

GENDER EQUALITY FOR SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES OF LARGE INDUSTRIAL ENTERPRISES IN SLOVAKIA

IGUALDAD DE GÉNERO PARA ESTRATEGIAS SOSTENIBLES DE RECURSOS HUMANOS EN GRANDES EMPRESAS INDUSTRIALES DE ESLOVAQUIA

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Abstract

Gender equality is one of the goals of sustainable development, which is focused on achieving the justice and prosperity of society. Gender equality is a powerful tool for the development of dynamic and equitable societies around the world. The main objective of this paper is to present the results of a study of the level of institutional support for gender equality in large industrial enterprises in Slovakia. We used a quantitative approach and descriptive design for the study. The participants of the study were managers and human resource management professionals in large enterprises. The findings showed that there are differences between men

Resumo

La igualdad de género es uno de los objetivos del desarrollo sostenible, que se centra en lograr la justicia y la prosperidad de la sociedad. La igualdad de género es una herramienta poderosa para el desarrollo de sociedades dinámicas y equitativas en todo el mundo. El objetivo principal de este artículo es presentar los resultados de un estudio sobre el nivel de apoyo institucional a la igualdad de género en las grandes empresas industriales de Eslovaquia. Para el estudio se utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo y un diseño descriptivo. Los participantes del estudio fueron directivos y profesionales de la gestión de recursos humanos de grandes



and women in their perceptions of how gender equality approaches are embedded in institutional formal documents. Also, the results showed that companies are more likely to have gender equality incorporated into the company's vision, strategy and policies. On the other hand, there are still gaps in monitoring and reporting gender equality in enterprises and insufficient attention is paid to the development of awareness of this area among employees.

Keyword: Gender Equality. Human Resource Management. Human Resource Policy. Human Resource Strategy. Internal Documents.

empresas. Los resultados mostraron que existen diferencias entre hombres y mujeres en su percepción de cómo se incorporan los enfoques de igualdad de género en los documentos formales institucionales. Además, los resultados mostraron que las empresas son tienden a incorporar la igualdad de género en la visión, la estrategia y las políticas de la empresa. Por otra parte, siguen existiendo lagunas en el seguimiento y la presentación de informes sobre la igualdad de género en las empresas y no se dedica suficiente atención al desarrollo de la concienciación sobre este tema entre los empleados.

Palavras-chave: Igualdad de Género. Gestión de Recursos Humanos. Política de Recursos Humanos. Estrategia de recursos Humanos. Documentos Internos.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is one of the key challenges in building a sustainable and just society, and achieving it requires a thoughtful and systematic approach at the level of policies, corporate governance and social discourse. Despite the formally declared equal opportunities for women and men, inequalities persist in practice, which are rooted in historically conditioned structures, cultural norms and implicit prejudices. These inequalities are reflected not only in the representation of women in management positions, but also in differences in remuneration, career progression and access to development opportunities. The problem is often not only the absence of formal measures, but also their insufficient implementation in everyday business practice and low awareness of gender equality among employees and managers. However, the causes of gender inequality are often deeply rooted in society. Although laws and policies alone cannot force and persuade the management of institutions to change their practices, they can still create incentives to bring about positive change or introduce sanctions for non-compliance. Laws and policies can send a signal about the values of the government and the nation. Ensuring formal change at the level of institutions and systems, in the form of human resource management processes, is also a necessity.

In this context, human resources strategies and internal processes of companies play a key role in creating equal opportunities for all employees regardless of gender.

Companies that actively integrate gender equality principles into their human resources policies, for example in the areas of recruitment, performance appraisal, career development or work-life balance, can contribute to creating a fairer and more sustainable working environment. At the same time, however, it is not enough to adopt formal measures alone. What is also important is how these principles are communicated, applied and perceived across the organizational structure. The level of gender equality in organizations can thus be assessed not only according to the existence of specific documents or strategies, but also according to the extent of their implementation and the real impact on everyday working reality.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Gender equality is a complex topic that requires understanding the deeper structural causes of inequality, recognizing the importance of men's involvement in the process of change, and considering the role of both prejudice and legislation. Addressing these aspects is crucial for advancing gender equality and creating a more just society.

