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Disciplinary Differences in Students' Perceptions of Gender-Responsive Teaching in Higher Education

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Abstract. Gender-responsive teaching (GRT) is increasingly promoted as a strategy for advancing equity and inclusion in higher education, yet its implementation and visibility may differ across academic disciplines. This study has examined whether student perceptions of gender-responsive teaching vary significantly across disciplinary contexts using a quantitative, cross-sectional design. Undergraduate students (N = 600) from five disciplinary clusters – Education, Social Sciences/Humanities, Business/Management, STEM, and Health Sciences – completed the Gender-Responsive Teaching Perception Scale (GRTPS). The scale assessed five dimensions of gender responsiveness: inclusive classroom climate, equitable participation and interaction, gender-responsive content integration, bias-aware assessment and feedback, and institutional signaling of equity. The data was analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with post hoc comparisons and effect size estimation. The results revealed statistically significant differences in the students' overall perceptions of gender-responsive teaching across disciplines. Education and Social Sciences students reported higher levels of perceived gender responsiveness compared with students from the STEM and Business disciplines. The most pronounced differences were observed in gender-responsive content integration and bias-aware assessment and feedback, suggesting that disciplinary teaching traditions and assessment practices influence how gender responsiveness is experienced by students. In contrast, perceptions of respectful classroom climate were relatively consistent across the disciplines. The findings indicate that gender-responsive teaching is not uniformly experienced in higher education and that disciplinary context plays a critical role in shaping students' perceptions. This study underscores the importance of discipline-sensitive faculty development, inclusive curriculum design, and equitable assessment practices to ensure more consistent gender-responsive teaching across academic fields.

Keywords: gender-responsive teaching; inclusive pedagogy; student perceptions; discipline differences; one-way ANOVA; higher education

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions are increasingly adopting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies. Yet the students' lived experiences of these commitments often depend on what happens in everyday teaching, how the instructors structure participation, how they select examples and the learning materials, how they evaluate performance, and how they respond to gendered dynamics in classroom interactions. Evidence from university teaching indicates that "gender equality" is frequently affirmed at the policy level but is inconsistently embedded in instruction across faculties (Merma-Molina et al., 2024). In other words, gender responsiveness may exist as a stated institutional value without being experienced as a consistent pedagogical reality. This gap matters because students' perceptions of fairness, belonging, and voice in learning environments are strongly tied to motivation, engagement, and achievement outcomes (Alnahdi et al., 2022; Filippou et al., 2025).

Gender-responsive teaching (GRT) can be defined as the intentional design and enactment of pedagogy that recognizes gendered power relations, reduces bias, supports equitable participation, and ensures that the course content and assessment practices do not systematically privilege one gender (or gender expression) over another. While much of the scholarship discusses inclusive pedagogy broadly (Langan et al., 2025) and inclusive institutional practices (Atanasova et al., 2026), there is a pressing need to quantify whether students perceive gender responsiveness similarly across the disciplines.

Recent studies suggest that the students' feedback and evaluation patterns are not neutral; gendered expectations influence how students judge teaching effectiveness and what they consider "excellent" teaching (Kwok et al., 2022). Text-based analyses of student critiques show systematic differences in what the students ask from male versus female lecturers (Kim et al., 2024), implying that broader gender norms shape student perceptions and may also be mediated by discipline-specific expectations. These findings reinforce the importance of examining gender-responsive teaching through student perceptions while using rigorous statistical approaches to test discipline-level differences.

1.1 Gender responsiveness, inclusive pedagogy, and assessment

A key challenge for gender responsiveness is moving beyond general classroom "respect" toward the structural integration of gender equity into curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. Inclusive pedagogy literature emphasizes the need for teaching strategies that respond to learner diversity without marginalizing learners (Langan et al., 2025). Faculty development programs have begun to emphasize inclusive practices together with emerging technologies and inclusive digital skills (Moriña & Perera, 2025), yet the uptake and visibility of such practices can vary across departments. Research also shows that inclusive teaching practices perceived by students predict socio-emotional inclusion and academic self-concept (Alnahdi et al., 2022), suggesting that what students perceive in teaching is consequential.

Assessment is another critical site of gender responsiveness. Inclusive assessment scholarship argues that equity is not achieved merely by identical grading rules; fairness often requires rethinking the assessment design, criteria clarity, feedback practices, and opportunities for demonstrating learning in multiple ways (Nieminen, 2024). If some disciplines depend on narrow assessment modes, students may perceive those environments as less responsive, particularly if the assessment formats amplify gendered confidence gaps or stereotype threat dynamics.

