Gender Perspective in adolescents from Superior Basic Education and High School

Perspectiva de género en Educación Básica Superior y Bachillerato

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Abstract

Research on gender has shown that the school environment is the ideal space to eliminate stereotypes about inequality, discrimination, and violence. This is because, during this period, adolescent learn to form relations with others based on their cultural conceptions or following stereotypes learned from home or environment. Consequently, the objective of this study was to evaluate the influence gender perspective on the social interaction of adolescents in school environments, in secondary and high school education at Amelia Gallego Díaz high school. This research was carried out with a quantitative approach, non-experimental design, cross-sectional, and descriptive scope. The method employed for data collection was scale adaptation of attitudes towards gender equality aimed at students from García-Pérez et al. (2010) was implemented. This was applied to a sample of 263 students from the institution under study. When analysing the data, the results on the indicators, from gender perspective portrayed an adaptive attitude that directly affects equality and impartial treatment in the social interaction of students; this means in this high school, students have been adapting to the situations that nowadays arise. However, there is still a significant percentage of students that remain firm to the disciplines they have instilled from their family nucleus.

Keywords: Educational environment, social interaction, gender perspective, education, gender stereotypes, student adjustment

Resumen

Investigaciones sobre género han demostrado que el ambiente escolar es el espacio idóneo para eliminar estereotipos sobre desigualdad, discriminación y violencia. Esto se debe a que, es en este periodo, donde los adolescentes aprenden a relacionarse según sus concepciones culturales o siguiendo estereotipos aprendidos desde su hogar o en el entorno. Consecuentemente, el estudio tuvo como objetivo evaluar la influencia de la perspectiva de género en la interacción social del adolescente en ambientes escolares en los niveles de Educación General Básica Superior y Bachillerato en la Unidad Educativa Amelia Gallego Díaz. La investigación se fundamentó en un enfoque cuantitativo, diseño no experimental, corte transversal y alcance descriptivo. El instrumento utilizado para la recogida de datos ha sido una adaptación de la escala de actitudes hacia la igualdad de género dirigido al alumnado de García-Pérez et al. (2010), aplicado a una muestra de 263 estudiantes de la institución en estudio. Al hacer el análisis, los resultados en los indicadores de la perspectiva de género muestran una actitud adaptativa que incide directamente en un trato de igualdad y equidad en la interacción social de los estudiantes; es decir, en esta institución educativa los estudiantes se han ido adaptando a las situaciones que la actualidad les depara, sin embargo, aún queda un importante porcentaje que se mantiene firme a las enseñanzas que les han inculcado en su núcleo familiar.

Descriptores: Ambiente educacional, interacción social, perspectiva de género, educación, estereotipos de género, adaptación del estudiante.

1. Introduction

In the recent decade, different research on gender has been addressed from different fields (Benavente & Valdés, 2014, Trejo-Sirvent et al., 2015; Camarera & Saavedra, 2018). They emphasize attention to improving equality and equity; reducing inequality, discrimination and violence between men and women. Similarly, countries around the world have incorporated into their national constitutions regulations on gender equality and have aimed at implementing policies that fight inequality, exclusion and discrimination that drive women's participation in various contexts of society (United Nations Organization, 2014). Even though great progress has been made, inequalities continue to emerge in societies regarding sexist behaviors, gender roles and reproduction of stereotypes. In this regard, Duarte and García (2016) refer to the difference between sex and gender oppression as a result of biological and historical discrepancies that cannot be changed, and which are affirmed in ideologies or myths.

This approach, as Chávez-Carapia (2017) corroborates, has not yet been achieved. Many efforts have developed internationally over the years. The Fourth Beijing Conference (1995), as a government obligation and duty of undersigned members, stands out to establish a platform for implementing their policies that respect the equality of men and women. However, studies carried out by rights organizations around the world have alerted that gay, bisexual, transgender and lesbian students have been subjected to assaults in their school environment, mostly by other students, managers and violent teachers (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015), showing a long way to go.