Gender inequality persists despite legal frameworks that promote gender equality, as underlying biases continue to influence behaviour and social norms. Legal cases illustrate how gender discrimination manifests itself in diverse contexts, such as equal pay and reproductive rights, and reveal the challenges in achieving true equality (Beaumont, 2016). Gender inequality is often reflected in human resource management practices and affects hiring, training, pay and promotion, which can exacerbate discrimination within organizations. Institutional discrimination in organizational structures significantly affects human resource decision-making, highlighting the need for comprehensive reforms. Gender discrimination in human resources, such as hiring and promotion, is often rooted in broader organizational structures and the biases of decision-makers (Stamarski & Hing, 2015). Organizations should develop transparent and merit-based hiring and promotion processes to combat institutional discrimination (Karakhan *et al.*, 2021). Implicit biases and structural barriers continue to hinder women's representation in various fields, including medicine and science, despite equal educational opportunities (Noronha *et al.*, 2022). In some countries, cultural barriers also limit women's participation in the political sphere (Suratnoaji & Alamiyah, 2025). Nowadays, women's participation in politics is not only a question of equality, but also a way to better

adapt legislative frameworks to the diverse needs of society (Dragan & Teclean, 2023). Gender predetermination also does not sufficiently take into account real predispositions and abilities for management positions (Kamasak *et al.*, 2019). The representation of women in management positions of companies initiates a positive chain effect that affects the overall functioning of the organization. The presence of women in leadership contributes to changes in the perception of their role and position in the company. Research confirms that a higher proportion of women in management correlates with a healthier organizational culture, a higher level of recognition of their work achievements and a greater likelihood of their career advancement (Elting, 2023; Hinchliffe, 2023). The employer is the one who sets the conditions and rules for employee career advancement (Smerek & Vetráková, 2020). Understanding the biases that affect women's career advancement is key to developing effective strategies to promote gender equality in the professional environment (Popova, 2021). Hiring practices, especially those that use algorithms, can perpetuate gender bias, although some methods have shown promise in improving gender equality in hiring (Pisanelli, 2025). Appropriately chosen practices of human resource management also have a significant impact on employee engagement (Pološki Vokić & Regul Erent Ondrušek, 2024) and, in terms of a comprehensive set of human resource management practices, also influence business performance of organisation (Islami *et al.*, 2023).

Men's reactions to discussions about gender inequality can vary significantly, with some expressing resistance while others may support the cause, suggesting the need for targeted approaches (Anisman-Razin *et al.*, 2018). Engaging men as allies in the fight for gender equality is essential, as they can both benefit from and contribute to the dismantling of restrictive gender roles, and can lead to greater participation in both the professional and domestic spheres (Van Laar *et al.*, 2024). Raising awareness of gender imbalance and promoting a culture of zero tolerance towards discrimination are essential strategies (Noronha *et al.*, 2022).

Anchoring a commitment to gender equality in HR (human resources) strategy is essential, as it can help to remove biases and structural barriers affecting women's career progression. Effective HR policies should be based on an understanding of the equity and organisational benefits of gender diversity, which can reduce discrimination and improve workplace outcomes (Fine *et al.*, 2020). The younger generation in particular expects new, innovative practices in human resource management and inclusive workplaces that

ensure fair conditions (Dirik *et al.*, 2025). Initiatives like mentoring programs and training on unconscious bias can help create a more inclusive environment (Popa *et al.*, 2025; Grunwald & Daroub, 2023).

Gender diversity is linked to improved team performance, innovation, and overall organizational effectiveness, especially when there is an equitable gender distribution within teams (Asare Obeng *et al.*, 2025). The presence of women in leadership and decision-making positions is associated with better management and better results, highlighting the importance of gender balance in organizational hierarchies (Noronha *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, women may demonstrate higher levels of motivation than their male colleagues (Kharadze *et al.*, 2023). Research suggests that gender-sensitive human resources policies can foster a culture of innovation, although their effectiveness may depend on the proportion of women in research and development positions (Lee & Jung, 2024).

Gender quota legislation has been introduced in various contexts to mandate the appointment of women to directorships, although the effectiveness of such regulations may vary (Reddy & Jadhav, 2019). There is an urgent need for companies to adopt diversity policies and adhere to corporate governance codes to enhance board effectiveness and shareholder relations (Al-Rahahleh, 2017). The ongoing debate about gender quotas and their outcomes suggests that while they can promote diversity, their implementation must be carefully considered to ensure true inclusion (Kirsch, 2018). There is a need to constantly highlight gender inequalities, their causes and their consequences. Raising awareness and educating about the economic impacts of gender inequality leads to a shift in norms and values. Raising awareness about gender equality is key to the meaningful implementation of quotas and diversity policies, so that they do not just lead to formal compliance, but to real inclusion and improved corporate governance.