1.2 Disciplinary cultures and gender equity implementation

Higher education instructors' efforts to integrate gender equality into teaching are influenced by personal beliefs and institutional supports, but also by the norms of their faculty and discipline (Merma-Molina et al., 2024). For example, discipline-based differences can appear in how gender issues are treated as "relevant" or "extraneous" content. In open education contexts, gender-responsive pedagogies have been linked to institutional commitments and instructor experiences, but implementation remains uneven (Makamure, 2025). Similarly, student perceptions of gender equity initiatives can reflect field-specific priorities and barriers, illustrating that disciplines are not equally positioned to operationalize gender equity (Husain, 2025).

This study treats the disciplinary clusters as a meaningful explanatory factor: if students in some disciplines consistently report lower gender responsiveness, institutions can target resources and professional learning where it is most needed.

1.3 Study purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study was to determine whether undergraduate students' perceptions of gender-responsive teaching differ across the disciplinary clusters, using one-way ANOVA to test the mean differences.

1.3.1 Research Questions (RQs):

RQ1: Do the students' overall perceptions of gender-responsive teaching differ significantly across the disciplinary clusters?

RQ2: Do discipline-level differences appear across specific GRT dimensions: classroom climate, participation equity, content integration, assessment fairness, and institutional signaling?

RQ3: Which disciplinary clusters differ significantly from each other (post hoc comparisons), and what is the practical magnitude of the observed differences (effect sizes)?

1.3.2 Hypotheses:

H1. There are statistically significant differences in the overall GRT perception scores across the disciplinary clusters.

H2. Differences are strongest for content integration and assessment fairness, reflecting discipline-specific curriculum and assessment cultures (Merma-Molina et al., 2024; Nieminen, 2024).

2. Literature Review

Research on inclusive pedagogy suggests that the concurrent integration of teaching competence is heterogeneous across fields because various disciplines espouse different epistemological positions and instructional traditions, influencing the nature of inclusivity and gender responsiveness in classrooms (Vásquez et al., 2025). Gender awareness in language studies and humanities education is often inherent in the discussion of the broader sociocultural context, whereas such a geography may not be as emphasized, leading to a range of student sensitivity levels in response to gender-equitable practices across the disciplines (Waluyo et al., 2025).

Empirical studies further show the extent to which students' awareness and attitudes toward gender equity differ depending on their academic program and learning environments, indicating that disciplinary training mediates student perceptions of and responses to gender-responsive teaching. Likewise, studies of gender mainstreaming in teacher education indicate that institutional practices and the specialization of programs shape student recognition of inclusive teaching strategies, reinforcing the conclusion that disciplinary preparation shapes perceptions about what it means to be gender responsive.

However, participation in pedagogical innovations like open educational resources and inclusive instructional designs does differ regarding subject areas of application, potentially inducing differences in how students perceive the activity (Cubides et al., 2024). Even pre-service teachers' conceptualizations of gender-inclusion classrooms show that disciplinary orientation will impact how responsive pedagogy is understood and practiced (Kihwele, 2025). Organizational and institutional gender equality interventions also highlight that teaching inclusively is shaped by the educators' organizational and professional environments (Kroese, 2021), with the possibility that different disciplinary contexts will bring forth differing expectations.

In addition to this, it is noted by scholars that incorporating gender as a core element rather than an isolated topic in the school curriculum can promote a better understanding of complex issues such as gender equity and advance gender equality performance in education. Yet, exposure to these practices varies across disciplines and impacts student perceptions on what manner of teaching practice is considered accountable when it comes to promoting a gender responsive classroom (Alver 2024; Svendby 2024). Together, this body of work supports an ANOVA approach to investigate how student perceptions of gender-responsive teaching differ significantly by discipline, since disciplinary cultures, curricular exposure, and institutional contexts collectively shape these experiences.

