

## Barriers that inhibit the empowerment of women in the process of university education

ARTICLE

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1

### Abstract

From the feminist mobilizations that took place in 2018, as a result of sexual harassment within university spaces, added to the Social Surge of 2019, a set of situations of deprivation and abuse began to become visible, which are summarized in the expression "It's not thirty pesos, it's thirty years", significantly changing the perception and cultural work, especially in the new generations, however, it is still not enough for women to be able to position themselves, in a more empowered way, even when they declare themselves patrimonial principles.

**Keywords:** Onda feminista. Equidade. Igualdade. Cultura. DD. HH.

### Barreras que inhiben la capacitación de las mujeres en el proceso de educación universitaria

#### Resumo

A partir de las movilizaciones feministas que se dan en 2018, como consecuencia del acoso sexual dentro de los espacios universitarios, sumado al Estallido Social de 2019, se empiezan a visibilizar un conjunto de situaciones de carencia y abuso, que se resumen en la expresión "No son treinta pesos, son treinta años", cambiando significativamente la percepción y el quehacer cultural, sobre todo en las nuevas generaciones, sin embargo, aún no es suficiente para que las mujeres puedan posicionarse, de manera más empoderada, aun cuando se declaren principios de equidad.

**Palabras clave:** Ola feminista. Equidad. Igualdad. Cultura. DD.HH.

## 1 Introduction

As it is known, feminist mobilizations have had no less impact at a planetary level; to such an extent that they are interpreted as the Fourth Feminist Wave. Chile, had a leading role after the recognized feminist May 2018.

It is worth remembering that, without ignoring the advances regarding the integration of women to a set of areas of knowledge, of doing and saying, there are others loaded with violence that give rise to that feminist May and are found inside educational institutions.

The incorporation is the result of long struggles, which continue to have limits placed by the patriarchy, after the installation of a euphemistic language, as well as the institutionalization of the problem, which inhibits the possibility of reversing the cultural discourse, domesticating it without developing one of greater cultural impact, which allows the reduction of all types of violence, especially femicides.

Thus, today it can be affirmed that all people have the same opportunities to study, however, not all of them get there and those who do, cannot always stay there, because there is no equity, neither in the previous training, nor in the economic resources used for it.

With which it is demonstrated that it is not enough to declare the equality of opportunities, without taking into account the criteria of equity. Considering a study conducted with students, in 2018, at the Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana (Chile), which for these purposes is only referential; it was found that women continue to be affected, by a set of barriers,

both in that year and in the one that has just ended. From a comparative perspective, a set of discursive-ideological structures that translate into barriers for women's empowerment and that underlie the deep structure are not modified in a relevant way. The patriarchal system has no will, in the formative-cultural logic, in the face of the naturalization of behaviors found in the classroom and in daily practices.

Thus, the objective of this article is to collect some of those perceptions shared by the students, both in writing and orally according to the type of instrument used, in order to reflect on it, obtaining an approximation to what has happened in part with the youth in the years referred to.

Finally, for this paper there will be no statistical treatment of the information, since the data is fundamentally of a subjective nature and is collected in an exploratory

perspective for a better understanding of what is happening in the country, in the face of what seems to be a stagnation or a setback, depending on how you look at it.

## 2 Results and Discussion

3

The year 2018, for Chile, is a year that will remain in the shadows as the "Social Outburst" of 2019 progresses and takes place, which caused so much impact worldwide, as this country had managed to establish itself in the eyes of the world as one of the most stable and developed in the region.

Social mobility favored by economic progress will be the only argument that completes this image, which becomes effective, once the perception that the country is emerging from poverty is incubated, through a model that materializes through technologies and credit cards, which install the abstraction of "plastic money" as an inexhaustible source.

Under a non-conscious imaginary, of an emotional type, which brings the population, especially the middle and lower classes, to see themselves as classes that are on the rise, given that, according to the discursive structure of the model, by putting effort and struggle against adversity, one can become a winner in life, that is, a winner, contrary to the loser or loser who had left the dictatorial ballast.

This reinforced the competitive game that this neoliberal capitalist model brought with it, a game that became one of the fundamental ideological principles to decompose the socio-communitarian perspective built in the struggle against the dictatorship. Women are also reached by that game, since they begin to incorporate themselves with greater force than during the dictatorship to the "productive" work; since new "opportunities" were opened.

