higher education. Book of Abstracts are available online.
3. Paper is currently being drafted for submission to Academy of Management Learning and Education.
4. Development of the next phase of the project to develop and evaluate organisational and training interventions is currently being designed to integrate findings into selection and assessment methods for hiring, performance and promotion in HEIs. Application is being developed to apply for Gender Equality Enhancement Fund, 2025