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EDUCATION**

**Unveiling Views: Perspectives of Faculty Holding Doctoral Degrees on Gender  
Disparities in Academic Professorships**

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## **Abstract**

# **Unveiling Views: Perspectives of Faculty Holding Doctoral Degrees on Gender Disparities in Academic Professorships**

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**MASTER OF ARTS THESIS 2024**

This is a qualitative study that investigated the fundamental factors contributing to gender imbalance in Azerbaijani academia, focusing on female professors holding Doctor of Science and Doctor of Philosophy degrees. Moreover, the research explored the challenges faced by female professors holding doctoral degrees and gained insights into their unique experiences and perspectives about gender disparity. Despite substantial studies on gender-related themes in Azerbaijan, no prior studies have investigated the viewpoints of Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Science holders on gender imbalances in academia. This study explored two research questions: (1) How do highly qualified scientific staff perceive gender disparity in rank and scientific degrees in academia in Azerbaijan? (2) What are the female professors' holding doctoral degrees experiences and perspectives on addressing gender disparity in academia? To address the mentioned research questions data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 18 professors and holders of doctoral degrees from three public universities. Key themes emerged, including family-related issues, salary concerns, gender stereotypes, and biased views. While research suggests the existence of a global gender wage gap, respondents' experiences differ. The primary concern of the respondents lies in insufficient overall income rather than dissatisfaction with the gender-based wage gap. The findings underline the need of systemic change in addressing biases, promoting gender equality, and creating inclusive settings that support women's academic achievement. Overall, this research advances our understanding of

gender dynamics in Azerbaijani academia and informs targeted efforts to improve fairness and inclusiveness.

***Keywords:** gender disparity, multiple identities of women, salary concern, stereotypes, lack of family member's support, time constraints, work-life balance*

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Academic circles are rooted in patriarchal, imperial, and colonial ideas that contribute to the definition and perpetuation of gender roles and regulations, owing to their traditional, hierarchical, and selective nature. (Bomert & Leinfellner, 2017). These ideas can have a detrimental impact on women's academic experiences and self-identification, and they are viewed as a marginalized group confronting gender disadvantages. The underrepresentation of women in the field of higher education in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) is obvious (Phillips et al., 2021). According to European Institute for Gender Equality (2023), gender disparity refers to “Differences in women’s and men’s access to resources, status and well-being, which usually favor men and are often institutionalized through law, justice and social norms” while gender inequality refers to “Legal, social and cultural situation in which sex and/or gender determine different rights and dignity for women and men, which are reflected in their unequal access to or enjoyment of rights, as well as the assumption of stereotyped social and cultural roles” (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2023). These two key terms such as gender disparity and gender inequality were used in this research.

Achieving gender equality is an important indicator of both social and economic progress of the country. However, ignoring gender equality in development strategies can lead to a decrease in efficiency and significant financial consequences (Findik, 2016). The solution to the persistent global problem of gender inequality in the field of education is of primary importance, since the reduction of this gender gap in education is of crucial importance for the overall economic, social and environmental development of the country. This is because promoting gender equality may boost current economic growth and enhance development outcomes (OECD Council Ministerial Meeting, Paris, May 25-26, 2011). Given the seriousness of this issue and considering the fact that the problem remains to some extent, Azerbaijan is making substantial efforts to address the gender imbalance. According to Aghaeva (2012), Azerbaijan's Ministry of Science and Education has recently emphasized gender education. Despite ongoing efforts to

improve gender issues and educational standards in Azerbaijan, there remain significant obstacles that should be addressed. A major source of worry is the obvious gender disparity in the academic world, notably among professors with Doctor of Science degree (Samadov, 2023). According to the law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on science (2016), “yüksəkixtisaslı elmi kadr” [highly qualified scientific staff] are a person with a Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Science degree. Data from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan indicate that the gender ratio of professors from the department staff for the academic year 2022-2023 in public and private higher education institutions is as follows: 19.8% for female, 80.2% male professors (SSC, 2022-2023). The statistical data clearly show a gender imbalance among professors in both private and public higher educational institutions. Efforts to narrow the gender gap are essential for promoting equity in academic professor roles.

Correspondingly, the primary aim of this study is to explore perceptions of highly qualified scientific staff [yüksəkixtisaslı elmi kadr] regarding gender disparity in Academia in Azerbaijan. In addition, objective of the study is To investigate unique experiences and gain insights into perspectives of female professors holding doctoral degrees on addressing gender disparity in academia, and To identify factors contributing to gender imbalance within academia in Azerbaijan.

First of all, as more female enter the academic profession at lower levels, there is compelling evidence that intergenerational transition is occurring. The gender discrepancy, however, cannot be attributed solely to age groups or the historical pattern of fewer women receiving doctorates (Baker, 2012). Research suggests that the persistence of issue can be explained by factors related to family, household responsibilities and individual priorities, as supported by studies by various scholars (Wolf-Wendel et al, 2006; Comer & Stites-Doe 2006; Monroe et al., 2008; Settles et al., 2006). In addition, earlier studies have indicated that female academics face more challenges related to parenting compared to their male counterparts. This disparity is closely connected with various factors, including the physical aspects of pregnancy,

childbirth, and the experiences related to maternity leave that mothers undergo (Lendák-Kabók, 2022).

Moreover, research has emphasized work-life imbalance as a challenge for academic staff, particularly due to heightened work demands that lead to working on evenings and weekends. This distorts the line between work and personal life, resulting in an undesirable work-life imbalance. The intrusion of work into personal life is caused not only by physical factors, but also by a strong psychological attachment to work, which affects other life roles, rest and sleep (Slishkovich and Maslach Sershich 2011). The financial limitations that female scientists experience because of their lower salary, higher family duties, and limited career opportunities in the field are the second factor contributing to the gender gap in academia (Aghayeva, 2012).

The study's significance stems from its applicability to national development goals, such as the Ministry of Science and Education's focus on gender education, which views it as a resource to support ongoing initiatives. The Azerbaijani Ministry of Education has lately expressed concern about gender education. Besides from reviewing and approving curriculum for various gender courses, the Ministry now has a focus on gender issues. Within the ministerial framework, a new position of Representative on Gender Issues was established, with the primary purpose of achieving gender balance in the educational system (Aghayeva, 2012). Thus, this means that the Ministry of Education and Science has also concern about gender issues. Through influencing advocacy and policy projects, the research's conclusions have the potential to develop human capital in the academic sector and empower female academics. Significance of the study relates to given the available information, more research on this gender gap will be beneficial from the perspective of human capital to female professors, Institute of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the entire society and economy. It will provide insights that can guide targeted interventions and promote an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Thus, this study is guided by the following questions:

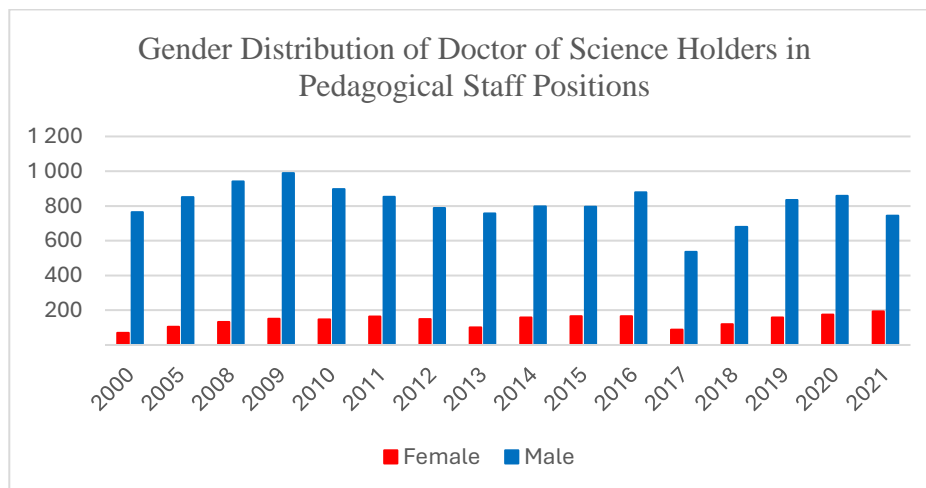
1. How do highly qualified scientific staff perceive gender disparity in rank and scientific degrees in academia in Azerbaijan?
2. What are the female professors' holding doctoral degrees experiences and perspectives on addressing gender disparity in academia?

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

People at higher education institutions are divided into a number of roles, such as support or administrative staff, faculty members, and students. These occupations contribute to the maintenance of social and institutional inequalities by having specific positions, responsibilities, and opportunities (Read & Leathwood, 2018). Although more women are enrolling in higher education, there are still obstacles facing female academic faculty members (LaPan et al., 2013). In majority part of the world, the number of women enrolled in PhD programs and institutions has increased significantly during the past forty years (Brommesson et al., 2022). Looking to the statistics, the proportion of women among new Ph.D. graduates increased for the third year in a row, reaching 20.5% in 2008, up from 19.1% the year before (Zweben, 2009). However, when taking into account the representation of women among full professors and tenured lecturers, the progress made toward reaching gender equality in academia is less clear (Brommesson et al., 2022). While numerous studies have unraveled the cumulative mechanisms leading to gender inequalities throughout the journey to higher education, there is limited research examining two or more consecutive transitions in the academic career that follow graduation from upper-secondary education (Lörz & Mühleck, 2019). Studies on doctorate education emphasize the idea of academic identity as a critical path that a doctorate student takes during their program to transform from a student to a scholar professional (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Lunde, 2017). Managing this academic identity journey for female doctorate students requires a complicated interaction between their fundamental sense of self and various roles they perform, including that of a wife, mother, or professional. Unfortunately, many women choose not to pursue PhD studies due to the inherent tension and conflicts that result from balancing these numerous identities. According to Rockinson-Szapkiw and Lunde (2017), this resulted in female doctoral students being unable to receive their doctorates for the previously mentioned reasons. Furthermore, even if the number of women obtaining doctorates is rising, the chronic underrepresentation of women in the academic profession is still a problem in North America (Schoening 2009).