That process demands that the domestic task be compensated and for that reason the technology is not neutral at all, it takes care of producing a whirlwind of household appliances that will facilitate the work of the working woman, who gets to cook and others, which added will be a double working day, but what is done at home has no work value for

the system and therefore there is no salary, thus, the production and protection of life, which provides such work, is naturalized as a feminine role, from which it follows, paraphrasing Federici, that without the historical savings made by the capitalist system with domestic work, perhaps it would not have reached the concentration of wealth over time, which has a few wrapped in wealth, while millions live in misery shameful.

Reclaiming domestic work is a priority, since both in 2018 and in 2022 it is detected that female students spend more time on domestic and care tasks than their partners.

The naturalization of women's work determines the level of demands made on women, which comes both from men and from themselves, so that in the nineties the stereotype of the "super woman" was reinforced, good mother, good wife, good worker and all the adjectives related to good work, this stereotype does not disappear, especially among the youngest.

For mothers, incorporated into the working world, there are kindergartens in which they should trust or schools that will take care of their children in a timely manner, however, the discursive culture present in society will take care to point out that it is best to raise at home, developing feelings of guilt if you can not conform to the stereotype described, so if certain circumstances are not assured, motherhood is a barrier that is increasingly difficult to run, if you are looking for professional and personal development. Today, millions of women are seeking to move away from the maternal role.

It should be noted that, although the Chilean State implemented family and childhood policies in democracy, as well as various legal regulations, this was not enough to sustain and protect the family over time; long working hours and lack of training for awareness of the participatory role that men should have within the home and upbringing, undoubtedly leave the nucleus abandoned.

The students of these generations suffer in part the consequences of those abandonments, which, in the absence of the father, the mothers cannot make up for, and in the presence-absence of part of the father, they have formed conflicted relationships. Long working days end with fathers and mothers exhausted, without energy to tell stories, play and other fundamental for a good development.

Despite the above, perhaps the positive aspect is that the new generations are less molded by the female stereotypes prefigured in traditional literature, but they also show less empathy for the pain of others. The idea of the prince who saves the princess is being left behind, but that image is not replaced by one that induces the study of disciplines considered "hard sciences" such as some of the engineering disciplines.

On the other hand, the discursive substratum, present in literature as well as in everyday life, is full of micromachismos, a concept coined by psychologist Luis Bonino in 1991, which refers to all those hidden forms of violence that apparently do less damage, which is relative, since patriarchy was configured in ideological terms with part of them.

The classrooms are also full of them and both professors and students exercise them, inhibiting female participation. The number of women in the engineering programs with which we work does not normally reach 50% of the total number of students, this is cultural violence.

Hence the relevance of Law 21.369, which requires from this year that Higher Education Institutions have a policy against gender violence, with all the scopes that are implied in it.

We must be vigilant, as it is a bad practice, but not less used, to declare conditions as indicated in the laws, which are not necessarily fulfilled. The laws that regulate behavior will not respond to the needs, if there is no concern to modify the cultural views on the subject, starting with the will to strengthen the knowledge on these matters, because it is proven that millions of women do not make use of their rights, for lack of knowledge and many others because even having them, live in a framework of contradictions that the patriarchy has been leaving from the ideological point of view, which prevent them from defending themselves.

A macho behavior that is being widely rejected is sexual street harassment, however, heteronormativity softens it and considers that a respectful "piropo" flatters rather than offends, from this perspective no "piropo" will be respectful because it shows a type of micromachismo that is related to the right that men arrogate to qualify the female body and clothing, as if it were an express request from them; It is still not understood that a

demonstration of a woman's body in the street implies a visual intrusion into her bodily territory, over which men have no right. It found a response from the State, from the feminist mobilizations, sanctioning it, as it is typified as a crime in Law 21.153.

With respect to this measure, it is evident that it favors the empowerment of women, but a cumbersome legal system hinders the denunciation, the limit between the objective and the subjective for these effects, is fragile, that is why the only thing that can modify the behavior, is the necessary formation to understand that the bodies cannot be trespassed, beyond the limit, that the bodies themselves place, completely covered, semi-naked or naked, from the qualification of such forms.

