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Análisis de la representación de la equidad de género en la
iconografía de los libros de texto de Lengua y Literatura de
sexto grado en Ecuador

Nubia Hernández Flórez

Nubia.hernandez@usa.edu.co
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8756-1895>
Universidad Sergio Arboleda
Santa Marta – Colombia

Olena Klímenko

Eklimenko@iue.edu.co
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8411-1263>
Institución Universitaria de Envigado
Envigado – Colombia

Jhoel Banegas Ramírez

Jhoeld14@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-2423-0383>
Universidad Metropolitana de Educación,
Ciencia y Tecnología
Loja – Ecuador

María Soledad Mendoza Carrión

Solemendoza27@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-8009-5668>
Universidad Metropolitana de Educación,
Ciencia y Tecnología
Loja – Ecuador

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Universidad Sergio Arboleda
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Eklimenko@iue.edu.co
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8411-1263>
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Abstract

The main objective was to examine how gender roles are configured in the images, identifying stereotypes and comparing them with the current social reality, through the identification of patterns, codes and relationships in the content. The findings show a predominance of traditional roles, where women continue to be represented in domestic and care contexts, while men are linked to positions of leadership, empowerment and physical activities. Although female empowerment is present in a higher proportion compared to other traditional roles, the association of women with domestic tasks persists, which reflects gender stereotypes that are still in force. In contrast, men are associated with ideas of masculinity and leadership. The research concludes a low representation of topics related to gender inclusion and diversity, such as the presence of people with disabilities or female financial autonomy, which indicates a lack of sensitivity towards these realities in the educational content. These results underscore the need to rethink curriculum design and the inclusion of equitable representations that allow for a plural and diverse view of gender roles in society.

Keywords: education, equity, gender, gender, stereotypes, school

Resumen

Este estudio analiza la representación de roles de género en las imágenes del libro de Lengua y Literatura de sexto grado en Ecuador, utilizando un enfoque cualitativo mediante la utilización de software Atlas ti, El objetivo principal fue examinar cómo se configuran los roles de género en las imágenes, identificando estereotipos y comparándolos con la realidad social actual, mediante identificación de patrones, códigos y relaciones en el contenido. Los hallazgos evidencian una predominancia de roles tradicionales, donde las mujeres continúan siendo representadas en contextos domésticos y de cuidado, mientras que los hombres se vinculan a posiciones de liderazgo, empoderamiento y actividades físicas. Aunque el empoderamiento femenino está presente en una mayor proporción en comparación con otros roles tradicionales, persiste la asociación de las mujeres con tareas domésticas, lo que refleja estereotipos de género aún vigentes. Contrariamente con los hombres quienes son asociados a ideas de masculinidad y liderazgo. La investigación concluye una baja representación de temas relacionados con la inclusión y la diversidad de género, como la presencia de personas con discapacidad o la autonomía financiera femenina, lo que indica una falta de sensibilidad hacia estas realidades en el contenido educativo. Estos resultados subrayan la necesidad de repensar el diseño curricular y la inclusión de representaciones equitativas que permitan una visión plural y diversa de los roles de género en la sociedad.

Palabras clave: educación, equidad, género, estereotipos, escuela

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INTRODUCTION

Gender stereotypes and gender-based violence are structural issues that profoundly affect women around the world. These stereotypes perpetuate restrictive roles and foster discrimination and violence towards women (Poggi, 2019). In Ecuador, approximately 64% of women have faced some type of gender-based violence throughout their lives. This reality is reflected not only in social dynamics, but also in educational materials, which continue to reproduce images and narratives that reinforce gender inequality (Chica, 2019).

In education, images in school textbooks play a crucial role in the formation of values and learning in childhood. However, sixth grade Language and Literature textbooks in Ecuador present gender representations marked by stereotypes and traditional roles (Klimenko et al., 2023). These images assign domestic and care work to women, while men appear in roles of leadership and action, which limits perceptions of equality from an early age. This phenomenon contributes to perpetuate gender inequality and symbolic violence in the school context, affecting students' construction of identity (Hernández-Flórez et al., 2024).