Data from the Survey of Earned Doctorates reveals that, in 2008, women constituted 46% of all doctorates earned in the United States (Fiegener, 2009). Similarly, in Canada, women comprised 44% of doctorate graduates during the 2005–06 academic year (King, Eisl-Culkin, & Desjardins, 2008). According to the State Statistical Committee of Azerbaijan (2023), in 2021, there were a total of 938 scientific and pedagogical workers with a Doctor of Science degree employed in higher education institutions. Among them, only 193 were women. Notably, these percentages exceed the representation of women faculty in each of these countries. While some indications suggest that graduate students in research-based programs lean towards pursuing academic roles after completing their degrees rather than working in other sectors (Gemme & Gingras, 2012): There is no specific threshold defining the ideal proportion for the direction towards a professorial career. According to data taken from the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the same trend has been observed for several years which confirms gender disparity among professors in academia.

**Table 1**



*Note: Gender Distribution of Doctor of Science Holders in Pedagogical staff positions through 2000-2021 years. Adapted from The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2023).*

Thus, the next section of the study is going to present crucial reasons for explaining gender disparity among professors in academia.

### Work-Life Balance Challenges

The available research suggests that cultural factors are important in determining the roles that men and women accept in society: One such function mentioned is to assign women with the responsibility of looking for both children and the elderly (Scott Metcalfe & Padilla González, 2013). Because of this, faculty members especially women with small children often have trouble maintaining a balance between their professional and personal obligations, which has led to some of them choosing part-time or flexible work schedules (Hill et al., 2014). The women, more than men, perceive difficulties in managing career ambitions alongside family obligations, possibly due to differing timelines for starting families (Anders, 2004). Furthermore, Wolfinger et al. (2008) found that marriage and raising small children at home might impede a woman's ability to advance in her academic career. Because women are more likely to adjust their career goals for family reasons, such as conflicting timing between the birth of a child and a promotion, men are more likely to outperform women in the workplace (Wolfinger et al., 2008). Both genders benefit from supporting family aspirations at work toward greater job satisfaction: However, because women often take on more family responsibilities, work-family imbalance can lead to decreased job satisfaction for women (Moors et al., 2014). This research explores the complex interactions that exist between gender roles, cultural expectations, and the obstacles that women encounter in academic contexts. It looks at larger cultural and institutional variables that contribute to these challenges in addition to individual job choices.

### Salary concerns

Strong evidence highlights the gender wage gap among degree holders worldwide, including Azerbaijan, as highlighted by Ismailov (2022). Gender wage gaps have received a great deal of attention in academic discourse; Okpara et al. (2005) highlighted this issue in their

study of American workers. Comparing female academics in the United States to their male counterparts, their results show that not only do they get paid less, but they expressed less satisfaction. According to authors wage disparity between men and women persists across all education levels, irrespective of working hours (Carnevale et al., 2011). Their findings further suggest that women holding doctoral degrees earn equivalent salaries to men with only a bachelor's degree: This claim is supported by 2019 research from the US website PayScale.com, which shows a general trend in which American women are generally paid less than men with similar qualifications. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, males are more than twice as likely as women to be in the top-paying group, indicating a comparable trend across both nations. Male teachers continue to earn more money than their female counterparts in the US, according to Glazer-Raymo (2008), who noted this pattern across all levels and institutional types. In addition, although there is comprehensive legal framework that prohibits pay discrimination, it is commonly acknowledged in the literature that women in Turkey face wage inequality, which results in their earning less than males (Ucal, 2015). There is no information about pay problems in the context of Azerbaijan.

Most of the resources cited represent the cases/ studies in the US. Why not refer to the regions/countries that will best suit to compare with the situation in Azerbaijan, ex: post-Soviet countries? You could expand on the situation in Turkey as well.

#### Gender biases and stereotypes

Beyond the classroom, pervasive biases based on gender have deep roots in many countries and often appear early in life, impacting young girls' career goals and lifetime academic achievements (Makarova et al., 2019). In various societies, a longstanding stereotype persists, asserting that boys outperform girls in mathematics (Else-Quest et al., 2010). This stereotype affects young girls' academic performance in mathematics assessments even though there are no inherent or biological differences (Kersey et al., 2019). Biases in the expectations of

parents and teachers also play a role in shaping children's attitudes and performance in mathematics (Gunderson et al., 2012). Interaction with parents, teachers, peers and mass media contributes to the formation of gender stereotypes, negatively affecting the interest and confidence of girls in STEM subjects and potentially reducing their inclination to a future research career in STEM (Cheryan et al., 2017).

In addition, available literature emphasizes evidence of bias in a variety of academic contexts (Fernandes et al., 2020). This includes biases in citations of journal articles and innovations (Dworkin et al., 2020b; Hofstra et al., 2020), publication rates (West et al., 2013), patent applications (Jensen et al., 2018), hiring decisions (Nielsen, 2016), research grant applications (Burns et al., 2019), evaluations of conference abstracts (Knobloch-Westerwick et al., 2013), invitations for symposia speakers (Schroeder et al., 2013), postdoctoral employment (Sheltzer and Smith, 2014), prestigious science awards (Lunnemann et al., 2019), and tenure decisions (Weisshaar, 2017). These biases are interconnected, develop and accumulate throughout the entire career trajectory of a person: the combination of these prejudices can lead to the gradual removal of women from the scientific career, while their number decreases as they progress through different career stages (Llorens et al., 2021).

Extensive research at the professorial level shows that female instructors score below average on student evaluations compared to their male counterparts: In particular, gender bias can be so pronounced that more effective female instructors are rated lower than less effective male instructors (Mengel et al., 2018). Experimental studies manipulating the gender identity of online course instructors further support these findings, with instructors perceived as female receiving lower ratings than both male and female students (Khazan et al., 2019; MacNeill et al., 2015). Men are generally seen as having more knowledge and stronger leadership qualities than women, even though there are no real disparities in the learning achievements of students (Boring, 2017). This bias, particularly evident in student evaluations of teaching (SETs), holds significant implications for the careers of women scientists, as SETs often serve as a metric for

teaching effectiveness in promotion and tenure decisions. Furthermore, women have less time for research and a heavier teaching load, which has a negative impact on their productivity in the field (Misra et al., 2011). Overall, gender stereotypes and biases that affect everything from early schooling to professorial assessments provide a serious barrier to women's success in STEM fields—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Solving these problems requires collective efforts to overcome entrenched prejudices and create an inclusive environment in which input is valued regardless of gender. Despite the fact that the government of Azerbaijan since its creation has implemented directives on gender equality in various sectors, gender stereotypes persist in certain spheres, including education (Agaeva, 2012).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this review examines widespread gender disparity in academia, including academic trajectories, work-life balance issues, and salary issues. Despite the growing participation of women in higher education, deep-rooted cultural elements influence academic trips and shape gender roles. For female doctoral students, the complexity of academic identity contributes to attractiveness. Constant underrepresentation of women in academic circles on a global scale requires a more thorough study of this dynamic in Azerbaijan as well. Problems of balance between work and personal life emphasize the necessity of support at the workplace, underlying the influence of cultural elements. Salary problems indicate a global gender pay gap in the academic environment, which requires further efforts to eliminate inequality. There is a lack of information about women in academic circles in the local context. Nevertheless, various studies conducted over several decades, such as Agaeva's study in 2012, consistently confirm the existence of stereotypes and prejudices. In addition, cultural measures related to work-life balance were examined. Addressing these interconnected challenges requires deep research, systemic change, eliminating biases, and promoting the inclusion of gender equality in scientific careers.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The research questions articulated in the problem statement section align with the principles of the interpretivist paradigm (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). The Interpretivist paradigm is characterized by its focus on understanding and interpreting the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences. In addition, Interpretivism underscores the importance of thoroughly examining complex variables and contextual factors in a given scenario. It asserts that, unlike physical phenomena, humans actively contribute to the richness of meanings. This perspective implies that investigating human experiences should employ methods distinct from those applied to physical entities (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Since, interpretivism prioritizes the exploration of diverse cultural backgrounds, circumstances, and historical periods, recognizing their role in shaping distinct social realities, it aligns with purpose of the study and exploration of the research questions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

The research methodology is qualitative, employing in-depth interviews to gather rich and nuanced data. In qualitative research, the practice involves posing open-ended questions to participants, enabling them to express their experiences without being influenced by the researcher's perspectives or prior research findings. The use of open-ended responses in addressing questions provides participants with the flexibility to generate their own options for answering (Creswell, 2014).