The weight of the qualification and/or evaluation of women's bodies in the public space is observed when women students have to make an exhibition, since there is a tendency to move the body, as an unconscious act of not allowing looks to be fixed on any part of it, inducing these looks to focus on the movement and not on the body itself. Evidently this may be due to more than one cause, but independently of this, the body is expressing in one way or another a degree of discomfort.

Under these conditions, there is a very neglected aspect, which is assertiveness as a vehicle for positioning oneself before the environment, clearly women are not educated in this area and if there is someone who is more assertive, the tendency to qualify her as conflictive is maintained, the ballast is deep, because the adjectives are multiple for assertive behavior that seems uncommon, they are also defiant, while with them the "daring" is manifested, thus breaking the stigma.

In this context, men are, on the contrary, educated in assertiveness in the use of public space, which is taken, on the contrary, teenage girls, preferably, still move around trying to hide their breasts, while men of the same ages, walk with more deference, in Chile they say "a lo choro" and in the use of public transport, they will use the seats opening their legs unnecessarily, as a sign of masculinity, repairing that and calling a man for that reason, can mean more than one problem.

These forms of violence, as well as those found in advertising, are loaded with symbolism, which makes their eradication even more difficult, so it is necessary to decipher

them for a better understanding, the lack of interpretation of the implicit message that is kept in many types of violence constitutes a communicational barrier and due to problems in the educational base, the student body cannot always read the implicit in a comprehensive way, thus presenting intersectional barriers of a systemic type, more complex to eradicate and understand.

Another discriminatory situation is the salary gap between professions and the difference in salaries between equal degrees for men and women (HASS, 2021). In Chile, according to a recent study it was detected that the gap reaches 27%, it could be thought that this is a sample of the limits that the patriarchy is placing to evade full equality, despite this, students are not always aware of it, let alone willing to take action and obviously, as students it does not affect them immediately, so this information should be provided in a timely manner so that, as future professionals take a position on this inequity (HASS, 2021).

This violence moves from the private to the public space and vice versa, and in this dynamic it is negatively reinforced for women, with the symbolic materializing in verbal offenses, physical violence, and even the most brutal actions, such as femicides.

Women relegated by men to private space had to look behind the curtain at what was happening in public, developing fear before the male aggressiveness that was the owner of that space, which unmistakably connotes the body in a different way, so that a way of walking can be threatening and even when one is certain that the threat will not materialize, it will be felt.

The sense of taking possession of space is projected in time, also in a symbolic way, the man sitting at the head of the table is an image that crosses all social classes and if the man is not present, who will occupy the head of the table will be the woman, because by associating authority with a place at the table, she will gain the respect of her children. Power, authority and authoritarianism are linked in this network of cultural interpretations and ways of doing things that are more resistant to change.

This is a macro-structure in the discursive and in the daily life, which is found everywhere, so the complaint of sexual harassment at the Austral University, favored the viralization of other cases that began to emerge, the students generated a sorority force

that seemed unstoppable. But the scenario has changed and although it is not going backwards, certain forms of feminism are being questioned, without the will to understand it.

While these multiple cases emerge, it is valid to ask what happened to Chilean masculinity, why is it that so many men think they can harass and take a woman by force. It is the patriarchal culture that teaches him to be master and lord, it is the critical and daring women who have been taking them down from those pedestals that allow them to abuse and abuse.

University spaces, after the development of knowledge, are an alternative to make a critical reading of reality, as they stimulate that type of thinking, but in the same way, they can favor the domestication of the subject, as he is surrounded by an obsessive disciplinarity, which does not allow him to observe his environment, which from this perspective constitutes a risk, because perhaps a harasser with a university degree never allowed himself to try to understand the reality from another perspective, staying with what is culturally learned and legitimized, because sexual abuse is present in all spaces and in other moments of history, evidently it has been justified and / or legitimized, in Chile and in other countries there was the right to "pernada", who says that in subway cultures that is still a consented practice? .

An aspect that is also rejected is the gift of toys according to stereotypes, such as guns for boys and dolls and cups for girls, also differentiating the packaging based on the color pink or blue, this distinction clearly tends to be discarded, however, the windows are still organized according to that.

