

# Gender bias in Brazilian Portuguese language textbooks

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Gender bias in textbooks is an important obstacle that tends to be camouflaged by taken-for-granted stereotypes about gender roles (Blumberg, 2008). Educational institutions hold important power in society and are key institutions for the construction of gender. (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2013). By using gender-biased materials, patterns of social structure become recurrent and are seen as natural, making it difficult to detach such ideas and views from a community, thus reinforcing the stereotypes of what is normal and how society and its people should function. Therefore, gender bias in textbooks is an important topic for discussion as it can reinforce sexism and potentially influence how people perceive themselves and their roles in society.

This study examines the presence of gender bias in four different Brazilian Portuguese language textbooks. The research employed a qualitative content analysis approach by examining the following categories: omission (referring to the number of female and male characters represented in the books' pictures), job occupations associated with men and women, the adjectives used to refer to each gender and the analysis of dialogues considering the number of turns, words spoken and initiation of conversation by each gender. Furthermore, this study also aimed to investigate whether gender bias diminishes from the oldest to the newest book.

The findings revealed that gender bias is prevalent in the analyzed textbooks, with instances of stereotypical representations of gender roles and characteristics, which aligns with results from previous studies on the topic. Gender stereotypes in job occupations and in the use of adjectives describing women and men, and limited visibility of women in various domains were identified as recurring themes. The results also suggested that gender bias was more salient in earlier books.

It is argued that the perpetuation of gender bias in language textbooks can reinforce unequal gender relations, contribute to the reproduction of gender stereotypes, and shape children's perceptions of gender roles in society. This study contributes to the existing literature on gender bias in educational materials and provides insights for educators, policymakers, and textbook publishers to promote gender equality in educational contexts in Brazil and beyond.

## References

Blumberg, R. L. (2008). The invisible obstacle to educational equality: Gender bias in textbooks. *PROSPECTS*, 38(3), 345–361. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-009-9086-1>.

Eckert, P., & McConnell-Ginet, S. (2013). *Language and gender* (Second edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press