#### Research Site

The research was planned to be conducted in three public universities. The research site was selected based on the historical backgrounds of the universities, number of students and professors that those universities have. The sample size, as guided by the saturation principle (Creswell, 2012), was determined by reaching a point where saturation occurred, signifying the identification of primary themes with no further information available to expand the list or provide additional detail to existing themes. The selection of Baku State University (established in 1919), Azerbaijan Medical University (founded in 1930), and Azerbaijan State University of

Economics (also established in 1930) was based on the shared historical backgrounds and founding dates of these three institutions (Dövlət universitetləri, 2021). This study focused on these institutions to explore the wealth of experiences and perspectives from professors with substantial educational history. The extended timeframe allowed for an in-depth examination of the evolution of gender disparities and faculty experiences, providing a nuanced understanding of dynamics within these academic institutions. Another essential reason for selecting these institutions was the ease of access for conducting interviews with professors. Securing permission for interviews involved coordinating with the universities directly, leveraging support from ADA University for sending letters to seek permission from the respective universities, and utilizing personal connections as necessary. Furthermore, since all three universities were situated in Baku, there was no need for additional resources, including financial expenditures.

### Participants

Participants of the study were university professors. In accordance with the Science Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan enacted in 2016, individuals classified as highly qualified scientific staff, or "yüksəkixtisaslı elmi kadr," were those who held either a Doctor of Philosophy or a Doctor of Science degree (Elm haqqında Azərbaycan Respublikasının qanunuç 2016). Given that obtaining a Doctor of Science degree necessitated first acquiring a Doctor of Philosophy degree, interviews were conducted with professors falling into both categories, possessing either a Doctor of Science or a Doctor of Philosophy degree. In addition, both women and men were participants of the study.

### Sampling

In this study, participants were recruited using a non-probability sampling approach. Availability sampling, one of the four common nonprobability sampling methods, involved selecting participants based on their immediate accessibility or convenience (Schutt, 2012). In addition, Availability sampling, also known as haphazard, accidental, or convenience sampling,

involved selecting elements because they were easily accessible or readily available. This method was employed when elements could be found effortlessly, without adhering to a predetermined plan (Schutt, 2012). In the context of our study on gender disparities among professors in Azerbaijani academia, availability sampling might be relevant for capturing the perspectives of professors who were accessible and willing to participate. For instance, researchers could approach faculty members during designated times or events at universities, utilizing convenient opportunities for data collection. This approach aligned with the practical considerations of our research, allowing for an exploration of gender disparities within the available pool of professors in the chosen universities.

### Data Collection

Data for the study was gathered through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research interviews seek to understand the world from the perspective of the research subjects (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It seeks to explain their lived environment and provide context for their experiences. Unlike everyday conversations, professional interviews, as noted by Sewell (2009), involved an interviewer structuring and directing questions. According to Turner and Hagstrom-Schmidt (2022), this type of interview was characterized by a conversation in which the researcher asked questions and listened simultaneously, placing both the researcher and the interviewee on equal footing. In addition, according to Galletta (2013), semi-structured interviews are characterized by questions that offered greater flexibility, enabling the enrichment of obtained data. Thus, in this study, the qualitative semi-structured interview approach was employed to delve into the perspectives of female and male professors in Azerbaijani academia regarding gender disparities. This method involved researchers posing open-ended questions to participants, aiming to capture detailed and nuanced insights into their experiences. Subsequently, the responses gathered during these interviews were transcribed and entered a computer file (Creswell, 2012). This meticulous process facilitated further analysis, allowing the

study to uncover the lived experiences of professors and gain a deeper understanding of the specific challenges contributing to gender imbalance within the context of Azerbaijani academia.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study entailed a thorough examination of qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews with university professors in Azerbaijani academia. Aligned with the principles of the interpretivist paradigm, the analysis prioritized comprehending the meanings participants attributed to their experiences, specifically focusing on the intricate dynamics of gender disparities within academic professorships. Initiating the analysis, we carefully examined interview transcriptions to identify recurring themes, patterns, and coding in participants' responses. The researcher used coding to categorize and organize data, recognizing commonalities and variations in participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2012). This iterative process ensured a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to gender imbalances in academia. Moreover, using thematic analysis as the primary method, the study systematically pinpointed and explored key themes related to gender disparities. In the mentioned thematic analysis, the concept of "interconnecting themes" suggested a nuanced exploration. The primary focus was on systematically identifying key themes related to gender disparities. In a complementary approach, the researcher established connections between these themes to portray a chronological unfolding of events. The study aimed to take these key themes and interconnect them, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics (Creswell, 2012). For example, the research emphasized how specific themes influenced each other, leading to the development of a theoretical model illustrating intricate interrelationships among various facets of gender disparities in academia. This holistic approach enhanced depth by considering not only individual themes but also dynamic connections between them.

## **Trustworthiness**

Establishing research trustworthiness is crucial for instilling confidence in the findings, as noted by Law (2002). However, evaluating trustworthiness in qualitative research was complex, lacking a universally agreed-upon set of criteria. Some definitions linked trustworthiness to a quantitative assessment of quality, emphasizing validity and reliability, terms traditionally associated with quantitative research rigor (Jackson, 2003). Qualitative researchers often eschewed quantitative terminology, recognizing the divergent goals of these research approaches (Morse, 2006). For instance, while quantitative research assessed treatment efficacy, qualitative research delved into nuanced issues like perceptions of care (Morse, 2006). Therefore, trustworthiness in qualitative research pertained to the authenticity of findings, reflecting the inherent nature of qualitative methodologies. Transparent descriptions of strategies in research articles were crucial for establishing trust. To evaluate trustworthiness, readers scrutinized how researchers addressed quality criteria in the research process and reporting. This involved detailed descriptions of setting, participants, and events (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Evidence of triangulation, member credibility, checking, dependability, transferability, and reflexivity should be sought (Jackson, 2003; Krefting, 1991; Law, 2002). Examples from published articles were provided for clarity.

## **Credibility**

Burnard (1991) maintains that when researchers are generating patterns or themes from qualitative data, they can enhance the validity of the categorization method and guard against researcher bias by enlisting the assistance of a colleague. Both individuals then produce categories, independently of one another. Similarly other authors (Appleton 1995) suggest enlisting the assistance of an 'experienced' or 'expert' colleague to verify the data categorization, preferably one who is an expert in the area investigated. In this study for assessing credibility peer review and triangulations will be used.

## Triangulation

Triangulation in this study is accomplished through a multifaceted approach to enhance the robustness and credibility of the research findings (Turner et al., 2017; Kern, 2018). Primarily, methodological triangulation is employed by utilizing semi-structured interviews as the principal method for data collection. This diversified methodological approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of the research questions, capturing the richness of participants' experiences from various perspectives. Furthermore, researcher triangulation entailed the engagement of numerous researchers in both the data collecting phase (interviews) and the later analytical procedure (document analysis). This strategy was used to reduce individual biases and increase the reliability of interpretation. Document analysis was planned to carry out to supplement the interview data, offering further insights into institutional regulations, academic publications, and other important materials linked to gender disparities in Azerbaijani academia. In accordance with Fischer's (2006) definition, document analysis was used in this study as a systematic technique for assessing or evaluating diverse documents, both printed and electronic. Qualitative research document analysis, as any other analytical approach, needs data examination and interpretation in to generate meaning, gain insight, and build empirical knowledge. By incorporating these triangulation strategies, the study aims to furnish a nuanced and thorough understanding of the complexities surrounding gender disparities within Azerbaijani academia.

## Peer review

In the scholarly communication domain, the established and universally recognized criterion for choosing papers for inclusion in academic journals was the process of peer review (Severin & Chataway, 2021). This method entailed a meticulous assessment of manuscripts to gauge their excellence, originality, validity, and potential influence. This thorough evaluation was carried out by respected experts in their respective field, as emphasized by Tennant et al. in their 2017 study. The forthcoming peer examination of this study involved each committee

member reviewing the research paper during the defense process and providing feedback on the research findings.

### Transferability

Wang et al. (2006) define transferability as the extent to which the effectiveness of an intervention can be replicated in a different context, a concept integral to assessing the broader applicability of research findings. This aligned with terms such as applicability, generalizability, transportability, and relevance, emphasizing the study's potential impact on understanding and addressing gender disparities in academic contexts beyond the specific institutions studied.

### Ethical Considerations of the Research

During qualitative research, it was imperative for researchers to observe ethical principles, including obtaining informed consent, safeguarding confidentiality and privacy, adhering to the principle of beneficence, and upholding honesty and integrity (KANG & Hwang, 2021). According to authors, several techniques could be offered ensure ethical considerations. In this study on gender disparities in Azerbaijani academia, ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and privacy, prioritizing beneficence towards participants, upholding honesty, and integrity throughout the research process, and subjecting the study to both peer review and expert consultation. These measures collectively safeguarded participant well-being, maintained research integrity, and contributed responsibly to the understanding of gender imbalances in academic settings.

### **Limitations**

While conducting the study on gender disparities in Azerbaijani academia, several limitations were acknowledged. First, achieving an equal number of female and male participants may have posed challenges, potentially impacting the comprehensiveness of gender perspectives. Language nuances in Azerbaijani responses could have posed a limitation, as interpretation may not have fully captured the authenticity of participants' expressions.

Additionally, the study was confined to Baku and older universities due to time and financial constraints, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to a broader context. Besides this, it was planned to make documentation analysis to assure credibility, however, it was not possible as there was no available such documentation. Despite these constraints, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into gender disparities within the specified academic institutions and contribute to the understanding of this complex issue.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The primary aim of this study is to explore perceptions of highly qualified scientific staff [yüksəkixtisaslı elmi kadr] regarding gender disparity in Academia in Azerbaijan. Moreover, the main objectives are to investigate unique experiences and gain insights into perspectives of female professors holding doctoral degrees on addressing gender disparity in academia, and to identify factors contributing to gender imbalance within academia in Azerbaijan. Based on aim and objectives this chapter of the study is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do highly qualified scientific staff perceive gender disparity in rank and scientific degrees in academia in Azerbaijan?
2. What are the female professors' holding doctoral degrees experiences and perspectives on addressing gender disparity in academia?

