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Gender equity: A challenge for universities

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Abstract

The objective of the research is to evaluate the previous knowledge that teachers and administrative staff of the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña have about a social problem such as gender-based violence, for which a descriptive study with a cross-sectional quantitative approach was undertaken, developed in three phases: a first phase begins with the theoretical support related to gender equity, a second phase has the quantitative analysis of the variables by applying a questionnaire to a finite sample of teachers and administrative staff on the topic of study. The results show that in spite of the strategies implemented by the institution to guarantee gender equity in its academic community, this is blurred by the fact that the majority of the university bodies confuse the definition of sex with gender and most of them do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of equality and equity. Likewise, the high lack of knowledge of the institutional route for a victim of gender-based violence resulting in not knowing how to act and protect their integrity and that of their academic community, adding that very few know about the five types of gender-based violence such as physical, psychological, economic, sexual and verbal violence.

Keywords: Gender equity, gender-based violence, academic community.

1. INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of gender studies in the policies of Higher Education Institutions raises the generation of knowledge that allows responding to the challenges immersed in the asymmetrical distributions of symbolic and material power between men and women. This process began in the 1970's in some public universities in Europe and the United States, which adopted a stance committed to high standards of quality and social justice; the City University of New York and the University of Paris, through their women's studies centers, were the main proponents of this initiative, which would provide the impetus for numerous centers and institutes of recognized HEIs to conceive gender studies with equal relevance (Buquet, et al. 2020). Since then, the gender perspective has emerged as a method of analysis between the differences between men and women, involving institutional mainstreaming as a strategy so that from "the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation" of each of the university's programs and policies, equity is guaranteed (Ortega, 2019).

On the other hand, Guzmán and Jones, 2021 cite Mayorga (2018) who states that gender equity can be defined as "a set of norms, personal values that determine the identity of each individual contributing to every opportunity they have" (P. 329). Likewise, they allude to what is stated by Pérez and Luque (2017), for whom gender equity from its concept seeks to evidence which are the possibilities that in the educational field women can take advantage of with respect to men, to determine whether there is any disadvantage.

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Alluding to what Bell (2017) mentioned, inclusion within the educational context is perceived as "one of the main challenges for Higher Education Institutions at present times and demands the integration and intensification of actions [...]" (p. 200).

From this point of view, Varela (2019) states that the female presence in universities has grown considerably over the years, both academically and as students, despite the fact that this phenomenon is characterized by unequal conditions of "access, permanence and mobility", which ultimately result in discrimination within the organizations. Likewise, the accelerated development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has diversified the way in which gender discrimination practices are carried out, especially towards the female population, which is not limited to the classroom, but extends on many occasions to the administrative sphere. In his study on the protocols of action against gender violence in public HEIs, Acuña, et al. (2022) establishes that it is a recurrent phenomenon in every space of the institutions, making necessary the implementation of policies that "regulate, prevent and punish". But it also confers the responsibility to these institutions to "promote the construction of a citizenship with a higher quality of life" as the ultimate mechanism of formal education (p. 62).

On the other hand, there seems to be a general consensus regarding the relevance of policies that allow balancing the efforts of both parties, since, as Montes (2019) states, there is the so-called metaphorical glass ceiling, which describes the barriers that cannot be seen with the naked eye, but that prevent female access to the highest echelons of the institutional hierarchy. Likewise, Montes addresses gender mainstreaming in HEIs by mentioning that this implies that the people who work in the study of gender perspectives do not remain on the sidelines, but that all members of the academic community share this point of view. Likewise, Quintero (2019) establishes that the process of incursion of universities in this problematic requires the understanding of this as an active part of society, which is not immune to anything and must assume responsibility towards the study, understanding and intervention of social dynamics.

It is imperative to recognize that there is a link between the discrimination and social devaluation experienced daily by women and the existing forms of violence, in order to ensure their prevention, punishment and eradication, bearing in mind that these become impediments to female empowerment (Niño & Sández, 2019). However, this phenomenon is considered multi-causal to the extent that it integrates various variables of individual, structural and contextual order; same that negatively impact the economic development of countries, insofar as they reduce female participation in the public sphere, reducing productivity, while increasing the resulting prevention, care and medical repair expenses (Cazares, et al., 2022). Although gender violence can be suffered by both men and women, there are cultural aspects that characterize Latin American countries in which there is a perceived asymmetry in power over social, symbolic and material resources that represents a disadvantage for the latter.

