

**UDC 331.44**  
**JEL: I23, J71, J83**

**GENDER LABOUR DISCRIMINATION IN THE  
HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: A CASE OF  
GEORGIA**

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**Received:** 18/07/2023

**Accepted:** 08/12/2023

DOI: 10.61954/2616-7107/2023.7.4-2

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**Introduction.** Discrimination, especially gender discrimination, is one of the main challenges of the modern labour market. Even though different countries have appropriate policies as well as the desire and readiness of society, gender discrimination remains an unsolved problem in all spheres of activity. Although women's participation and educational opportunities have increased, and they are actively involved in academic activities, according to research, the level of discrimination in this field remains high. The management apparatus of organizations should take into account the fact that discrimination is not only a violation of the country's legislation but also has a negative impact on both the image of the organization and its final results.

**Aim and tasks.** This research aims to identify gender discrimination in the higher education system and provide solutions using Georgia.

**Results.** The study aims to outline gender discrimination issues in Georgia and its impact on people's personal lives and health. A total of 759 respondents employed at a higher educational institution were interviewed. Despite the fact that the government of Georgia has developed legislative reforms to eliminate discrimination, the results of the study revealed significant problems in the higher education system of Georgia in terms of gender discrimination. Part of them state that they were victims of discrimination most often at the workplace. The results revealed that gender discrimination affected people's health and personal lives.

**Conclusions.** Managers must consider many factors to achieve the intended results for an organisation. However, one of the most essential challenges for enhancing employee labour productivity is the creation of a place to work, where the issue of discrimination plays a significant role. Attention was also focused on the factors causing discrimination, to which managers should pay attention to take appropriate measures. The study analysed how men and women perceive the conflicts caused by discrimination in the labour market. Also, it revealed the perception and vision of the ways of solving these conflicts among women and men.

**Keywords:** gender, discrimination, workplace, employees, management positions.

## **1. Introduction.**

The fight against various types of discrimination has acquired particular importance in modern society, which is why it is a field of interest for science and research. It occurs based on stereotypes, in which a person or a certain group are ascribed different views and behaviours depending on culture, society, age, gender, and race. In the long term, stereotypical attitudes result in self-perception, ambition, and perception of personal achievement (Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010). Gender differentiations refer to the establishment of different requirements, attitudes, and values for women and men, which vary depending on the cultural context (Iqbal et al., 2012). Increasing women's involvement in the workforce has led to more incidences of gender discrimination and brought the issue to the fore.

Gender discrimination can be revealed in the processes of hiring, promoting, and defining roles and tasks. It is stereotypically considered that a man is more masculine and makes decisions easily, whereas a woman is more emotional and more focused on building relationships. The distribution of roles, according to these beliefs, leads to discrimination between women and men. The choice of education direction can also result from gender stereotypes (UN Woman, 2020).

## **2. Literature review.**

Although public awareness and attitudes towards gender discrimination have improved (UNFPA, 2020), it is the most common form of discrimination in the workplace. For instance, according to a Pew Research Center (2017) study, 42% of women in the US have been victims of gender discrimination in the workplace. Gender discrimination was also expressed in terms of the promotion and holding of high positions by women. In EU countries, presidents (86%) and ministers (69%) in the public sector and politics are primarily men (EIGE, 2023). The private sector is no exception; the top managers are also mostly men. Even today, women are primarily in lower or middle management positions and rarely in senior management or executive positions (Nmecha & Bowen, 2015).

Gender discrimination occurs at any stage of recruitment, promotion, and career development. Hiring is often influenced by age and is more common among young women (Petit, 2007). Women managers experience statistical discrimination when their attitude and evaluation towards them are more critical and demanding (Konrad & Cannings, 1997).

Cases of gender discrimination are also relevant in the higher-education sector. Studies conducted in Italy (Filandri & Pasqua, 2021), the United Kingdom (Knights & Richards, 2003), and Ireland (Quinlivan, 2017) show that, despite women's active involvement and achievements in academic activities, they still do not reach the upper levels of career development. This applies to academic and non-academic staff employed in higher education (Quinlivan, 2017).

