Gender Representation in Foreign Language Textbooks: Trends, Gaps, and Implications for Multilingual Teaching

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Abstract
This study offers a bibliometric analysis of research on gender representation in foreign language textbooks from 2000 to 2024, with a focus on its implications for multilingual teaching. Drawing on 713 articles indexed in Scopus and analyzed using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, the results reveal significant growth in scholarly output, especially in developed countries such as the United States, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Germany. The field remains dominated by traditional themes of gender bias and stereotypes, while emerging issues like intersectionality and gender-neutral language receive less attention. Notable geographic and thematic gaps persist, with minimal research originating from Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia. These findings highlight the importance of inclusive, context-sensitive research and greater international collaboration to address global disparities. The study underscores the need for curriculum developers and policymakers to prioritize gender-equitable and culturally relevant textbooks, particularly in multilingual educational settings. Future research should explore intersectional identities and apply diverse methodologies to advance gender equity in educational materials worldwide.
Key words: gender representation, foreign language textbooks, bibliometric analysis, multilingual teaching, gender bias

Introduction

Foreign language textbooks occupy a central role in the modern educational landscape, particularly in an era characterized by accelerating globalization and increased cross-cultural mobility (Wang, 2017; Qi, 2024). Beyond functioning merely as tools for language instruction, these textbooks serve as windows through which students are introduced to a broad spectrum of social, cultural, and political values (Sobkowiak, 2015). The content embedded in such materials, therefore, not only shapes students' linguistic competencies but also profoundly influences their social identities, particularly in terms of their perceptions of gender roles (Hua, 2019; Lu et al., 2022). As highlighted by Sunderland (2000) and Lee & Collins (2010), foreign language textbooks operate as potent mediums in the process of gender socialization, with the representations of male and female roles potentially impacting how students conceptualize gender relations within society.

Scholarly attention to the representation of gender in textbooks has paralleled a growing global awareness of the importance of gender equality in education (Asriyama & Sari, 2022; Hussain et al., 2023; Nurjanah et al., 2024; Santika, 2023). Previous research consistently demonstrates that textbooks are often imbued with social biases, most notably by depicting women in passive or domestic roles and positioning men in public or professional spheres (Porreca, 1984; Blumberg, 2007). Such patterns of gender bias are not restricted to any single national or cultural context; instead, they manifest as a pervasive global phenomenon, as evidenced by Brugeilles & Cromer (2009). Textbooks that perpetuate gender-biased representations risk reinforcing traditional societal stereotypes, shaping students' career aspirations, attitudes toward gender equality, and patterns of interpersonal interaction (Blumberg, 2007; Brusokaite, 2013). Consequently, textbooks become not only repositories of

pedagogical content but also ideological instruments capable of molding students' social and gender values. This underscores the necessity, as emphasized by Pavlenko (2004) and Norton & Pavlenko (2004), for more in-depth and nuanced analyses of gender representation in foreign language textbooks, in order to identify and address these biases and foster a more inclusive learning environment.

The rise of feminist theory and the advancement of gender studies have further intensified scholarly scrutiny of gender inequality across diverse sectors, including education (Butler, 1990; Norton & Pavlenko, 2004). In this evolving context, textbooks are increasingly viewed not only as educational resources but also as vehicles for disseminating gender ideologies and social norms. Achieving balanced and equitable gender representation in educational materials is crucial for enabling students to develop a more accurate and critical understanding of social realities. As Lee and Collins (2010) assert, "the analysis of gender representation in foreign language textbooks is relevant and significant at a global level, since textbooks are employed across national and cultural boundaries." The persistence of gender bias across diverse cultural settings underscores the universal nature of the issue. This highlights the urgent need for further research, particularly in regions and countries where such inquiries remain underdeveloped. Cross-cultural analysis is therefore essential, as it enables the identification of both shared patterns and context-specific factors shaping gender representation in textbooks around the world.

A systematic and global approach to mapping this research field can be achieved through the use of bibliometric analysis. This methodology provides a robust framework for evaluating research trends, patterns of author and institutional collaboration, and dominant topics within the literature. By leveraging tools such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix, it is possible to uncover the trajectory and landscape of studies on gender representation in foreign language textbooks across diverse contexts. Equally important, bibliometric analysis allows for the identification of critical gaps in the literature and the formulation of clear directions for future research.

In multilingual and multicultural educational settings, these issues become even more pronounced, as textbooks are often used by students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Understanding trends and gaps in gender representation is essential for teachers and curriculum developers aiming to create inclusive, equitable learning environments in multilingual classrooms. By highlighting these challenges and opportunities, this study seeks to inform both research and classroom practice, ultimately supporting efforts to eliminate gender bias and promote social justice through language education.

