

Lingnan University 2024/2025 SDG Report

SDG 5 – GENDER EQUALITY



105

Undergraduate Courses



57%

Female Academic Staff



218

Research Outputs



77

Research Projects and Grants

Lingnan University is committed to advancing SDG 5 – Gender Equality by promoting inclusive participation and empowering women across education, research, and community engagement. Through interdisciplinary studies and partnerships with NGOs, the University addresses structural and cultural barriers that sustain gender disparities. Lingnan scholars generate evidence to inform policy and practice on issues such as housing, health, and well-being. By linking research with public engagement and advocacy, Lingnan fosters a more equitable and gender-inclusive society locally and globally.

Gender Inequality, Cultural Values, and Emotional Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study, *“Gender Inequality and Cultural Values in Explaining Gender Differences in Positive and Negative Emotions: A Comparison of 24 Countries During the COVID-19 Pandemic,”* contributes to SDG 5 – Gender Equality by examining how gender and cultural factors shape emotional well-being during global crises. Drawing on data from 49,637 participants across 24 countries, the research reveals clear gender differences in emotional experience: women reported higher levels of negative emotions—including anxiety, depression, and exhaustion—and lower levels of positive emotions compared to men.

The analysis shows that cultural context significantly influences the extent of gender disparities. The gender gap in positive emotions was wider in individualistic societies such as

the United States, United Kingdom, Italy, and France, but narrower in countries marked by higher power distance and collectivist values, including Mainland China, Malaysia, and South Korea. These findings demonstrate that cultural values shape how gender norms and emotional expression interact within different societal frameworks.

Notably, the study finds that these emotional disparities cannot be fully explained by conventional measures of gender inequality, such as the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) or the Gender Inequality Index (GII). This suggests that emotional well-being reflects deeper sociocultural patterns beyond structural measures of equality.

Interestingly, greater pandemic severity appeared to reduce some gender differences in positive emotions—implying that shared adversity can foster a sense of unity across genders.

Overall, the research highlights the importance of accounting for cultural and contextual factors when addressing gender inequality in mental health. By connecting emotional well-being to broader social values, it offers new insights for designing gender-sensitive policies and interventions that promote psychological resilience and equality in both ordinary and crisis contexts.

The Precarity of Progress: Gendered Division of Labor, Relationships, and Well-Being During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This study, *“The Precarity of Progress: Implications of a Shifting Gendered Division of Labor for Relationships and Well-Being as a Function of Country-Level Gender Equality,”* advances SDG 5 – Gender Equality by examining how the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped gender roles and affected psychological well-being across different cultural contexts.

Drawing on a cross-cultural longitudinal survey of 10,238 participants conducted weekly during the early months of the pandemic, the research tracked changing household dynamics through seven waves of data. Findings revealed a widespread regression toward traditional gender roles, with women assuming greater responsibilities for housework and childcare.

While both genders recognized this shift, its emotional impact varied by national gender-equality levels. In countries with higher economic gender equality, the return to traditional labor divisions was linked to lower relationship satisfaction and worsened mental health among women, reflecting perceived disempowerment and frustration with stalled progress toward equality. Conversely, in less gender-equal countries, women’s relationship satisfaction and well-being sometimes improved, suggesting that these shifts aligned more closely with existing cultural expectations.

Men’s relationship satisfaction and psychological well-being, however, remained largely unchanged across contexts, underscoring the disproportionate emotional burden borne by women during the pandemic.

The study highlights the context-dependent nature of gender dynamics, showing that the same social change can have opposite emotional effects depending on cultural and structural norms. It calls for policymakers and researchers to consider both objective gender equality measures and subjective perceptions of empowerment when evaluating progress toward gender equity. By revealing how crises can reinforce or reshape gender roles, this research deepens understanding of the challenges in achieving sustainable gender equality and inclusive well-being worldwide.

Promoting Gender Equality through Research, Collaboration, and Knowledge Transfer at Lingnan University

Faculty members at Lingnan University (LU) are actively advancing SDG 5 – Gender Equality through research, NGO partnerships, and knowledge transfer activities that empower women and promote inclusive social change. Their work addresses gender inequality across intersecting areas such as poverty, housing, employment, health, and social care.

1. Research on Gender Equality and Intersectional Social Issues

LU researchers investigate how gender dynamics interact with broader social challenges. Professor Ruby Lai and her team have studied the lived experiences of low-income families living in subdivided units (SDUs), revealing high levels of depression, anxiety, and stress among female caregivers and significantly lower life satisfaction compared to the general population. The study also found that female migrant tenants face multiple socio-material and legal barriers, highlighting the need for targeted support for women experiencing housing insecurity and caregiving pressures.

2. Collaborative Research with NGOs for Social Impact

LU faculty collaborate closely with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure that research translates into social impact. Professor Lai's team conducted a commissioned study for Teen's Key Hong Kong to examine the needs and marginalization pathways of at-risk young women and to evaluate the effectiveness of the organization's empowerment programmes. Additionally, Professors Stefan Kühner and Ruby Lai completed a consultancy project for the Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres, analyzing user trends and challenges of its Women's Helpline Services, contributing to evidence-based service delivery and policy advocacy.

3. Knowledge Transfer for Public Engagement and Education

To bring research into the public sphere, Professor Lai co-curated the exhibition *"Belongings: The Audio Stories of 118.4 Square Feet"* (所有：聽見 118.4 呎的聲音故事) in early 2025, in collaboration with local artists and NGOs. Attracting around 700 visitors,

the exhibition used audio storytelling and interactive displays to challenge stigma surrounding SDU tenants—particularly female caregivers—and to raise awareness of gender equality, housing rights, and community care.

Together, these initiatives exemplify Lingnan University's commitment to integrating research, collaboration, and public engagement to foster a more equitable and gender-inclusive society.