According to a study conducted by Gberevbie et al. (2014), gender discrimination among academic staff leads to feelings of dissatisfaction and reduced performance. However, the situation is not unequivocally negative in this regard, as Winchester and Browning's (2015) study in the field of higher education in Australia and Mian et al.'s (2016) research in the Pakistani education sector highlighted positive changes in terms of reducing gender discrimination. Discrimination is a uniquely negative phenomenon affecting work processes, human health, and life. In terms of impact on the work process, it leads to decreasing performance, increasing dissatisfaction, demotivation, the probability of organizational conflict, and lower self-esteem (Channar et al., 2011).

Discrimination affects a person's psycho-emotional state, causing stress and depression (Kim et al., 2020). This is demonstrated in the study of Kim et al. (2022) among employed women in Korea. Kira et al. (2010) concluded that discrimination can lead to trauma that causes mental illness and health damage. It should be noted that mental problems affect women more due to hormonal and biological differences and may be the reason for various diseases (Hosang & Bhui, 2018). Georgia is an advanced country in the Caucasus in terms of gender balance (Abesadze et al., 2019).

Nevertheless, there are many challenges in the country in terms of gender discrimination; abuse against women is high, especially violence in the family, which is a taboo topic in society (Abesadze et al., 2019). Discriminatory approaches are also found in terms of employment. The average salary of women was 67 percent of that of men. According to the latest data, the number of male business founders is almost twice that of women in the same category (Geostat, 2022). In Georgia, women are rarely in top management positions, and men still make decisions, mainly due to cultural peculiarities (Pirtskhalaishvili et al., 2021).

According to a study conducted in the public sector, men have an advantage in the career path, while 70% of respondents believe that women have more theoretical knowledge about career success (IDFI, 2020). Gender discrimination is facilitated by the lack of promotion and career development systems in organizations (Kharadze et al., 2019). According to the study of Abesadze et al. (2022), positive changes regarding reducing discrimination in Georgia have been observed. Furthermore, studies have been conducted on the challenges faced by academic staff at the retirement age in terms of gender (Kharadze et al., 2023).

The improvement of legislation in Georgia in terms of reducing discrimination against women started in 1994 and continues to this day. It is worth noting that the Law of Georgia on Gender Equality (Parliament of Georgia, 2010), aims to strengthen the principle of equality of people based on gender at the legislative level and to create appropriate legal guarantees to achieve gender equality (Arjevanidze, 2012). It is important to create appropriate legislation and strengthen institutional mechanisms for equality to harmonize national legislation with international standards (GYLA, 2014). Human capital development should be based on an effective state strategy for human resource management (Paresashvili et al., 2021).

From the management side of the organization, it is crucial to determine how to overcome the challenges that occur in the human capital management process (Paresashvili et al., 2021).

This study offers recommendations on how to manage conflict successfully to increase employee productivity. It is based on research conducted in Georgia, and outlines the main challenges, trends, and understanding of conflict management. Discrimination is a significant concern (Paresashvili et al., 2021).

### 3. Methodology.

The results obtained in the research were processed using the SPSS software package. Different statistical procedures were used during the analysis. The survey included 759 participants. The object of this research is the entities of Georgia's higher education system.

The following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Male and female respondents have different views on the types of discrimination that lead to conflicts in the workplace.

H2: There is a difference between gender categories regarding the impact of workplace discrimination on respondents' health, and it has a particularly negative effect on women's health.

H3: There is a difference between gender categories in the impact of workplace discrimination on respondents' personal lives.

H4: For all gender categories, the impact of discrimination in the workplace on respondents' health and personal life is closely related.

H5: In the case of being a victim of discrimination, there is a different perception between gender categories regarding the form of discrimination that they face.

The survey, which was conducted in the higher educational institutions of Georgia, involved 759 respondents, who are represented by gender as follows (Table 1).