To address research questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews. The interview was conducted with eighteen participants from three different public universities who were professors holding doctoral degrees. Out of eighteen participants, seven were men and eleven were women. The figure 1 below illustrates eighteen participants background information.

| Participants | Gender | Degree               | Year of getting degree | Holders of Position |
|--------------|--------|----------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| MP S 1       | Male   | Doctor of Science    | 1991                   | NO                  |
| FP Phi 2     | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2018                   | NO                  |
| MP S 3       | Male   | Doctor of Philosophy | 1990/ 2015             | NO                  |
| FP Phi 4     | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2007                   | NO                  |
| MP S 5       | Male   | Doctor of Science    | 2011                   | YES                 |
| FP Phi 6     | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2018                   | NO                  |

(Continued)

|           |        |                      |            |     |
|-----------|--------|----------------------|------------|-----|
| MP Phi 7  | Male   | Doctor of Philosophy | 2000       | YES |
| FP Phi 8  | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2010       | YES |
| FP Phi 9  | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2010       | NO  |
| FP Phi 10 | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2013       | YES |
| FP Phi 11 | Female | Doctor of Philosophy | 2012       | NO  |
| MP Phi 12 | Male   | Doctor of Philosophy | 2005       | YES |
| MP S 13   | Male   | Doctor of Science    | 2012       | YES |
| FP S 14   | Female | Doctor of Science    | 2005/ 2018 | NO  |
| MP S15    | Male   | Doctor of Science    | 1979/1991  | YES |
| FP S16    | Female | Doctor of Science    | 1999/2013  | NO  |
| FP S17    | Female | Doctor of Science    | 2006 (S)   | YES |
| FP S18    | Female | Doctor of Science    | 1988       | YES |

Data collection was done at the start of the spring semester of the 2023–2024 academic year. Throughout this section, male participants who hold a Doctor of Science degree are abbreviated as MPS and males who hold a Doctor of Philosophy are abbreviated as MP Phi. Moreover, female participants who hold Doctor of Science degrees are noted as FP S and female participants who hold Doctor of Philosophy are abbreviated as FP Phi. This part of the chapter is divided into several subsections to examine the concept of "Gender disparity" in Academic Professorship and the issues faced by female academics. These subsections focus on analyzing gender disparities in academic professorship and addressing problems such as family concerns, female professors' multiple identities, financial constraints, as well as societal expectations and preconceptions.

### **Understanding of the Notion “Gender Disparity” in Academic Professorship**

Firstly, after the participants introduced themselves, they were asked to define gender disparity and comment on the existing disparity in academic professorship. Analyzing the replies

about the definition and its existence in academia among academics having a Doctor of Science degree revealed that sixteen of the eighteen participants recognized the existence of such an issue that exists and persists in Azerbaijan. Only two male professors initially denied the issue; however, as they answered subsequent questions, they came to perceive its presence in academia to a certain extent. Sixteen participants provided almost similar definitions of gender disparity such as differences between males and females in access to job opportunities, differences in their well-being, and other differences. For instance, MP S1 defined gender disparity as follows:

Gender bərabərsizliyi dedikdə kişi və qadın hüquqları və onlara açıq olan imkanlar başa düşülür. Məsələn qadınların hansı sahədə çoxluq təşkil etməsi, kişilərin hansı sahədə çoxluq təşkil etməsi. Konkret deyək ki, biz həkim kimi məşğul oluruq, bizdə qadınlar xüsusiyə elə ixtisaslar var ki orda üstünlük təşkil edir. Məsələn mənim ixtisasım stomatologiya üzrədir, və bu sahədə kişilər üstünlük təşkil edir. Amma ginekologiya pediatriya bu sahələrdə qadınlar üstünlük təşkil edir. Kifayət qədər qadın professorlar və müəllimlərimiz çoxdur. Amma Elmlər doktoru dərəcəsinə gəldikdə kişilər üstünlük təşkil edir.

[Men and women's rights and the opportunities available to them are understood. For example, the predominance of women in certain fields and men in others. Specifically, as we work as doctors, there are specialties where women have the advantage. For instance, my specialty is stomatology, where men have the advantage. However, in gynecology and pediatrics, women have the advantage in these fields. We have a sufficient number of female professors and teachers. But when it comes to obtaining a Doctor of Sciences degree, men prevail in numbers.]

Participant MP S1 explained the meaning of the gender disparity and provided examples that showed the prevalence of women and men in particular areas. Another FP S5 shared his insights:

Gender bərabərsizliyini kişi və qadın hüquq bərabərliyinin pozulması olaraq anlayıram. Universitet miqyasında götürdükdə sözsüz var. Amma bizim kafedra bu nöqtəyi nəzərdən istisna kafedradır, çünki bizdə daha çox qadınlardır nəinki kişilər o cümlədən bizim kafedrada 6 elmlər doktorundan 4-ü qadındır. Amma ümumiyyətlə akademik təhsil ocaqlarına nəzər salsaq sözsüz ki bu tərsinədir, kişilər çox üstünlük təşkil edir. Və mən hesab edirəm ki buda düzgün deyil. Belə olmamalıdır çünki qadınların potensialı heç də kişilərdən az deyil. Lakin burda bir neçə səbəb var ki qadınlar o qədərdə bu işdə iştirak edə bilmirlər.

[I understand gender inequality as a violation of equal rights for men and women. It is evident even on a university scale. However, our department is an exception in this regard, as we have more women than men, including four out of six Doctor of Science degree holders are women. But if we look at academic institutions in general, it's clear that this is the opposite, with men having a significant advantage. And I believe this is not right. It shouldn't be like this because women's potential is certainly not less than men's, but there are several reasons why women may not participate as much in this field.]

She noted that among her faculty members disparity against women did not exist. Instead, women outnumbered men. Then FP S5 started to count the main reasons for the existing disparity among professors. The next response given by MP Phi 12 was one of the interesting ones. The respondent explained gender disparity and counted reasons in the Azerbaijani context,

however, he noted that he did not feel such disparity among professors' holders of doctoral degrees. MP Phi 12 responded in the following way:

Qadınların həyatları boyu işsizlik karyerada qeyri-əsaslı ayrı-seçkilik faktorları ilə qarşılaşırlar. Bununla yanaşı iş və məişət qayğılarının iki qat yükünün öz üzərinə götürməyə məcbur qalırlar və oda gətirib ona çıxarılan kişilər və qadınlar arasında hüquqlar iş imkanları və sairə pozulmuş olur. Mənə görə bu qeyd etdiyim məqamlar gender bərabərsizliyin əsasını təşkil edir.

[Throughout their lives, women face unemployment and non-merit-based discrimination in their careers. Additionally, they are often burdened with twice the workload of both work and household responsibilities, which highlights the infringement of rights, job opportunities, and other areas between men and women. In my view, these points I have mentioned constitute the basis of gender inequality.]

For the next question regarding their perception of gender disparity at the level of academic professorship in Azerbaijan, respondent MP Phi 12 replied, “Mən onu hiss etmirəm hal- hazırda öz universitetimizdə bizim fakültədə nəzər saldıqda kifayət qədər həm qadın həm də kişi müəllimlər var. Ali dərəcəsi olan qadınlar da çoxdur.” [I do not feel it. Currently, in our university, when we look at our faculty, there are enough female and male teachers. There are also many women with doctoral degrees.] Unlike the other sixteen respondents, MP Phi 12 noted that he did not feel gender disparity among professors in academia. In addition, he added that there were enough number of femal professors holders of degrees and difference was not visible. Thus, the section presented findings on how professors holders of doctoral degrees understand the notion of gender disparity and how they perceived this disparity among professors holders of Doctor of Science degrees. Data collected from eighteen professors indicated that professors were aware of the notion of gender disparity and they counted reasons and provided their definition of gender disparity almost in the same way. Two professors out of eighteen responded that there was no such disparity among professors.

### **Challenges Faced by Female Professors**

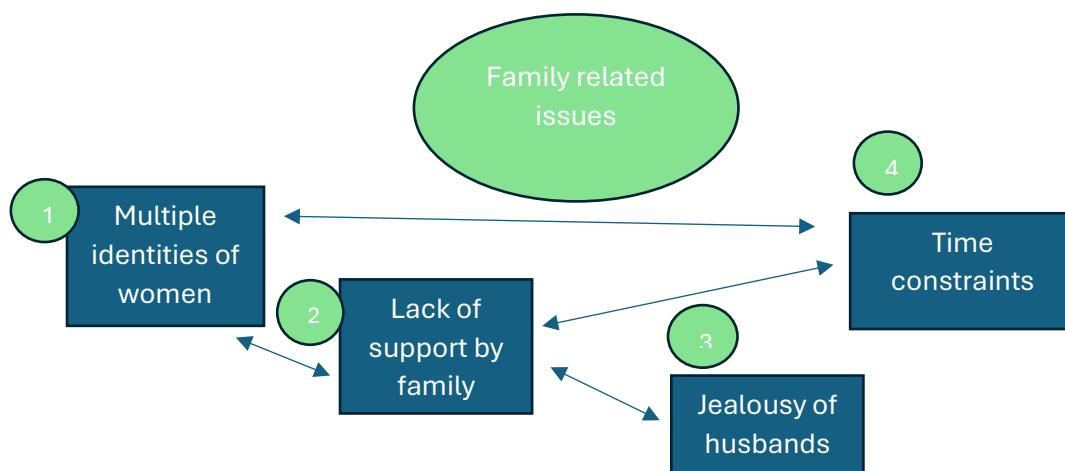
To find reasons for existing gender disparity among professors during the interview, the questions were asked about the factors that may have contributed to the gender imbalance within

academic professorship. In addition, participants were asked to identify at least three major reasons behind it. The data collected from eighteen professors revealed common challenges regarding existing disbalance among professors. These challenges include family concerns, financial restraints, mental, cultural, and historical reasons, as well as stereotypes of women as weak creatures. Firstly, family-related issues was one of the broad one which will be divided into several sub-sections.