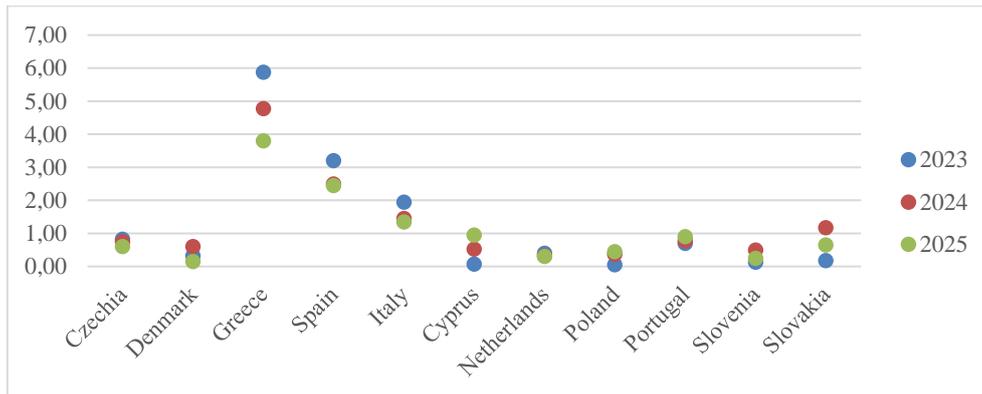
3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The position of women in the labour market varies across European countries. There are differences in both the employment rates of men and women and in their pay. Women in Slovakia lag behind men in terms of employment rates, even though older Slovak women work more than other European women. Although Slovak women have,

on average, a higher level of education than men, their employment rate is lower. Figure 1 shows the percentage difference in unemployment rate between women and men in European countries where women have higher unemployment rate than men.

Figure 1

Difference in unemployment rates between men and women

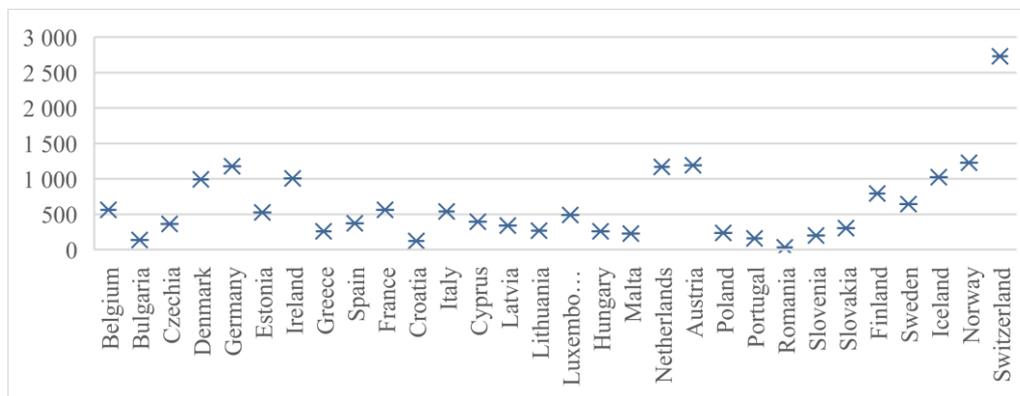


Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data (2025)

Figure 1 shows the difference in unemployment rates between women and men in countries where women have higher unemployment rates. The most significant differences are in Greece and Spain, while in Central and Northern Europe the differences are smaller. Between 2023 and 2025, the differences mostly decrease slightly or remain stable. The following figure 2 shows the difference in average wages between men and women in individual European countries. The values are given in euros and show how much more men earned on average than women in 2022.

Figure 2

Differences in average wages between men and women in euros for 2022



Source: Own elaboration based on Eurostat data (2025)

We can see that, based on the data in Figure 2, the differences vary significantly, in some countries the difference is relatively low (e.g. Romania, Slovenia, and Luxembourg), while in others it is very high (Switzerland, Germany, and Denmark). Overall, the graph shows persistent inequality in the remuneration of men and women across Europe.