In her study entitled "Transformational leadership and gender equity: the case of graduate students", Díaz (2020) refers to the cases of women who aspire to leadership positions, in which the role of HEIs in promoting an inclusive and diverse organizational culture becomes transcendental. However, although there is an increase in the participation of women in management positions or as students, gender stereotypes are still evident both in the organizational environment and in HEIs, which require the implementation of educational strategies oriented towards transformational leadership. According to Chapa, et al. (2022), it is necessary for HEIs to develop pedagogical changes that involve other ways of relating and foster coexistence both inside and outside the classroom, while incorporating "critical, ethical methodologies that subvert the mind-body division, that promote self-knowledge based on

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feeling, thinking and acting, that strengthen debate and stimulate critical imagination" (p. 89).

The study by Baeza and Lamadrid (2019) highlights the research of authors such as Acker (1995), Ledwith and Manfredi (2000) and Acker and Dillabough (2007), in which gender barriers within the academy were evidenced, which generated conflicts in the family. Likewise, the latter showed how the increase of women in tenured positions did not reduce the rates of job insecurity, added to the conflict experienced by those who assume care and maternity roles. In this sense, the conclusions of Baeza and Lamadrid show that it is not enough to increase the number of women recognized and involved in university policies related to gender equity; it is also necessary to work on the reduction of generational violence and the symbolism immersed in it.

Gender equality is considered a transcendental element of the university, which is perceived as an agent of socialization and sociocultural references, with a high degree of commitment to the population on which it impacts. Likewise, the university approach to equality and individuals are recognized as "indicators of quality and institutional modernization (Lizama & Hurtado, 2019). The gender perspective is then, something more than a social and cultural categorization, since it implies diverse phenomena and interpretations that over time have modified experiences, ethics, politics, relationships and sex. However, the multicausal nature of gender problems makes it necessary to eradicate the indices of socioeconomic poverty that cause its increase and that of the vulnerable population (Jiménez & Galeano, 2020).

Martínez (as cited in Galoviche, et al., 2020) states that education should be conceived as an element responsible for both the normalization and reproduction of societies in marked inequality or, on the contrary, as tools for citizen transition towards equality. Vázquez, et al. (2021) argue that generational violence is inherent to the power relations existing in educational environments, which are promoted in the development of formative, practical, behavioral, belief and ideology dissemination processes, which are usually naturalized in institutional structures and procedures.

Finally, it is pertinent to highlight the role of the teacher as stated by Chaveco, et al. (2020) in their study entitled "The curricular, research and extension in gender mainstreaming in university teaching", when they state that the teacher must be updated in contents on education and the gender approach, thus facilitating the transition towards a mediating and agile teaching direction of equitable learning. Likewise, in accordance with what is stated by authors such as Benslimane and Moustaghfir (2020), Rauhaus and Carr (2020) and Winfield, et al. (2017), it is necessary to understand the differences between gender equality and equity, given that the former alludes to equal conditions between men and women, while the latter guarantees that this is complemented with ethics and guarantees real equality.

Gender studies are the ideal tool to understand the social dynamics in this regard, analyzing imbalances in society, to the extent that they allow the formation of a more balanced conception of the understanding of the feminine and masculine. In this sense, the role of the university is to provide solutions to society, which requires legal and institutional harmonization with guidelines to address gender problems and formulate mechanisms to identify asymmetrical relations within EIS.

2. METODOLOGY

The methodological design aims at evaluating the previous knowledge that teachers and administrative staff of the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña have about a social problem such as gender-based violence, for which a descriptive study with a cross-sectional quantitative approach was undertaken.

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The research carried out presents three phases: A first phase begins with the theoretical support related to gender equity, a second section exposes the methodological development of the research, which was based on a quantitative study of the variables by applying a questionnaire to 29 teachers and 37 administrative staff on the topic of study, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Operationalization matrix of variables.

Variable	**Scale**
Gender refers to the anatomical and physiological characteristics that identify a person as female or male.	v/f
Gender equity is having the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of sex.	v/f
Do you know the institutional and national route for a victim of gender-based violence?	Yes/No
Mention the types of violence you know.	open

A final section presents the results obtained and analyzed, identifying the tendencies and frequencies of the population under study with respect to knowledge of the topic of gender equity.

