

Review of: "Exploring the Relationship Between Gender and Sustainable Development Competencies in Higher Education Institutions: Insights from a Zimbabwean University"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Dear author,

Thank you for allowing me to read your manuscript. As you pointed out, despite increasingly gaining access to decision-making positions, women are still underrepresented in these positions, and the HEIs are not an exception but another evidence of this behavior.

With this in mind, I would like to highlight some elements I appreciated in your paper and consider that can be improved to strengthen it.

The COVID-19 pandemic made evident that female academics face several difficulties in success in their academic careers, and these challenges are aggravated by the scarce support provided by Universities and other colleagues who enjoy better conditions. Your paper shows a deep literature review describing female academics' laboral context and its consequences. In my opinion, this is your paper's main strength.

However, very respectfully, I have some suggestions I hope you find helpful.

1. It is essential to publish in an international development journal, showing the novelty of your research beyond the specificity of the case. In other words, why is it essential to study this case? How does this case help us to understand other similar cases better? It is relevant to develop these elements further. Moreover, I think it is importante to describe why this particular HEI provides a good approach to Zimbabwe's situation since it seems the university is small.
2. Regarding the theoretical framework, I strongly suggest describing what "sustainable development competences" are. Are these competencies linked to the sustainable development theoretical framework? Have they been previously defined? How? Also, it is key to connect sustainable development competencies with the intersectionality theory. Though intersectionality is clearly defined, it is not straightforward why an intersectional approach is necessary and how it has been neglected in developing the described competencies.
3. In addition, "gender mainstreaming" is mentioned in the document in different sections. Nevertheless, this approach needs to be defined, and the author's reference is unclear. I am pointing out this because the gender mainstreaming strategy has been used in the feminist movements and international agenda since 1990, facing strong criticism about

their impact on the feminist movements.

4. The paper declares a mixed-method approach; however, it is unclear how quantitative and qualitative data are integrated to provide insights into the female academic situation in the studied university. Most of the findings rely on the testimonies of the three interviewed deans, but there is little information regarding the questions made to the staff and how the sustainable development competencies were assessed.
5. Consequently, the paper provides an exciting description of the professors' situation. However, there is no assessment of female academic sustainable development competencies and the specific mechanism behind this underperformance compared with their male counterparts. This is essential to contribute something new to the literature in this field.
6. Finally, since the author has such a strong set of theoretical tools in the intersectionality theory, I strongly suggest using these tools to analyze the results. For instance, what are the distinctive attributes of these two outstanding female scholars at the university, and how do the intersections of different vulnerabilities or discrimination conditions operate in this scenario?

Please, consider these suggestions made by someone passionate about the subject but still learning. Good luck! :)