The problem persists globally and Ecuador is not different. Gender in Ecuadorian society has taken relevance as a way to achieve equality rights in discriminated areas. Discrimination stigmatizes the human being as it differentiates it both physically and culturally, evidencing inequality and stereotyping. The Constitution of the Republic (2008) incorporated principles and rights to address inequality, gender-based violence and discrimination, elements that have also been mentioned in the National Plan for a Whole Life (2017-2021) and in the document issued by the Ombudsman's Office entitled "Institutional Policy for Gender Equality 2016-2019". In this regard, the latter body mentions that even though progress has been made in this area, Ecuador has a "rooted patriarchal and androcentric culture, reflected in social and institutional practices, evidence of the absence of strategies and actions that promote gender equality and non-discrimination" (p. 6).

In education, it is also imperative to eradicate discrimination through tolerance and education (Medina et al., 2015). According to Solis (2016), incorporating the gender perspective into education allows to transform the value schemes in which skills are developed from sexual and gender differences as part of the learning process. Castillo and Gamboa (2013), state that "gender equality requires an acculturation process in changing the concepts and practices that have been socially learned" (cited in Azorín, 2017, p. 46). They say that the adolescent is a key element in society, which must be formed with a gender perspective that exercises gender equality from the various social contexts.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), adolescence is the time where young people learn to relate to their peers, between men and women, according to their cultural concepts or following the stereotypes learned at home or in the environment (UNICEF, 2015). It is a stage for initiating relationships with others and defining their identity: experience and knowledge. Lozano (2014), affirms that the adolescent, in the process of specifying his/her personality, expanding his/her relationships among equals or becoming part of a group, follows gender stereotypes in accordance with cultural concepts on which his /her formation is constituted, starting from elements

of his/her identity assigned by the culture. The adolescent, apart from struggling with his/her physical and emotional aspects of age, also has to face external situations such as the imposition of gender culture, which is reflected in the cloth, expressing and relating to the peers, and following patterns of behavior imposed by society.

Based on these approaches, research is of great importance in the social and educational field, because it allowed to understand and visualize the concepts of gender and stereotypes that are acting in language, behavior and other areas. For this reason, the aim is to evaluate how the gender perspective influences the social interaction of adolescents in school environments at the High School Amelia Gallegos Díaz, located in Riobamba-Ecuador. Based on the identification of gender stereotyping behaviors of adolescents, the factors affecting social development in school spaces were determined and analyzed and the incidence levels between the two dimensions were established (gender perspective and social interaction).

1.1. Gender concepts

The gender approach in adolescence as a research topic is increasing. Rodríguez et al. (2017) affirm that gender represents an intrinsic element of personality, where beliefs, lifestyle, opportunities and behavior are combined in society. Guzmán (2015) points out that there is a role of supremacy and power of men over women based on the dichotomic and structural way people build the world. The terms sex and gender are different. According to Liscano (2016), sex is the biological vision that differentiates men and women, while gender is the sociocultural dimension of people's behaviors, ways, and expressions. Guerra López (2016) mentions that gender is creating a social profile of individuals according to their nature or the sex to which they belong. These approaches make it possible to affirm that sex and gender are related, but each one fulfills a specific function; while the first one is determined by a con-

dition since the individual is born, the second one is characterized by the influence of society. Thus, in a universal way, there are concepts of the actions and roles that men and women have in the society. According to Torres (2018), these manifestations are conditioned and identified by their nature of being and doing the social sphere; from birth, male and female social and sexual representation will be predetermined, regardless of the fact that, as a mature person, he/she does not want to fulfill the task entrusted.

Similarly, Serret (2016) expresses that men and women are not biologically equal, and also because they are defined as a consequence of what they learn in their ideological, family, economic and social environment. Therefore, gender roles are based on sex, and social and behavioral norms are socially perceived as appropriate and historically generalized. Bruel et al. (2013) say that this social representation of men and women is based on the behavior of each person and the interaction between individuals. For Aguilar et al. (2013), the difference lies in their formation to exercise their role in society: men are considered independent, autonomous and empowered, while women are educated to take care of people, they are guardians.