3. RESULTS

Universities take giant steps to include gender equity in their mission policies, materializing a commitment of inclusion, moral and ethical demanded by society. In this case, the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña directs its actions to this social problem, but it is blurred when its academic community does not know the previous knowledge of a social problem such as gender equity.

In accordance with the above, the following results are presented in this article.

Table 2. Trends and frequencies of the teaching staff regarding knowledge of gender, gender equity and the institutional and national route for a victim of gender-based violence.

University Internship	**Variables**		
	1	**2**	**3**
Professor 1	f	v	si
Professor 2	v	v	no
Professor 3	v	v	si
Professor 4	f	v	si
Professor 5	f	v	si
Professor 6	v	v	no

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Professor 7	v	v	no
Professor 8	f	v	no
Professor 9	v	v	no
Professor 10	v	v	no
Professor 11	f	v	no
Professor 12	v	v	no
Professor 13	v	v	no
Professor 14	v	v	no
Professor 15	v	f	no
Docent 16	f	v	no
Docent 17	v	v	no
Professor 18	v	v	no
Professor 19	v	v	no
Professor 20	f	v	si
Professor 21	f	v	no
Professor 22	f	f	no
Professor 23	f	v	no
Professor 24	f	v	no
Professor 25	f	v	no
Professor 26	v	v	no
Professor 27	v	v	no
Professor 28	v	v	no
Professor 29	v	v	no

Table 3. Trends and frequencies of the administrative staff regarding knowledge of gender, gender equity and the institutional and national route for a victim of gender-based violence.

University staff	**Variables**		
	1	**2**	**3**
administrative 1	v	v	no
administrative 2	v	v	no
administrative 3	v	v	yes

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administrative 4	v	v	no
administrative 5	v	v	no
administrative 6	f	f	no
administrative 7	f	v	no
administrative 8	v	v	no
administrative 9	v	v	yes
administrative 10	f	v	no
administrative 11	f	v	no
administrative 12	v	v	no
administrative 13	v	v	no
administrative 14	f	v	no
administrative 15	f	v	no
administrative 16	v	v	no
administrative 17	f	v	no
administrative 18	f	v	no
administrative 19	v	v	no
administrative 20	f	v	no
administrative 21	f	v	no
administrative 22	f	v	no
administrative 23	v	v	no
administrative 24	v	v	no
administrative 25	v	v	no
administrative 26	f	v	no
administrative 27	v	v	yes
administrative 28	v	v	yes
administrative 29	f	f	yes
administrative 30	f	f	yes
administrative 31	v	v	no
administrative 32	f	v	no
administrative 33	v	v	no
administrative 34	v	v	no

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administrative 35	v	v	no
administrative 36	v	v	no
administrative 37	v	v	no