## 2.1 Family- related issues

**Figure 2**

*Family related factors*



### 2.1.1 Multiple Identities of the Women

The participants identified family-related issues, as described in Figure 1, and elaborated on their interconnections via using arrows. Thus, participants noted that women possessed multiple identities such as being spouses, mothers, daughters, and household keepers. For instance, FP Phi 9 commented on multiple identities of women:

Düşünürəm ki ən başlıcası qadının bir neçə rolunun olmasıdır. Məsələn qadın həm anadır, həm həyat yoldaşı, həm övlad bu səbəblərə görə onlar öz təhsil və ya karyeralarına pauza verə bilirlər və ya tamamiylə özlərini ailələrinə həsr edə bilirlər.

[I think the main thing is that a woman has several roles. For example, a woman is a mother, a life partner, and a daughter. For these reasons, they may to take a break from their education or careers, or they may devote themselves entirely to their families.]

The multiple identities of the women sometimes pushed them to prioritize family over education or careers. MP Phi 1 shared his opinions regarding this point:

Mən yenə ailə faktoruna qayıtmaq istəyirəm məsələn 25-30 lu yaşlarında elmlər namizədi və ya fəlsəfə doktorudur. O ərəfədə onun o qədər çətinliyi olur ki 1- ci növbədə ailəlidirsə ailə, uşaq birdə görürsən həyat yoldaşı bunlar, bax gözümlə qabağında oturub cavan və çox qabiliyyətli xanımdır aspirantımızdır. Məsələn bir də görürsən zəng gəldi ki, bəs usağın özünü pis hiss edir evə gəl.

[I still want to return to the family factor. For instance, imagine a candidate for a scientific or philosophical doctorate in their 25-30s. At that stage, if they are married and have a child, their life partner and child become primary factors, for instance, this young lady and highly capable lady, our aspirant. Sometimes she might receive a call saying the child feels bad, come home.]

The respondent also emphasized the importance of the women identity as a mother pointed out to the lady in the room where he was being interviewed. The MP Phi 1 noted that she was a graduate student, a mother, and wanted to continue her education to pursue a degree. Sometimes She was called and informed that her child was not feeling well, and she needed to go home. Given that graduate student was obliged to get permission to go home and take care of her children. FP Phi2 also believed that:

Ümumiyyətlə qadınlarımızın həyatı çox ağırdır çünki qadınların bir neçə rolu var hem karyera, həm ev, işi həm də ailə. Kişilərdə bir tək karyeradır. Tək karyera ilə məşğul olmağa nə var ki. Amma biz qadın olaraq gedirik evə həm uşaq həm ailə qayğısı ev işləri bunlar və üstəlik karyeranı bir arada aparmaq çətinidir. Hər qadında buna tab gətirə bilmir.

[In general, the lives of our women are very challenging because they have multiple roles, both in their careers and at home, managing both work and family responsibilities. Men typically have only one role, focusing solely on their careers. It is not easy to carry out both career and family duties as a woman. Not every woman can handle it.]

That female participant mentioned difficulties regarding women being able to balance multiple roles, such as in their career, household chores, and caring for the family. She also emphasized that males often focused solely on their careers, finding it easier to engage only in professional pursuits. However, for women, after finishing work, they had to go home and begin taking care of children and completing household tasks.

In addition participant MP S5 stated the same issue by providing example himself.

Women after getting married and having children, their responsibilities were increasing in the

family, and time management problems appeared as they needed to take care of children and prepare for getting doctoral degrees. MP S5 stated:

Ailə səbəbi, ikinci davamlılıq yenə də dediyim kimi. Düşünürəm ki elmlər dərəcəsində bir də görürsən daha çox praktika tələb edir və o saatlarla günlərlə vaxt tələb alır. Və qadının buna zəmanə yetmir ailə uşaq üstəlik bu elmi dərəcənin praktikasını aparmaq. Mən özümü misal çəkə bilərəm gecə 12 ə kimi universitetdə olurdum. Amma bir qadın üçün gecə 12 də evə getmək alınmaz.

[Family and continuity are the reasons as I mentioned before. I think a doctoral degree also requires more practical work, which takes hours and days. And a woman does not have enough time for that, taking care of family and children, in addition to pursuing this doctoral degree. I can give myself as an example; I used to be at the university until midnight. But it is not acceptable for a woman to go home at midnight.]

The participants reflect on his perception of women's roles and expectations within both the academic environment and the family. He believed that pursuing a doctoral degree required practical application that demanded more time, energy, and continuous effort. The speaker addressed the different expectations put on men and women by describing his personal experience while pursuing a Doctor of Science degree. He observed that, while he occasionally stayed at the university until midnight, married females were frequently unable to do so owing to cultural standards and duties. This incident highlighted the discrepancy in expectations between women in academic and professional environments.

The next FP Phi 10 also underlined how women's multiple identities caused lack of time.

She said:

Qadının bir necə şəxsiyyətinin olması ana işçi yoldaş övlad və sairə. Digər səbəb bundan dolayı vaxt azlığı. Mən özümü misal çəkim çox çətinlik çəkdim. Ailəmədə vaxt ayırmağa idim və elmi işimə. Bir qadın olaraq özüm özümə vaxt ayıra bilmirdim.

[In general, the lives of our women are very challenging because they have multiple roles, both in their careers and at home, managing both work and family responsibilities. Men typically have only one role, focusing solely on their careers. It's not easy to juggle both career and family duties as a woman. Not every woman can handle it.]

Even though she stated that she was not able to find time to spend on herself as a woman.

In short, data revealed problem related to the multiple identities of the women. Both female and male participants admitted this obstacle and bring examples from their personal lives. They indicated that having multiple identities that refers various social roles that they perform leads to a lack of time.

### 2.1.2 Lack of support and constraints by family members and spouse

The lack of support and constraints imposed by family members were constantly emerging obstacles among participants. Both female and male professors emphasized that the existing disparity in academia was frequently caused by the lack of assistance and constraints placed on them by their husbands or families. Most participants considered it as an obstacle for women seeking doctorates. They highlighted that family members, especially spouses, might resist their daughters or wives pursuing a degree higher than theirs or traveling abroad for conferences due to jealousy or traditional gender roles. Additionally, participants pointed out that marriage and motherhood often posed challenges, as not all husbands supported women in balancing childcare responsibilities with academic pursuits or encouraged them to attend conferences or pursue higher degrees.

Participant FP S18 explained and justified her ideas in the following way:

Ailədə təbiiki təsir olur ailənin mədəni səviyyəsindən təhsilindən həyat yoldaşının böyüdüyü ailənin səviyyəsindən asılı olaraq ola bilsin kişi başa düşmür və ya elmdən xoşu gəlmir. Onun üçün qadının özünü təsdiqləməsi elədə vacib deyil və sairə. Birdə kişilərdə həm paxıllıq həm də qısqanclıq var. Əgər qadınlar kişilərdən daha yüksəyə qalxırsa onda paxıllıq biruzə verir ki məndən yüksəkdir. Az ailələrdə mənim yoldaşım kimi tam demokratikdir əksinə bir dəfə mənə dediki mən sənənlə fəxr edirəm. Baxmayaraq ki o bizdə elm adamı deyil mənə dediki fəxr edirəm sənənlə.

[Of course, there is an influence of the family, depending on the cultural level of the family, education, and the level of the family where the husband grew up, maybe the man does not understand or does not like science. For him, a woman's self-affirmation is not very important, and so on. Men have both envy and brevity at the same time. If women surpass men, it challenges their pride. In some rare cases like my partner, who is fully supportive, even though he is not an academic himself, he once said to me, I am proud of you.]

Her explanation of why men may not support women obtaining higher education and degrees was surprise. She indicated that one explanation might be a lack of interest in academic pursuits, particularly in areas like science, which could be impacted by their spouses or family's opinions. Another issue highlighted was that when women achieved academic success, males could get jealous which were noted by FP Phi 2, MP S3, FP S18, MP Phi 7 participants. Then she provided an example from her own life, stating that in a small number of families, there were spouses like hers. She recalled a moment when her husband, despite not being from a scientific

background, expressed pride in her accomplishments, saying, "I am proud of you." Additionally, she offered another example:

Məsələn bir xanım mənə demişdiki yoldaşım deyirki neynirsən e doktorluq dərəcəsinə bir uşağın fəlsəfə doktoru diplomundu digəri isə elmlər doktoru diplomun.

[For instance, a lady told me that my husband says: why do you need doctoral degrees, one child is your Doctor of Philosophy diploma another child is a Doctor of Science diploma.]

According to the FP S17, a partner's jealousy could be problematic as sometimes some husbands did not allow their wives to choose male supervisors, especially in the areas where there were only or majority male supervisors available. FP S17 noted:

Növbəti isə ola bilərki yoldaşı qısqanc olsun qoymasın ki elmi rəhbəri kişi seçməyə və mənim elə aspirantım var idi. Bu ona müəyyən qədər çətinlik yaratmışdır.