The behavior of young people during the adolescence has special emphasis in assuming a role in society. Beltrán (2012) states that man during adolescence, in many cases, as a way of demonstrating his masculinity, has to acquire cultural practices such as to defend himself, do sport, use certain hair style, cloth, use of grotesque and insulting language, etc. At this stage of social development, attitudes and values are acquired, which help in the formation of his identity for conflict management and the regulation of aggression. According to Javaloy et al. (2016), it is a way of maintaining society through the exchange of expressions, words, gestures in which people participate with a common objective. Uranga et al. (2016), consider the relationship with other individuals, which is part of the life of human beings, in which human beliefs arise and,

through this bond, attitudes are shaped and values are created. From a similar perspective, Suárez and Vélez (2016) refer that it is a way of organizing behaviors to relate to other people and influence those from a certain perspective. Following Meza and Páez (2016), it is a reciprocal influence in which both the individual and other people interact, change, or modify the behavior.

Therefore, the educational context will give the opportunity to discern whether the education received will help the adolescent to adapt to the social environment, or whether the adolescent will have to make some changes in the behavior. During this period, ranging from childhood to adolescence, people experience different trends in relationships that lead to aggressive, assertive, and passive styles. These variations depend on the family nucleus and its composition. For Ortiz et al. (2018) coexistence allows the development of empathy in which attachment, affective reciprocity and the construction of solid moral criteria are involved.

Given that the gender perspective is turned toward people who show different circumstances, it can be understood that there is a social biodiversity, where there is a sexual difference and social representations built around it. In this sense, Solis (2016) states that:

> Gender perspective is a critical, explanatory, and alternative vision of what happens in the gender, allowing to analyze the deep and complex causes of such oppression and of the historical processes that cause and reproduce it. (pp.101-102)

2. Methodology

2.1. Design

This research is based on a quantitative approach; descriptive and cross-sectional design. The quantitative method was used to collect the information, based on numerical quantification and statistical analysis (Cabezas et al., 2018). The description made it possible to directly demonstrate reality and identify the factors that influenced the gender perspective in an educational environment. The research was cross-sectional as reality was known in a given space and time (Hernández et al., 2014).

2.2. Population and sample

The population consisted of 764 students from the Amelia Gallegos Díaz School, of whom 510 (66,75%) were female women and 254 (33,25%) were men; distributed in sections, grades, ages and sex. The sample was structured by 263 students of 8°, 9° and 10° of Elementary (between 12 and 14 years of old) and 1°, 2° and 3° of High School. According to the level of education, 40.7% were students of Elementary and 59.3% of High School. Proportional stratified random sampling was applied as the population was not homogeneous (Gamboa, 2017), and elements were selected from each subgroup. A simple random sampling by sex, grade and section was applied and the random number table was used to select each of the participants.

2.3. Instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect the information. It was adapted to gender equality from the scale of attitudes developed by García et al. (2010), and was composed of 41 closed questions, with four answer options (never, sometimes, almost always and always). Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient using SPSS statistical software version 21. The result was 0.801 (reliable).

The instrument was organized according to the indicators of the variables: gender perspective (stereotypes, discrimination, violence and sex) and social interaction (equity and equality). Items 1-9: stereotypes, addresses generalized behaviors of men and women; items 10-16: discrimination, describes various situations in which people feel excluded from their gender; items 17-22: violence, includes questions related

to aggression, disorder, infidelity; items 23-31: sex, raises situations in the conceptions of being men and being women; items 31-36: equity, includes questions about opportunities for men and women; items 37-42: equality, indicates various situations in school settings.

2.4. Procedure

Initially, procedures were presented to the authority of the Educational District and the institution for their proper authorization, and the objectives of the investigation were communicated. Prior to the application of the instrument, parental acceptance and the willingness of the participants were obtained. The instrument was applied in the third part of the school year 2019-2020, during academic hours. Finally, the data provided by those involved were statistically analyzed.