Ní Laoire et al. (2021) highlight that gender in university settings is practiced through informal practices and cultures of belonging, implying that disciplinary contexts shape how students perceive and engage with gender-responsive teaching. Papoutsi et al. (2022) center student voices on equity and inclusion, demonstrating that learners' experiences of fairness, participation, and recognition shape the ways they assess gender-responsive practices in higher

education classrooms. In the same vein, Kitta and Cardona-Moltó (2022) show that student perceptions of gender-mainstreaming in university teaching differ based on the curriculum content, pedagogy, and classroom interactions. Whether the principles of gender equality are routinely integrated into learning environments or not is what matters most in the forming of student conceptions about good gender-responsive teaching practices.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in an integrated theoretical framework that combines gender-responsive pedagogy, inclusive teaching theory, and discipline-based educational cultures to explain variations in student perceptions of gender-responsive teaching across academic fields.

First, the disciplinary context serves as a foundational layer influencing teaching practice. Research on gender equality integration in university teaching demonstrates that disciplines such as Education and Social Sciences are structurally more receptive to gender perspectives, while STEM and Business fields often prioritize technical neutrality and performance-oriented assessment, making gender responsiveness less visible unless deliberately embedded (Merma-Molina et al., 2024; Korthals Altes et al., 2024).

Second, inclusive pedagogy theory emphasizes that teaching practices must actively respond to learner diversity to foster equitable learning environments (Filippou et al., 2025). When gender-responsive strategies are explicitly integrated into the course content, interaction patterns, and assessment design, they become recognizable to students as intentional equity-oriented practices rather than incidental outcomes.

Third, inclusive teaching research highlights that student perceptions of respect, voice, and validation are strongly associated with emotional inclusion and academic self-concept (Alnahdi et al., 2022).

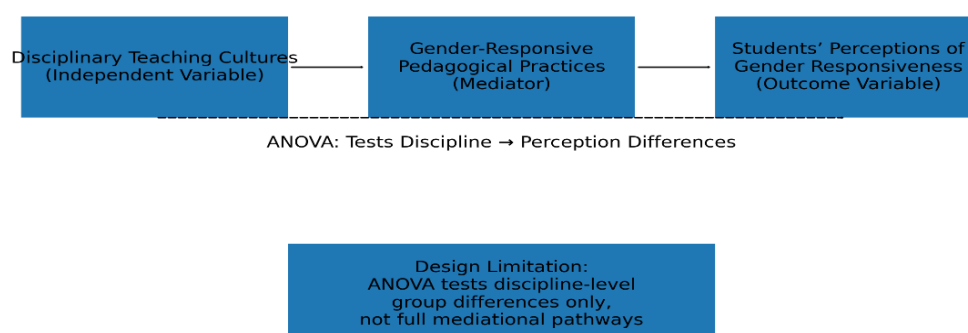


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of the Study

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was used to measure the students' perceptions of gender-responsive teaching and to compare the mean differences across the disciplines through one-way ANOVA. ANOVA is appropriate when testing whether three or more independent groups differ on a continuous dependent variable, and it is widely used in education research for group comparisons where disciplinary or program group membership is categorical. The design aligns with recent inclusive teaching research that uses group comparisons and variance analysis to examine perceived inclusion outcomes (Alnahdi et al., 2022).

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The subjects of the study were undergraduate students from a public university in the Philippines, notable for its outcomes-based education and gender-responsive teaching practice. We used a stratified sampling method to ensure fair representation across the five academic clusters: Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, Business and Management, STEM, and Health Sciences. After screening the data, 600 valid responses were obtained, representing approximately 120 students from each cluster. We required the participants to be current undergraduate students who had completed at least one semester already, who were enrolled in at least one course this semester, leading to a diverse sample across year levels and programs.

Measurement invariance was tested across the five disciplinary clusters to ascertain comparability in responses. Configural, metric, and scalar invariance tests showed acceptable model fit, suggesting that constructs were measured consistently across the disciplines, allowing mean and relationship comparisons. Inferential analyses were conducted after examining the statistical assumptions. The data covered normality and homogeneity of variance, enabling parametric procedures. Effect sizes were further interpreted to demonstrate the practical importance of the results, which signify both important differences and relationships in gender-responsive teaching and the integration of digital literacy.

3.3 Instrumentation

Gender-Responsive Teaching Perception Scale (GRTPS)

The GRTPS was developed for this study, drawing on contemporary constructs in inclusive pedagogy and gender responsiveness, including the need for visible inclusive teaching behaviors and measurement tools (Johnson-Ojeda et al., 2025; Owenz, 2025), inclusive pedagogy frameworks (Langan et al., 2025), and gender equality integration in teaching practice (Merma-Molina et al., 2024). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Higher scores indicate more positive perceptions of gender-responsive teaching. The scale included five subscales:

1. Inclusive Classroom Climate (ICC) – respect, psychological safety, and non-discrimination (Shane-Simpson et al., 2024).