Among European Union countries, Slovakia is one of the countries with a significant gender pay gap. While the EU average is just under 13%, in Slovakia the difference in gross hourly earnings is as high as 16%. At the current reduction rate of these differences, pay equality between men and women would not be achieved until 2050. The pay gap is caused by persistent horizontal segregation in the labor market. Women are more often employed in lower-paid sectors and occupations, such as education and services, while men dominate mainly in industry, where wages are higher. Vertical segregation favors men in higher management, executive, and leadership positions, so women often do not even have the opportunity to earn higher wages (KOZSR, 2025).

Breaks due to maternity and parental leave and childcare responsibilities also reduce women's chances of career advancement. Pay differences are also influenced by the higher rate of part-time work among women due to family care responsibilities. When considering the reasons for the lower employment rate of women compared to men, unpaid work must also be taken into account. Unpaid work includes a wide range of activities performed for the purpose of caring for household members and housekeeping. Women are usually at a disadvantage in this type of work. It appears that the time spent on housework or caregiving is then lacking either in participation in the labor market, training and education, or in leisure activities. This imbalance not only deprives women of economic opportunities, but is also costly to society in terms of lower productivity and lost economic growth (Bednárík, 2024).

Based on defined theoretical principles and statistical data on the employment rate of women and men as well as income disparity, we defined the research framework. Within this framework, we focused on the degree of integration of gender equality into the HR strategies of companies operating in the industrial sector, given their significant importance for the Slovak economy. In our research, we focused on large companies, where the existence of well-developed HR strategies is most likely. For the purposes of the research, we set three research questions:

RQ1: What is the level of support for gender equality through its incorporation into human resource strategies and processes in large industrial enterprises?

RQ2: What is the support for gender equality based on enterprise documents?

RQ3: What progress is being made in improving employers' support for gender equality awareness?

The overall objective of these research questions is to assess the level of institutional support for gender equality in large industrial enterprises in Slovakia, from the perspective of human resource strategies, official enterprise documents and specific awareness-raising initiatives. The research seeks to identify the extent to which organizations actively and systematically approach the promotion of gender equality, as well as to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of their approach. At the same time, it aims to highlight the practical aspects of implementing gender equality in the work environment and their impact on enterprise culture and human resource management.

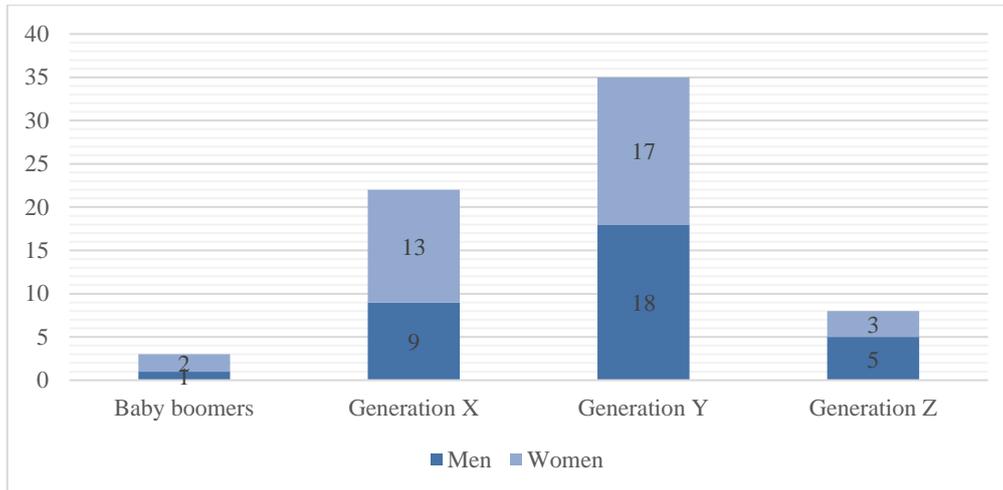
Industrial enterprises play a key role in the Slovak economy (Grenčíková *et al.*, 2021), and therefore it is relevant to examine how these organizations approach equal opportunities and diversity. The industry has historically been considered a male-dominated field (Kräft, 2021), which creates specific challenges in the area of gender equality and allows for better identification of potential barriers and inequalities. The research sample consisted of managers and human resource professionals in large industrial enterprises. Given the specificity of the questions in the questionnaire, it was important that it be filled out mainly by managers or professionals from human resources departments, who are expected to have greater knowledge of the issue. Employees from 68 large industrial enterprises operating in Slovakia participated in the research. The research sample was created on the basis of random selection. The criteria for selecting enterprises were a sector with an industrial character and a number of employees over 250. Based on these criteria, the basic set represented 292 large industrial enterprises. Addressed were 89 representatives from large enterprises, based on which we can conclude that the return rate of questionnaires was 76.4%.