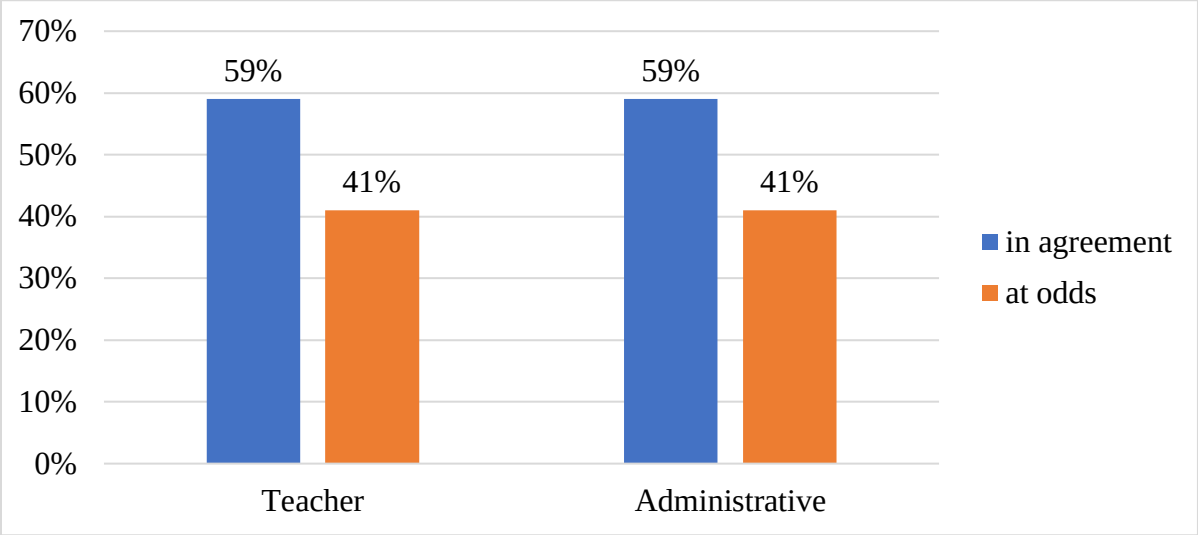


Figure 1. Gender refers to the anatomical and physiological characteristics that identify a person as female or male.

The World Health Organization has defined sex as the organic condition that differentiates men and women, and also defines gender as the characteristics and roles determined by society. In spite of the definitions, the perception of the terms tends to cause confusion, hence 59% of the teachers and 59% of the administrative staff of the sample with respect to this subject agreed with the definition of gender, showing that the majority of the two university strata do not have the true concept appropriate and confuse sex with gender, while 41% of both groups have clarity in what gender means.

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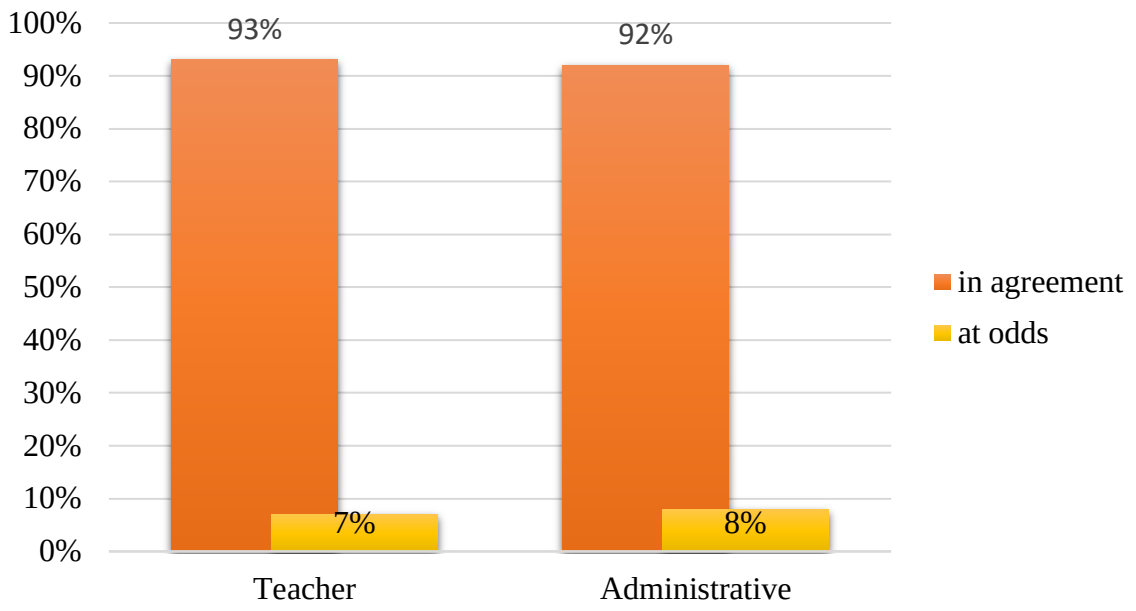


Figure 2. Gender equity is having the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities regardless of sex.

Gender equality has been conceived as the equality of women and men in terms of rights, responsibilities and opportunities (One Women, 2022). Gender equity is defined as fair and differentiated treatment according to the needs of men and women (UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators). In the study conducted, a definition of gender equity was proposed to the teachers and administrative staff in order to inquire about their knowledge of the term, with the result that 93% of the teachers surveyed and 92% of the administrative staff confused the definition of equality with equity, and only a small group of university staff managed to understand that the premise stated speaks of the meaning of equality and not equity.