2.5. Data analysis

To analyze the information descriptive statistics were used such as averages, percentages, and the elaboration of tables and inferential statistics as Spearman's correlation analysis, based on the values obtained from the responses for each of the indicators, dimensions and variables.

3. Results

Table 1 presents the cut-off points used to determine the students' attitude toward gender equality (sexist, adaptive, or equal) to evaluate the gender perspective in the social interaction of adolescents in school settings, depending on the variables of the research.

Table 1. Overall results

	No items	Empirical scores		Cutpoints		
		V. Scale	Median	Sexist	Adaptive	Equal
Stereotype	9 (1-9)	From 9 to 36 points	18	≤ 18	19- 28	≥ 29
Discrimination	7 (10-16)	From 7 to 28 points	14	≤ 14	15-22	≥ 23
Violence	6 (17-22)	From 6 to 24 points From 8 to 32 points	12	≤ 12	13-19	≥ 20
Sex	8 (23-30)		16	≤ 16	17- 25	≥ 25
Equity	5 (31-35)	From 5 to 20 points From 6 to 24 points	10	≤ 10	11-15	≥ 16
Equality	6 (36-41)		12	≤ 12	13-19	≥ 20
Global scale	41 (01-41)	From 41 to 164 points	82	≤ 82	83-123	≥ 124

Source: García-Pérez et al. (2010).

According to García-Pérez et al. (2010) sexist attitudes include analyzing the competitive views between men and women, as well as unconscious actions of gender-related behaviors and social models, where men predominate over women. Adaptive behavior involves exercising

actions based on a socially appropriate behavior perspective that, even though it shows differences and inequalities, it also shows uncertainty in the assessment of some stereotypes. The egalitarian attitude assumes the existence of inequality and positively weights the behaviors of men and women from a vision with equity.

Table 3 shows the behavior of the different indicators in relation to the cut-off points set out in Table 2. In correspondence with the stereotype, an adaptive attitude can be seen in women and men. It also occurs with discrimination, violence, sex, equity and equality, where the average values for both genders express an adaptive attitude toward gender equality. The perspective of the participants in the study based on the cut-off points shows that women adopt adaptive (86,2%), egalitarian (13,3%) and sexist (0,5%) attitudes; while men manifest adaptive (85,9%) and egalitarian (14,1%) attitudes. Students' opinions are approaching levels toward adaptive attitudes (Figure 1).

Table 2. Overall results based on gender

| | Attitude Results of obtained by students based on gender | | | |
| | Mean | | D.T. | |
	H	V	H	V
Global (42 items)	110,57	110,17	10,658	11,022
Stereotypes	27,96	26,47	4,108	4,525
Discrimination	18,66	19,39	3,664	2,915
Violence	15,88	17,16	2,605	3,004
Sex	19,55	19,83	3,100	3,190
Equity	12,62	12,05	2,247	2,705
Equality	15,91	15,28	2,535	3,434