**Table 1. Distribution of respondents in terms of gender.**

|              |        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|--------------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid        | Female | 618       | 81.4%   | 83.4%         | 83.4%              |
|              | Male   | 123       | 16.2%   | 16.6%         | 100.0%             |
|              | Total  | 741       | 97.6%   | 100.0%        |                    |
| Missing      |        | 18        | 2.4%    |               |                    |
| <b>Total</b> |        | 759       | 100.0%  |               |                    |

According to the research findings, gender discrimination in the hiring, working, and firing process (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Discrimination based on gender in the process of hiring, working, and firing process, (2023).

The chi-square test results show a difference in opinion between male and female respondents on the mentioned issue, which is confirmed by the results of the chi-square test (Table 2), from which it was concluded that there is a significant statistical relationship

between gender and the mentioned variable at the 0.01 level (*p value* is 0.06). The second diagram represents employees' perceptions of different types of harassment in the workplace in the higher education system (data are presented from a gender perspective) (Fig. 2).

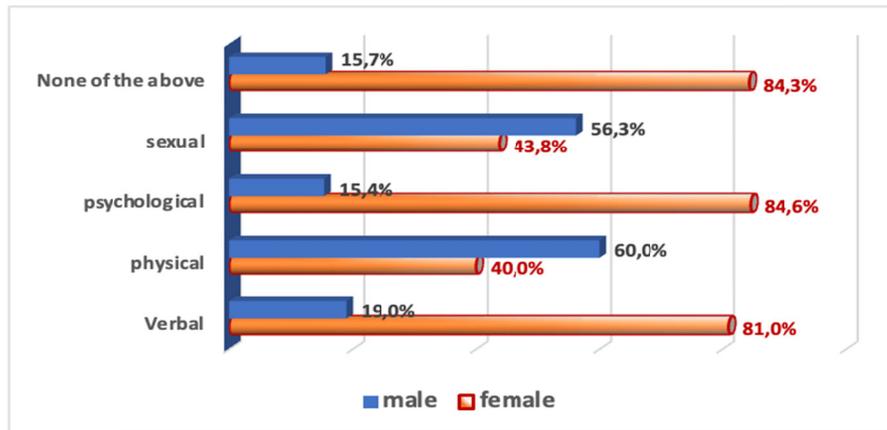


Fig. 2. Types of employee discrimination, (2023).

As indicated by the chi-square test findings, we have the maximum statistical relationship between gender and the variable of harassment due to different aspects (*p value* is less than 0.001) (Table 2). Gender influences various aspects of workplace harassment.

It was interesting to discuss the comparison between male and female respondents and which discriminatory acts were taken against them during their work experience. Figure 3 illustrates the results of the research.