Given the significance of these issues, this study aims to address several core questions: How have global research trends on gender representation in foreign language textbooks evolved? Which countries and institutions have emerged as the most influential contributors? What are the dominant topics and themes in the literature on gender roles in textbooks? What persistent challenges exist in the representation of gender across different contexts? Moreover, crucially, what are the significant research gaps that require further investigation? In exploring these questions, this study aims to generate new insights into the identification and mitigation of gender bias in textbooks, with the broader goal of advancing more equitable and high-quality educational environments worldwide.

Literature Review

Previous Research on Gender in Textbooks

The examination of gender representation in textbooks, particularly in foreign language education, has emerged as a significant focus within academic discourse. Numerous studies have explored not only how male and female characters are

depicted in textbooks, but also how these portrayals shape students' perceptions and cognitive frameworks regarding gender roles. A recurring pattern identified across diverse contexts is the dominance of male figures in active and authoritative roles, whereas female figures are often relegated to passive or domestic positions. Such findings, as highlighted by Blumberg (2007), García et al. (2020), and Lee & Collins (2010), reveal that the imbalance in both visual and textual representation within textbooks continues to reinforce existing social norms and influences students' internalization of gender roles.

Literature from Southeast Asia reveals complex patterns of gender representation in both educational and literary texts. For example, Afiah et al. (2022) found that women in *Burmese Days* are depicted as passive and subordinate, reinforcing their dependence on male characters. Similarly, research on classic literature such as *Little Women* highlights the presence of the Cinderella Complex, with female characters unconsciously exhibiting dependency on men (Asriyanti et al., 2022). In contrast, Lestari et al. (2025) show that while traditional stereotypes persist, there are also conscious efforts by characters to challenge these norms and reflect broader values of gender equality. Collectively, these studies demonstrate both the persistence of traditional gender roles and the emergence of more equitable representations in contemporary and classic texts from the region.

International research has further documented the consistency of these stereotypes across different regions. For example, studies by Islam and Asadullah (2018) and Gharbavi (2012) show that textbooks in Asia and Africa frequently depict men in public and professional spheres, while women are more commonly shown in subordinate or domestic contexts. Despite some improvements in certain countries, significant gender disparities remain prevalent in foreign language textbooks worldwide, particularly at the primary and secondary school levels.

Importantly, research by Sovic (2015) and Ariyanto (2018) emphasizes that gender bias is not merely about the numerical distribution of male and female characters, but more critically about the types of roles assigned to them. Men are still typically portrayed as leaders or professionals, whereas women are more often cast in nurturing or objectified roles. These persistent patterns in textbook content serve to perpetuate conventional social norms and shape students' beliefs about acceptable roles for each gender.

In addition to examining gender representation, it is also essential to consider the broader suitability and appropriacy of learning materials, as highlighted by Arafah et al. (2023) and Kuswanty et al. (2023), who emphasize that the evaluation of materials is central to their effectiveness in supporting language learning and should extend beyond linguistic accuracy to include cultural and ideological dimensions such as the presence of gender bias.

Previous Research Findings into Gender Bias

Gender bias in textbooks can manifest in various ways, from disproportionate representation to the reinforcement of stereotypical roles. A substantial body of research demonstrates that, even after attempts to revise and update educational materials, gender stereotypes often remain embedded in textbooks (Sunderland, 2000). Female representation is frequently restricted, and access to leadership or influential positions is more commonly attributed to male characters, who are typically depicted as decision-makers or professionals.

From a theoretical perspective, Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of social representation highlights the significant impact of language and imagery in textbooks on the construction of social meanings, including gender stereotypes. These imbalanced portrayals serve to solidify notions that public and professional domains are more

appropriate for men, while women are relegated to domestic or caregiving roles. Furthermore, Judith Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity is highly relevant, positing that gender identities are constituted through repeated social actions—such as the persistent ways gender is depicted in educational texts.

The Role of Bibliometric Analysis in Gender and Textbook Studies

Given the global scope and evolving nature of research on gender representation in textbooks, bibliometric analysis has become an indispensable methodological tool. As a quantitative approach, bibliometrics enables the systematic mapping of academic literature using indicators such as publication volume, citation counts, and patterns of collaboration among scholars and institutions. This method not only reveals research trends and geographical concentrations but also uncovers thematic gaps and emerging areas of inquiry. Among the various bibliometric indicators, the H-index (Hirsch, 2005) is particularly useful for assessing both productivity and impact within the scholarly community.

Through bibliometric techniques, it becomes possible to trace the development of specific research topics, explore relationships across studies, and identify particularly active regions—or, conversely, underrepresented areas—in gender and textbook research. For example, Zyoud et al. (2023) demonstrate that bibliometric analysis can yield insights not readily observable through traditional literature reviews, thus enhancing our understanding of the field's global dynamics. Likewise, Zhang et al. (2020) employed bibliometric methods to identify global trends in gender studies within education, highlighting both established and underexplored themes, as well as gaps across countries and regions.