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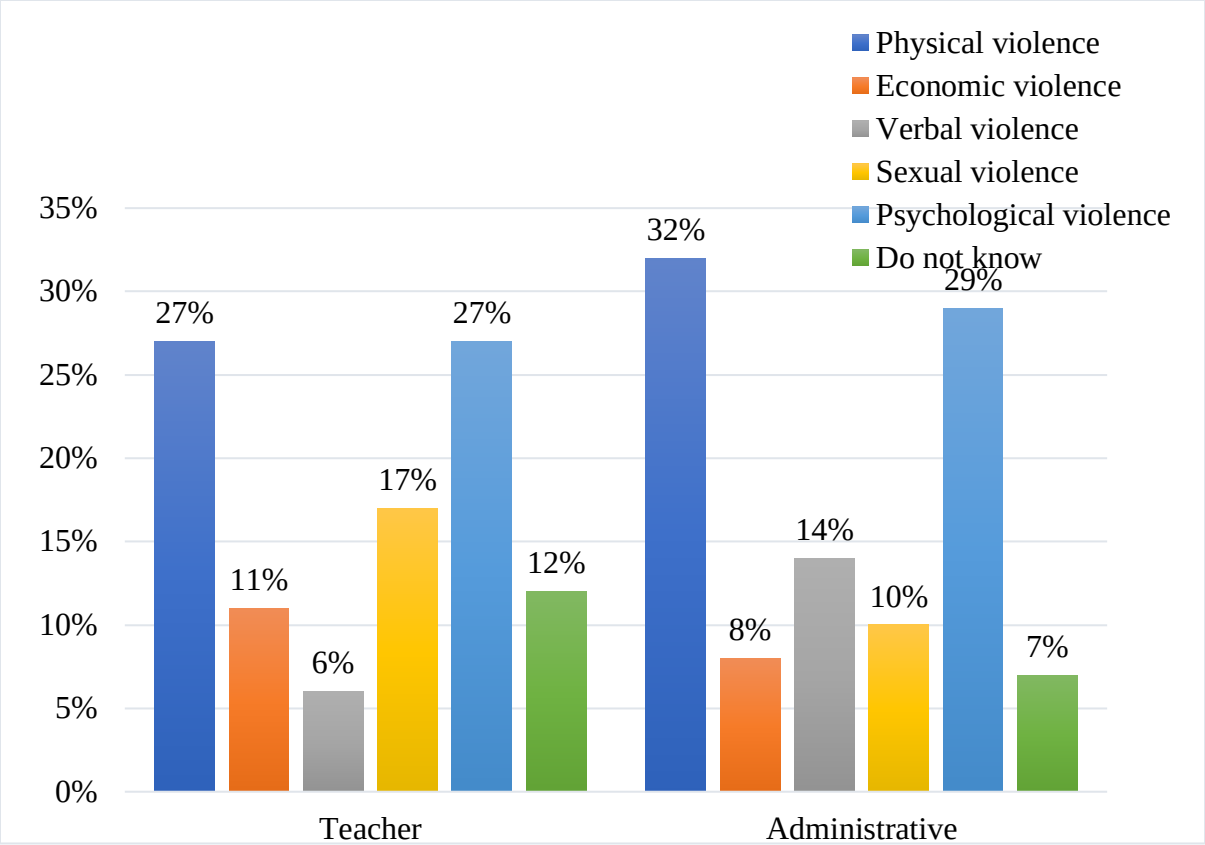


Figure 3. Know the types of gender-based violence.

There are many cases around the world of violence against women and girls, becoming one of the most common violations of human rights, bringing serious psychological, physical and economic consequences and thus preventing women's equal participation in society (UN Women, n.d.). Psychological, economic, verbal, verbal, sexual and physical violence are the most common forms of violence suffered by women worldwide. The purpose of the research was to find out if the teaching and administrative staff of the Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña University were aware of the five most common types of violence against women and girls described by UN Women. The research reveals that only 27% of the teachers and 32% of the administrative staff recognize physical violence as one of the gender violence, while economic violence is also recognized by the two university strata with a degree of knowledge of 11% and 8% respectively. Verbal and sexual violence does not have a high percentage of recognition among teachers and administrators as one of the forms of violence against women and girls, while psychological violence achieves a better degree of appropriation among teachers with 27% of knowledge of this type of violence and among administrators with 29%. It should be noted that 12% of the teachers and 7% of the administrative staff do not know the types of gender-based violence. The aforementioned indicates that the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña should implement training actions on gender-based violence, which will allow for action to be taken in the face of an event of this nature and adequate guidance for students and victims of this scourge in the academic community.