[Next, it could be that the spouse is jealous and does not allow the selection of a male academic supervisor, as I had an aspirant who experienced this. This created some difficulties for her.]

The participant described the experience of her graduate student who wanted to obtain a degree. However, her husband was envious and refused to allow her to choose male supervisor.

The next respondent MP Phi 7 emphasized lack of support and assistance from family members and husbands for sending women to abroad to attend conferences. MP Phi 7 commented on the point:

Sadəcə olaraq nə biraz çətinlik törədə bilər xarici ölkələrə ezam olunmaları konfraslarda iştirak zəruriliyi yənə orada müəyyən qədər məhdudiyyətlər ola bilər hansı ki ailə və yoldaşla bağlı olan hardakı ailədə qadına dəstək olmurlar kömək etmərlərki bir neçə gündə olsa o gedib təhsilinin bir parçası olan tədbirdə iştirak etsin.

[Simply, what can cause a little difficulty is the necessity of being sent to foreign countries to participate in conferences, and there may be some restrictions related to family and spouse. They do not support the woman, they do not help her to go and participate in the event that is a part of her education, even for a few days.]

Likewise, MP S13 from the same group noted the reasons for attending conferences abroad and the limitations of the women in sense. He said:

Dünyada olan actual sahələr üçün yeniliklər gətirmək lazım olur hardakı xaricə səfər etməlisən konfraslarda iştirak etməlisənki yeniliklər gətirəsən həm öz sahənə həm də ölkəyə. Burada isə kişilər daha çox üstünlük təşkil edir. Qadınlar isə ailəylə əlaqədar olaraq bəzi hallarda limitlənilirlər yəni onlara dəstək olmurlar. Və kişilər üstünlük təşkil edir.

[It is necessary to bring innovations for actual fields in the world, where you have to travel abroad, you have to participate in conferences to bring innovations both to your field and to the country. Men are more dominant here. Women are limited in some cases in connection with the family, where they are not supported. And men dominate.]

He explains that sometimes it was necessary to travel overseas and bring innovations to your work and education, whereas men tended to travel without any limitations while women have several limits. It highlighted a gender disparity, with males predominating in those activities. The low participation rate of women, which was frequently brought about by lack of support and family obligations, highlighted ingrained gender norms.

The discussion in this section focused on how women balanced multiple roles as being a wife, mother, and daughter, and how it affected their decision to pursue doctorates. The participants mentioned that it might be difficult to balance these obligations, particularly when spouses or family members were not assisting and motivating women. Examples showed situations in which men discouraged their spouses from attending conferences abroad or pursuing higher education. Several obstacles were identified, including jealousy or a reluctance to select male supervisors. The challenge of fulfilling family commitments while attending conferences overseas highlighted the differences in opportunity between the sexes in the workplace. Overall, the conversation accentuated the interconnected relationship between women's home circumstances and their aspirations for higher education.

### **Financial constraints**

Besides family issues, out of eighteen, sixteen indicated financial constraints and resource limitations as one of the factors that discouraged women to pursue doctoral degrees. The participants emphasized the importance of finance from different perspectives. Firstly, four female participants FP S14, FP S16, FP S17, and FP S18 who held Doctor of Science degree admitted the fact that they hired babysitter for their children. And only in that way they were able to manage with both family and children and education. FP S10 noted the importance of support and assistance by the babysitter.

| <b>Financial Priorities</b> | <b>Male Professors</b> | <b>Female Professors</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Hiring Babysitters/Assistance for Housework |   | ✓ |
| Publishing Journals                         | ✓ | ✓ |
| Attending Conferences Abroad                | ✓ | ✓ |
| Affording research and experiments          | ✓ | ✓ |

Ən birincisi düşünürəm bu maddiyatdan asılıdır əgər yüksək olsa onda elm məsələləri ilə məşğul olmaq istəyi daha da yüksək olacaq nəyə görə çünki qadının köməkçisi və ya uşaqları üçün dayəsi olar, konfranslara getmək alınar əlavə saatlarda universitetdə qalıb tətqiqat aparmaq olar.

[Firstly, I think it depends on finances. If they are high, the desire to engage in academic matters will also increase, because a woman can afford help or childcare for her children, allowing her to attend conferences and spend additional hours at the university conducting research.]

Then she shared personal life experience:

Sözsüz ki insan ailəli olanda bütün işlərə yetişmək çox çətinidir. Yəni kömək olmasa çox çox çətin olar. Mən indi düşünürəm ki mənim köməkçim olmasa mən bu işləri görə bilməzdim. Bilirsiz ananın əsas fokusu onun uşaqlarındadı işləyə işləyə düşünürsüz o necə oldu ne yedi içdi. Ona görə mütləq kömək olmalıdır əgər ailədən yoxdursa onda maddi durum yaxşı olmalıdırki qadın köməkçi tuta bilsin uşağın müəyyən bir yaş dövrünə kimi.

[Without doubt, when a person is married, it is very difficult to catch up with all the work. That is, it will be very difficult without help. Now I think, if I did not have assistance, I would not be able to manage these tasks. You know, a mother's main focus is on her children, constantly thinking about how they're doing, what they're eating and drinking. Therefore, assistance is necessary. If there's no support within the family, then the financial situation should be good so that the woman can hire help until the child reaches a certain age.]

The significance of financial stability in reducing married people's domestic obligations was emphasized in this response. It highlighted how having sufficient resources made it possible for people to employ help, which made it easier to manage responsibilities until the child reached a particular age.

The second group of participants discussed financial constraints from the perspective of affording research and experiments, or publishing articles in world's top journals which required money. For instance, FP S14 stated:

Mən indi tibb sahəsindən misal çəkə bilərəm. Məsələn elə işlər varki eksperimet xarakterlidir yəni maddiyata ehtiyac var. Bəzən tətqiqat işlərində müayinəyə ehtiyac olur və onu həyata keçirmək üçün maddiyat vacibdir. Və ya bəzi jurnallar varki bilirsizki orda məqalə çap etdirmək çox yüksək maddiyat tələb olunur. Və ya xaricə konfraslara fəlan getmək üçündə düzdü bəzi hallarda qarşılınır amma bəzi hallarda bu da müəyyən maddi çətinliklər törədir.

[Now I can give an example from the medical field. For instance, there are tasks that involve experimentation, meaning they require financial resources. Sometimes, research work requires funding for experiments, and it is essential to implement them. Or there are some journals where publishing an article requires a significant amount of money. Additionally, attending conferences abroad, for instance, is covered in some cases, but in others, it can pose certain financial difficulties.]

Despite the fact that majority of the respondents underlined financial challenges, MP S15 noted that his university met all their needs and shared further insights regarding the point:

Universitetimizdə hər cür şərait vardır. Gedin baxın bizim laboratoriyaya orda istədiyiniz qədər yeni aparatlar, eksperiment aparmaq üçün maddələr vardır. Bizim Universitetin zəngin kitabxanası var. Və düşünürəm ki əgər bir insan elmi işlə məşğul olmaq istəyirsə o öncəliyini seçər və digər sahələrdən qısıtlayıb təhsilinə sərf edər.

[Our university provides all kinds of facilities. Just go and see our laboratory; there are all the new equipment and materials you need for experiments. We have a rich library at our university. And I think if a person wants to engage in scientific work, they prioritize it and allocate their education to it by limiting other areas.]

Given financial challenges, the respondents were asked questions about female concerns regarding their salaries and their relation to the gender disparity in academia among professors.

All eighteen participants indicated that salaries were given based on the degree that person obtained and years of the work experience. However, some female participants had concerns about the treatment differences between men and women. FP Phi 6 emphasized that:

Maaş azdır mən daxil olmaqla. Burada fərq etmir kişinində maaşı azdır qadınında. Qadın olanda gözləyirlər ki ailədən dəstək var deyək ki mənim yoldaşım qazanır ona görə mən aşağı masala işləyə bilirəm. Kişilərdə güzəşt olurki bu getməlidir pul qazanmalıdır.

[The salary is low, including mine. It does not matter here whether it is a man or a woman; both have low salaries. When it comes to women, they expect that there is support from the family, like saying, 'My husband earns, so I can work on less pay. Men have a concession that they must go and earn money.]

Firstly, she stated that salary was the same if both men and women were holding the same degrees. However, the approach toward women and men was different which she considered as not correct. MP S3 elaborated:

İstər kişi istər qadın əmək haqqı dərəcəyə görə verilir. Birdə işlədiyi staja görə verilir yəni ola bilər ki siz 10 il mənsə 5 il orda staj fərqi olur buda maaşda özünü göstərir. Mühasibatlıqda onu bu meyaralara görə hesablayırlar yəni baxırki bu qadındır və ya kişi. Hamı üçün eynidir.

[Both men and women are paid according to their degree. At the same time, it is given according to the years of experience, for instance, you may have 10 years and I may have 5 years of experience. In accounting, they calculate it according to these criteria. It does not look whether it is a woman or a man. It is the same for everyone.]

This section addressed the obstacles women seeking doctorates faced due to financial limits. Participants spoke from their own experiences indicating the importance of possessing a

stable financial situation ~~in order~~ to balance family obligations and academic endeavors. The important point also was mentioned as the salary counted based on the degree that person obtained and years of work experience. Overall, the discussion brought to light the nuanced connection between academic goals and financial situation.

