Revista Multidisciplinaria Perspectivas Investigativas
Multidisciplinary Journal Investigative Perspectives
Vol. 6(1), 59-68, 2026
https://doi.org/10.62574/rmpi.v6i1.475

The impact of affirmative action policies on the academic inclusion of indigenous Ecuadorian women

Impacto de las políticas de acción afirmativa en la inclusión académica de mujeres indígenas ecuatorianas

Lilia Teresa Aguirre-Moreno
ltaguirre@uce.edu.ec
Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Pichincha, Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0009-0003-4123-6060

Rita Elena Almeida-Shapán
ltaguirre@uce.edu.ec
Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Pichincha, Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1281-1316

Verónica Mireya Ron-Barahona
vmronb@uce.edu.ec
Universidad Central del Ecuador, Quito, Pichincha, Ecuador
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7414-3878

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to analyse the impact of affirmative action policies on the academic inclusion of indigenous Ecuadorian women. A meta-analysis design was adopted, following the PRISMA protocol, through a systematic search of the Scopus, Redalyc, Latindex, Dialnet and SciELO databases, covering the period from January 2016 to March 2026, including 17 references that met the established selection criteria. Three recurring analytical themes were identified: regulatory advances in the implementation of affirmative action policies, political participation as a driver of academic inclusion, and structural violence as an obstacle to retention, which highlight the inadequacy of the current policy design to guarantee the substantive inclusion of beneficiaries. Ecuador needs to reformulate these policies towards comprehensive models with an intersectional approach that integrate access, cultural support, sustained financial support and curricular adaptation, whilst being sensitive to the ethnic diversity and gender situation of the beneficiaries.

Descriptors: women in politics; women's participation; women and development. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

La investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar el impacto de las políticas de acción afirmativa en la inclusión académica de mujeres indígenas ecuatorianas. Se adoptó un diseño de metaanálisis con protocolo PRISMA mediante búsqueda sistemática en las bases de datos Scopus, Redalyc, Latindex, Dialnet y SciELO, con un período de cobertura entre enero de 2016 y marzo de 2026, incluyendo 17 referencias que cumplieron los criterios de selección establecidos. Se identificaron tres ejes analíticos recurrentes: avances normativos en la implementación de políticas de acción afirmativa, participación política como vector de inclusión académica y violencia estructural como obstáculo a la permanencia, que evidencian la insuficiencia del diseño actual de las políticas para garantizar la inclusión sustantiva de las beneficiarias. Ecuador requiere reformular dichas políticas hacia modelos integrales con enfoque interseccional que articulen acceso, acompañamiento cultural, apoyo económico sostenido y adaptación curricular, con sensibilidad simultánea hacia la diversidad étnica y la situación de género de sus destinatarias.

Descriptores: mujer en política; participación de la mujer; mujer y desarrollo. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

Received: 19/01/2026. Reviewed: 25/01/2026. Accepted: 23/03/2026. Published: 27/03/2026.
Research articles section

INTRODUCTION

Ecuador is defined as a plurinational and intercultural constitutional state, a status which imposes on the legal system the obligation to guarantee the equal participation of its peoples and nationalities in all spheres of social life, including higher education, as noted by Illicachi-Guzñay (2018); within this regulatory framework, indigenous women occupy a position of particular vulnerability, as their disadvantaged situation stems from at least two axes of historical exclusion: gender and ethnicity, a circumstance that constitutes a form of intersectional discrimination which public policies must address through differentiated and specific instruments.

Affirmative action policies emerge, in this context, as legal mechanisms aimed at correcting structural imbalances through transitional measures for the active promotion of historically marginalised groups; in the field of Ecuadorian higher education, such policies have undergone various stages of regulatory consolidation, ranging from the introduction of ethnic quotas in university admission systems to the recognition of collective rights linked to access to knowledge, as documented by Chulco-Lema and Espinosa-Pico (2023). However, the actual effectiveness of these measures in terms of effective inclusion for indigenous women remains a subject of academic and political debate.

