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GENDER ISSUES IN EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract. Education plays a fundamental role in the development of society, and gender equality in education has become one of the most important global issues. Men and women have equal rights to education; however, differences in opportunities, social expectations, and cultural traditions often influence their participation and achievements in the educational system. This article discusses gender issues in education, the historical role of men and women in educational development, challenges faced by both genders, and possible solutions for achieving equality in education.

Introduction. Gender equality in education is considered a key factor for social and economic progress. In many countries, women historically had limited access to education, while men were encouraged to participate in academic and professional activities. Over time, reforms and international policies improved educational opportunities for women. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes and inequalities still exist in some educational institutions and societies.

The role of men and women in education is not only connected to access to schooling but also to participation in leadership, teaching professions, research activities, and educational decision-making processes.

Historically, education systems in many societies favored men. Women were often expected to focus on household responsibilities rather than academic achievement. During the 19th and 20th centuries, movements for women's rights emphasized the importance of female education. As a result, universities and schools gradually opened their doors to women.

Today, women actively participate in almost all academic fields, including science, medicine, engineering, and technology. However, in some regions, girls still face barriers such as poverty, early marriage, and cultural restrictions.

Gender Issues in Modern Education

1. Access to Education

In many developing countries, boys and girls do not always have equal access to education. Girls may leave school earlier because of family responsibilities or financial difficulties. According to international educational organizations, millions of girls worldwide are still unable to complete secondary education.

2. Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes influence students' academic choices and career paths. For example, boys are often encouraged to study engineering and technology, while girls are directed toward arts or social sciences. These stereotypes limit individual potential and reduce diversity in professional fields.

3. Representation in Leadership

Although many teachers are women, leadership positions in schools and universities are frequently dominated by men. Increasing female participation in educational leadership can create more balanced and inclusive decision-making processes.

4. Academic Performance and Expectations

Research shows that social expectations may affect student performance. Boys are sometimes expected to be strong in mathematics and science, while girls are expected to perform better in language subjects. Such assumptions may negatively influence students' confidence and motivation.

Global Statistics on Gender and Education

Gender equality in education has improved significantly during the last decades, but important differences still exist between men and women in several regions of the world. The following tables present global educational statistics related to literacy, school enrollment, and higher education participation.

Table 1. Global Literacy Rates by Gender (2024 Estimated)

Region	Male Literacy Rate (%)	Female Literacy Rate (%)
North America	99	99
Europe	99	99
Central Asia	100	99
East Asia & Pacific	98	95
Latin America	95	94
Middle East & North Africa	88	79
South Asia	84	70
Sub-Saharan Africa	72	59

Analysis

The table shows that developed regions such as Europe and North America have almost complete gender equality in literacy. However, significant differences remain in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, where female literacy rates are considerably lower than male literacy rates.

Table 2. Global Primary and Secondary School Enrollment (2024)

Education Level	Boys Enrollment (%)	Girls Enrollment (%)

Primary Education	90	88
Secondary Education	78	74
Higher Education	41	43

Analysis

Primary education enrollment is relatively balanced worldwide. However, in secondary education, girls in some developing countries leave school earlier due to social and economic factors. Interestingly, women's participation in higher education has increased globally, and in some countries female university enrollment is now higher than male enrollment.

Table 3. Women's Participation in Educational Leadership

Position	Men (%)	Women (%)
School Principals	56	44
University Rectors	72	28
Education Ministers	65	35
Teachers (Global Average)	38	62

Analysis

Women represent the majority of teachers worldwide, especially in primary education. Nevertheless, leadership positions in educational institutions are still largely occupied by men.

Table 4. Gender Distribution in Academic Fields

Academic Field	Male Students (%)	Female Students (%)
Engineering & Technology	71	29
Medicine & Health Sciences	42	58
Education Sciences	30	70
Social Sciences	45	55
Information Technology	74	26

Analysis

Traditional gender stereotypes still influence career choices. Men dominate engineering and information technology fields, while women are more represented in education and health sciences.

The Role of Women in Education

Women play a significant role in shaping future generations. Female teachers often contribute to creating supportive and inclusive learning environments. Educated women also improve family health, economic stability, and community development.

In recent decades, women have achieved major success in higher education and scientific research. Female participation in universities has increased dramatically, and many women now work as professors, researchers, and educational administrators.

The Role of Men in Education

Men also have an essential role in educational systems. Male educators can serve as positive role models for students, especially in areas where male participation in teaching is limited. Men contribute to academic leadership, curriculum development, and educational innovation.

At the same time, modern education encourages men to participate more actively in fields traditionally associated with women, such as early childhood education and social sciences. This balance can help reduce gender stereotypes in society.

Solutions for Gender Equality in Education

To achieve gender equality in education, governments and institutions should:

1. Provide equal access to quality education for both boys and girls.
2. Eliminate gender stereotypes in textbooks and teaching methods.
3. Support women's participation in leadership and research.
4. Encourage boys and girls to study all academic disciplines freely.
5. Create safe and inclusive learning environments.
6. Promote awareness about gender equality through educational programs.

Conclusion. Gender equality in education is essential for sustainable social development. Both men and women contribute significantly to the educational process and the advancement of society. Although considerable progress has been achieved, many challenges remain. Eliminating stereotypes, ensuring equal opportunities, and promoting inclusive educational policies can help build a fair and effective education system for future generations.

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