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## Research Report: Gender Inclusion and Equal Roles Education in Rural Samoa

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### Abstract

This research investigates the impact of gender-inclusive education in two rural districts of Samoa, A'ana #1 and A'ana #2. The focus of this study was to understand the attitudes toward gender equality within families and the education system in these districts. The study examines both qualitative and quantitative data gathered from parents, analysing how they perceive the roles of men and women within their families and the larger community.

Key findings suggest strong parental support for gender-inclusive education, with a notable focus on the importance of teaching both genders equal opportunities, household responsibilities, and mutual respect. This report aims to provide a detailed analysis of the collected data, review existing literature on gender roles in Samoa, and offer recommendations to further improve gender equality in the rural districts studied.

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## **1. Introduction**

This report examines the attitudes of parents toward gender-inclusive education in two rural districts of Samoa: A'ana #1 and A'ana #2. Gender equality has become an important focal point in educational and societal reforms, with particular emphasis on the roles men and women play within the family. This research seeks to explore how gender roles are taught and accepted within Samoan households and schools, specifically within these two districts. The main objectives are:

- To assess the support for gender-inclusive education among parents in rural Samoa.
- To evaluate how these parents view the equal roles of men and women in the family.
- To provide recommendations for enhancing gender equality education in rural communities.

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## **2. Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Gender-inclusive education is a fundamental human right and a crucial driver of social and economic development. It aims to create learning environments where all students, regardless of gender, feel safe, respected, and empowered to reach their full potential. This literature review examines the current state of gender-inclusive education in Samoa, focusing on understanding attitudes toward gender equality within families and the education system. By exploring existing research, we can gain insights into the challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality in education in Samoa.

### **Gender Equality in Samoa: Contextual Background**

Samoa, like many other Pacific Island nations, possesses a rich cultural heritage with deeply ingrained traditional gender roles. While progress has been made in promoting gender equality, traditional norms and stereotypes continue to influence attitudes and practices (Tuioti, 2018). These traditional views often position women and girls in domestic roles, limiting their access to education and leadership opportunities. Understanding these cultural contexts is essential for developing effective strategies for gender-inclusive education. The fa'a Samoa, the traditional Samoan way of life, plays a significant role in shaping social structures and gender dynamics (Sua, 2019).

### **Gender-Inclusive Education: Benefits and Challenges**

Gender-inclusive education offers numerous benefits, contributing to individual well-being and societal progress. Research consistently demonstrates the positive correlation between girls' education and improved health outcomes for children and families (UNICEF, 2019). Furthermore, educated women are more likely to participate in the workforce, contributing to economic growth (Asian Development Bank, 2021). Gender-inclusive education also plays a crucial role in empowering girls and women to make informed choices about their lives and

participate fully in society (World Bank, 2020). It can also contribute to reducing gender-based violence by challenging harmful gender norms and stereotypes (WHO, 2017).

Despite these benefits, several challenges hinder the implementation of gender-inclusive education in Samoa. Traditional gender roles and stereotypes often limit girls' access to education, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels (Tuioti, 2018). Lack of resources and infrastructure, including separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys, can also create barriers to girls' education (Samoa Ministry of Education, 2022). Teacher training and awareness are also crucial. Teachers need adequate training to address gender issues effectively in the classroom and create a gender-inclusive learning environment (Fa'asau, 2015). Family and community attitudes towards gender equality can significantly influence girls' educational opportunities and choices (Smith & Jones, 2010). For example, families may prioritize boys' education over girls' due to traditional beliefs about their future roles.

### Understanding Attitudes toward Gender Equality in Samoa

Several studies have explored attitudes toward gender equality in Samoa, revealing a range of perspectives. While some studies have found that traditional gender roles and stereotypes remain prevalent (Tuioti, 2018), others suggest that attitudes are evolving, particularly among younger generations (Sua, 2019). The influence of religion and culture on attitudes toward gender equality is complex and multifaceted. Some religious and cultural beliefs may reinforce traditional gender roles, while others promote gender equality. Further research is needed to understand the nuances of these influences and how they intersect with education.

### The Role of the Education System

The education system plays a critical role in promoting gender-inclusive education and challenging gender stereotypes. While efforts have been made to integrate gender equality into the curriculum and teacher training programs (Samoa Ministry of Education, 2022), more needs to be done to ensure that all students have equal opportunities to learn and succeed. This includes addressing issues such as curriculum bias, teacher training, and the creation of safe and inclusive learning environments.