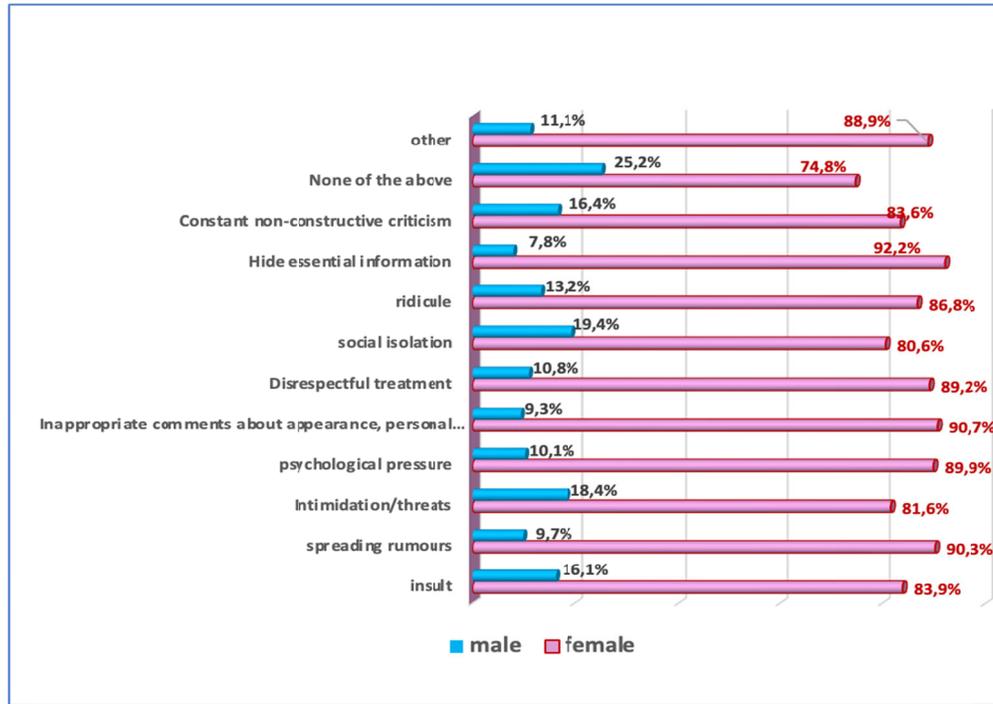


Fig. 3. Discriminatory actions against the respondents during work experience, (2023).

Figure 2 clearly illustrates that different trends related to discriminatory experience during work experience are observed between male and female respondents.

There is a maximum statistical relationship between these variables (*p value* is less than 0.001, and the chi-square coefficient is equal to 68.221) (Table 2).

Table 2. Pearson Chi-Square tests (2023).

|   |            | Gender |
|---|------------|--------|
| What was discrimination related to?   | Chi-square | 14.557 |
|   | df         | 4      |
|   | Sig.       | .006   |
| Have you experienced any form of harassment in the workplace due to the aspects listed below? | Chi-square | 34.282 |
|   | df         | 6      |
|   | Sig.       | .000   |
| What kind of discriminatory actions have you encountered during your work experience?         | Chi-square | 68.221 |
|   | df         | 13     |
|   | Sig.       | .000   |

According to the research framework, it is essential to determine the manager's role concerning the issues of discrimination in the organization, what relief the management apparatus provides for discrimination, and how it responds to these challenges.

Therefore, it was crucial to compare the responses of male and female respondents regarding managers' responses to discrimination. Considering the rating (4 points, where 1 – never, 2 – sometimes, 3 – often, and 4 – always), a downward trend can be observed in both sexes, especially in men (Fig. 4).

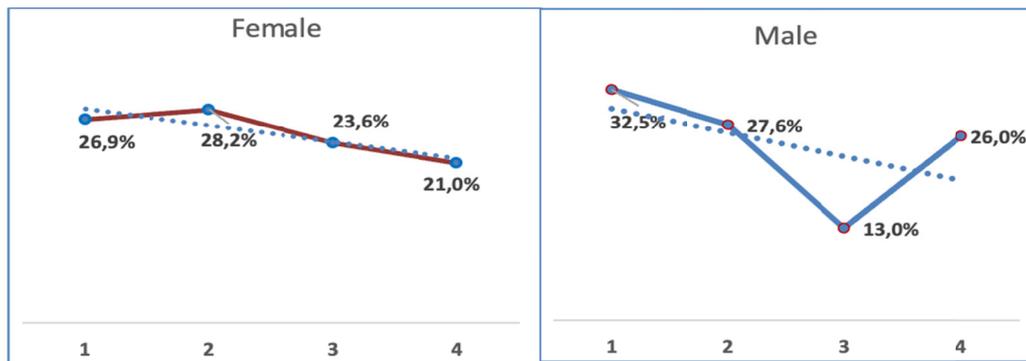


Fig. 4. Manager’s reaction on the fact of discrimination, (2023).

To evaluate the statistical relationship between gender and the manager's response to discrimination, the mean difference method, namely the t-test, was employed. As a result, we obtained descriptive statistics (Table 3) and the outcomes of Levin's test.