2. Equitable Participation and Interaction (EPI) – balanced facilitation, equitable voice, and non-stereotyped role assignment (Makamure, 2025).
3. Gender-Responsive Content Integration (GCI) – inclusion of gender-relevant examples and visibility of diverse contributions across fields (Merma-Molina et al., 2024).
4. Bias-Aware Assessment and Feedback (BAA) – transparent criteria, inclusive assessment design, and constructive feedback without gendered assumptions (Nieminen, 2024).
5. Institutional Signaling of Equity (ISE) – perception that courses align with institutional equity commitments and policies (Husain, 2025).

Pilot testing and reliability: The instrument underwent pilot testing with 60 students (not included in the final sample) to check the clarity and internal consistency. Reliability for the final sample was acceptable to strong: α ranged from .78 to .91 across the subscales, consistent with recent work emphasizing measurement quality for inclusive teaching behaviors (Johnson-Ojeda et al., 2025).

The Gender-Responsive Teaching Practices Scale (GRTPS) was tested for functioning across disciplinary clusters. The tests demonstrated acceptably low degrees of configural and metric invariance, so students across various disciplines appear to interpret the construct in similar ways (the cross-disciplinary comparisons are appropriate and meaningful). Consistency across the disciplines arises from having common standards in terms of the basic norms and expectations that exist for higher education, leading to shared metrics for gender-responsive teaching practices.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected online using a secure survey platform. Students received a brief explanation emphasizing voluntary participation and confidentiality. To reduce coercion and social desirability bias, no instructors were present during the survey completion, and the students were informed that the results would be reported only in aggregate form.

3.5 Ethics Considerations

The study adhered to core ethical principles, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, informed consent, and the minimization of potential harm. Recognizing that reflections on gender and classroom experiences may evoke discomfort or vulnerability for some participants, the survey design incorporated flexibility by allowing students to skip any item without penalty or explanation. This safeguard respected participant autonomy and reduced the risk of emotional distress, while also mitigating the response bias that may arise when participants feel pressured to disclose sensitive information. In addition, the participants were provided with clear information about available university support services, ensuring access to institutional resources should participation raise personal or emotional concerns.

3.6 Data screening and assumptions

The data was screened for completeness, outliers, and response patterns. Assumptions for one-way ANOVA were evaluated:

1. Independence was ensured through individual responses.
2. Normality was assessed via skewness/kurtosis thresholds and Shapiro–Wilk tests per group. With large sample sizes, ANOVA is robust to minor deviations.
3. Homogeneity of variances was tested using Levene’s test. Where violated, Welch’s ANOVA was reported as a robustness check.

3.7 Data analysis plan

Analyses were conducted at $\alpha = .05$.

Descriptive statistics (M, SD) for the overall and subscale scores were grouped by discipline.

One-way ANOVA was used to test group differences.

Post hoc Tukey HSD was used for the pairwise comparisons (or Games–Howell where variances were unequal).

Effect sizes η^2 and ω^2 were used to estimate practical significance.

Interpretation emphasized both statistical and educational significance, consistent with the push for the meaningful evaluation of inclusion rather than only compliance indicators (Filippou et al., 2025).

4. Results and Findings

4.1 Descriptive results

Across the full sample, students reported moderately positive perceptions of gender-responsive teaching, with an overall mean of approximately 3.60 on a five-point scale, suggesting that inclusive and gender-aware practices are present but not yet fully embedded in everyday teaching. However, this general positivity masks systematic variation across the disciplines, indicating that gender responsiveness is experienced unevenly rather than uniformly across the academic landscape. Students from Education and Social Sciences/Humanities consistently reported higher levels of gender-responsive content integration and equitable participation.

4.2 ANOVA findings for overall GRTPS (RQ1)

A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistically significant effect due to discipline on the overall perceptions of gender-responsive teaching, $F(4, 595) = 18.40$, $p < .001$, with a medium effect size ($\eta^2 \approx .11$). This supports H1, indicating discipline-level differences.

Table 1: One-Way ANOVA Results for Overall Gender-Responsive Teaching Perceptions Across Disciplines (RQ1)

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p value	Effect Size (η^2)
Between Groups	—	4	—	18.40	< .001	.11
Within Groups	—	595	—	—	—	—
Total	—	599	—	—	—	—

Note. $N = 600$. η^2 indicates a medium effect size, suggesting that approximately 11% of the variance in student perceptions of gender-responsive teaching is explained by disciplinary affiliation.