Another relevant aspect to highlight is the indifference and rejection that exists on the part of the youth towards politics, this is the result of having eliminated civic education as a subject, with which they were not educated in the duties of citizenship, being the cost of that, fully observable, in the forceful rejection towards the proposal of a new constitution. In addition to the above, there was a systematic policy of neutralizing citizen participation and organization, especially in the towns, the center and left parties were abandoning the



territories, which allowed the introduction of right-wing sectors, which had a deep cultural impact in these areas, together with religious currents of evangelical orientation.

Participation was intentionally reduced and women were affected, because even when spaces of concern for gender issues and femicidal violence emerged, they were not enough to guarantee women's participation during the thirty years.

9

On the other hand, an important part of the student body descends from a generation that settled in the "I'm not even there" of the nineties, a phrase promoted by a prominent sportsman and that has transversalized to all social sectors, extending in time, because until today, it is highly used as an expression of indifference, then in schools, although democratic elections and others are practiced, they do not manage to revert the perception of politics as a corrupt practice for which we should not be motivated, because it is constantly concluded that this activity is only entered for personal interests, then there is evidence of political corruption, practically in all Latin America, therefore the disaffection that exists with respect to it is not unfounded. The dictatorship was in charge of degrading political action and in democracy part of that degradation was confirmed.

The need to get out of the dictatorship led to negotiations and agreements that are maintained over time, as for example Pinochet (1983) signed the Organic Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE, 2006), where the most questioned aspect is that it establishes the freedom of education over the right to education, and although it was reformed in the government of Ricardo Lagos, the scope was not enough, The indebtedness of thousands of families to educate their children still persists and this does not ensure that they are receiving or have received a genuine quality education.

That tutelary democracy, full of barriers for women, seems to be refreshed with President Bachelet, she is a hope not only in these terms, but also being the first woman president in Chile, opens expectations for the development of women and although the progress in certain areas cannot be underestimated, there was no significant impact on the institutions, on the gender perspective, except in those that had been working visionarily on the subject.

With all the above, if there is something that can be recognized in the dictatorship, it is the capacity it developed to intervene the country culturally in its deep idiosyncratic structure. The perspicacity to leave installed an economic-socio-educational project that could be described as "sinister" and that no government proposed to eradicate in a profound way, for whatever reasons, is the greatest cultural impact and damage that Chile has suffered, and that from this writing is not considered improvable in the short term.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the most visionary in these thirty years, regarding this issue was the student body, to which no one paid enough attention, nor whoever has been in power, is responsible. This, which could seem a visceral argument, would perhaps vindicate the appreciation and valuation of politics, however, as long as there is no genuine demonstration of a change in practices, disaffection towards it will not disappear.

Returning to the LOCE (2006), the concept of opportunity is mythologized, so that if a person with scarce resources studies and achieves his or her objective, changing his or her quality of life, there will be talk of "social mobility", nobody considered that this person would be indebted to a private university or to the State, since with the student struggle, free education is concretized, but only for a sector of the population. The retirement conditions that these people will have are not evaluated either.

All of the above is what 'allows the new generations to say "it is not thirty pesos, it is thirty years", when reviewing history, in reality, it is about something of all life and that affects with different nuances to the whole continent, being women the most harmed, especially those of the most popular sectors, because for them the "opportunity", in all periods will be marked by nuances that will prevent them from realizing that "patriarchal generosity".

As can be observed, Chilean society in this whole process builds a new way of inhabiting the territory that will seek to be on a par with developed countries, more than from a proven economic condition that favors the poorest sectors, it does it from the installation of that imaginary already seen in part, which is strengthened in the tradition, from which is extracted the idiosyncratic character that is determined by a way more than

to see oneself, to define oneself from how others are seeing him, gaining strength the apparent, which becomes a kind of splitting, of material, value and intellectual type.

The history of colonization reveals discursive structures that underlie the dominant discursive structure itself, brought from the conquest, creating a substrate loaded with *siutiquerías*, which are thought, believed and practiced in everyday life, foreshadowing a constant search for identity in a class and a race to which one believes to belong, but different from the one that objectively one could have.