By leveraging bibliometric analysis, scholars can gain a more nuanced and comprehensive picture of how gender representation in textbooks is researched, where attention is concentrated, and what critical issues still require exploration. This approach is particularly relevant for guiding future research agendas and informing efforts to address persistent gender biases in educational materials worldwide.

Method

This study adopts a bibliometric approach to quantitatively analyze the literature on gender representation in foreign language textbooks. Bibliometric methods are well-suited for evaluating scientific publications using quantitative indicators such as publication count, citation analysis, and patterns of author and institutional collaboration (Donthu et al., 2021; Taqdir, 2024). This methodology enables the identification of global trends and gaps in the literature, providing valuable insights into the development of gender studies in foreign language education over time. It also resonates with broader discussions of digital culture literacy, where Generation Z learners are positioned not only as readers but also as producers and publishers of texts in digital spaces (Arafah et al., 2023), underscoring the importance of situating textbook analysis within the wider landscape of contemporary literacy practices. Similar bibliometric rigor has also been applied in scientometric mapping of Japanese language teaching and learning research, which identified patterns, hotspots, and emerging frontiers in the field (Taqdir, et al. 2025).

To ensure scientific rigor, the article selection process follows explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria as outlined in the PRISMA flow diagram (Moher et al., 2009; Taqdir, 2025). This approach has been shown to enhance reliability and transparency in literature mapping, as evidenced in systematic and bibliometric reviews on language textbooks.

To achieve a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the literature, this study integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component

involves measuring publication output, citation frequency, and collaboration networks to provide an objective overview of research activities worldwide. Temporal trends, geographical distribution, and individual researcher contributions are analyzed quantitatively. In parallel, a qualitative approach is employed to examine the content of the literature through keyword analysis, facilitating the identification of dominant themes, conceptual patterns, and the qualitative nuances of gender representation and stereotypes in textbooks across various contexts.

Article Selection Process

The article selection process followed explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, as outlined in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1). The initial search retrieved 1,539 articles from the Scopus database using the keywords "Gender AND Textbook." Inclusion criteria were as follows: (1) peer-reviewed journal articles; (2) publication years from January 2000 to 2024; (3) subject areas limited to Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities; and (4) non-duplicate records. Exclusion criteria eliminated non-journal publications (e.g., conference papers, books, technical reports), studies not directly addressing gender, and articles employing bibliometric, systematic, or meta-analytic methodologies inconsistent with the study's focus on content analysis.

The screening process began with the removal of 810 articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria. The remaining 729 articles were assessed for eligibility, and 16 were excluded due to their methodological focus. Ultimately, 713 articles were included for further bibliometric and qualitative analysis. This selection process ensured a high level of scientific rigor and relevance to the study's aims.

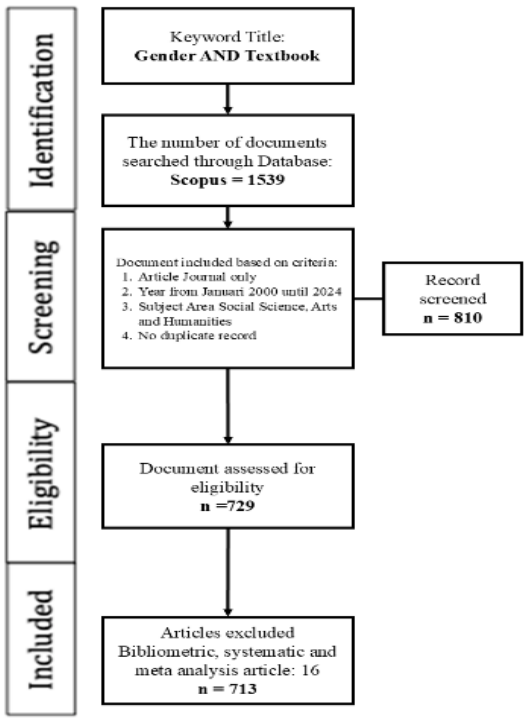


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the article selection process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using two primary tools: VOSviewer and Bibliometrix. VOSviewer was utilized to map collaboration networks among authors and institutions, as well as to analyze keyword co-occurrence for the identification of dominant themes (van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Bibliometrix, an R-based package, facilitated performance analysis, including publication output per author, citation metrics, and longitudinal trends in the research topic (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Furthermore, Bibliometrix enabled regional analysis to identify the most active research areas. By integrating both tools, the study mapped global research trends, pinpointed influential contributors, and revealed gaps in the literature to inform future research directions.

Finding

Annual Growth Trends

As depicted in Figure 2, the scientific production on gender representation in foreign language textbooks has shown a substantial upward trend over the past two decades. During the initial period from 2000 to 2011, the annual number of publications remained relatively low, with fewer than ten articles published each year. This suggests that scholarly attention to gender issues in textbooks was still in its early stages of development at that time.