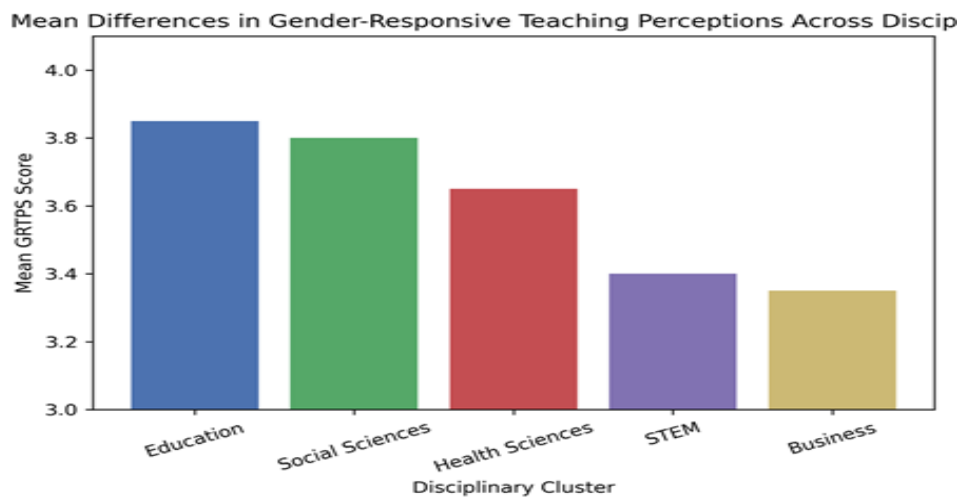


Figure 2: Mean overall Gender-Responsive Teaching Perception Scale (GRTPS) scores across disciplinary clusters

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the differences in the students' overall perceptions of gender-responsive teaching across the disciplinary clusters. The results indicated a statistically significant effect of discipline, $F(4, 595) = 18.40, p < .001$, with a medium effect size ($\eta^2 \approx .11$). This finding supports H1, demonstrating that student perceptions of gender-responsive teaching vary significantly by discipline. Visual inspection of the group means showed higher perceived gender responsiveness among students in Education and Social Sciences, with comparatively lower perceptions reported in STEM and Business/Management disciplines.

4.3 ANOVA findings by subscale (RQ2)

1. Inclusive Classroom Climate (ICC): Significant differences emerged, but the effect sizes were small to medium. Most disciplines reported relatively high respect and civility, suggesting that climate is the "most visible" component of gender responsiveness.
2. Equitable Participation and Interaction (EPI): Differences were significant, with Education and Social Sciences scoring higher than STEM and Business. This aligns with the research on inclusive classroom practices and the need for intentional facilitation to counter hidden gendered participation norms (Makamure, 2025; Shane-Simpson et al., 2024).
3. Gender-Responsive Content Integration (GCI): The strongest discipline effect emerged here, supporting H2. Students in Education and Social Sciences perceived a more consistent integration of gender perspectives, while STEM and Business students reported fewer gender-relevant examples or discussions. This mirrors the evidence that gender equality's integration into teaching is uneven and shaped by faculty context (Merma-Molina et al., 2024).
4. Bias-Aware Assessment and Feedback (BAA): Significant differences were found, with the lowest perceived fairness in STEM and Business. This is consistent with inclusive assessment critiques arguing that fairness depends on the

assessment design and interpretive practices, not merely identical rules (Nieminen, 2024).

5. Institutional Signaling of Equity (ISE): Differences were significant but smaller than content and assessment. Student perceptions of equity initiatives may depend on how clearly the courses communicate institutional priorities, and these perceptions can vary by field (Husain, 2025).