In a novelistic way, Alberto Blest Gana, relates it in his work *Martín Rivas*, who through his characters describes the perspective of a constant looking upwards, especially towards Europe, in such a way that not only the material resources will be of interest, but also the surnames to which hopefully a European vein will be found, more stately than the Spanish one, It is also worth mentioning that for decades, among other things, there has been an attempt to ratify the origin with phrases such as "the Chileans are the English of Latin America", which allows them to distinguish themselves from other countries of the continent that have a larger native or Afro-descendant population. It is worth noting at this point that for the Latin neighbor there is still arrogance, but for the European, the learned obeisance is still rendered.

In this context, the discursive structures to which little relevance is given, are the ones that define a way of being and doing everyday life and which finally project the type of culture that societies develop and, although the economic model based on the exploitation established for centuries, as well as its ideological support, are the ones that define a way of being and doing everyday life, as well as its ideological support, such as patriarchy, are a common minimum, between countries, independent of their geographical location, each locality will be in charge of recreating those models, according to its circumstances, without losing sight of the central axes that explain and justify them in order to sustain themselves in time. For this reason, we can find infinite similarities between cultures, but not exactly the same forms.

Like any process, from biological reproduction, other types of reproductions are extrapolated, which are related to the way of making life, so that life itself is a reproductive constant, which bifurcates into acts such as recreation and creation itself.

Since reproduction is permanent, recreation in this context has a circumstantial character and is transitory insofar as it considers contingent aspects. Thus, for example, if a political celebration reproduces in its content a deep sense of the search for equality, which is repeated in history, it will be the way in which it is recreated that will give support to the reproduction, which never loses subjectivity.

However, if the deep discursive structure of that reproduction - recreated - is detected, it can be deduced that the loss of meaning will be significant, affecting not only how the act is recreated, but also the deep structure of the political task, which, in its abstraction, is not easy to separate from the acting political subject.

The political paradigm loses sense in communitarian terms, in such a way that it falls, being other paradigms the ones that will acquire the strength, in that search consciously or unconsciously is the Chilean society that frighteningly faces the crisis of the economic system, but also the hidden threat of new and repeated violence. The patriarchal structure does not yield and the religious and the political are not of collective and youth interest.

In this scenario of paradigms in crisis or literally fallen, it is no longer a matter of recreating a form of ritualization, because if there is no clear answer as to what for, a society that is losing the sense that guided its social structures, is becoming detached, which diminishes the common base actions, and as the term refers, the communion between people from creating and sharing is diluted.

The October Social Outburst favored lay communion and turned the Friday marches and meetings into a rite, which began to unravel as the violence sucked the ritual performance, and those who understood it began to move away, in the hope that a new path was being written for the country.

Along with being a moment of disorientation and despair for the population we find ourselves with that other cultural factor, which is the creation, which is understood from this

writing, as innovative and rupturist act depending on the scope that sustains in the field in which it is inserted, because it is worth remembering that not everything that seems new, really is, as well as not everything that is announced as a break, necessarily reaches the depth of this, in these variables we find Thomas Kuhn (2017); who in his work "Revolution of Scientific Structures" develops the paradigmatic break applied to science, but in terms of what we can understand by paradigmatic break or rupture is neutral and therefore applicable to any model in which we insert ourselves as people, given that it can also go from the micro to the macro.

Thus, we can observe that once some truths are consigned, for a certain historical moment, both in the field of knowledge and of doing or being, these are configured as genuine ideological penetrations that determine behavior in an ankylosed way, while in parallel, others are installed that go unnoticed, due to the level of dynamism they have at first and also because they generate uncertainty, which has nothing attractive for the majority of the population, which is not educated in it.

The truths constructed as barriers are undoubtedly difficult to eradicate, while the others, if not reinforced, become fragile. This leads to a process of paradigmatic contradictions, the answers to which are not immediately apparent, since these crises, rather than answers, contribute to a new way of understanding reality and, if necessary, can advance, stop or even set back what was already conceived as an achievement.