Descriptive statistics, graphs, and cross-tabulations of absolute and relative frequencies were used to evaluate the research questions and characteristics of respondents.

The basic demographic characteristics of the respondents can be seen in the Figure 3.

Figure 3

Characteristics of the research sample



Source: Own elaboration (2025)

Figure 3 presents the characteristics of the research sample in terms of generational distribution and gender of respondents. In total, 33 men and 35 women participated in the research. The graph shows four generations: Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964), Generation X (born 1965-1980), Generation Y (born 1981-1995), and Generation Z (born 1996-2012). A generation refers to people born in approximately the same time period who grew up around the same time of political, economic, and social events. Each column is divided by gender, with darker blue indicating men and lighter blue indicating women.

The Baby Boomers generation is represented by only two women and one male respondent. In the case of Generation X, 9 men and 13 women participated in the research, which represents a total of 22 people. The largest group was Generation Y, with 18 men and 17 women, for a total of 35 respondents. Generation Z was represented by 5 men and 3 women, for a total of 8 people.

Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents are from Generation Y, with the representation of women being slightly higher or equal to that of men in most generations.

4 RESULTS

The presentation of the research results is aimed at the evaluation of the established research questions.

RQ1: What is the level of support for gender equality through its incorporation into human resource strategies and processes in large industrial enterprises?

As part of the analysis of RQ1, respondents' answers were analysed as to whether gender equality is included in the vision of the industrial enterprise in which respondents are employed. The evaluation is shown in the Table 1. AF represents absolute frequencies and RF denotes relative frequencies in %.

Table 1

Incorporating gender equality into the visions of industrial enterprises

| Respondents / Option | Yes | | I don't know | | No | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|--------------|--------|----|--------|
| | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] |
| Man | 26 | 56.52 | 4 | 36.36 | 3 | 27.27 |
| Woman | 20 | 43.48 | 7 | 63.64 | 8 | 72.73 |
| Sum | 46 | 100 | 11 | 100.00 | 11 | 100.00 |

Source: Own elaboration (2025).

The answers in Table 1 show that 46 respondents (68% of the total) answered this question positively, of which 26 were men (56.52% of all positive answers) and 20 were women (43.48% of all positive answers). The answer option that respondents do not know whether gender equality is included in the vision of the industrial enterprise in which they are employed was chosen by a total of 11 respondents, of which 4 were men (27.27%) and 7 were women (63.64%). Negatively answered 11 respondents, of which 3 were men (30.00%) and 8 were women (72.73%).

The results show that the majority of respondents perceive gender equality as part of the vision of their enterprise, with men confirming this fact more often. On the contrary, among those who answered uncertainly or negatively, women dominate. This difference may indicate different levels of awareness or perception of strategic communication about gender equality between men and women within companies.

RQ1 also analysed respondents' responses regarding whether the current HR strategy, policies, and processes of the industrial enterprise in which they are employed support gender equality. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Promoting gender equality through human resource strategy, policy and processes in industrial enterprises

| Respondents / Option | Yes | | I cannot assess | | No | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|-----------------|--------|----|--------|
| | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] |
| Man | 24 | 55.81 | 6 | 37.50 | 3 | 33.33 |
| Woman | 19 | 44.19 | 10 | 62.50 | 6 | 66.67 |
| Sum | 43 | 100 | 16 | 100.00 | 9 | 100.00 |

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

Table 2 shows that a total of 43 respondents responded positively, of which 24 were men (55.81%) and 19 were women (44.19%), which indicates that the support of gender equality is perceived mostly positively, slightly more often by men. Totally 16 respondents, including 6 men (37.50%) and 10 women (62.50%), were unable to assess the support of gender equality through human resource strategy, policy and processes. Negatively responded 9 respondents, including 3 men (33.33%) and 6 women (66.67%).

The results show that men more often perceive human resource strategies as supporting gender equality, while women more often express uncertainty or a negative assessment. These differences may indicate a different experience or degree of integration of gender equality into the internal enterprise culture and practice.

RQ2: What is the support for gender equality based on enterprise documents?

When analysing RQ2, we focused on whether the industrial enterprise in which the respondents work, has developed documents respecting the principles of gender equality.