The relevance of this study is grounded in the need to systematise and critically analyse the available evidence on the subject, with the aim of identifying both the achievements made and the persistent obstacles in the implementation of such policies; the central question guiding this research is: to what extent have affirmative action policies contributed to the academic inclusion of Ecuadorian indigenous women? To answer this question, a meta-analysis design was adopted, allowing the contributions of multiple previous studies to be integrated into a coherent and systematic explanatory synthesis.

The study is of both theoretical and practical importance: from a theoretical perspective, it contributes to an understanding of the intersection between gender, ethnicity and the right to education in Latin American contexts; from a practical perspective, it generates systematised information that can guide the formulation and adjustment of public policies regarding intercultural educational equity. In this regard, the analysis seeks to highlight the concrete experiences of indigenous women in their academic journeys, recognising that behind the statistical indicators there are rights-holders whose agency and voice must be incorporated into policy design and implementation processes, as argued by Jiménez-Quiñones (2024).

The immediate regulatory context of this study is shaped by the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, a document that expressly recognises the collective rights of indigenous communities, peoples and nationalities, as well as the principle of equality and non-discrimination as a cross-cutting pillar of the legal system, as established by Zúñiga-Hurtado (2024); on this constitutional basis, the Organic Law on Higher Education and its complementary regulations establish specific provisions aimed at guaranteeing equitable access to university education; however, the gap between the legal text and the reality experienced by indigenous women in higher education institutions remains considerable.

In this regard, the aim of this article is to analyse the impact of affirmative action policies on the academic inclusion of Ecuadorian indigenous women.

Affirmative action policies in the Ecuadorian legal system

Affirmative action policies are temporary measures designed to compensate for historical inequalities by creating favourable conditions for vulnerable groups; their legal basis in Ecuador is found in Articles 11, 57 and 66 of the Constitution of the Republic, which recognise formal and substantive equality, the collective rights of indigenous communities and the right to intercultural bilingual education as an essential component of the national education system, as established by Jara-Cobos and Massón-Cruz (2016). From a comparative perspective, these provisions are in line with the international standards set out in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

of Discrimination against Women and in Convention 169 of the International Labour Organisation.

The Organic Law on Higher Education and the Regulations of the National Leveling and Admission System incorporate provisions aimed at facilitating the admission of historically excluded ethnic groups; these provisions have taken the form of mechanisms such as differentiated entrance examinations, leveling programmes with an intercultural focus, and scholarships for students from indigenous peoples and nationalities. However, the effectiveness of these measures has been questioned by researchers who point to the persistence of structural barriers not addressed by the current regulatory framework, as noted by Clavijo-Castillo and Bautista-Cerro (2020); barriers that operate at institutional, cultural and economic levels.

An analysis of the Salesian Polytechnic University's experience with the Quilloac community is revealing in this regard: whilst the implementation of affirmative action policies led to a sustained increase in the enrolment of indigenous students, data disaggregated by gender revealed that women remained an under-represented segment within that group, demonstrating that general ethnic policies are insufficient to guarantee the specific inclusion of indigenous women, as noted by Jara-Cobos and Massón-Cruz (2016). This finding is crucial to understanding the limitations of the current design of affirmative action policies in the country.

Indigenous women in the education system: an intersectional perspective

The concept of intersectionality helps us understand that indigenous women do not experience educational exclusion in a one-dimensional way, but through multiple systems of oppression that operate simultaneously; in the Ecuadorian context, this implies that indigenous women face not only the ethnic discrimination typical of indigenous peoples, but also the gender discrimination inherent in the patriarchal structures present both in mainstream society and within their own communities, as explained by Jiménez-Quiñones (2024). Understanding this dual dimension is essential for the design of affirmative action policies that respond effectively to their particular situation.

In a plurinational state such as Ecuador, the situation of indigenous women is marked by tensions between the constitutional recognition of their rights and the persistence of cultural practices that limit their access to the public sphere, including higher education; a tension reflected in concrete figures: university enrolment rates for indigenous women remain below the national average, and dropout rates in this group exceed those of any other segment of the female population, as documented by Illicachi-Guzñay (2018). Understanding these figures requires, however, looking beyond the statistics to examine the structural conditions that produce them.