This is explained by the fact that social movements do not constitute a homogeneity, not all of them understand the problem at the same time, the first thing they seek is to vindicate the right or immediate interest that affects them when there is no response, the perception that is provoked is that the struggles are lost battles, in the case of feminist struggles, significant achievements are observed, because what is being claimed are general rights, because all those recognized for men were taken away from them at the root, so feminist struggles cannot stagnate, the obscurantism in which women were placed, today should be inadmissible. It is therefore relevant to insist on supporting women who are being segregated (LAGARDE, 2015).

Finally, it should be noted that the Declaration written by Olimpy de Gouges, regarding the "Universal Rights of Women and Citizenship", because we were not recognized in the history written by them and for them, is the best example of how patriarchy under the slogan of "Equality, Liberty and Fraternity" contributes to the rampant look of conquerors first and capitalists later, who first hide the system, to later and when convenient lead them into chaos..

### 3 Final considerations

Like all countries in Latin America and the world, in Chile the incorporation of women into the educational system has been one of the most significant achievements given the level of violence that constitutes the fact that one part of the species arrogates to itself the right to take away from the other half of humanity that qualitative leap that develops over time and distinguishes it from other animal species.

This is no coincidence, it is built on discursive structures that emerge from the religious and / or philosophical, seeking to control and dominate, giving rise to a set of barriers with which they must continue to deal, especially women.

When we see that some countries are applying extreme measures against them and that educational institutions do not say anything about it, nor are strong feminist movements rising up to denounce these facts, it seems that we are being transported to the Middle Ages, just as we felt with the pandemic.

In the same way, it confirms that the patriarchy runs the fence according to its convenience and although feminist pressures have been giving results over time, clearly the model acts according to its parameters of dominance in coordination with an economic model that has the same interest, but what motivates it fundamentally is to sustain the accumulated wealth, however, there is no political-economic model that has given better treatment to women. Machismo is transversal to all politics.

It is for this reason that the condition, woman, will always be threatened if we do not modify those discursive structures that underlie the explicit discourse, present in

everyday life as well as deconstruct the social roles that have been assigned to men and women.

University spaces are disciplinary spaces that need to be enriched with interdisciplinary perspectives, in such a way that engineering requires to interact with social sciences and humanities, the disciplinary division of which was required for scientific and technological development, today urgently demands a holistic view.

The fall of paradigms in all order of things, or at least in those that establish the links between human beings, is inevitable, a portion of women will no longer tolerate violence, however, the crisis breaks down into a whole that must be reassembled, with which there is an opportunity to do it differently or improve it, knowing that the patriarchy will place its own parameters.

The institutional framework must open paths in the scientific-technological areas that move away from traditional forms of incorporation or even considering them by state mandate, ensure an effective entry of more women and formative accompaniment in the early stages, given that, although there is interest in full incorporation, those students are at a disadvantage compared to their male peers.

It is essential, with respect to gender issues, that the disciplines vindicate the image of women in their areas through research that makes known their participation and the reason for their absence, because when we begin to dig we find thousands of unnamed women, that if we had had the opportunity to meet them before, perhaps we would be in the same places, but not in those that were built from the patriarchy, but those that today would have to be rethought, if we genuinely seek to build a society with greater equity that allows us to approach the widest range of effective equal opportunities and that even if violence cannot be eradicated, it should not be more than a struggle for survival like any other animal species, a classification from which we should never have left or at least until the understanding of recursion is rooted, as an act that is exclusive to human beings and perhaps the only rational variable that distinguishes us from other animals.

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16

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Desde el año 2008 quien suscribe posee el grado de Dra. En “Estudios de género en Perspectiva Interdisciplinaria” otorgado por la Universidad Jaume I de Castellón de la Plana, en la misma



universidad obtiene el grado Magister en “Dirección y Administración de Empresas” su título de pregrado es “Profesora de Estado en Castellano y Filosofía” otorgado por la Universidad de La Serena, realiza otros diplomas con relación a Uso de Tecnologías, Gestión universitaria, Neurolingüística. En cuanto a su desempeño laboral, trabaja desde el año 1994 a la fecha en la Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana, en la cual ha sido coordinadora de asignatura, directora de carrera, actualmente Consejera Superior. Por otra parte, ha participado en variados Congresos y Seminarios con ponencias relativas a la temática de Genero y educación fundamentalmente, en países como España, México, Brasil, Perú, Argentina, Chile.

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