The results indicate that the majority of respondents (37 of them) stated that their enterprise does not have such documents. Another 4 respondents answered that they could not assess whether such documents exist.

The remaining answers were provided as multiple options and indicate specific types of documents in some enterprises. The most frequently mentioned ones include

gender equality policy (5 answers), gender equality strategy (4), gender equality vision (4) and gender equality plan (3). Less frequent answers include code of ethics (1), declared company principles (1), gender equality manual (2) and code of conduct (1).

The results show that the occurrence of formally established documents supporting gender equality is rather exceptional, which points to the reserves in the systematic approach to incorporating gender equality principles into corporate governance.

Furthermore, when analysing the second research question, we focused on whether gender-sensitive language is used in the industrial enterprise where the respondents are employed (in job advertisements, gender-neutral language in internal documents, etc.). The answers are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Using gender-sensitive language in industrial enterprises

| Respondents / Option | Yes | | I cannot assess | | No | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|-----------------|--------|----|--------|
| | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] |
| Man | 11 | 39.29 | 15 | 60.00 | 7 | 46.67 |
| Woman | 17 | 60.71 | 10 | 40.00 | 8 | 53.33 |
| Sum | 28 | 100 | 25 | 100.00 | 15 | 100.00 |

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

The results in Table 3 present that the positive use of gender-sensitive or neutral language was assessed by 28 respondents, of whom 11 were men (39.29%) and 17 were women (60.71%), which indicates that women are more likely to perceive the presence of gender-sensitive language in their employer's environment. The option that they cannot assess this fact was chosen by 25 respondents, of whom 15 were men (60.00%) and 10 were women (40.00%), while men more often reported uncertainty in assessing this area. The negative use of gender-sensitive or neutral language was assessed by 15 respondents, of whom 7 were men (46.67%) and 8 were women (53.33%), so the distribution is relatively balanced here.

The results indicate that gender-sensitive language is not systematically implemented in most industrial enterprises, and a significant part of the respondents is not sure about its presence, which may be related to a lack of awareness or formal rules in this area.

For the broader context of RQ2, Table 4 evaluates the respondents' answers on whether the company in which the respondents are employed has a reporting system in place on the status of gender equality in the industrial enterprise.

Table 4

Monitoring and reporting on gender equality in the enterprise

| Respondents / Option | Yes | | I cannot assess | | No | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|-----------------|--------|----|--------|
| | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] |
| Man | 6 | 42.86 | 10 | 55.56 | 17 | 47.22 |
| Woman | 8 | 57.14 | 8 | 44.44 | 19 | 52.78 |
| Sum | 14 | 100 | 18 | 100.00 | 36 | 100.00 |

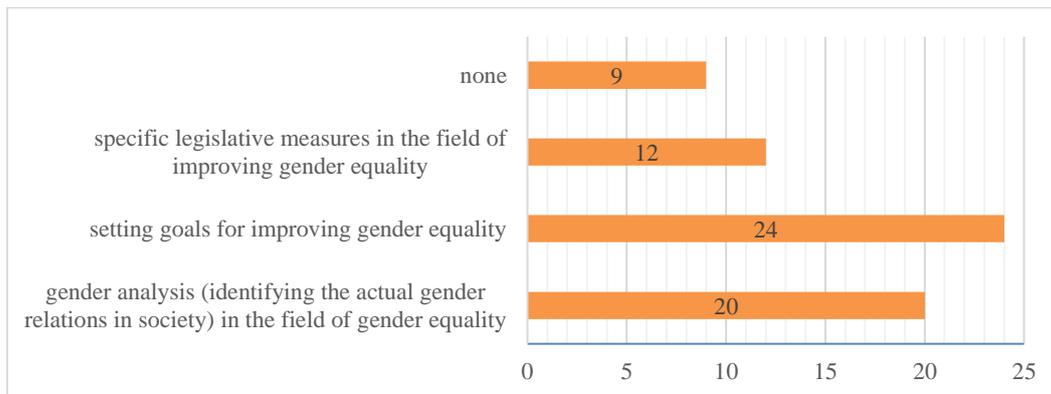
Source: Own elaboration (2025)

Table 4 illustrates that a total of 14 respondents responded positively, of which 6 were men (42.86%) and 8 were women (57.14%), which indicates that women are informed about the existence of such a system somewhat more often than men. The option that they cannot assess whether their enterprise monitors and reports on gender equality was chosen by 18 respondents, of which 10 were men (55.56%) and 8 were women (44.44%). The highest number of respondents, 36 of them, responded negatively, of which 17 were men (47.22%) and 19 were women (52.78%).

