

Differences by Gender and Role in PhD Theses on Sociology in Spain

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Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growth in the number of papers that synthesize empirical research studies on gender and sex inequalities in academic statements. Furthermore, these studies can comply with European requirements of equalities since the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1999 enacted that equality between men and women should be included in all policies (Fernández Álvarez, 2014).

Theses are the research papers by excellence and a good indicator to elucidate the lines and research trends in a field of science, since this work must be original and specialized and are subject to a rigorous academic assessment (Delgado López Cózar et al., 2006).

Our objective is to analyse the differences in gender representation in the Spanish sociological theses focusing on three actors involved in the process: PhD students, supervisors and academic assessment boards.

Method

Records were obtained from TESEO, the governmental database of the Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, which includes the Spanish theses defended and approved after evaluation. The search was limited to theses indexed by UNESCO codes related to Sociology (code 63) and to theses from the departments of Sociology of Spanish universities. A relational database was created to analyse and compare results.

Results

The total number of theses defended was 3,413. In the role of the PhD student, men presented 253 more theses than women did, while in the role of supervisor and academic assessment board, the differences were much greater: 1,004 and 1,159, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of PhD theses by gender and role.

Role	Male	Female	Total
PhD student	1,833	1,580	3,413
Supervisor	1,593	589	2,182
Assessment board	1,824	665	2,489

The percentage difference between males and females for PhD students is of 7 points, while for supervisors is of 47 points in favour of males, and for academic assessment boards this difference is of 47 points (Figure 1). The highest percentage of difference occurs in the role of academic assessment board, where 73.3% of board members were of males (Figure 1).

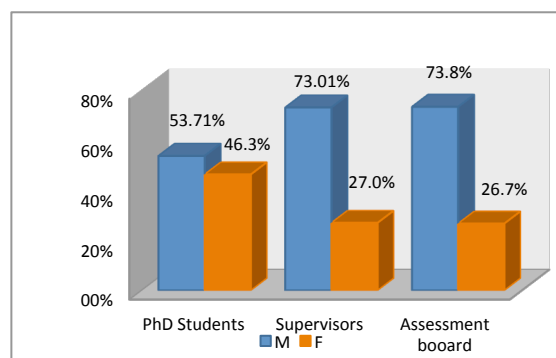


Figure 1. Percentage differences in PhD theses by gender and role

In the annual evolution of the percentages in the roles of supervisor and academic assessment board, men remain between 70% and 80% and women between 20% and 30%. On the contrary, from 2006-2010 period, women-PhD students reach parity (50%) and even surpass men in conducting thesis, ranking 57.8% in the last five-year period analysed (2011-2013) (Figure 2).

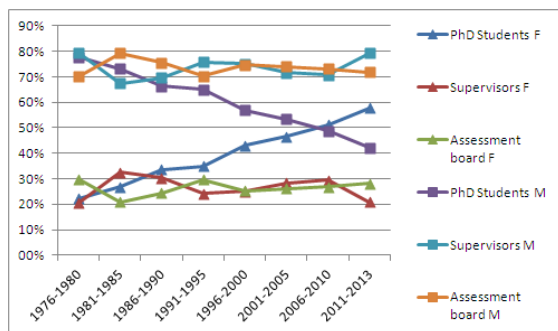


Figure 2. Five-year evolution of PhD theses by gender and role (1976-2013).

Discussion and Conclusions

Although a century has elapsed since the first woman enrolled in a Spanish university and its presence in several strata of the university has greatly improved, the percentage of women compared to men remain far from achieving parity in some roles.

The participation of women at the Spanish universities has increased steadily and its consolidation as PhD students today is a reality (Bermudez et al., 2011). However, from this stage, the academic careers of women slow down and the number of women who leave after doctorate is large (Bordons et al., 2003; Villarroya et al., 2008). Consequently, the percentage of female lecturers in Spain is between 30% and 35%, and the female professors between 14% and 20%. Therefore, it is noteworthy the existing great inequality in the Spanish universities as a professional field and that even though women are more numerous and better prepared than men at all levels of education, this is not reflected in prestigious academic positions (González Alcaide et al., 2009).

In conclusion, the promotion of women to positions of great academic responsibility is slow and is not in line with the number of women who obtained his doctorate in Sociology in Spain. Future research could explore other variables and behaviours, for example, if students of one gender tend to have supervisors from other different gender, as well as these trends in other fields and countries.

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