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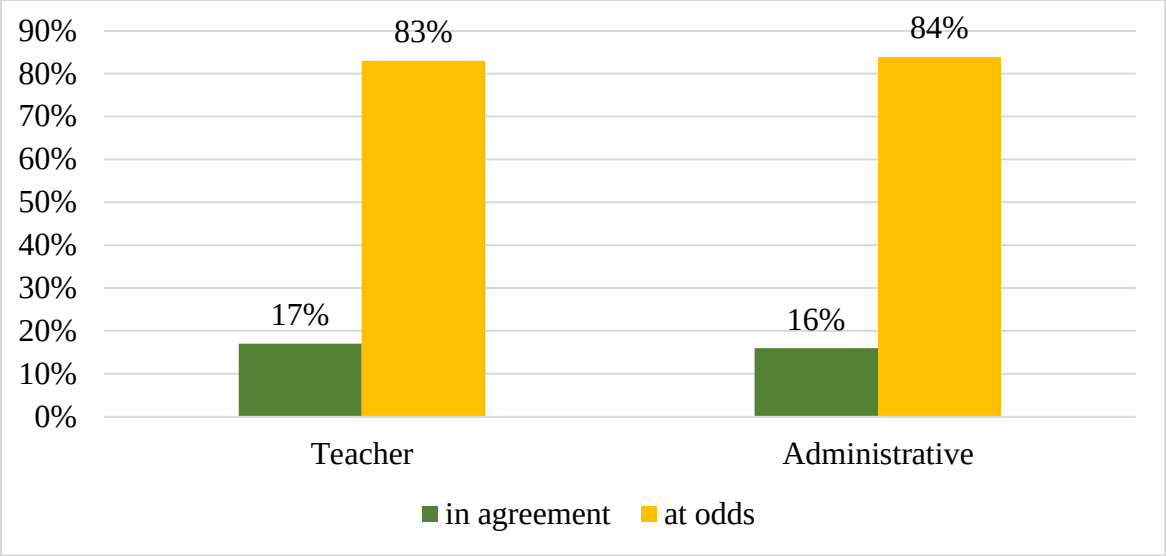


Figure 4. Know the institutional and national route for a victim of gender-based violence.

The Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña University, through the university welfare office, has implemented the care route for victims of gender-based violence, taking into account the regulatory and legal mandates that guarantee the protection, recovery and restitution of the violated rights of its academic community. This strategy seeks to guide and inform the three university strata (teachers, administrators and students) and protect the educational community in the face of this social problem. The route includes all the internal actions of each governmental institution to address the victim according to their competencies and the coordination of intersectoral interventions. This route is composed of six stages, where information and orientation tools will be used to respect the integrity of our entire community. Once a possible event related to gender-based violence is detected or reported, the attention route will be activated, starting with the reception of the case, followed by the analysis of the case, referral of the case to welfare services, reception and management of the case in the respective unit, case follow-up and closure of the case. (Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña, 2022).

The results of the research show that 83% of the teaching staff and 84% of the administrative staff do not know the institutional and national route for a victim of gender-based violence, resulting in not knowing how to act and protect their integrity and that of their academic community.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In spite of the efforts of the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander Ocaña to direct strategies aimed at guaranteeing gender equity in its academic community, this is blurred by the fact that the teaching and administrative staff is mostly unaware of the previous knowledge of a social problem such as gender equity. The population under study confuses the definition of sex with gender and most of them are not clear about the meaning of equality and equity.

The institution has also made inroads in the orientation and information to the university strata on the social problem of gender-based violence, as well as the creation of a care route for these victims, however the institutional efforts are minimized by not having enough appropriation of the teaching and administrative staff on the subject, Most of them do not know the five most common types of violence against women and girls, retaining only one or at most three types of violence such as physical, psychological and

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sexual violence, but a very low knowledge about the type of verbal and economic violence that seems to be more socially accepted and not recognized as a type of gender-based violence. In addition to this, there is a high lack of knowledge of the institutional route for a victim of gender-based violence, resulting in not knowing how to act and protect their integrity and that of their academic community.

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