Table 3. The relationship between gender and the manager's response to discrimination group statistics (2023).

|  | Gender | N   | Mean  | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--|--------|-----|-------|----------------|-----------------|
| Did the manager react to the fact of discrimination after informing him? | Female | 618 | 5.61  | 56.660         | 2.279           |
|  | Male   | 123 | 10.43 | 89.875         | 8.104           |

According to the results of Levin's test, it was concluded that there is uniformity for respondents of both genders (*p value* is 0.568, higher than 0.05). Male and female respondents have the same views regarding the manager's response to the facts of discrimination (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of Levin's test (2023).

| Independent Samples Test   |                             | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |        |                 |                 |                       |   |        |
|--|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
|  |                             | F                                       | Sig. | t                            | df     | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |        |
|  |                             |   |      |                              |        |                 |                 |                       | Lower                                     | Upper  |
| Did the manager react to the fact of discrimination after informing him? | Equal variances assumed     | 2.424                                   | .120 | -.770                        | 739    | .442            | -4.816          | 6.255                 | -17.096                                   | 7.464  |
|  | Equal variances not assumed |   |      | -.572                        | 141.89 | .568            | -4.816          | 8.418                 | -21.457                                   | 11.825 |

A checkbox question was used to test the first hypothesis (“What kind of discrimination causes conflict in your organization?”).

The gender frequency distribution of the answers to the provided question is presented in the following Table 5.

**Table 5. Types of discrimination that cause conflicts in the organization in terms of gender.**

|   |                                       |             | Gender |       | Total |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------|-------|-------|
|   |                                       |             | Female | Male  |       |
| What kind of discrimination causes conflict in your organization? | Age discrimination                    | Count       | 99     | 18    | 117   |
|   |                                       | % responses | 8.0%   | 8.1%  |       |
|   | Gender discrimination                 | Count       | 78     | 12    | 90    |
|   |                                       | % responses | 6.3%   | 5.4%  |       |
|   | Racial discrimination                 | Count       | 27     | 6     | 33    |
|   |                                       | % responses | 2.2%   | 2.7%  |       |
|   | Religious discrimination              | Count       | 36     | 12    | 48    |
|   |                                       | % responses | 2.9%   | 5.4%  |       |
|   | Social discrimination                 | Count       | 63     | 0     | 63    |
|   |                                       | % responses | 5.1%   | 0.0%  |       |
|   | Unfair motivation policy              | Count       | 213    | 27    | 240   |
|   |                                       | % responses | 17.3%  | 12.2% |       |
|   | A biased career management system     | Count       | 198    | 24    | 222   |
|   |                                       | % responses | 16.1%  | 10.8% |       |
|   | An unfair system of control           | Count       | 129    | 27    | 156   |
|   |                                       | % responses | 10.5%  | 12.2% |       |
|   | Stereotyped attitude from the manager | Count       | 171    | 30    | 201   |
|   |                                       | % responses | 13.9%  | 13.5% |       |
| I have no answer  | Count                                 | 219         | 66     | 285   |       |
|   | % responses                           | 17.8%       | 29.7%  |       |       |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>Count</b>                          | 1233        | 222    | 1455  |       |

Since respondents could provide several answers to a given question, the number of responses exceeded the number of respondents. In particular, 1233 responses were provided by females, and 222 were provided by male respondents. Several forms of discrimination have been identified, which have caused conflicts in the organization. The table presents some of them, which stand out owing to their high percentage. For instance, 17.3% of the answers given by female respondents and 12.2% of the responses from male respondents indicated that managers in the organization implemented an unfair motivation policy. Equally important is for managers to be aware of stereotypes and to recognize how much they affect them. A total of 13.9% of female respondents and 13.5% of male respondents indicated that the reason for discrimination was the manifestation of stereotypical attitudes on the part of the manager.

While the goal of any modern organization is to occupy a worthy place in a fiercely competitive environment (Koval et al., 2023), the career advancement of the organization's employees is an important issue. This is why we needed to evaluate employees' career development. 16.1% of responses from females and 10.1% of responses from males indicated that their organization has a biased career management system. This significant percentage has a detrimental influence on worker productivity.

The results of the chi-square test are presented in the sixth table, and it is evident that there is a maximum statistical relationship between gender and the cluster variable as "the type of discrimination that causes conflict in your organization". The level of statistical significance (P) did not exceed 0.001. The chi-square coefficient was high (89.982), and the results confirmed the validity of the hypothesis H1 (Table 6).