Analyzing the role of gender in school texts is fundamental to promote an education that fosters equity and critical thinking in students. According to Piaget (1947, cited in Hanum and Saragih, 2022), children aged 10 and 11 are at a key stage of cognitive development, where they acquire skills to question information and develop critical thinking. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that educational materials promote narratives and images free of discrimination, promoting gender equality and respect. In addition, this analysis contributes to the objectives set out in the National Plan to Prevent and Eradicate Gender Violence (2020).

It should be noted that the gender representations present in school textbooks have awakened an interest in an analysis from the educational field because education has been conceived as a tool in which the formation of children and young people helps the formation of the construct of personal identity from the different perceptions that are linked to society. In this sense, the study materials develop a fundamental role in the role configuration constructs associated with children taking into account a holistic perspective (Castaño-Aguirre, 2023).

Educational books present, through different images, texts and curricular and complementary activities, a visual and discursive perspective that generates challenges regarding gender representations, which from a millenary tradition have been anchored to the different sociocultural and family dynamics that are rooted in the patterns of behavior and thought of society (Moreno, 2021). It should be noted that these representations do not present neutrality, but on the contrary reproduce marked gender stereotypes tending to representations in which the role of women is mainly linked to domestic, caring and submissive activities. On the contrary, men are associated with images of masculinity, authority, managerial jobs, denoting greater authority or a tendency to develop physical activities. This leads to the fact that these types of images are reproduced in school textbooks from the earliest stages of education (Álzate et al., 2024).

One element of analysis is placed in the perspective of gender representations through school texts, which not only include illustrations, figures or iconographies, but also take into account aspects related to narratives, language and the constructs of the characters portrayed. The trend represents that books have a tendency to show images where men have roles related to achievements, discoveries, relationship with science and sports activities. While women are associated with images of submission, household chores, childcare, and human reproduction, as indicated by Hernández, et al (2024), the books do not include the social and educational aspects that support more diverse and inclusive presentations that lead to gender equity in the various activities of life.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive and exploratory qualitative design was used to analyze gender representations in a sixth grade Language and Literature textbook in Ecuador. The research combines documentary analysis and content analysis, prioritizing visual elements to identify stereotypes, biases and gender patterns (Rojas-Gutiérrez, 2022).

Atlas.ti software was used to organize, code and analyze the text content, allowing a detailed interpretation of both images and narrative texts. Based on a theoretical framework, four main categories were defined to guide the analysis: gender roles in activities, professions, emotions and the use of space. This design allows us to deeply interpret the explicit and implicit messages related to gender and to evaluate their potential impact on students (De la Roche et al., 2021).

The study covered the entire content of the book, including images and graphic elements, to ensure a comprehensive analysis (Ripossio, 2023). No specific chapters or sections were selected, as each component could contain gender-related messages. Visual elements that directly or indirectly addressed gender representations were analyzed, excluding content without social or cultural relevance, such as grammatical explanations.

The qualitative analysis followed systematic steps with Atlas.ti, using predefined categories to code and organize the visual content of the book. The validity of the analysis was ensured through the use of Atlas.ti, which allows for rigorous and transparent interpretation. Reliability was ensured with consistent categorization, data triangulation (textual and visual) and detailed documentation of the process (Raventós, 2021)

RESULTS

In order to analyze gender roles in the iconography of sixth grade Language and Literature textbooks in Ecuador, key patterns and relationships were identified using Atlas.ti software. A total of 68 images were analyzed and classified into four main categories, each with their respective codes. These categories reflect specific patterns in the representation of gender roles in educational material.

Category 1: Traditional Gender Roles

This category includes representations where traditional gender stereotypes are maintained, assigning functions, behaviors and roles based on historical patterns. Images were observed in which women performed domestic tasks (cleaning, childcare) while men performed leadership or professional activities such as engineers or doctors. Emotional expressions were frequently differentiated: women were depicted as caring or concerned, while men showed bravery or security. Image 1 shows 12 activities of a woman within the context of a female domestic role; however, this graph does not show any male participation in domestic roles (Salgado, 2020).

Figure 1

Female domestic role



Note: The image allows you to visualize the assignment of activities for women through iconography.