Beginning in 2012, however, the number of publications began to rise more sharply, reflecting increased academic interest and broader discussions around gender equality in educational materials. The most significant surge occurred after 2017, with annual publication output reaching its peak in 2023 at nearly 80 articles. This dramatic growth coincides with a heightened global awareness of gender bias in education and a call for more inclusive teaching resources.

Although there was a slight decline in 2024, the overall volume of publications remains substantially higher than in the early 2000s, indicating that gender representation in textbooks remains a prominent and evolving field of academic inquiry. This trend highlights the increasing awareness of the necessity to thoroughly examine and address gender bias in educational content globally.

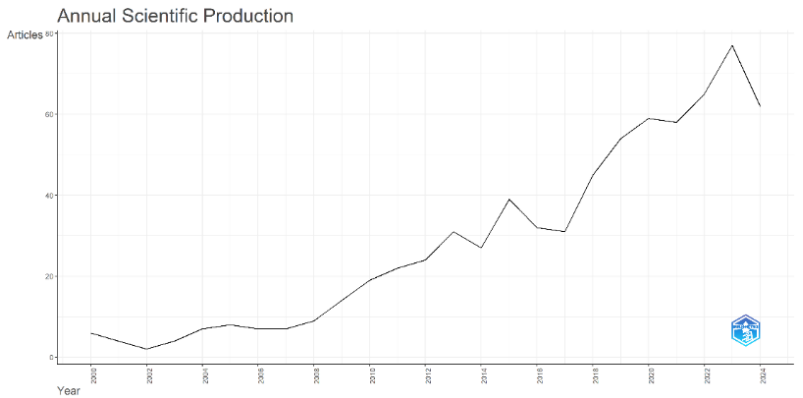


Figure 2. Annual scientific production

Most Cited Countries

Figure 3 presents the citation data for countries most actively contributing to research on gender representation in foreign language textbooks. The United States leads by a

considerable margin, with more than 2,200 citations, reflecting its dominant position and sustained research output in this field. Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Germany also feature prominently, each with several hundred citations, underlining their significant contributions to the academic discourse on gender and education.

Other countries such as Spain, Canada, Australia, Indonesia, Turkey, and Iran appear further down the list, indicating growing but comparatively modest levels of engagement. Notably, Indonesia has received 54 citations, while Turkey and Iran have each accumulated 36 citations. The predominance of Western and developed countries in citation counts highlights a global imbalance in both research production and impact, with many developing regions—including those in Africa and Latin America—still underrepresented.

This disparity underscores the need for increased support, international collaboration, and capacity-building to enhance gender-related research in less-represented countries. Addressing these gaps will be essential for achieving a more inclusive and globally representative understanding of gender issues in educational materials.

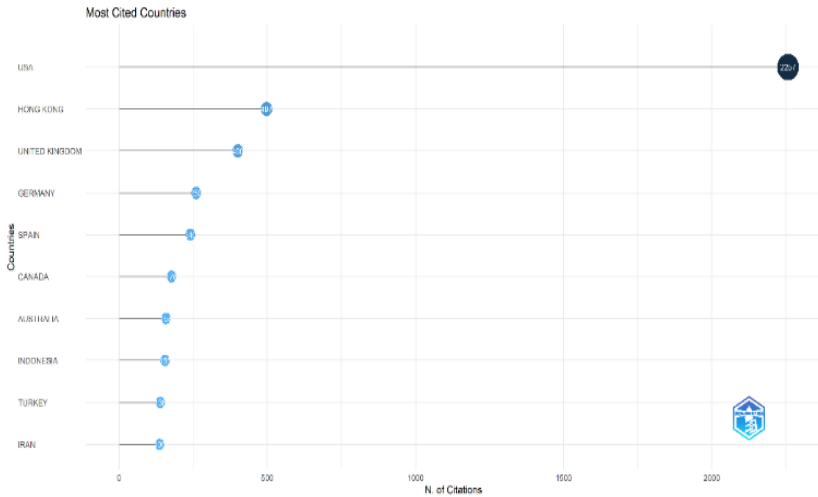


Figure 3. The most cited countries

Most Relevant Affiliations

Figure 4 highlights the most productive institutions in the field of gender representation in foreign language textbooks. Beijing Normal University stands out as the leading affiliation, having produced 14 articles on this topic. The University of California and Vanderbilt University closely follow, each contributing 13 articles. This intense research activity reflects these institutions' long-standing commitment to educational equity and their leadership in gender studies within the context of language teaching and learning.

Several other prominent universities, including Ajman University, Columbia University, Stanford University, University College London, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, also make significant contributions, with each institution publishing between seven and nine articles. The inclusion of universities from various regions—including Asia (e.g., Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia), Latin America (e.g., Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso), and the Middle East (e.g., Umm Al-Qura University)—signals a gradual but positive diversification of scholarly engagement in this area.

