

ENSURING GENDER EQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION: YOUTH INITIATIVES AND ROLES IN GENDER EQUALITY

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15460109>

Abdusamiyev Dilmurod Abdug'ani ogli

Associate Professor, Turan International University

PhD in Pedagogy Email: abdujamiyev1993@bk.ru

Tel: +(94) 152 58 68

Nazirbek Azimjanov

Lecturer, Turan International University PhD

Maxmudov Nurillo Normirza ogli

Associate Professor, PhD in Pedagogy

Sultonov Sardorbek Nu'monjon ogli

Master's student, Turan International University

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5990-625X>

Email: sardorsultonov20010704@gmail.com

Tel: 93-642-33-12

Abstract: *This study explores the issue of ensuring gender equality in higher education and the initiatives and roles of youth in promoting gender equality. It analyzes young people's awareness, practical activities, existing problems, and solutions related to gender equality. The research findings show a generally positive attitude among youth towards gender equality, although stereotypes and gender imbalances still persist. The study provides practical recommendations to strengthen gender equality in educational institutions. It also emphasizes the presence of youth activism and initiatives in gender issues, highlighting the need for systematic support. Based on the research results, practical proposals to enhance gender equality and youth engagement in higher education institutions were developed.*

Keywords: *Higher education, Gender equality, Youth initiatives, Gender stereotypes, Education policy, Student activism, Equal opportunities, Gender culture in society*

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the education system is not only responsible for knowledge dissemination but also plays a crucial role in establishing principles of social justice and equality. Higher education institutions, in particular, play an unparalleled role in ensuring gender equality in modern society. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, opportunities, and responsibilities of men and women in education, work, and social life.

Due to ongoing reforms in Uzbekistan, attention to gender issues has increased significantly. Specifically, initiatives aimed at increasing female participation, engagement,

and leadership potential in higher education are growing. Youth play a pivotal role in this process — they are active participants in strengthening gender balance, overcoming stereotypes, and promoting the idea of equality.

This study examines youth initiatives in ensuring gender equality, including clubs, events, and social projects they organize, and their positive contributions to university life.

Currently, ensuring gender equality is one of the priority areas in Uzbekistan's education policy. Particularly in higher education, reforms, youth activism, and increased focus on gender issues are noticeable. Youth represent a key social group promoting gender equality, not only as students but also as activists, innovators, and initiative takers in this field.

METHODS

This research employed a mixed-methods approach to study the status of gender equality in higher education institutions and analyze youth engagement and initiatives in this process. The research was based on the following methods:

1. Analytical-methodological approach

Legal frameworks, national and international regulations, and recommendations from organizations such as UNESCO, UN Women, and OECD were reviewed, including:

- Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- Law “On guarantees of equal rights and opportunities for women and men”
- National Gender Equality Strategy until 2030
- Normative documents from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Innovation of Uzbekistan

2. Survey method

A questionnaire was conducted among 200 students (100 females, 100 males) from various universities in Uzbekistan to assess attitudes toward gender equality, participation levels, and personal initiatives. The survey included questions on:

- Rating the gender equality level at their institution
- Awareness of their rights and opportunities
- Experiences with gender stereotypes or discrimination
- Levels of activism (participation in clubs, events)

3. Interviews

Individual and group interviews were held with students, youth leaders, club heads, and representatives of youth organizations such as the “Youth Union,” “Female Students Council,” and “Gender Equality Center.” Semi-structured interviews covered topics like:

- Personal initiatives on gender equality
- Gender environment and opportunities at universities
- Attitudes and psychological support from faculty
- Challenges and suggestions for ensuring gender equality

4. Observation

Activities of university “Gender Centers,” “Youth Leadership Clubs,” and “Female Students Councils” were observed and analyzed. Events such as “Girls Leadership School” trainings, “Equal Opportunities – Equal Society” projects, and gender balance discussions were directly monitored.

5. Content analysis

Gender-related materials and news posted on social media platforms (Telegram, Instagram), mass media, and official university websites were analyzed focusing on:

- Number and themes of organized events
- Youth participation and roles
- Sustainability and continuity of initiatives
- Addressed issues and proposals

6. Comparative method

A comparative analysis was conducted between Uzbekistan and selected countries (USA, Sweden, Malaysia, Kazakhstan) to highlight strengths and unresolved challenges in Uzbekistan’s higher education gender equality efforts.

The methodological approach was based on:

- Theoretical frameworks
- Empirical evidence
- Youth’s own perspectives and participation
- Integration of local and global experiences

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study identified several key areas regarding gender equality and youth roles in higher education:

1. General awareness but limited depth

While youth generally understand the concept of gender equality, deeper knowledge and conscious attitudes are insufficient. Many students perceive gender equality mainly as a women’s rights issue, indicating a lack of comprehensive educational efforts.

2. Variable youth activism

Some universities have active female student councils, gender centers, and open discussions, but such activities are unevenly distributed across institutions. Youth initiatives often depend on internal environment and administrative support.

3. Higher female, lower male participation

Female students are more attentive and active in gender-related seminars, trainings, and projects, whereas male students tend to regard these topics as “women’s issues,” limiting their involvement. This suggests gender equality is not yet recognized as a societal priority by all.

4. Persistent gender stereotypes

Stereotypes, especially in technical, engineering, and IT fields favoring males, still exist. Despite female students’ activity, their opinions are sometimes undervalued, and non-traditional fields remain challenging for them.

5. Initiatives exist but lack systematization

Student initiatives on gender equality—clubs, projects, creative outputs—are present but often episodic rather than systematic. Support from institutional resources, mentors, and permanent platforms is insufficient.

6. Incomplete institutional integration

Though gender equality principles exist officially, their consistent application in university life is lacking. This leads to apathy or misunderstandings among students regarding gender issues.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Gender equality remains a significant issue in higher education institutions. While youth have a general understanding, full implementation is lacking. Female students are more engaged, whereas male involvement is limited. Gender stereotypes persist in certain fields, hindering full equality. Although student initiatives exist, they require more systematic and continuous support. Gender issues are often addressed formally but need stronger practical attention.

Recommendations

- Integrate gender equality topics more broadly into the curriculum through special courses or seminars.
- Support youth initiatives by enhancing the activities of student clubs and projects and providing more opportunities.
- Increase efforts to overcome gender stereotypes, encouraging female participation in male-dominated fields and promoting male engagement in gender equality.
- Raise awareness among university leadership and faculty to support and encourage students' gender equality activities.

REFERENCES:

1. UNESCO. Gender Equality and Education: Insights from Global Research. Paris: UNESCO Publishing, 2019.
2. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Gender Equality in Education: Policy and Practice. New York: UNDP, 2020.
3. World Bank. Gender and Education: Gender Equality in Education and Training. Washington, D.C., 2018.
4. Stromquist, Nelly P. Gender Equality in Education: The Role of Schools and Teachers. New York: Routledge, 2015.
5. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. The Global Education Monitoring Report 2023: Gender Report.

6. Kabeer, Naila. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis. Development in Practice, 2016.
7. Local sources on higher education and gender equality in Uzbekistan: Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan, National Gender Equality Strategy documents (if available).