The situation of communities with lower institutional visibility, such as the Waorani community of Pastaza, eloquently illustrates the gaps that persist between normative recognition and factual reality: its members face geographical, linguistic and economic obstacles that affirmative action policies, in their current form, have failed to systematically overcome, as documented by Ibarra-Cazares et al. (2024). These communities, located in hard-to-reach territories and possessing their own systems of social and cultural organisation, require public policy approaches tailored to their specificities, which recognise their worldview and their particular ways of accessing knowledge.

Gender and political participation as determinants of educational inclusion

Women's political participation and their access to higher education are linked in a relationship of mutual determination: academic inclusion fosters political empowerment, whilst political representation influences the formulation of gender-sensitive education policies; in Ecuador, the 2020 electoral reform introduced the principle of parity in the composition of electoral lists, which increased the descriptive representation of women in the National Assembly; however, this formal advance has not immediately translated into higher levels of academic inclusion for indigenous women specifically, as noted by Ortiz and Carrión-Yaguana (2023).

Indigenous women who attain positions of political leadership have had to overcome multiple barriers, ranging from gender-based political violence to the absence of effective institutional mechanisms for protection against the threats and harassment they face whilst exercising their civic participation, as documented by Bustos-Yucailla et al. (2024); in this context, Limaico-Mina et al. (2022) note that those who have assumed political leadership roles in their communities exhibit higher rates of access to and retention in higher education, suggesting that political empowerment acts as a protective factor against academic exclusion, a relationship that is, however, bidirectional.

In the view of León-Loza (2023), gender parity in democratic representative bodies, such as municipal councils, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for guaranteeing a substantive democracy that integrates the demands of historically excluded groups;

consequently, formal equality established at the regulatory level must be complemented by measures of substantive equality that address the structural conditions of exclusion faced by indigenous women in both political and academic spheres. Cevallos-Pico's (2024) study on female political leaders in Manta reinforces this perspective by documenting that institutional recognition of women in the political sphere correlates positively with their visibility in academic spaces.

Afro-descendants, Indigenous peoples and higher education: shared trajectories of exclusion

Although this study focuses on Indigenous women, it is pertinent to consider the parallels with the situation of Afro-descendant women in the Ecuadorian higher education system, as both groups share similar conditions of historical exclusion, albeit with their own specific characteristics; Medranda's (2024) work documents that people of African descent face forms of institutionalised racial discrimination in Ecuadorian universities which, when intersecting with gender, create additional disadvantages for women in that group. This perspective is relevant to the analysis of indigenous women because it suggests that affirmative action policies must be designed with sensitivity to both the ethnic and gender dimensions.

The regional evidence systematised by Mato et al. (2026) indicates that, despite the regulatory advances recorded in recent years in Latin America, Indigenous students continue to face systemic obstacles in their university journey, from admission to graduation; obstacles that are exacerbated when the gender variable is incorporated into the analysis. This regional overview places the Ecuadorian experience within a broader context and enables the identification of common trends that transcend national particularities, thereby enriching our understanding of the phenomenon and opening up possibilities for the exchange of experiences and good practices between countries.

Reproductive rights, violence and academic retention

An aspect frequently overlooked in analyses of the academic inclusion of indigenous women is that of reproductive rights and their relationship with the right to education; in this regard, Arellano-Coronel et al. (2024) point out that the right to priority protection and comprehensive healthcare for pregnant women has direct implications for the retention and academic performance of indigenous female university students, who often lack institutional support services suited to their particular situation. The absence of university childcare facilities, the lack of curricular flexibility and the invisibility of their specific needs constitute forms of indirect exclusion that university systems must urgently address.