However, the overall pattern still indicates that the most substantial output comes from institutions in countries with established academic traditions, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. This further reinforces the necessity for expanded international collaboration and increased support for research institutions in less-represented regions, which is crucial for advancing a more globally balanced research landscape on gender and educational materials.

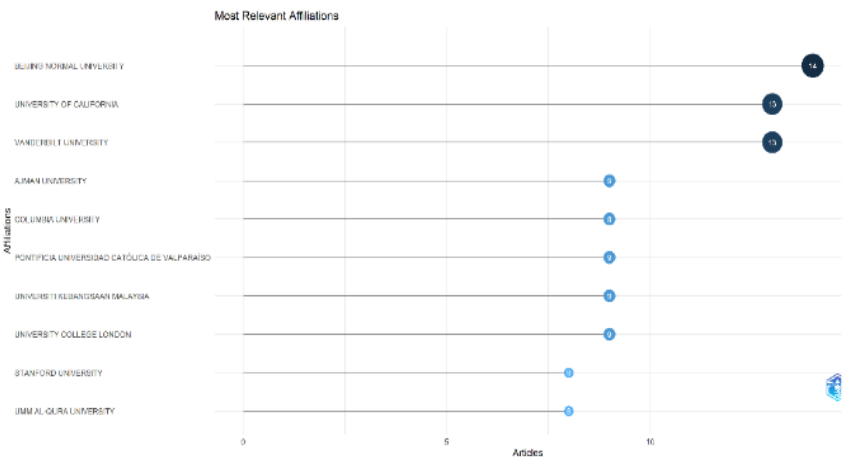


Figure 4. Most relevant affiliations

Collaboration Networks

The analysis of local author impact, as measured by the H-index (see Figure 5), reveals notable differences in scholarly productivity and influence within the field of gender representation in foreign language textbooks. Among the leading authors, Lee J.F.K. stands out with the highest H-index of 8, indicating a substantial number of publications that are frequently cited. This demonstrates Lee's significant influence, particularly in empirical research on gender bias in educational materials. Other prominent authors, such as Sunderland J. and Collins P., possess lower H-indices (both at 3), suggesting that while they have fewer publications, their works maintain sustained relevance and are consistently referenced by peers.

However, the H-index alone provides only a partial view of an author's academic contributions. To gain a deeper understanding, co-citation network analysis was performed, as illustrated in Figure 6. This network visually maps the intellectual connections between authors whose works are frequently cited together in the literature. Notably, Sunderland J. occupies a central position in the co-citation network, closely linked to major theorists such as Butler J. and Foucault M. This centrality highlights Sunderland's foundational role in shaping theoretical frameworks and critical approaches to gender representation in textbooks.

The network further reveals the distinction between empirical and theoretical contributions. While Lee J.F.K. (clustered in blue) is more closely associated with empirical researchers like Collins P. and Foroutan Y., Sunderland J. is interconnected with theorists who have significantly influenced the field of gender studies. This contrast suggests that Lee's impact lies in data-driven case studies and empirical analysis, whereas Sunderland's influence is primarily theoretical, contributing to broader academic discourse on gender and education.

By integrating H-index data with co-citation analysis, this study demonstrates that academic influence is multidimensional—balancing quantitative productivity with

qualitative theoretical relevance. While the H-index reflects citation frequency, the co-citation network underscores an author's intellectual significance and their place within the broader scholarly community. Ultimately, both productivity and theoretical contribution are crucial for advancing the field, with each author playing distinct but complementary roles.