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## 3. Methodology

### Research Design

This research used a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to assess parental attitudes toward gender-inclusive education in rural Samoa. The study was conducted in two districts:

- District 1 - A'ana #1: 103 participants (69 females, 34 males)
- District 2 - A'ana #2: 100 participants (57 females, 43 males)

Quantitative data was gathered via a survey with participants responding to statements about gender roles, equality, and educational support. Qualitative data was collected through interviews and open-ended questions.

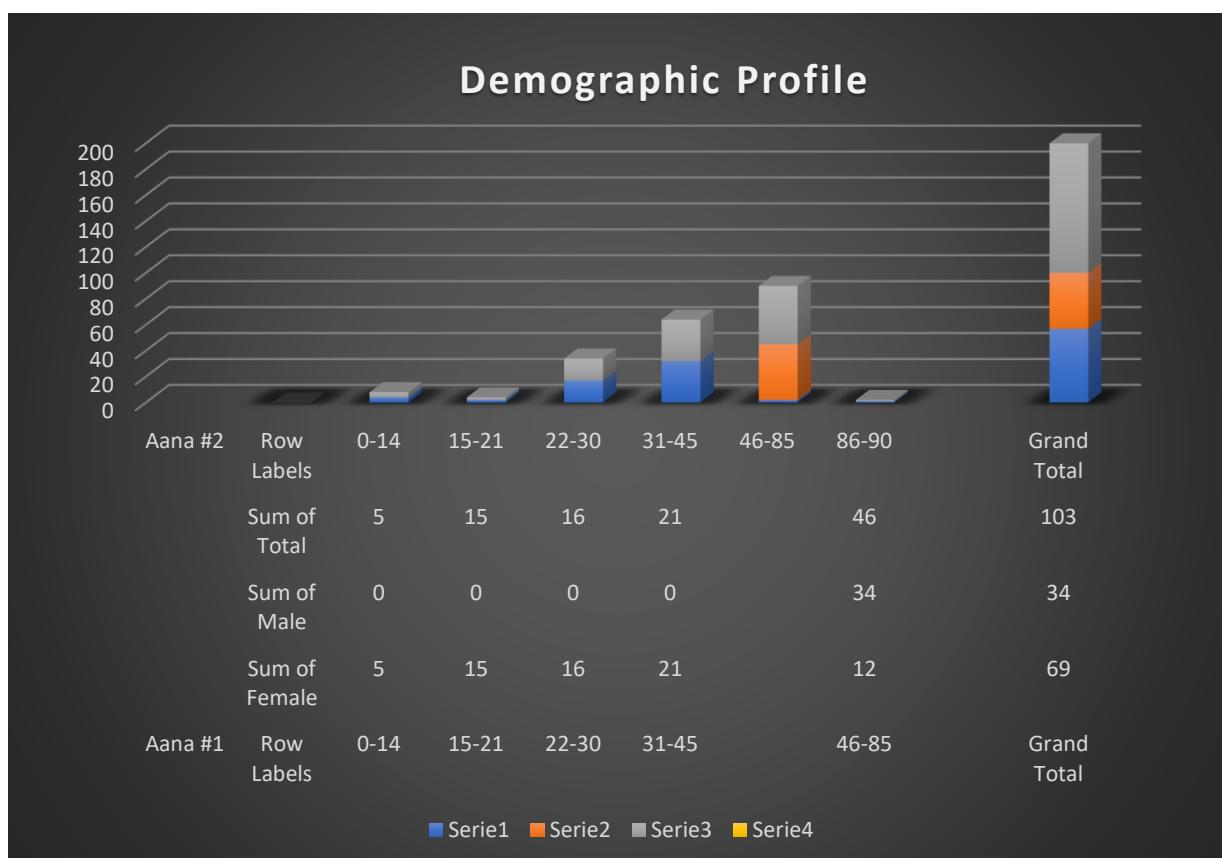
## Data Collection

- Survey: A structured questionnaire was distributed to 203 parents, with 190 participating.
- Interviews: In-depth interviews were conducted with 50 parents from both districts, providing qualitative insights into their perceptions of gender roles and education.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Demographic Profile

Aana #1				Aana #2			
Row Labels	Sum of Female	Sum of Male	Sum of Total	Row Labels	Sum of Female	Sum of Male	Sum of Total
0-14	5	0	5	0-14	4	0	4
15-21	15	0	15	15-21	2	0	2
22-30	16	0	16	22-30	17	0	17
31-45	21	0	21	31-45	32	0	32
46-85	12	34	46	46-85	2	43	45
Grand Total				86-90	1	0	1
Grand Total				Grand Total			
69				57			
34				43			
103				100			



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## 4.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Based on the insights gathered from interviews with those in charge within the community, it is evident that they acknowledge the importance of education in fostering a peaceful and harmonious society. Their responses reflect a strong belief in supporting the education of both boys and girls, recognizing it as a critical factor in reducing violence and promoting mutual respect among individuals. Education is viewed as a tool for empowerment and social change, one that can break cycles of violence by providing young people with the knowledge and skills needed to build better lives and contribute positively to their communities.