The data shows that a gender equality reporting system is absent in most companies, and only a small proportion of respondents have experience with its existence. Moreover, a significant proportion of respondents who are unaware of the existence of such a system points to low awareness or transparency in this area, which may affect the overall effectiveness of measures to promote gender equality.

RQ3: What progress is being made in improving employers' support for gender equality awareness?

The first part of RQ3 involves evaluating respondents' answers regarding what forms of gender equality improvements are used by the industrial enterprise they are employed in. The results are graphically displayed in Figure 4.

Figure 4*Forms of improvement in gender equality*

Source: Own elaboration (2025)

The results shown in Figure 2 show that the most respondents (24 of them) stated that management in their enterprises focuses on setting goals in the area of improving gender equality. This is followed by gender analysis, which is used by 20 respondents, and specific legislative measures were mentioned by 12 respondents. Interestingly, 9 respondents stated that no forms of improvement in gender equality are used in their company. So it can be concluded that in the majority of enterprises is management working on improving gender equality in at least some way, most often through setting goals and analyzing the current state, but there are still companies that do not develop any activities in this area.

RQ3 also includes an assessment of respondents' responses on whether the industrial enterprise in which they are employed provides gender equality training to employees as needed. The results are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5*Provision of gender equality education*

| Respondents / Option | Yes | | I cannot assess | | No | |
|----------------------|-----|--------|-----------------|--------|----|--------|
| | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] | AF | RF [%] |
| Man | 11 | 57.89 | 7 | 43.75 | 15 | 45.45 |
| Woman | 8 | 42.11 | 9 | 56.25 | 18 | 54.55 |
| Sum | 19 | 100 | 16 | 100.00 | 33 | 100.00 |

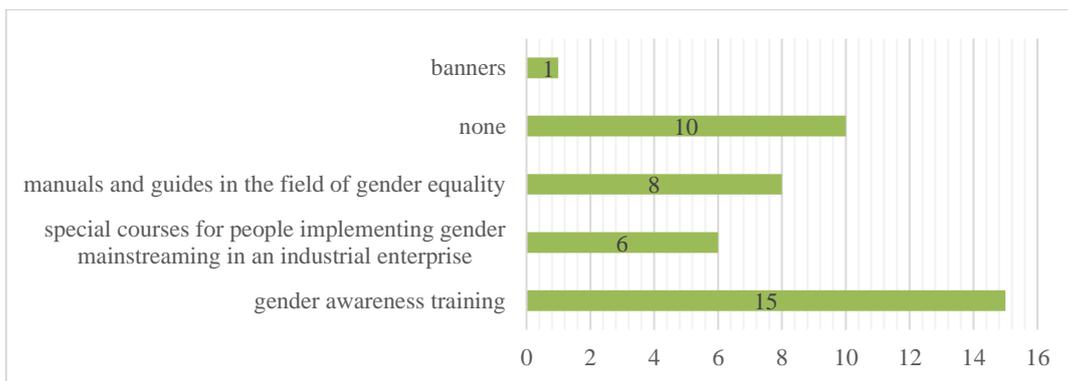
Source: Own elaboration (2025)

The data in Table 5 shows that 19 respondents answered positively, with the majority of them being men (57.89%), while women represented 42.11%. Unable to assess the provision of gender equality training were 16 respondents, the majority of whom were women (56.25%). Negative answer was chosen by 33 respondents, with a higher proportion of women (54.55%) compared to men (45.45%). From the above, it can be concluded that only a part of the enterprises provides gender equality training, while a significant part of the employees either do not register such practice, or training in this area is not provided at all in the enterprise.

The last part of RQ3 analysis contains the respondents' answers regarding the methods of education and awareness-raising in the field of gender equality used in the industrial enterprise they are employed in. The given question allowed multiple answers, the results are shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Raising employee awareness on gender equality



Source: Own elaboration (2025)

The data shown in Figure 5 above illustrate that the majority of respondents (15) stated that their enterprise uses gender awareness training. Manuals and handbooks on gender equality were chosen 8 respondents, and special courses for people who implement gender mainstreaming in an industrial enterprise were mentioned by 6 respondents. Ten respondents answered that none of the above forms of training are used in their enterprise, and only 1 respondent mentioned the use of banners. The results show that if training is carried out, it most often takes the form of training courses that serve to raise employees' awareness of gender equality, but at the same time it appears that some enterprises still do not use these opportunities.