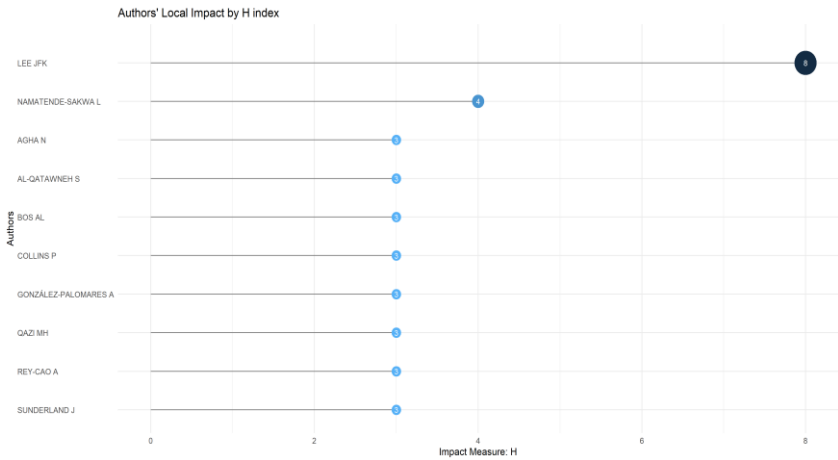


Figure 5. Authors' local impact by H-index

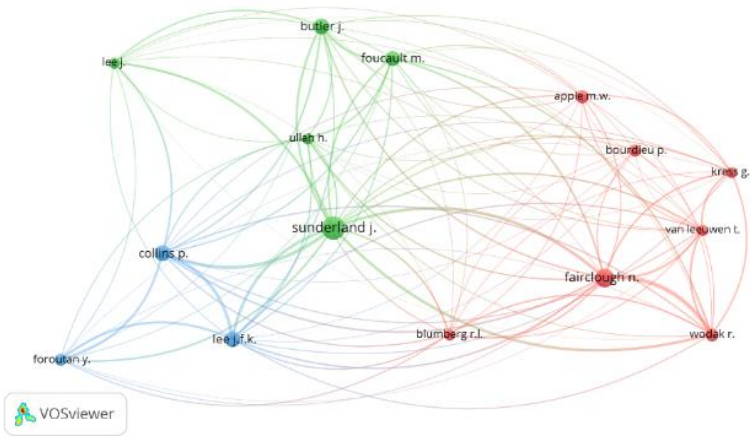


Figure 6. Co-citation network

Keyword Analysis

Figure 7 illustrates the most prominent keywords in research on gender representation in foreign language textbooks. Unsurprisingly, the terms "gender" and "textbooks" occupy central positions, reflecting their status as core topics in the field. Textbooks are widely recognized not only as educational resources but also as instruments that introduce and reinforce social norms, including gender roles, among students. As a result, the representation of gender in textbooks has become a focal point for academic inquiry.

Among the most frequently occurring keywords are “gender bias” and “gender stereotypes,” which signal that many studies have identified persistent inequalities in the portrayal of male and female characters. Research frequently finds that men are depicted in active, public, and professional roles, whereas women are often assigned domestic or passive roles. This trend, observed across multiple geographical contexts, highlights the global nature of gender bias in educational content.

The visualized network also shows that critical discourse analysis and content analysis are widely used methodological approaches to examine these patterns. These methods are essential for uncovering how traditional stereotypes are embedded in textbook narratives and for evaluating the impact on students’ perceptions of gender roles—particularly for girls, who may feel marginalized by such portrayals.

In addition to classic themes of gender bias, there has been growing attention to gender-neutral language. The emergence of keywords like “gender-neutral language,” “diversity,” and “multiculturalism” indicates an increasing scholarly interest in making educational materials more inclusive. Gender-neutral language aims to reduce implicit bias by using terms and expressions that do not favor a specific gender, supporting the broader goal of fostering equality and inclusivity in educational environments.

Finally, the increasing prominence of keywords related to “multicultural education” and “diversity” suggests a shift toward integrating both gender and cultural perspectives in textbook content. This reflects the evolving recognition that textbooks should not only ensure gender equality but also represent the diverse backgrounds and identities of all students. As the literature expands, research is increasingly focused on how textbooks can serve as vehicles for promoting both gender equity and cultural inclusion in classrooms worldwide.

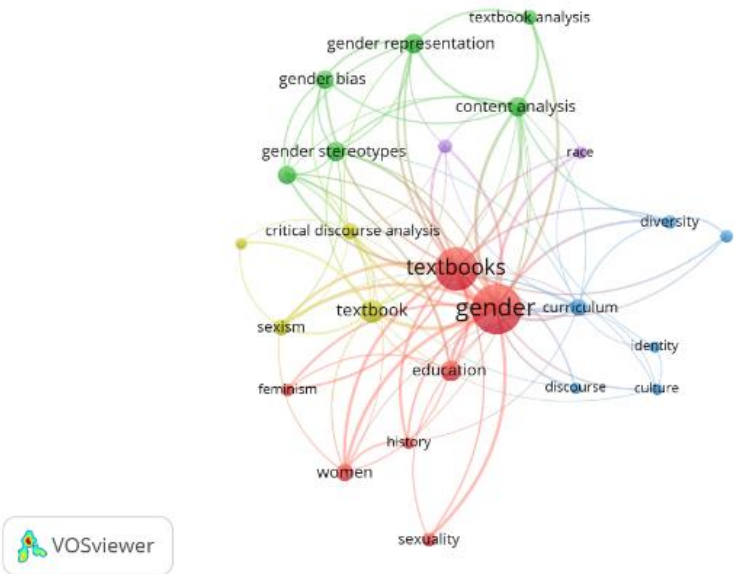


Figure 7. Keywords visualization

Discussion

The findings of this bibliometric analysis reveal a rapidly growing scholarly interest in gender representation in foreign language textbooks over the past two decades. This growth reflects increasing global awareness of gender equality in education, yet also

highlights persistent gaps in research distribution, thematic focus, and impact across regions.