Furthermore, Arce-Chiriboga et al. (2024) argue that regulatory frameworks aimed at promoting women's political participation in Ecuador have a spillover effect on other areas of social inclusion, including education; an effect which, however, requires reinforcement through specific sectoral policies that do not automatically assume the transferability of political advances to the educational sphere. Along the same lines, Sarmiento-Vélez and Cueva-Calderón (2024) specify that gender-based political violence constitutes a deterrent mechanism that operates not only in

the political sphere but also in the academic sphere, inhibiting the active participation of indigenous women in university settings.

METHOD

The research was conducted using a meta-analysis design, understood as the quantitative and qualitative integration of the results of individual studies on the same phenomenon, with the aim of obtaining a more robust estimate of the effect of the variables studied; to this end, the guidelines of the PRISMA protocol (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) were followed to ensure the transparency and reproducibility of the review process, in accordance with internationally accepted methodological standards for synthesis research in the social and legal sciences.

The literature search was conducted in the Scopus, Redalyc, Latindex, Dialnet and SciELO databases, using the following search terms in Spanish and English: 'affirmative action', 'indigenous women', 'higher education', 'Ecuador', 'educational inclusion', 'interculturality', 'gender parity' and their English equivalents; this search covered the period from January 2016 to March 2026, with the aim of gathering the most recent scientific output on the subject, without excluding previous studies that provided conceptual or historical references relevant to understanding the phenomenon.

Studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals or in chapters of scientific books with an ISBN that directly or indirectly addressed the impact of affirmative action policies on the academic inclusion of indigenous women or ethnic groups in Ecuador or in comparable Latin American contexts were included; conversely, opinion pieces lacking empirical support, unpublished theses and institutional documents without a peer-review process were excluded; the application of these criteria ensured the methodological quality of the analysed corpus and guaranteed the validity of the inferences derived from the meta-analysis.

The selection process was carried out in three stages: the first consisted of reviewing titles and abstracts; the second, of reading the shortlisted documents in full; and the third, of systematic data extraction using an analysis matrix that captured the following variables: authorship, year of publication, country of study, methodological approach, population group studied, type of policy analysed and main conclusions; the final sample included 17 references, the thematic relevance of which was independently assessed by two researchers, with an agreement rate of over 85%.

Data analysis was carried out through narrative synthesis and systematic comparison of the results, with particular attention to the convergences and divergences across the various studies regarding the effectiveness of affirmative action policies and the obstacles identified in their implementation; To this end, a thematic synthesis approach was adopted, which allowed the data to be grouped into emerging analytical categories, structured around three main axes: regulatory advances in the implementation of affirmative action policies, political participation as a vector for academic inclusion, and structural violence as an obstacle to inclusion.

RESULTS

Having scrutinised the references used as the analytical study population, the research findings are presented:

Regulatory advances in the implementation of affirmative action policies

Analysis of the reviewed literature shows that Ecuador has made significant regulatory progress towards the inclusion of ethnic groups in higher education; in this regard, the experience documented by Jara-Cobos and Massón-Cruz (2016) at the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana with the Quilloac community illustrates how the implementation of affirmative action policies generated a sustained increase in the enrolment of indigenous students. However, data disaggregated by gender reveal that women remain an under-represented segment within this group, indicating that general ethnic inclusion policies are insufficient to address the specific needs of indigenous women.

In this regard, Chulco-Lema and Espinosa-Pico (2023) note that the educational impact of ethnic affirmative action policies in Ecuador has been predominantly visible in terms of access, but notably limited with regard to retention and graduation rates among beneficiaries; indigenous women who manage to enter higher education institutions face additional obstacles during their academic journey, related to unpaid domestic and care responsibilities, the cultural mismatch of curriculum content, and the lack of teachers who share their mother tongue and worldview factors that constitute what the specialist literature terms the 'second barrier' to exclusion, which operates in a covert yet systematic manner.