**Table 6. Pearson Chi-Square tests.**

| What kind of discrimination causes conflict in your organization? | Gender     |        |
|---|------------|--------|
|   | Chi-square | 89.982 |
|   | df         | 20     |
|   | Sig.       | .000   |

To test the second and third hypotheses, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was applied (Table 7). It was determined that gender affects the variables at the 0.01 level of statistical significance:

- *How does workplace discrimination influence your health?*

0.01 level of statistical significance. Chi-square test = 10.550 and P = 0.005.

- *How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life?*

0.01 level of statistical significance. Chi-square test = 9.800 and P = 0.007.

The results mentioned above show that the following hypotheses are confirmed: H2 and H3.

**Table 7. Test statistics.**

|             | <b>How does workplace discrimination influence your health?</b> | <b>How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life?</b> |
|-------------|---|--|
| Chi-Square  | 10.550  | 9.800  |
| df          | 2   | 2  |
| Asymp. Sig. | .005  | .007   |

- a. Kruskal Wallis Test.
- b. Grouping Variable: gender.

Throughout the research process, we were interested in whether discrimination in the organization affected the respondent's health and personal life (in terms of gender). A paired-sample t-test was used to investigate this issue.

From the obtained tables, it is established that in the case of the female and male gender, both the questions “How does workplace discrimination influence your health?” and “How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life?” were evaluated negatively because the obtained average was equal to 2 (Table 8).

The given questions were scored as follows: 1 = significantly negative, 2 = negative, 3 = positive, 4 = does not influence, 5 = I have no answer. In the case of male and female respondents, workplace discrimination had a more negative impact on health than on personal life (health/personal life: 2.01/2.13 for female and 2.28/2.55 for male). Different results were observed for the sex category, with no reported sex. In this category, organizational discrimination negatively affects personal life more than health (health/personal life: mean=1.82/1.76).

**Table 8. Paired samples statistics.**

| <b>Gender</b> |        |   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Std. Deviation</b> | <b>Std. Error Mean</b> |
|---------------|--------|---|-------------|----------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Female        | Pair 1 | How does workplace discrimination influence your health?        | 2.01        | 479      | .924                  | .042                   |
|               |        | How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life? | 2.13        | 479      | .992                  | .045                   |
| Male          | Pair 1 | How does workplace discrimination influence your health?        | 2.28        | 98       | .939                  | .095                   |
|               |        | How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life? | 2.55        | 98       | .986                  | .100                   |

The correlation table (Table 9) demonstrates a high, directly proportional linear relationship between the variables given to male and female respondents. However, the correlation was significantly higher for female respondents (r=0.604) than for male

respondents (r=0.569). In addition to the linear relationship, the maximum statistical correlation was established between them (the level of statistical significance did not exceed 0.001), implying that discrimination significantly impacted health and personal life.

**Table 9. Paired samples correlations.**

| Gender |        |  | N   | Correlation | Sig. |
|--------|--------|--|-----|-------------|------|
| Female | Pair 1 | How does workplace discrimination influence your health? & How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life? | 479 | .604        | .000 |
| Male   | Pair 1 | How does workplace discrimination influence your health? & How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life? | 98  | .569        | .000 |

The T-test findings are displayed in Table 10, which assesses the validity of the mean differences between pairs by gender group. The given table demonstrates that female and male gender affect the given pair, and the difference between the means in female respondents is higher than in male

respondents, although there is a statistical relationship between female and male respondent pairs at the 0.01 level: with female respondents  $T = 3.102$ ,  $P = 0.002$ , with male respondents  $T = 3.050$ . For the third category,  $P = 0.773$ , there is no difference between the means for this group.