### 2.3 Social Expectations and Stereotypes

During the interview, the discourse around "Social expectations and stereotypes" emerged as a central theme. Primarily, the female participants expressed concerns about societal norms and expectations placed on them particularly perceptions of certain individuals as underestimating their capabilities by members of the opposite sex. The stereotypes and biases were an inseparable part of the discussions with the participants. The majority of female participants noted that some people viewed women mainly as domestic roles, limited to childcare, cooking, and housework, and hence believed that women should not pursue further scientific endeavors. FP S8 shared her own experience from which she had in the process of getting a Doctor of Science degree. She elaborated on her experience:

Mən sizə bir məsləhət verim istər namizədlik dissertasiyasında istər doktorluq bu işlərə başladıqdan qabaq əks cinslər tərəfindən yəni kişilər tərəfindən belə bir sözlər eşidirdim məsələn sən qadınsan bu sənə nəyinə lazımdır otur evdə uşaqlara bax belə bir sözlər gəlir yəni mənim qadın olmağım məni zəif kimi görürdülər bəzən olurdu ki ruhdan düşürdüm amma mənim ən böyük dəstəkçim mənim ailəm olub.

[Let me give you a piece of advice, whether it is in candidacy or during the doctoral dissertation, before starting these endeavors, I heard such words from the opposite gender, for example, "You are a woman, what do you need this for? Just stay at home and take care of the children." Such statements made me feel weak due to my gender at times, but my biggest support has always been my family.]

Additionally, FP S17 expressed disappointment, noting that the idea persisted that women belonged to the kitchen at home and that there was no place for them in the field of science. She mentioned:

Hələdə qalib insanlarda bəzən mən çox təəssuf edirəm ki gənclərdə də bu var ki qadının yeri evdi, mətbəxdə, uşaqdır və onun elmdə yeri yoxdur. Mən həmişə deyirəm ki qadın doktorluq dissertasiyasını müdafiə edən qadın qəhrəmandır. O qədər bu maneələrdən keçəsi olur.

[Still, it saddens me to see that even among the youth, there exists the notion that a woman's place is in the home, kitchen, and with children, and that she has no place in academia. I always say that a woman defending her doctoral dissertation is a hero. The more she overcomes these obstacles.]

The discussion on social expectations and stereotypes led to the idea "woman is a weak creature", with which mostly female participants do not agree with. FP Phi 4 stated:

Bəzən deyirlər “qadın zəif məxluqdur” elə qadınlarımız varki çox kişidən güclüdür. Yəni aslanın erkəyi dişisi olmaz. Məsələn mən bir qadın olaraq heç bir kişidən özümü zəif bilmirəm. Düşünürəm ki əgər insan xarakteri möhkəmdirə, güclüdürsə həm fiziiki həm psixoloji həmdə mənəvi cəhətdən bu güc varsa qadında kişidə istədiyi hər bir şeyi bacara bilər.

[Sometimes they say that "a woman is a weak creature." We have such women who are much stronger than men. In other words, 'Aslanın erkəyi dişisi olmaz'. For example, as a woman, I do not know myself to be inferior to any man. I think that if a person's character is strong, strong, physically, psychologically, and spiritually, a woman or a man can do anything they want.]

The stereotypes and biases, participants revealed crucial points and examples. FP Phi 4 gave a personal example, explaining how a prejudiced teacher, when she still was in the 10th grade, admitted her mistake in front of the students and apologized.

Sizə özümdən misal çəkim. Mən məktəbdə oxuyanda bu bir müəllim var idi mənə dediki qızların beyni riyaziyyatı qəbul etmir sən riyaziyyat öyrənə bilməzsən. Və dediki oğlanlar daha yaxşı öyrənir qızlar öyrənə bilmir. Mən ona 10 cu sinifdə sübut etdim ki bütün uşaqların içində ki mən bacardım oda dediki mən sözümü geri götürürəm. bu niyə yaranıb belə stereotiplər qadınlar riyaziyyat kimya fizika kimi dəqiq elmləri sevmir daha çox humanitar elmləri sevirilər.

[Let me give you an example from my own experience. When I was in school, there was a teacher who told me, "Girls' brains cannot grasp mathematics; you cannot learn mathematics." And he said, "Boys learn better, girls cannot learn." I proved that he is wrong in the 10th grade, he said I take back my words. Why do such stereotypes arise? Women do not like technical subjects like mathematics, chemistry, and physics; they prefer humanities more.]

The case shared by the respondent discussed how excelling in mathematics might refute a teacher's belief that girls lacked the mental capacity to comprehend the subject. The respondent believed that the enduring stereotypes regarding women's preference for technological subjects over humanities ones was apparent.

The discourse surrounding social expectations and stereotypes shed light on the obstacles that women encountered because of cultural norms and beliefs. The female participants conveyed concerns over their perceived role as homemakers, and the lack of support they received for pursuing scientific and higher education goals. Female participants provided examples of how their partners, family members, and even instructors demoralized them and doubted their abilities. Despite these challenges, the participants shared their stories of perseverance and determination, overcoming social expectations and stereotypes and providing

their worth in male dominated academia. Considering all the points, the discussion shed light on the broader impact of cultural norms and practices on women's educational and career goals.

### **Findings of Document Analysis**

The aim of analyzing the documentation was to explore both printed and electronic sources to address research questions from various perspectives. During face-to-face interviews, I intended to inquire about any existing documents related to gender disparity among professors. However, the participants informed me that such documents were not available. Nonetheless, during the interviews, the participants mentioned that while it was not a written rule or document, there had been an increase in encouragement for females to pursue Doctor of Philosophy and Doctor of Science degrees in the recent years. Furthermore, they noted that special attention was given to female candidates during the defense process, often resulting in their comfortable passage. In conclusion, as there were no available documents on the topic, it was not possible to analyze additional documentation.

## **Chapter V: Discussions**

The previous Chapter 4 Findings discussed in detail gathered data from eighteen participants from three different universities. This discussion section aims to illustrate important research results. Three main research questions guided the overall study:

1. How do highly qualified scientific staff perceive gender disparity in rank and scientific degrees in academia in Azerbaijan?
2. What are the female professors' holding doctoral degrees experiences and perspectives on addressing gender disparity in academia?

To present the findings of the research and drive conclusions, it is necessary to analyze the results of the literature review section, which reveals several themes that explain gender gap among professors in academia. Given that reasons were categorized into work-life balance challenges, salary concerns, and stereotypes. Firstly, work-life challenges encompass various subtopics such as cultural expectations about women's roles, balancing work and family responsibilities (Hill et al., 2014), and managing multiple identities (academic and otherwise) (Rockinson-Szapkiw & Lunde, 2017). All these points resonated with the data collected in this category, except for part-time or flexible scheduling. According to the authors, the issue's persistence may be explained by factors such as family, home obligations, and individual priorities, which are backed by research conducted by many researchers (Wolf-Wendel et al, 2006; Comer & Stites-Doe 2006; Monroe et al., 2008; Settles et al., 2006). In addition, the participants unanimously stated that there are no opportunities for part-time or flexible arrangements in Azerbaijani higher educational institutions. Nonetheless, they expressed that having such options would be beneficial due to women's responsibilities in academia, work, and family. The concept of work-life balance is underscored by the works of Anders (2004), Wolfinger et al. (2008), and Moors et al. (2014). Their study focuses on the difficulties that people experience while balancing work goals and family responsibilities. Anders (2004)

emphasizes how women frequently feel problems in establishing work-life balance owing to competing timetables for beginning kids. Similarly, Wolfinger et al. (2008) describe how marriage and childrearing duties might inhibit women's job progress, resulting in work goals being adjusted for family reasons. Moors et al. (2014) underline the influence of work-family imbalance on job satisfaction, especially among women who bear more home duties. These writers add to our understanding of work-life balance dynamics and the importance of supportive workplace policies and practices in addressing these difficulties successfully. Thus, respondents also noted supportive workplace environments by referring to part-time work opportunities for women.

The next point concerns salary, where literature indicates a wage gap between male and female professors. This issue touches on several factors, including the global gender wage gap in academia (Fernandes et al., 2020), lower pay and satisfaction among women, and persistent salary disparities across educational levels. Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011) underscore the enduring wage gap between men and women across all education levels, irrespective of working hours. Their research reveals that women with doctoral degrees earn salaries equivalent to men with only bachelor's degrees. This is corroborated by a 2019 study from PayScale.com, demonstrating a consistent trend of American women being paid less than men with similar qualifications. Moreover, salary differences between male and female academics are a major topic, as emphasized by Carnevale, Rose, and Cheah (2011), Glazer-Raymo (2008), and Ucal (2015). Their pooled study demonstrates a continuous wage difference across all education levels, regardless of working hours, with women continually earning less than males. In contrast, data gathered from the eighteen participants do not support this claim, as all respondents have indicated that wages are determined based on the individual's degree, whether it be a Doctor of Philosophy or Doctor of Science, and their years of work experience. Regarding salary satisfaction, the majority of participants, both female and male, expressed dissatisfaction with current salaries, suggesting that increases would be beneficial for professors holding advanced

degrees. According to Park (2011). direct benefits for faculty members include salary, advancement, and tenure. Salary increases, sometimes known as merit raises, directly affect faculty members and help them afford their living expenses, which respondents noted that their salaries are not enough to both live and expand their knowledge in particular area.