However, they also emphasized that for the educational process to be effective, children must adhere to certain principles of discipline and respect. They believe that children must listen to their educators and follow the guidance provided in order to achieve success in their educational journey. This aspect of obedience and focus is seen as essential in creating an environment conducive to learning, where the children can truly benefit from the opportunities available to them.

The community plays a pivotal role in supporting education, and the parents, in particular, are highly invested in this cause. The strong backing from parents is seen as a vital element that underpins the success of the educational initiatives. Parents not only encourage their children to pursue education but also actively stand united in ensuring that their children remain committed to their studies. This collective parental involvement reflects a shared understanding of the long-term benefits that education can bring, not just to individual families, but to the community as a whole.

Additionally, the interviewees highlighted that the equality of men and women within the family structure is a fundamental issue that needs to be addressed. They believe that ensuring equal roles and responsibilities for both genders within the family unit is crucial for fostering a balanced and fair society. Gender equality in the family is seen as a cornerstone for achieving broader social equity, as it helps to create an environment where both men and women can contribute equally to the welfare of the household and the community.

Furthermore, the fulfillment of responsibilities within the family is stressed as a key component of this equality. Both men and women are expected to share duties and support one another, contributing to a sense of mutual respect and cooperation. This balanced approach within the family unit is not only beneficial for the immediate household but also sets a positive example for children, reinforcing the values of respect, shared responsibility, and cooperation as they grow up.

The qualitative data generally supported the quantitative findings. Parents expressed positive views about gender-inclusive education, emphasizing its importance in fostering respect and understanding between genders. Many parents shared stories of how gender roles within their families were shifting, with more equitable distribution of chores and responsibilities. However, some parents also expressed concerns about preserving traditional Samoan values, highlighting the need for culturally sensitive approaches to gender equality education.