First, the substantial rise in publication volume since 2012, with a peak in 2023, signals that gender issues in textbooks have become a mainstream concern in educational research. This trend corresponds to broader international movements toward gender equality and the integration of inclusive pedagogical practices. However, the uneven geographical distribution of research output and citations These approaches dominated by countries such as the United States, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Germany underscores enduring disparities. Many developing countries, including those in Africa, Latin America, and certain parts of Asia, remain underrepresented, both in terms of the number of publications and their citation impact. This gap may reflect differences in research infrastructure, academic resources, and policy attention, but it also highlights the need for increased international collaboration and targeted support to enhance research capacity in underrepresented contexts.

Institutional and author analysis further illustrate this imbalance. While a small number of universities and scholars drive the field, the co-citation network highlights the importance of both empirical and theoretical contributions. Authors like Lee J.F.K. play a leading role in empirical research, as evidenced by high H-index values and publication productivity. Meanwhile, figures such as Sunderland J., despite a lower H-index, occupy central positions in the intellectual landscape, influencing critical theory and conceptual frameworks for analyzing gender bias in textbooks. This interplay of productivity and theoretical impact underscores that advancing knowledge in this area necessitates both robust, data-driven inquiry and innovative theoretical development.

Keyword analysis reveals that the literature has primarily focused on traditional issues, such as gender bias and stereotypes using methods like content analysis and critical discourse analysis. These approaches have been instrumental in exposing the ways textbooks reinforce societal norms and marginalize female students. Similar dynamics are also evident in literary works, such as Helen Garner's Monkey Grip, where male domination is constructed through discourse that positions women as subordinate (Asri et al., 2023), Steinbeck's The Pearl, where the father figure embodies patriarchal authority (Sunyoto et al., 2022), and Sewell's Black Beauty, where human characters exercise domination over animals through cruelty and exploitation, reinforcing broader patterns of hierarchical power (Yudith et al., 2023). Such parallels highlight that gender hierarchies and unequal power relations are not confined to textbooks but are part of wider cultural narratives reproduced across diverse textual forms. Nevertheless, the emergence of new themes, such as gender-neutral language and multicultural education, indicates a shift toward more nuanced understandings of gender representation. This trend suggests that future research will need to address not only overt bias but also the subtle forms of exclusion embedded in language and culture. Moreover, the increasing focus on multiculturalism highlights the need to explore the intersections between gender and other social identities, as well as ensuring that textbooks are inclusive of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Despite these advances, several challenges remain. First, the persistence of gender bias in textbooks—even in recent publications—underscores the difficulty of effecting lasting change at the curriculum and policy levels. Second, the concentration of research in developed countries raises concerns about the global representativeness of current findings; voices and contexts from the Global South are often missing or marginalized. Third, methodological diversity, although increasing, remains limited, with a firm reliance on content analysis. Future studies could benefit from integrating classroom-based research, longitudinal studies, and participatory approaches involving teachers and students as co-researchers.

Finally, the implications of these findings are profound for policy and practice. Curriculum designers and educators must critically assess and select textbooks not only for their linguistic content but also for their capacity to foster gender equity and inclusion. At the same time, technological innovations such as artificial intelligence have been shown to enhance students' language learning outcomes, particularly in improving writing skills through automated feedback and reading practices (Kaharuddin et al., 2024). This highlights the need for textbook evaluation to be situated within broader educational developments that increasingly integrate digital tools alongside traditional materials. Policymakers should promote guidelines for textbook development that explicitly address gender and cultural diversity, ensuring that these aspects are adequately represented. Strengthening research collaboration across countries and regions will be essential for sharing best practices, building capacity, and ensuring that progress toward gender equality in education is truly global.

Importantly, in multilingual and multicultural educational settings, these findings become even more significant. Foreign language textbooks are often used by students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, making the issues of gender bias and cultural representation more complex and impactful. Teachers in multilingual classrooms must be especially vigilant in selecting and adapting materials to ensure that all students regardless of gender or cultural identity feel represented and included. As highlighted in studies of local cultural practices such as the Mowindahako ritual speeches, which transmit collective values and identity (Takwa, et al., 2025), sensitivity to cultural context is indispensable in the design and evaluation of textbooks. This perspective reinforces that inclusivity in educational materials must encompass both gender and cultural dimensions.

For curriculum developers and policymakers, the design and selection of textbooks for multilingual contexts should prioritize gender equity and cultural inclusivity. This not only enhances language learning but also fosters a classroom environment that values diversity and promotes social justice. The findings of this study underscore the need for teacher training and professional development programs that equip educators with the skills to critically evaluate textbooks for both gender and cultural content, as well as to facilitate classroom discussions about these issues.

Future research should further explore how gender representation in textbooks interacts with multilingual and multicultural classroom dynamics, examining, for example, how students from different backgrounds perceive and respond to gendered content, and how inclusive materials can support equitable outcomes in multilingual education settings.

In conclusion, while significant strides have been made in uncovering and challenging gender bias in textbooks, much work remains to be done—particularly in diversifying research perspectives, expanding methodological approaches, and ensuring that the benefits of inclusive educational materials reach all learners, regardless of geographical location.