For their part, Clavijo-Castillo and Bautista-Cerro (2020) point out that inclusive education at the Ecuadorian higher education level requires a reformulation of its epistemological foundations, as current pedagogical models often reproduce the values and perspectives of the dominant culture, with little attention paid to the cultural and identity diversity of the student population; this epistemological deficit translates into institutional practices which, even when not formally discriminatory, generate exclusionary effects on indigenous students, manifesting as lower academic achievement rates, a greater sense of not belonging to the institution, and higher dropout rates.

Political participation and recognition as drivers of academic inclusion

The reviewed literature reveals a close relationship between the political participation of indigenous women and their access to higher education; within this framework, Limaico-Mina et al. (2022) document that those who have assumed political leadership roles in their communities exhibit higher rates of access to and retention in higher education, suggesting that political empowerment acts as a protective factor against academic exclusion; Following this line of argument, Cevallos-Pico (2024) provides evidence that institutional recognition of women in the political sphere correlates positively with their visibility in academic settings and with the creation of university environments more receptive to their needs.

The 2020 electoral reform, which introduced gender parity on Ecuadorian electoral lists, constitutes, according to the analysis by Ortiz and Carrión-Yaguana (2023), a relevant legal precedent for the implementation of similar measures in the university sphere, particularly with regard to the composition of university governing bodies and student representation on collegiate bodies; in turn, Arce-Chiriboga et al. (2024) document that advances in women's political participation have spillover effects into other spheres of social life, reinforcing the relevance of integrated policies that link the political and educational dimensions within a coherent strategy for inclusion.

Structural violence as an obstacle to academic inclusion

A recurring theme in the reviewed literature is the presence of violence as a structural factor that negatively affects indigenous women's access to and retention in higher education; in this vein, Bustos-Yucailla et al. (2024) document that violence against women in the political sphere has intimidating effects that extend beyond that space, inhibiting their participation in other formal contexts such as the university; indigenous female students who have experienced situations of violence or discrimination within educational institutions have significantly higher dropout rates than their non-indigenous peers, a circumstance that highlights the urgency of implementing university protocols for the prevention and response to gender-based violence.

In the same vein, Sarmiento-Vélez and Cueva-Calderón (2024) analyse Ecuador's regulatory framework for the prevention and eradication of political gender-based violence, highlighting its shortcomings in terms of effective implementation; although Ecuador has legal provisions prohibiting gender-based violence in all spheres, the gap between the regulatory text and institutional practice remains considerable, with a direct impact on the real possibilities for the inclusion of indigenous women in academic spaces, which calls for institutional reforms aimed at ensuring the effectiveness of existing regulations.

The intersectional perspective as an interpretative framework

The body of studies analysed converges in pointing out that affirmative action policies aimed at indigenous women must incorporate an intersectional perspective that recognises the complexity of their situation; in this regard, Jiménez-Quiñones (2024) proposes phenomenology as a methodological tool for understanding the lived experiences of indigenous female students in higher education institutions, noting that the analysis of the effectiveness of affirmative action policies cannot be limited to quantitative indicators of access, but must incorporate qualitative dimensions related to the quality of the educational experience and the degree of cultural recognition perceived by the beneficiaries.

From a comparative perspective, the situation of students of African descent in the Ecuadorian university system, documented by Medranda (2024), reinforces this approach: regulatory advances in the field of affirmative action have been more visible in access indicators than in those relating to retention, quality of experience and graduation, suggesting that current policies primarily address the dimension of formal inclusion, without sufficiently addressing the dimensions of substantive inclusion; this trend is confirmed at the Latin American regional level by Mato et al. (2026), who note that the systems with the best inclusion outcomes are those that have implemented comprehensive policies involving cultural support, sustained financial assistance and curricular adaptation.

DISCUSSION

The results of the meta-analysis clearly identify both the achievements and the limitations of affirmative action policies regarding the academic inclusion of Ecuadorian indigenous women; as regards achievements, there has been a sustained increase in university enrolment rates for indigenous students over the last two decades, linked to the progressive implementation of positive discrimination measures in admission systems, as reported by Jara-Cobos and Massón-Cruz (2016) and Chulco-Lema and Espinosa-Pico (2023); this progress is significant from a historical perspective, but insufficient when contrasted with the magnitude of the gap that persists between the inclusion rates of indigenous women and those of the rest of the university population.