5 DISCUSSION

Descriptive approach to analysis of the research questions allowed us to reveal some differences in the answers between women and men on individual gender equality issues. Given the variability in the perception of gender equality issues, it can be stated that the discussion on gender equality is important and not only its formal anchoring in corporate documents, but also its practical application in individual areas of human resource management. It is also important that both genders participate in this discussion. However, the involvement of men in this discussion may be dampened by the privileged position of men in most societies, who may perceive progress in the field of gender equality as a certain threat. Although men themselves may often be negatively influenced by gender stereotypes and restrictive perceptions of gender roles (Van Laar *et al.*, 2024). Fulfilling these gender roles and taking responsibility for others, however, may not be possible or equally feasible for everyone, also according to different life circumstances (Vazonienė & Wojewódzka-Wiewiórska, 2024). Engaging in discussions about gender equality issues may not be easy for women either, especially when combined with negative past experiences (Radke *et al.*, 2016). In addition, men and women may perceive particular factors affecting their work differently (Kudaibergenov *et al.*, 2025). The promotion of gender equality can thus be influenced by the degree of perception of certain injustices and by the feeling of self-confidence and support in promoting changes in the area of gender equality (Petzel *et al.*, 2024). It is therefore important that gender equality priorities and principles are formally documented in corporate documents. Gender equality should be part of corporate strategies so that they can contribute not only to improving corporate culture but also the performance of organizations (Gudekli *et al.*, 2023). Human resource management strategies in particular play a key role in increasing the performance and competitiveness of organizations (Stacho *et al.*, 2022). However, the implementation of gender equality in the corporate vision, strategy, policies, or business processes is made difficult by obstacles at the organizational level. Those who are supposed to be responsible for promoting gender equality in organizations either lack sufficient information and also face resistance to such changes at the organizational level (Ylöstalo, 2016). Barriers to implementing gender equality in business processes are also often organizational structures or corporate culture. Founders and managers of organizations play an important role in shaping corporate culture by influencing it through

their personal and managerial influence and by being its primary representatives (Lorincová *et al.*, 2025). The management has opportunities to influence what happens in the organisation and how the organisation is perceived by employees and externally. Appropriate and effective management of human resource diversity and the creation of a suitable working environment not only makes the organisation more efficient but also makes the organisation an attractive employer for the best employees (Urbancová *et al.*, 2024).

The integration of gender equality at the institutional level is influenced by broader societal challenges and unequal power relations within the genders. Insufficient understanding of gender equality also plays a role here, as does the absence of specific measurements to monitor progress in the field of gender equality. It is therefore necessary to develop a strategic and transformative approach to gender equality that would enable a better understanding of the basic concepts of gender equality by all parties (González Vélez *et al.*, 2020). Education is important to raise awareness of gender issues and implement fair gender policies. Education in the sense of equal opportunities is key to enabling equal opportunities in employment or education (Zakowska *et al.*, 2018).

6 CONCLUSION

The results of the presented study showed that despite the formal anchoring of the principles of gender equality in the strategies and visions of several large industrial enterprises in Slovakia, their practical implementation in the field of human resources management is uneven and often insufficient. Gender equality is more often declared at the level of strategic documents, but less systematically reflected in specific tools such as monitoring, reporting, education or the use of gender-sensitive language. A significant part of the respondents could not assess the existence of specific measures or denied their occurrence, which points to insufficient awareness and the absence of effective communication about this issue within organizations. The findings also pointed to differences in the perception and assessment of the support of gender equality between men and women, with women more often being more critical or less informed about existing measures. This fact emphasizes the need to strengthen internal communication and actively involve all groups of employees in building equality and diversity. In addition to the formal embedding of gender equality, it is therefore essential to ensure its

practical promotion through concrete and measurable steps, with internal human resource management processes, training while corporate governance is playing a key role. Promoting gender equality in industrial enterprises should be understood not only as a matter of justice, but also as a strategic advantage that promotes better performance, innovation and organizational culture. To achieve real progress, it is necessary to develop a transformative approach that takes into account structural barriers, implicit biases, as well as the need for continuous education and awareness-raising for all employees.

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Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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