The final point in the literature review is gender biases and stereotypes, which is discussed in detail, illustrating how stereotypes impact girls' educational aspirations, biases in various academic contexts, and gender bias in student evaluations and teaching perceptions (Fernandes et al., 2020). Female participants provided examples where their teachers displayed biased opinions regarding their mathematical skills, which highlight the existence of such biases. However, she noted these biases might impact girls with low self-esteem, influencing their career choices. During the interview, it was revealed that not only do biases and stereotypes affect girls' career choices and fields, but their parents or teachers also influence their children's decisions. Thus, participants have mentioned that with this guidance, some students do not continue their specialty after graduating with a bachelor's degree due to not loving or seeing themselves in that sphere. Gender bias in student evaluations and teaching perceptions has been indicated by some female professors; they have emphasized that it is not only related to students' biased evaluations but also to other professors' evaluations. If something is done by men, it is appreciated more than women's work. Thus, this point was also common to a certain extent.

Moreover, during the interview process, participants shared valuable insights about the gender disparity issues that exist among professors in Academia in Azerbaijan. It was a compelling fact that out of four female participants who hold Doctor of Science degrees, three of them admitted that they had grown up in families where their primary supporters were their fathers who also held Doctor of Science degrees. It means that fathers both were role models for their daughters and primary supporters. Fathers are influential figures in the lives of teenagers, providing distinct contributions depending on their level of involvement, roles, and living situations within families (Whitney et.al, 2017). In addition, it can be related to the both parents

educational level not only father's, data collected for this research emphasizes fathers' supports and being role model. The literature suggests that the level of parental education has been recognized as a significant indicator for career choices. Similarly, according to authors Grauca, Ethington, and Pascarella (1988) found that both father's and mother's college degree had an indirect favorable impact on women's educational achievement and gender-atypical occupations. In a similar study, Ware, Steckler, and Leserman (1985) found that highly educated parents predicted women's decision to major in science.

Thus, fathers' motivation carries huge importance in girls' both academic and career life choices.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this thesis presents in-depth insights into the complicated topic of gender disparity among Azerbaijani academic educators. Several major themes have been highlighted as a result of a comprehensive evaluation of both obtained data and existing literature. The participants confirmed the issues identified in the research about work-life balance, cultural expectations, and maintaining multiple identities, emphasizing the need for greater schedule flexibility to meet women's responsibilities. While the research suggests a global wage disparity between male and female academics, participants' replies do not entirely support this assertion, despite widespread unhappiness with existing earnings across both genders, highlighting the need for pay increases. Furthermore, participants shared firsthand stories of how biases and preconceptions influence girls' educational goals and job choices, underlining the significance of increasing knowledge and fairness in evaluation procedures. Furthermore, observations from the interview process highlighted dads' major involvement in shaping their daughters' academic and professional paths, emphasizing the need for paternal support and drive. Overall, this thesis may add several insights to the discussion of gender disparities in academia and emphasize the

significance of taking steps to build a more inclusive and supportive atmosphere for all members, regardless of gender.

### **Implications**

Based on the data which collected from respondents, various conclusions emerge about solutions for addressing gender imbalance in Azerbaijani academia. Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive educational efforts that target both students and higher education institutions. My recommendation relates to improving career guidance services in higher educational institutions that can help students discover their interests and make correct choices about their academic and professional paths. Educational institutions may encourage students to follow their hobbies and objectives without being limited by their gender. In addition, national level educational initiatives are crucial for promoting gender equality and supporting women in academia. In this context, initiatives refer to the awareness campaigns, mentoring programs, and scholarships for female students and professionals. According to data, achieving balance in academia can be facilitated by investing in women's education and growth. In this case, Azerbaijani academia can create a varied and inclusive environment that values the skills and knowledge of all individuals, regardless of their gender. As another most discussed point was about traditional gender roles and stereotypes, participants pointed out this issue and proposed solutions. The cultural and societal changes are required to challenge the old gender roles and prejudices that perpetuate inequity in academia. By encouraging open-mindedness and equality in families and communities, Azerbaijani society may foster an atmosphere in which people can pursue their academic and professional goals without fear of discrimination or prejudice. I suggest that number of educational activities and awareness campaigns should increase and improve in official way that can play an important role in altering attitudes and views regarding gender roles, resulting in increased involvement and representation for women in academics. Moreover, majority of participants pointed out specific support measures which I also would like to recommend is part-time work opportunities for those female professors who has , and financial

incentives for women, should be established to meet the specific obstacles they experience while managing academic and personal commitments. Institutions may foster a more supportive and inclusive atmosphere in formal way for women to succeed in their academic careers by offering flexible work arrangements and other support services.

To sum up, addressing gender disparity in Azerbaijani academia among professors holding doctoral degrees requires a complex amendment that includes educational, institutional, cultural, and social measures. By implementing targeted initiatives and support measures, Azerbaijani academia may develop a more equal and inclusive atmosphere that encourages full involvement and representation of all persons, regardless of gender.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Consent Form**

Dear Participant:

This is an invitation to participate in an interview that is a part of my Master's thesis called *Unveiling Views: Perspectives of Faculty Holding Doctoral Degrees on Gender Disparities in Academic Professorships*. This research is conducted by Narmin Ganbarova, MA (Master of Arts in Education Management) student at ADA University under the supervision of Dr. Vafa Yunusova. Your much-valued participation will contribute to the knowledge creation about identifying reasons for the existing gender imbalance in academia among professors holding Doctoral degrees. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose either to answer or not to the questions you feel comfortable responding. If you agree to participate, you will be invited to a one-segment structured face-to-face interview. The interview will last approximately 50 - 60 minutes, depending on how long your responses are. The interview process will be audio-recorded for accuracy and completeness, and the data will be treated with strict confidentiality. Any direct identification information, such as your name will be removed from the data when the responses are analyzed. Only the reviewers who agree to the terms of confidentiality will have access to the data as they review the data analysis and codes. After your responses are analyzed and built into themes, they will be compiled into a paper as part of a master's degree thesis.

Because all the possible measures will be taken to keep participant identity private, this study poses no risk to the individuals. Participants may feel unnecessary pressure to partake in this study because of administrative or political pressure. However, this type of involuntary

participation is completely discouraged as it violates the participant's rights. Therefore, you should know that participation is completely voluntary and your decision to not participate will not be disclosed to anyone. However, your voluntary participation will benefit you through self-reflection and sharing your voice and experiences in the existing gender disparity among professors in Azerbaijani academia. A final copy of the study will not include your identification information and your name. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality. Your responses or decision whether or not to answer some questions will not affect your status as a professor in academia. At any point, you may withdraw as a participant from the study. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowed by law.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Narmin Ganbarova, MAEM student at ADA University, by phone at (+994) 507003979, or email at [nganbarova4720@ada.edu.az](mailto:nganbarova4720@ada.edu.az). You can also contact and email Dr. Vafa Yunusova at [vyunusova@ada.edu.az](mailto:vyunusova@ada.edu.az).

Thank you for participating!

Researcher: Narmin Ganbarova, Master's student at ADA University.

Academic Supervisor: Dr. Vafa Yunusova, Assistant Professor at ADA University

*Signature of research participant*

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Name (Printed)\_\_\_\_\_

*Signature of researcher*

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to his/her participation in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Protocol**

**Location** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date/Time** \_\_\_\_\_

**People attending** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Researcher Conducting Interview: Narmin Ganbarova**

We may start an interview and record it if you do not have any questions or concerns.

- 1) Can you please introduce yourself?
- 2) Could you please provide information about your academic/professional background?
  - How long have you been holding your degree?
- 3) What is gender imbalance?
- 4) How do you perceive gender imbalance within academic professorships in Azerbaijan?
- 5) What factors may contribute to gender imbalance within academic professorships? Please, be specific and provide at least 3 factors.
- 6) Do historical and cultural factors have an impact on shaping the gender disparities among professors in Azerbaijani academia? If yes, in what ways did historical and cultural factors shape the gender disparities among professors in Azerbaijani academia? If not, then why?

- 7) Are there any policies or practices within academia that mitigate gender disparities within academic professorships? If yes, what are they? Name at least a few.
- 8) What difficulties do female students encounter in getting doctoral degrees in Azerbaijani academia?
- 9) What challenges may female professors holding doctoral degrees face in their daily lives in Azerbaijani academia? Be specific and name at least three of them.
- 10) In what ways may gender disparities among professors impact career advancement, research opportunities, and the overall professional experiences of female professors in comparison to their male counterparts? Be specific and elaborate.
- 11) Do social expectations, work-life balance, and familial responsibilities impact the career paths and gender differences among academics in Azerbaijani academia? If yes, how? If not, again how?
- 12) Can you share any personal experiences or observations related to the work-life balance challenges that female professors may encounter in academia, considering cultural expectations and family responsibilities?
- 13) Does the concept of multiple identities contribute to gender disparities in academia? If yes, in what ways does the concept of multiple identities, such as academic and other roles, affect female professors in academia? If not, how?
- 14) Should female professors have the choice of flexible or part-time work schedules? If yes, why? And if not, why?
- 15) Are female professors concerned about their salaries? If yes, may it contribute to the overall gender disparity in academic professorships? If not, why, elaborate, please.
- 16) Can you share any instances or examples of gender bias and stereotypes that you have observed in various academic contexts within Azerbaijan?
- 17) Can gender biases and stereotypes impact the educational aspirations of girls in Azerbaijan? If yes, how? If not, how?

- 18) May gender biases and stereotypes contribute to gender disparities in academic professorships such as student evaluations, teaching perceptions, and the career progression of female professors? If yes, how? If not, how?
- 19) What steps or initiatives could be taken to address gender biases and stereotypes in academia and promote a more equitable environment?
- 20) Is there a need for institutional changes to address gender disparities in academia, and if so, what specific changes would be made?