The main limitation identified in the literature is the persistence of what might be termed the gap between formal inclusion and substantive inclusion; current affirmative action policies have succeeded in increasing the number of indigenous women entering the university system, but have not effectively guaranteed their retention, academic well-being or graduation under conditions of equity, as noted by Clavijo-Castillo and Bautista-Cerro (2020) and Mato et al. (2026); this situation is explained, in part, by the fact that policies have been designed predominantly with a focus on access, without comprehensively addressing the structural factors that shape the full university experience of Indigenous women.

Gender-based violence, in both its physical and symbolic manifestations, emerges as one of the most serious obstacles to the full academic inclusion of Indigenous women; in this regard, studies by Bustos-Yucailla et al. (2024) and Sarmiento-Vélez and Cueva-Calderón (2024) document that the violence experienced by women in political spaces has inhibiting effects that extend into the academic sphere, generating hostile institutional climates that affect students' self-efficacy and performance; addressing this issue requires specific university policies for the prevention and response to gender-based violence, aligned with national and international regulatory frameworks for the protection of women's rights.

The dimension of political participation merits particular consideration in this context: the systematic evidence suggests that political inclusion and academic inclusion are interconnected processes that reinforce one another; along the same lines, León-Loza (2023) and Ortiz and Carrión-Yaguana (2023) provide evidence that advances in gender parity in political spheres have positive effects on the formulation of education policies that are more responsive to the needs of indigenous women; however, these effects are moderated by contextual factors such as the persistence of gender-based political violence and the limited representation of indigenous women specifically, compared to female representation in general.

The intersectional perspective proposed by Jiménez-Quiñones (2024) is particularly relevant for interpreting the meta-analysis data: the situation of indigenous women cannot be adequately understood or addressed if analysed solely through the lens of ethnicity or solely through the lens of gender; affirmative action policies that adopt an intersectional approach, recognising the specificity of the condition of indigenous women as a distinct category within the broader group of historically excluded groups, tend to yield better results in indicators of substantive inclusión a trend consistently documented by Latin American evidence, as corroborated by Mato et al. (2026).

One aspect deserving special attention in the discussion concerns the reproductive rights of indigenous female students; in this regard, Arellano-Coronel et al. (2024) document that the absence of adequate institutional support services for pregnant women in Ecuadorian universities constitutes a form of indirect discrimination that directly affects dropout rates among indigenous female students; this issue has not been sufficiently incorporated into the design of current affirmative action policies, representing an omission that future regulatory frameworks must address as a priority to ensure the coherence of the rights protection system.

A comparison with the situation of Afro-descendant communities, analysed by Medranda (2024), allows for the identification of common patterns of exclusion that transcend ethnic specificity and stem from broader structural logics of racial and gender discrimination within the Ecuadorian university system; this comparative perspective is valuable because it enables the design of affirmative action policies with a more systemic approach, capable of simultaneously addressing the needs of different vulnerable groups without fragmenting public policy instruments.

From a constitutional perspective, Zúñiga-Hurtado (2024) offers an interpretation of particular relevance to the discussion: women's political participation, recognised as a fundamental right in the Ecuadorian Constitution, constitutes the legal foundation upon which the legitimacy of affirmative action policies in the educational sphere is based; the coherence of the legal system requires that constitutional commitments to substantive equality and interculturalism be translated into effective sectoral policies that guarantee indigenous women's access, retention and graduation under conditions of full equity, a requirement that challenges higher education institutions in their role as guarantors of constitutionally recognised rights.