**Table 10. Paired Samples Test.**

| Gender |        |  | Paired Differences |                |                 |   | t     | Df     | Sig. (2-tailed) |       |
|--------|--------|--|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-------|--------|-----------------|-------|
|        |        |  | Mean               | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |       |        |                 |       |
|        |        |  |                    |                |                 | Lower                                     |       |        |                 | Upper |
| Female | Pair 1 | How does workplace discrimination influence your health? - How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life? | -.121              | .854           | .039            | -.198                                     | -.044 | -3.102 | 478             | .002  |
| Male   | Pair 1 | How does workplace discrimination influence your health? - How does workplace discrimination influence your personal life? | -.276              | .894           | .090            | -.455                                     | -.096 | -3.050 | 97              | .003  |

As a result, the fourth hypothesis has been proven for both male and female respondents. To confirm hypothesis H 5, we applied filtering and crosstabulation.

Table 11 provides a frequency table of the distribution of respondents who have experienced discrimination by gender.

**Table 11. Being a victim of discrimination in terms of gender.**

|  |                        | Gender |        |                         | Total  |
|--|------------------------|--------|--------|-------------------------|--------|
|  |                        | Female | Male   | I do not have an answer |        |
| Have you ever been a victim of discrimination? | Yes                    | 33.0%  | 29.3%  | 16.7%                   | 32.0%  |
|  | No                     | 65.0%  | 65.9%  | 83.3%                   | 65.6%  |
|  | I don't want to answer | 1.9%   | 4.9%   |                         | 2.4%   |
| Total  |                        | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0%                  | 100.0% |

Table 11 demonstrates that this is not a small part: 33% of female, 29.3% of male, and 16.7% of the gender category who did not answer admitted being a victim (Table 11).

It filtered respondents who had experienced discrimination and investigated the type of discrimination they encountered (Table 12).

**Table 12. Forms of discrimination encountered by respondents in terms of gender.**

|   |                                  |            | Gender |       |
|---|----------------------------------|------------|--------|-------|
|   |                                  |            | Female | Male  |
| What form of discrimination have you encountered? | Access to professional education | Column N % | 6.9%   | 8.8%  |
|   | Availability of employment       | Column N % | 31.7%  | 55.9% |
|   | Discrimination in the workplace  | Column N % | 78.3%  | 70.6% |

According to Table 12, the majority of female respondents (78.3%) and male respondents (70.6%) were categorized as experiencing workplace discrimination. The statistics in the consumer table provided us with the chi-square test findings (Table 13), which confirmed the hypothesis H5.

There is a statistical relationship at the 0.01 level,  $P = 0.001$ , and the chi-square coefficient equals 23.626 between the respondents who are discriminated against in terms of gender and the variable "Which form of discrimination you have encountered"?

**Table 13. Pearson Chi-Square tests.**

| What form of discrimination have you encountered? |      | Gender     |
|---|------|------------|
|   |      | Chi-square |
| df  | 6    |            |
| Sig.  | .001 |            |

#### 4. Conclusions.

Despite the Georgian government's legislative and political reforms to eliminate gender discrimination, gender equality in the Georgian labour market remains an unattainable goal, with a significant percentage of women still experiencing gender discrimination during employment. As a result of the gender analysis of labour discrimination in the higher education system, it was possible to explain the sources of power imbalance and inequality between men and women and analyze the forms of manifestation.

It analysed how men and women perceive conflicts caused by discrimination in the labor market and also revealed the perception and vision of ways to resolve these conflicts among women and men.

Hypotheses H 2 and H 3 were confirmed by the results of the research, demonstrating that discrimination in the organization has a special impact on the health and personal lives of female respondents.

The research results revealed the views of both female and male respondents about the insufficient involvement of managers in managing conflicts caused by discrimination in the organization. It is crucial for managers to promptly disclose and investigate the root reasons for any conflict so that appropriate anti-discrimination actions can be taken in response. Along with preventive measures for managing conflicts caused by discrimination, it is vital to increase the role and involvement of the manager in managing already existing and sometimes intensified conflicts.

Employees have a low level of awareness and understanding about protecting their rights and anti-discrimination mechanisms, which is why it is necessary to organize large-scale training for employees about existing legal regulations. An unfair control system is one of the main reasons for discrimination and the conflicts that result from it. An effective discrimination management and control system should be implemented at the state level.

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