The Paradigm Shift: Understanding the Reversal of the Gender Gap in Education

Raluca-Mihaela Molea
Doctoral School of Sociology, University of Bucharest, Romania
National Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Social Protection, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

The phenomenon of the "reverse gender gap" has been identified and addressed in many educational studies since the 2000s. This phenomenon is characterised by a decline in boys' academic performance and a decrease in the number of boys enrolling in higher education or graduating from university, while girls achieve higher academic performance and outnumber boys in both enrolment and graduation rates. This paper aims to thematically analyse the research directions associated with this phenomenon in order to observe the evolution of the research topic over time and to identify possible future directions for study. The research methodology is based on a dataset of 119 articles indexed in Web of Science, analysed using the VOSviewer program to examine keyword co-occurrence, thereby mapping the research topic and highlighting the main thematic clusters. The results show that the literature clusters around three major thematic areas: 1. academic performance in STEM fields in relation to gender stereotypes; 2. structural inequalities and socioeconomic implications for women; 3. consequences for the family and gender relations. The temporal analysis indicates a shift from concerns about academic performance toward emerging themes regarding the social and cultural impact of the reverse gender gap in education.

Keywords: reverse gender gap; education; gender relations; socio-cultural implications; thematic analysis