Category 2: Non-Traditional Gender Roles

This category identifies role representations that challenge traditional norms and promote greater gender equity. Images were identified where women were shown in leadership roles (teachers, scientists) and where men performed activities such as child rearing, breaking conventional stereotypes. These representations are important to foster an equitable perspective in students (Meeussen & Koudenburg, 2022)

Category 3: Gender Equity in Iconography

This category examined images that promote messages of gender equality and equity. The images with the greatest focus on equity showed men and women collaborating in the classroom or participating in academic activities on equal terms. These images reinforce a positive view of equity and inclusion in the school environment (Pérez-Alvaro, 2023).

Category 4: Implicit and Contextualized Gender Stereotypes

This category identifies subtle gender stereotypes that are not always evident, but are present in the visual content (Shu et al., 2022). On the other hand, the representation of men in non-traditional roles occupies 2.67%, the appearance of this gender in this situation is limited, this means that there is a scarce representation of diversity in terms of male roles, remaining largely within traditional roles (image 2).

Figure 2

Representation of men in non-traditional roles



Note: This representation underlines a more equitable vision of gender roles, showing the man in a role of care and active fatherhood.

Many images use clothing as a gender marker, assigning traditional roles based on specific colors or styles. Patterns were also identified where gender distribution is contextualized in terms of spaces: men in public spaces and women in domestic contexts (Goodhew et al., 2021). Traditional stereotypes predominate in the iconography, with unequal representation of roles assigned to men and women, especially in domestic and professional contexts. However, there are efforts to represent alternative, non-traditional roles, challenging traditional Images that promote gender equity are less frequent, but they are evidence of a strategy to generate greater inclusion in school texts (Charlesworth et al., 2021) .

There are subtle patterns of gender stereotypes, such as the use of differentiated clothing and specific contexts, which reinforce gender representations in the visual material analyzed. nal gender stereotypes.

DISCUSSION

The analysis conducted in this study on gender roles in the iconography of sixth grade Language and Literature textbooks in Ecuador reveals patterns that are consistent with previous studies and with the theoretical framework that underpinned this research.

The results indicate that traditional gender stereotypes continue to be predominant in visual representation. This finding is similar to previous studies, such as that of Welter (2020), who points out that educational materials tend to reproduce traditional gender roles, assigning domestic tasks to women and academic and technical professions to men. In addition, the emotional differences between men and women, identified in the images analyzed, have also been observed in research such as those of Axell y Boström (2019), who emphasize that these stereotypes reinforce the traditional perception of gender from the earliest school stages.

On the other hand, the presence of non-traditional gender roles in the analyzed material (women in leadership positions and men performing domestic tasks) supports Butler's, cited by Muñoz y Parra (2021) theory of gender performativity, in which gender identities are not fixed but fluid and can be

redefined through representations in educational and social contexts. These representations could be driving a transformation in traditional gender perceptions through education (Vecino, 2024).

In terms of gender equity, the analysis revealed a limited presence of images that promote equitable representation, which is consistent with the theory of Arenas and Cervantes (2021) who argue that curricular materials tend to perpetuate inequalities by maintaining stereotypical representations and limiting role alternatives for students in training.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the gender roles represented in the iconography of sixth grade Language and Literature textbooks in Ecuador. The results confirm that, although gender stereotyped patterns persist, there are also efforts to show alternative and equitable representations in the visual material.

By contrasting these findings with existing theory, it is concluded that education can play a key role in the transformation of gender perceptions if more inclusive and equitable strategies are implemented in educational resources. The methodological combination, the use of technological tools and triangulation guarantee the validity and reliability of the results, thus offering a relevant contribution to the academic field and educational practice.

The analysis of the images in the sixth grade Language and Literature book in Ecuador reveals clear patterns in the distribution of gender roles and stereotypes present in the visual material. From the five categories studied, the main conclusions are the following:

In summary, the analysis indicates that, although the visual material in the Language and Literature textbook shows attempts to break stereotypes, traditional gender patterns persist and there is a scarce representation of inclusion and diversity issues. These findings highlight the need to rethink the design of educational content to promote an equitable and diverse representation that allows students to access a pluralistic view of gender roles in contemporary society.

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