Research Gaps

Despite significant advances in research on gender representation in foreign language textbooks, this bibliometric analysis reveals several notable gaps that warrant further investigation. Geographically, the literature remains heavily skewed toward contributions from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and Hong Kong. In contrast, countries from Africa, Latin America, and regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are severely underrepresented, despite the persistent relevance of gender equality issues in their educational systems. This lack of representation introduces a geographic bias, which can distort our understanding of how gender is constructed and perceived across diverse social and

cultural contexts. Without greater scholarly attention to these underrepresented regions, the global literature risks perpetuating narrow perspectives and incomplete generalizations about gender bias in textbooks. For instance, textbooks in developing nations may exhibit distinct patterns of gender representation, shaped by local social, linguistic, and cultural norms (Agni et al., 2020).

Thematically, the current research focus tends to revolve around traditional gender stereotypes—such as men in professional roles and women in domestic ones—while more complex topics, including intersectionality, gender-neutral language, and representations in multicultural contexts, remain underexplored (Ghajarieh et al., 2023). The lack of studies addressing intersectional identities and broader diversity limits our understanding of how gender interacts with race, class, culture, and other dimensions in educational materials. This bias in academic attention can be attributed to unequal access to resources, limited research funding, and restricted opportunities for international collaboration in less-developed contexts (Mutune et al., 2023).

Notably, there is also a significant gap in research exploring gender representation within multilingual and multicultural classrooms. Little is known about how gender roles and identities are constructed and negotiated in educational settings where multiple languages and cultures intersect. Addressing these gaps is crucial for constructing a more inclusive and globally relevant body of knowledge on gender representation in textbooks, and for informing best practices in multilingual language teaching.

Implications for Education and Policy

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. One critical issue is the regional imbalance in gender representation research, with many countries in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia still lacking substantive contributions. Policymakers and curriculum planners in these regions are encouraged to initiate and support research that evaluates existing educational materials, ensuring that textbooks reflect principles of equality and social justice. Additionally, with the increasing globalization of education, imported textbooks are often used without adequate adaptation to local contexts. The results of this analysis emphasize the need for context-sensitive curriculum development that promotes gender equity while respecting local cultural and social values.

From a curriculum development perspective, these findings suggest practical strategies, such as the intentional use of gender-neutral language, the avoidance of traditional gender stereotypes, and the balanced depiction of both men and women in various roles. Teachers, as the primary users of textbooks, play a key role in recognizing and addressing gender bias in classroom materials. Professional development programs should equip educators with the skills to critically assess learning materials and foster discussions about gender equality among students.

At the policy level, governments and educational authorities in underrepresented regions should allocate more resources for research and international collaboration. Establishing national guidelines and evaluation frameworks for textbook content can ensure that gender equality and cultural diversity are systematically addressed in educational reforms. Ultimately, bridging these research gaps and implementing the recommendations identified in this study will be instrumental in advancing gender equity in education and promoting more inclusive learning environments worldwide.

Furthermore, in multilingual and multicultural classroom settings, these implications become even more significant. Teachers and curriculum designers must be attentive to how textbooks address both gender and cultural diversity, ensuring that all students—regardless of language or cultural background—see themselves represented. Training programs should prepare educators to navigate the added complexity of fostering

gender equity in linguistically and culturally diverse learning environments, and policy frameworks should explicitly support the selection and adaptation of textbooks for use in multilingual education contexts.

Conclusion

This bibliometric study has mapped the global research landscape on gender representation in foreign language textbooks over the past two decades. The analysis reveals a substantial growth in scholarly interest, reflecting increased recognition of gender equality as a central concern in educational materials. However, the findings also highlight significant disparities, with research and citation activity concentrated in a limited number of countries, leaving many regions—particularly in Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia—underrepresented.

Empirical and theoretical contributions from a core group of authors and institutions have driven much of the field's development. However, emerging themes such as intersectionality, gender-neutral language, and multicultural perspectives remain insufficiently explored. The persistent presence of traditional gender stereotypes in textbooks and the lack of diversity in research contexts emphasize the need for more inclusive, context-sensitive, and globally representative studies.

These results underscore the importance of international collaboration, resource allocation, and policy initiatives to support gender-sensitive research and curriculum development—especially in underrepresented regions. Educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers must critically engage with both the content and context of textbooks to ensure that educational materials promote equality, diversity, and social justice.

In multilingual and multicultural educational contexts, ensuring that textbooks are both gender-equitable and culturally relevant is especially critical. The insights from this study offer practical guidance for advancing more inclusive teaching practices and curriculum design in classrooms where linguistic and cultural diversity is the norm.

Future research should address both geographic and thematic gaps, exploring the intersections of gender with other social categories and employing a variety of methodological approaches. By advancing more holistic, inclusive, and contextually grounded research, the field can better support efforts to eliminate gender bias in educational materials and contribute to the creation of equitable learning environments for all students.

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