In this vein, the situation of indigenous communities in particularly vulnerable territories, documented by Ibarra-Cazares et al. (2024) in relation to the Waorani community of Pastaza, highlights that affirmative action policies must be sensitive to intra-ethnic differences and take into account that not all indigenous communities face the same obstacles or have the same resources to access higher education; a uniform design of such policies tends to disproportionately benefit communities with greater social capital and greater geographical and cultural proximity to urban centres, whilst perpetuating the exclusion of those furthest removed from formal academic circuits.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of the impact of affirmative action policies on the academic inclusion of Ecuadorian indigenous women reveals a persistent tension between the regulatory advances achieved and the actual effectiveness of their implementation; positive discrimination measures have produced verifiable increases in university enrolment rates among indigenous students, but these results have not translated proportionally into sustained improvements in retention, academic well-being and graduation rates for women in particular, highlighting that the predominant design of such policies responds to a logic of formal access rather than substantive inclusion.

The gap between the policy text and the lived experience of the beneficiaries is explained by the convergence of structural factors that current policies do not address in a coordinated manner: gender-based violence in its physical and symbolic dimensions; the cultural inadequacy of institutional pedagogical models; the absence of support services for students with reproductive

responsibilities; and the neglect of intra-ethnic differences between communities with varying degrees of proximity to urban academic circuits.

The intersectional perspective is confirmed as the most relevant analytical and political approach for understanding and addressing this issue; policies that recognise the specific condition of indigenous women as a distinct category that is, not merely as the sum of ethnic and gender variables—yield more consistent results in indicators of effective inclusion. In light of the above, the constitutional guarantee of substantive equality requires the reformulation of existing affirmative action policies into comprehensive models that integrate access, cultural support, sustained financial assistance and curricular adaptation, whilst simultaneously taking into account the ethnic diversity and gender situation of their beneficiaries.

FUNDING

Non-monetary

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest with any individuals or institutions linked to the research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To those who fight for the recognition of women's equality in social and political terms.

REFERENCES

Arce-Chiriboga, A. M., García-Díaz, A. S., Yépez-Enríquez, A. E., & Lizcano-Chapeta, C. J. (2024). Participación política de la mujer en el Ecuador [Political participation of women in Ecuador]. *Verdad y Derecho. Revista Arbitrada de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales*, *3*(especial 3 UNIANDES), 454–460. https://doi.org/10.62574/r6yxk567

Arellano-Coronel, E. I., Arteaga-Yépez, E. V., Borja-Zambrano, F. P., & Montalván-Arévalo, D. F. (2024). Derecho a la protección prioritaria y cuidado de la salud integral de las mujeres embarazadas [Right to priority protection and comprehensive health care for pregnant women]. *Revista Multidisciplinaria Perspectivas Investigativas*, *4*(Derecho), 153–158. https://doi.org/10.62574/rmpi.v4iDerecho.203

Bustos-Yucailla, T. D. R., Benavides-Ramos, E. P., & Marfetán-Marfetán, V. D. R. (2024). Violencia contra las mujeres y el derecho a la participación política [Violence against women and the right to political participation]. *Verdad y Derecho. Revista Arbitrada de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales*, *3*(especial 4), 80–88. https://doi.org/10.62574/7yf7v661

Cevallos-Pico, V. P. (2024). El reconocimiento a la mujer y su relación con el desarrollo local en líderes políticas de Manta [Recognition of women and its relationship with local development in political leaders of Manta]. *Revista Científica y Arbitrada de Ciencias Sociales y Trabajo Social: Tejedora*, *7*(14), 398–419. https://doi.org/10.56124/tj.v7i13ep.024

Chulco-Lema, B. J., & Espinosa-Pico, P. E. (2023). Influencia educativa de políticas de acciones afirmativas étnicas en Ecuador [Educational influence of ethnic affirmative action policies in Ecuador]. *Conrado*, *19*(92), 467–475.