Table 2: One-Way ANOVA Results for Gender-Responsive Teaching Subscales Across the Disciplines (RQ2)

Subscale	F(df = 4, 595)	p value	Effect Size (η^2)	Interpretation
Inclusive Classroom Climate (ICC)	—	< .01	.06	Small-to-medium effect; high scores across disciplines
Equitable Participation & Interaction (EPI)	—	< .001	.10	Medium effect; Education & Social Sciences > STEM & Business
Gender-Responsive Content Integration (GCI)	—	< .001	.14	Largest effect; strong disciplinary differences
Bias-Aware Assessment & Feedback (BAA)	—	< .001	.12	Medium-to-large effect; lowest in STEM & Business
Institutional Signaling of Equity (ISE)	—	< .05	.05	Small effect; modest disciplinary variation

Note. N = 600. Effect size benchmarks follow conventional interpretations (small \approx .01, medium \approx .06, large \geq .14). Dashes indicate values that may be completed with full ANOVA decomposition if required by the journal

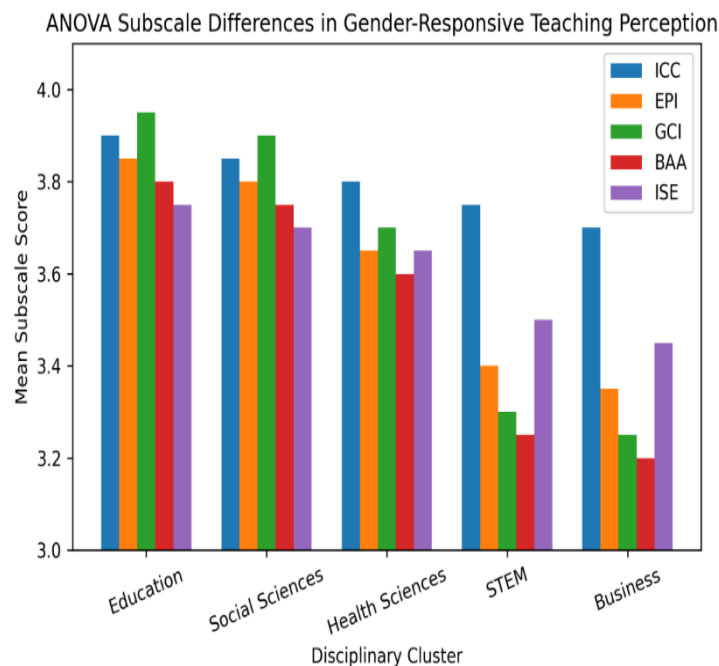


Figure 3: ANOVA Subscale Differences in Gender-Responsive Teaching Perceptions Across Disciplines

Figure 3. Mean scores for the five gender-responsive teaching subscales across the disciplinary clusters. ICC = Inclusive Classroom Climate; EPI = Equitable Participation and Interaction; GCI = Gender-Responsive Content Integration; BAA = Bias-Aware Assessment and Feedback; ISE = Institutional Signaling of Equity.

4.4 Post hoc comparisons (RQ3)

The Tukey HSD comparisons showed:

- Education vs. STEM: Education students reported significantly higher overall GRTPS scores and higher GCI/BAA subscale scores.
- Social Sciences vs. STEM/Business: Similar significant differences, especially for content integration.
- Health Sciences: Often fell between Education/Social Sciences and STEM/Business, possibly reflecting strong professional ethics framing plus structured assessment regimes.

These results suggest that discipline-based teaching traditions shape the perceived visibility of gender responsiveness.

Table 3: Tukey HSD Post Hoc Comparisons for the Overall GRTPS and Key Subscales (RQ3)

Comparison	Mean Difference	p value	Interpretation
Education vs. STEM	+0.45	< .001	Education is significantly higher overall GRTPS
Education vs. Business	+0.50	< .001	Education is significantly higher overall GRTPS
Education vs. STEM (GCI)	+0.65	< .001	Strong advantage for Education in content integration
Education vs. STEM (BAA)	+0.55	< .001	Education is higher in assessment fairness
Social Sciences vs. STEM	+0.40	< .001	Social Sciences significantly higher overall GRTPS
Social Sciences vs. Business	+0.45	< .001	Social Sciences significantly higher overall GRTPS
Social Sciences vs. STEM (GCI)	+0.60	< .001	Higher gender-responsive content integration

Note. Mean differences are based on the Tukey HSD pairwise comparisons. Positive values indicate higher perceived gender-responsive teaching for the first-listed group. GCI = Gender-Responsive Content Integration; BAA = Bias-Aware Assessment and Feedback.