Source: own elaboration

Figure 1.Perspective of students' attitudes
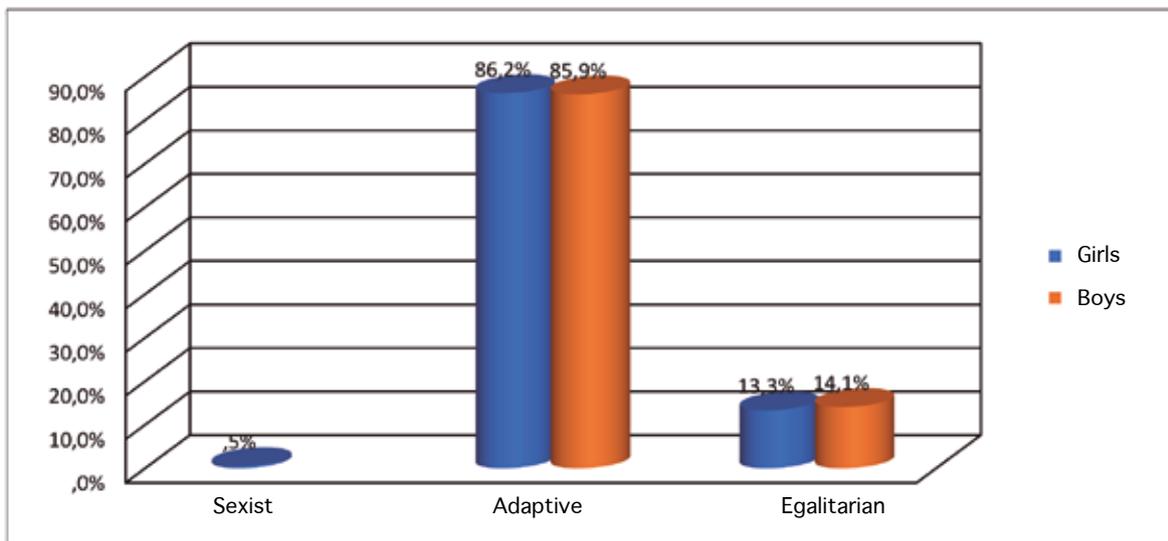
Source: own elaboration

Table 3 shows the results of Spearman's non-parametric correlation analysis There is a highly significant correlation between gender perspective and social interaction at a significance level of 0.01. This explains that both variables are highly associated; therefore, the results in gender indicators show an adaptive attitude that directly affects the treatment of equality and equity in the social interaction of students.

Table 3. Spearman's non-parametric interaction

			Gender Perspective	Social Interaction
rho de Spearman's	Gender perspective	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,370[**]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,000
		N	259	259
	Social Interaction	Correlation coefficient	,370[**]	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	.
		N	259	259

** Correlation is significant at level 0.01 (2-tailed).
Source: Own elaboration.

4. Discussion

The research led to a structural analysis from the diversity of characteristics that can be generated by a representative sample of students. There was a marked difference in the gender perspective with regard to sex. The information made it possible to construct an analysis of the indicators of the variables:

Stereotype: Students maintain a high perspective with a tendency to moderate on stereotypes about generalizations and beliefs; this is understandable because during adolescence a more precise knowledge of these aspects is gradually acquired. In this regard, Andrade-Zurita et al. (2017) affirm that these social practices, models exercised, ideas created, speeches and cultural representations are accepted in morality and ethics by communities, and are simultaneously promoted and reproduced by school institutions.

Discrimination: Stereotypes are imposed; they arise when gender differences become unequal. However, in the results, students agree to have homosexual friends, which is manifested by a degree of acceptance toward equality, but it dissociates itself into activities that are considered for women (tasks of care), which allows to infer that there is a high perception in the established stereotype roles for men, and it is moderate for the behavior that is appropriate for women. In this regard, Andrade-Zurita et al. (2017), refer that there are students´ assessments of the social behavior represented by women or men; and that these relate sociocultural discrimination to the gender perspective. For Silva-Diverio (2016), adolescents interconnect and support in activities related to their gender. In the case of women, attitudes related to caring for people, understanding and feelings are evident; while men stand out in the ability to act with physical strength, measure superiority of one with the other and show their manly appearance.

Violence: The information showed a clearly sexist attitude and socially influenced by stereotypes that abound in considering the social subjection of men to women. Women's vulnerability is accepted, a belief shared by the same women sample. De la Osa et al. (2013) reported that adolescents, in a significant number, are tolerant and disagree with violent actions; however, there

are moments when they use aggressive responses based on the role they play as men. Therefore, the way in which aggression against women is carried out should be avoided, and as mentioned by Jiménez and Estévez (2017) students should know that "gender equality promotes development in societies (p. 254).