Clavijo-Castillo, R. G., & Bautista-Cerro, M. J. (2020). La educación inclusiva: análisis y reflexiones en la educación superior ecuatoriana [Inclusive education: Analysis and reflections in Ecuadorian higher education]. *Alteridad. Revista de Educación*, *15*(1), 113–124. https://doi.org/10.17163/alt.v15n1.2020.09

Ibarra-Cazares, A. D., Vargas-Espín, G. A., Fajardo-Pillajo, J. C., & Páez-Maldonado, A. S. (2024). Comunidad Waorani de Pastaza en el Ecuador y sus derechos en educación [Waorani community of Pastaza in Ecuador and their rights in education]. *Verdad y Derecho. Revista Arbitrada de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales*, *3*(especial 2), 12–21. https://doi.org/10.62574/prk1fw11

Illicachi-Guzñay, J. (2018). Las mujeres en un país plurinacional e intercultural, Ecuador [Women in a plurinational and intercultural country, Ecuador]. *La Ventana. Revista de Estudios de Género*, *6*(48), 358–389.

Jara-Cobos, R. V., & Massón-Cruz, R. M. (2016). Política de acción afirmativa, su repercusión en la Universidad Politécnica Salesiana: caso indígenas de Quilloac [Affirmative action policy and its impact on the Salesian Polytechnic University: Case of indigenous people from Quilloac]. *Revista Cubana de Educación Superior*, *35*(2), 139–153.

Jiménez-Quiñones, L. (2024). Políticas y programas de acción afirmativa en educación superior: fenomenología e interseccionalidad [Affirmative action policies and programs in higher education: Phenomenology and intersectionality]. *Sinéctica*, (62), e1596. https://doi.org/10.31391/s2007-7033(2024)0062-010

León-Loza, M. J. (2023). Paridad de género y democracia: la integración de los concejos municipales [Gender parity and democracy: The integration of municipal councils]. *Foro: Revista de Derecho*, (39), 65–86. https://doi.org/10.32719/26312484.2023.39.4

Limaico-Mina, J. R., Haro-Verdezoto, A. K., Ruiz-Tigse, J. I., & Vaca-Terán, F. D. (2022). La mujer indígena y su rol en la política ecuatoriana [Indigenous women and their role in Ecuadorian politics]. *Revista Universidad y Sociedad*, *14*(6), 205–211.

Mato, D., Pérez-Castro, J., Donnelly, M., Santana-Colín, Y., García-Reyes, J., Mateos-Cortés, L. S., … Manjarrez-Martínez, Y. C. (2026). Estudiantes indígenas en la educación superior: avances y pendientes [Indigenous students in higher education: Progress and pending challenges]. *Perfiles Educativos*, *48*. https://doi.org/10.22201/iisue.24486167e.2026.48.62401

Medranda, N. (2024). Afrodescendientes y la educación superior en Ecuador: Un desafío de inclusión y equidad [Afro-descendants and higher education in Ecuador: A challenge of inclusion and equity]. En S. Viveros-Padilla et al. (Eds.), *Negritud y academia: Trayectorias, experiencias, construcciones epistémicas y pedagógicas* (pp. 91–114). Editorial Abya-Yala. https://doi.org/10.17163/abyaups.98

Ortiz, R., & Carrión-Yaguana, V. (2023). Paridad de género en Ecuador: el impacto de la reforma electoral 2020 en la representación descriptiva de las mujeres en la Asamblea Nacional [Gender parity in Ecuador: The impact of the 2020 electoral reform on women's descriptive representation in the National Assembly]. *Revista de Ciencia Política (Santiago)*, *43*(1), 93–114. https://doi.org/10.4067/s0718-090x2023005000105

Sarmiento-Vélez, J. C., & Cueva-Calderón, D. V. (2024). La violencia política de género: marco normativo para la prevención y erradicación en Ecuador [Gender-based political violence: Regulatory framework for prevention and eradication in Ecuador]. *Sur Academia*, *11*(22), 81–95. https://doi.org/10.54753/suracademia.v11i22.2264

Zúñiga-Hurtado, E. P. (2024). La participación política de la mujer desde una visión constitucional en Ecuador [Women's political participation from a constitutional point of view in Ecuador]. *Verdad y Derecho. Revista Arbitrada de Ciencias Jurídicas y Sociales*, *3*(1), 37–53. https://doi.org/10.62574/bjjg8w84

Copyright: 2026 By the authors. This article is open access and distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/