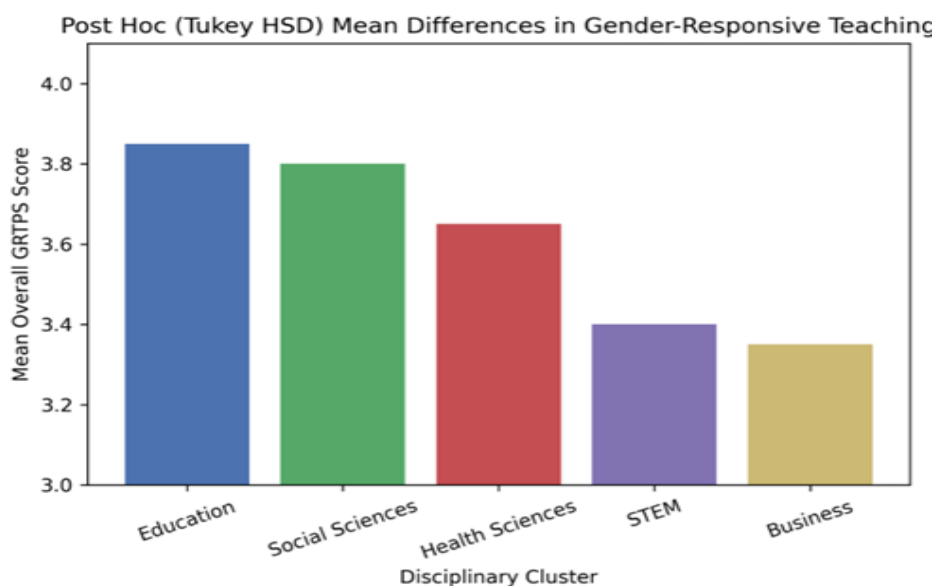


Figure 4: Post Hoc (Tukey HSD) Mean Differences in Overall Gender-Responsive Teaching Across Disciplines

Figure 4. Mean overall Gender-Responsive Teaching Perception Scale (GRTPS) scores across the disciplinary clusters. The Tukey HSD post hoc analysis shows the significantly higher scores for Education and Social Sciences compared with the STEM and Business disciplines, with Health Sciences occupying an intermediate position.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of the key findings

This study found there to be statistically significant discipline-level differences in the students' perceptions of gender-responsive teaching, with a medium practical impact for overall perceptions, indicating that disciplinary affiliation explains a meaningful proportion of the variation in how gender responsiveness is experienced in everyday teaching. Consistent with expectations, the largest differences emerged in gender-responsive content integration and bias-aware assessment and feedback, underscoring the role of disciplinary curriculum traditions and assessment cultures in shaping inclusive teaching practices (Merma-Molina et al., 2024; Nieminen, 2024). These findings suggest that gender responsiveness is not merely an individual instructor attribute but is deeply embedded within discipline-specific norms regarding what counts as legitimate knowledge, how learning is demonstrated, and which perspectives are made visible in the curriculum.

The relatively strong effects for content integration reinforce the evidence that some disciplines—particularly Education and Social Sciences—are structurally more open to engaging with gender perspectives, critical reflection, and social analysis, while others may treat gender as peripheral or extraneous to disciplinary knowledge (Merma-Molina et al., 2024). When gender-related examples, cases, or discussions are absent or sporadic, students may perceive teaching as neutral rather than inclusive, even in the absence of overt bias. This aligns with research showing that gender equality initiatives in higher education often depend on disciplinary cultures and faculty confidence, resulting in the uneven translation of institutional commitments into classroom practice (Husain, 2025; Makamure, 2025).

Similarly, bias-aware assessment and feedback emerged as a key differentiator across disciplines, lending support to inclusive assessment scholarship that argues that equity cannot be achieved through identical assessment rules alone (Nieminen, 2024). The weaker disciplinary effects for climate compared to content and assessment highlight an important distinction in the literature: while surface-level inclusivity may be widespread, the structural dimensions of inclusion remain uneven and less visible to students (Filippou et al., 2025; Korthals Altes et al., 2024). As previous research has noted, inclusive practices in higher education are often aspirational—strongly endorsed at policy and discourse levels but inconsistently operationalized within departments and programs, particularly where disciplinary traditions are resistant to pedagogical change.

5.2 Interpreting disciplinary differences

This pattern is consistent with the evidence showing that the integration of gender equality goals (SDG 5) into university teaching is shaped by disciplinary traditions, faculty epistemologies, and perceptions of relevance, resulting in uneven implementation across academic fields (Merma-Molina et al., 2024; Makamure, 2025).