Gender: Adolescents maintain a sexist perspective to the female and male figure in society, persisting the position of vulnerability towards women. It is observed that sexist and adaptive positions are related to the social and stereotyped character, given the indicators involved in this dimension which are acquired in a process in which adolescents integrate culture, social environment, family group and school. Segato (2016) states that with age, the marked differences in behavior between men and women are increasing and have a negative impact on their interrelationships; therefore, the population must be educated not only by explicit measures, but also by indirect measures that foster positive values and attitudes in discrimination behaviors, to make them visible and to eliminate them.

Equity: Equity is overlooked; a sexist overvaluation is observed against this indicator. However, students are more sensitive about women being academically superior to men and, in the sport and social fields students consider that there is equality in both genders. In this regard, Ruiz-Ramírez and Ayala-Carrillo (2016) explain the importance of raising awareness about gender equity to transform the way of seeing the roles that women and men play in social and economic development.

Equality: Adolescents have accepted that there are other forms of masculinity and femininity and that they can live together in educational environments on equal terms, but there was a tendency to assume that there is no equality in certain stereotyped activities of both men and women. In this regard, Villegas (2018) demonstrated that there is marked inequality between women in relation to men in some areas. Vega et al. (2019) affirm that balanced and productive development requires actions that promote equality between men and women, as well as the creation of policies that regulate and promote equitable participation with a view to fostering inclusive and respectful education for the other. Adolescents are more considered when it comes to equality, this helps to "reduce gender gaps in opportunities and rights" (UNESCO, 2015, p.14).

According to the defined cut-off points, the sample showed adaptive perspectives that directly affect equality and equity in the social interaction of students. The correlation analysis showed a high significance level between the variables.

5. Conclusions

The gender perspective of today's adolescents has changed considerably compared to 20 years ago. Even though archaic attitudes like machismo and homophobia continue in Ecuador, trends have varied in favor of gender equality and conditions.

In reference to factors affecting the gender perspective of adolescents for the social development in Elementary and High school, it is inferred that social, religious, ideological, political, historical, economic and cultural levels prevail in stereotypes, discrimination, violence and sex.

Study participants with respect to adaptive attitudes showed that they have adapted to the situations; most have done so because they believe in equality of opportunities. However, there is still a low percentage remaining that holds firm to the sexist ideas that have been taught at home.

It was evident that students understand that women are a fundamental and active part of society, not only as a mother but also as a professional who helps to improve the productivity of the country; however, there are trends to place them in the conduction of domestic tasks.

Social stereotypes were related to the fact that men represent the strong gender and lead group activities, and it is very natural that parents give them more permission and freedom to do more things. The results also show the tendency to

believe that they are more capable of performing technical and mechanical tasks; they are responsible for supporting the family economically; and that the president of the country must be a man. Women are socially considered better students and more physically vulnerable than men.

In general, some of the attitude of young people to new circumstances is marked by the education they receive at home; there is a condition of stigmatizing the unknown, but these barriers have been decreasing as new technologies allow people to appreciate and value similar situations that occur in other countries. Similarly, women have gained opportunities in all social spaces managing to be equal, where gender does not define the individual capacity of people.

The analysis carried out in this research reaffirms the need to propose actions focused on equality policies, reinforced with activities that sensitize on these topics from the adaptive profile of the student. It is necessary to change, modify and suppress gender-sensitive social attitudes and behaviors related to the private sphere and care tasks. On the other hand, it is recommended to avoid the formation of scenarios where gender-based violence is allowed, by focusing on formative activities that seek social coexistence and peace.

It is necessary that parents and family members address issues that relate to gender as a social condition but from a reflective and tolerant point of view, to avoid the exclusion or discrimination of young people who do not identify themselves with their sex. Teachers should be trained so that they can clarify questions that students formulate, so that there is no misconception or misinformation that would generate doubts and confusion. Strategies should be implemented to develop an educational process from co-education, based on values such as tolerance, acceptance of new ways of expressing gender, harmonious coexistence, diversity, inclusion, plurality and autonomy.

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