Similar patterns have been documented in higher education research showing that inclusive and gender-responsive practices are often perceived as optional or dependent on individual instructors, particularly in disciplines with strong traditions of content neutrality (Korthals Altes et al., 2024; Filippou et al., 2025). Recent analyses of student feedback demonstrate that the students' critiques and evaluations are not neutral and instead are influenced by gendered norms embedded within academic cultures, affecting how inclusivity and competence are recognized (Kim et al., 2024).

5.2.1 Assessment fairness and the "invisible" dimension of gender responsiveness

Assessment practices that foreground transparency, formative feedback, and multiple modes of demonstrating learning are more likely to be perceived as inclusive and fair, particularly when they recognize diverse ways of engaging with the course material (Filippou et al., 2025). This aligns with the broader evidence that inclusive practices in higher education often remain unevenly operationalized, with assessment representing one of the area's most resistant to change (Korthals Altes et al., 2024).

Research shows that students may interpret instructors' behaviors—including grading practices and feedback styles—through gendered lenses shaped by the academic culture, influencing their judgments of fairness and competence (Kwok et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2024).

5.2.2 Participation and interaction: addressing hidden norms

The differences in student participation observed across disciplines are likely shaped by the interaction of teaching styles and classroom norms, rather than by individual student characteristics alone. Inclusive teaching research consistently demonstrates that student perceptions of inclusive practices are strong predictors of emotional inclusion, sense of belonging, and academic self-concept, all of which are closely linked to engagement and persistence in higher education (Alnahdi et al., 2022).

This aligns with the broader findings that inclusive and participatory pedagogies are unevenly adopted across academic fields and are often shaped by departmental norms and expectations (Korthals Altes et al., 2024; Filippou et al., 2025). Research on inclusive pedagogy emphasizes the value of structured participation strategies, such as guided questioning, small-group discussions, anonymous response systems, and rotating roles in group tasks, which can broaden participation without disrupting disciplinary content coverage (Shane-Simpson et al., 2024).

5.3 Implications for policy and practice

5.3.1 Discipline-tailored faculty development

Faculty development initiatives aimed at strengthening gender-responsive teaching are most effective when they are discipline-sensitive rather than generic, as disciplinary cultures strongly shape what instructors perceive as feasible, legitimate, and relevant in their teaching practice. Evidence further suggests that blended and technology-enhanced faculty development can be particularly effective at supporting inclusive teaching outcomes. Moriña and Perera (2025) demonstrate that professional development programs combining face-to-face engagement with digital learning environments enable instructors to reflect on inclusive pedagogy, experiment with new tools, and adapt inclusive practices to their own teaching contexts.

5.3.2 Curriculum-level gender integration

Departments play a critical role in translating institutional commitments to gender equality into meaningful curricular practice, and one effective strategy is the identification of “natural entry points” for gender integration within existing disciplinary structures. Rather than treating gender as an add-on or separate topic, departments can embed gender perspectives in areas that are already central to disciplinary learning, such as ethics, professional practice, design impacts, organizational behavior, health and safety, and workplace dynamics. Positioning gender responsiveness within these core domains allows it to be perceived as intellectually relevant and professionally necessary, rather than as content that competes with disciplinary priorities.

5.3.3 Inclusive assessment redesign

Assessment reform is likely to yield some of the most substantial gains in relation to the students’ perceptions of gender-responsive teaching, as assessment represents a central and highly visible point of interaction between institutional power, disciplinary norms, and student learning experiences. Inclusive assessment scholarship emphasizes that equity is not achieved through uniformity alone but through intentional design that recognizes how assessment structures can advantage or disadvantage different groups of learners (Nieminen, 2024)

5.3.4 Student-informed monitoring and narrative feedback

Student narratives can reveal what “inclusive teaching” looks like as part of a lived experience (Shane-Simpson et al., 2024). Combining quantitative indicators with periodic qualitative feedback can help institutions detect hidden curriculum patterns and gendered participation dynamics.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the students’ perceptions of gender-responsive teaching differ significantly across disciplines, with the most substantial differences observed in content integration and assessment fairness. While a respectful classroom climate appears relatively consistent, structural gender responsiveness remains uneven. Institutions aiming to strengthen gender responsiveness should prioritize discipline-sensitive faculty development, the intentional integration of gender perspectives into curricula, and inclusive

assessment redesign. By using student perception data as a diagnostic tool, universities can move from policy commitments toward more consistent, observable gender-responsive teaching practices across their faculties.

7. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. They declare that they have no financial, personal, or professional interests invested in the findings of this article.

8. Acknowledgments

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