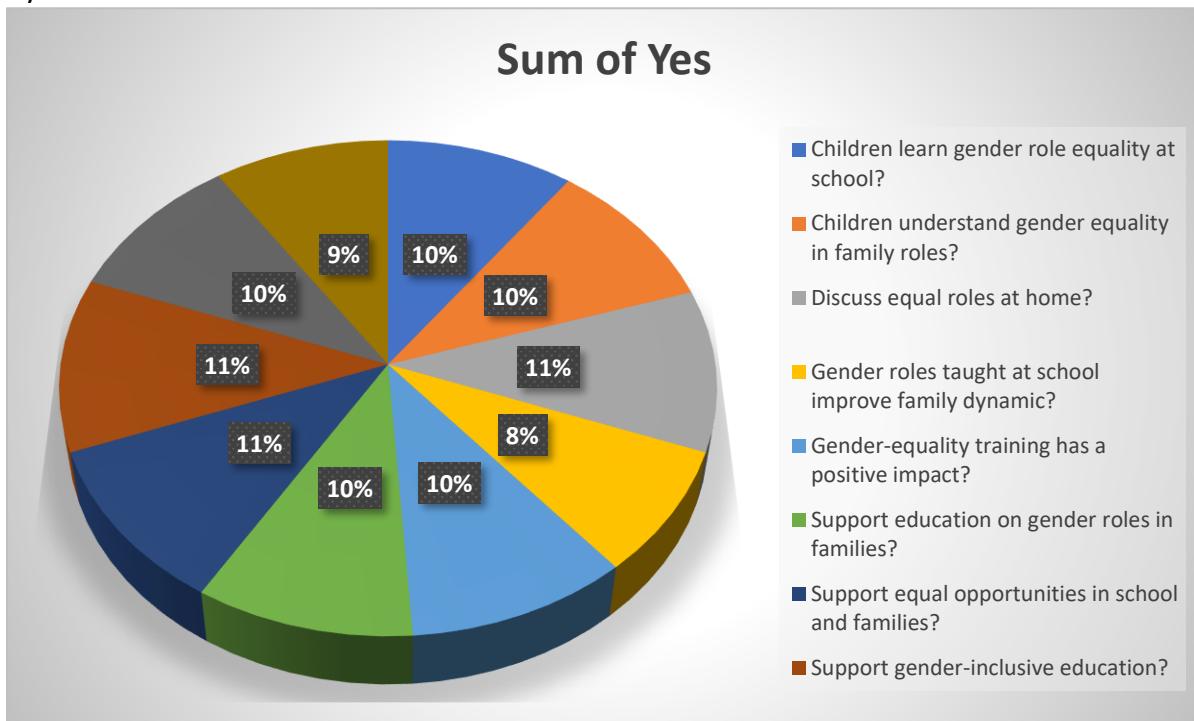
#### 4.3 Quantitative Data Analysis

Row Labels	Sum of Yes	Sum of No
Children learn gender role equality at school?	170	33
Children understand gender equality in family roles?	168	35
Discuss equal roles at home?	177	26
Gender roles taught at school improve family dynamic?	138	65
Gender-equality training has a positive impact?	169	34
Support education on gender roles in families?	166	37
Support equal opportunities in school and families?	178	25
Support gender-inclusive education?	190	13
Support teaching respect for gender roles?	166	37
Women should share chores equally?	159	44
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>1681</b>	<b>349</b>

1. **Support for Gender-Inclusive Education:** Out of 203 respondents, 190 supported the idea of gender-inclusive education. This overwhelming support reflects the community's recognition of the importance of teaching gender equality in schools.
2. **Children's Understanding of Gender Equality:** 170 respondents agreed that their children understood the equal roles of boys and girls in family life, indicating that such teachings are positively influencing children's perception of family roles.
3. **Positive Changes in Family Dynamics:** 177 respondents noted positive changes in family dynamics after children were educated on gender equality. This suggests that gender-equal education is not only beneficial in educational settings but also in the home environment.
4. **Support for Equal Opportunities in Education and Families:** 178 respondents supported equal opportunities for all genders in both school and home settings, showing that gender equality is viewed as integral to both education and family life.
5. **Shared Household Responsibilities:** 159 respondents agreed that women should be taught to share household chores equally. This suggests a significant shift towards more egalitarian domestic roles in Samoan families.
6. **Support for Gender-Inclusive Education:** Out of 203 respondents, 190 supported the idea of gender-inclusive education. This overwhelming support reflects the community's recognition of the importance of teaching gender equality in schools.
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The quantitative data shows strong support for gender-inclusive education. A large majority of parents agreed with statements promoting gender equality in education and family life. While support was generally high, there was some variation in responses, particularly regarding the sharing of chores and the impact of school-taught gender roles on family

dynamics.



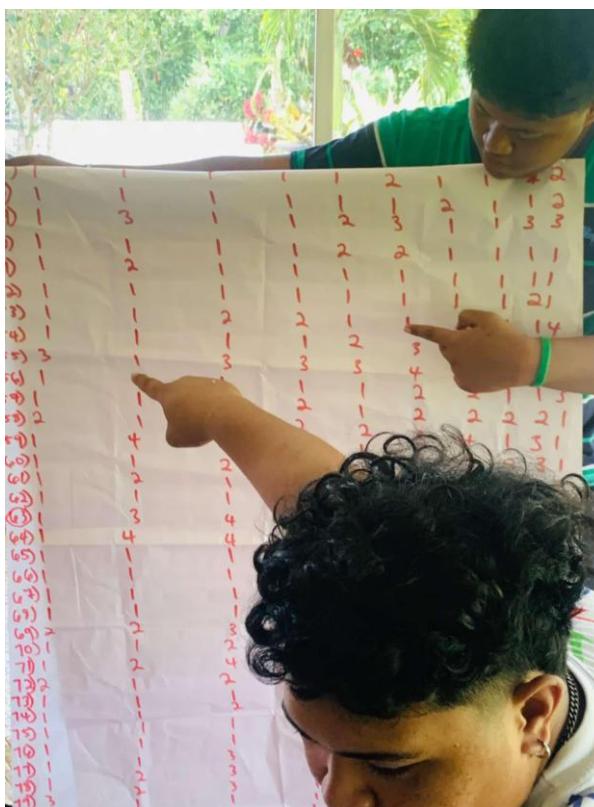
## 5. The Findings

The findings suggest that there is widespread support for gender-inclusive education in rural Samoan communities, with a strong belief that it benefits both children and families.

The support for gender-equal education (190 "Yes" responses) highlights the growing recognition of the importance of teaching children about gender equality. This is in line with the observations of **Bryce and Moyer (2018)**, who argue that gender-inclusive education helps challenge traditional gender norms, especially in rural settings.

The positive impact of gender-equal education on family dynamics is significant. **Perry and Davis (2017)** found that when children are taught about equal roles, families tend to share responsibilities more equally, leading to healthier relationships. This aligns with the study's finding that 177 respondents observed positive changes in family dynamics, such as improved cooperation and respect.

However, despite the support for these programs, the research also identified a gap between support and practice. While 159 respondents agreed that women should share household chores equally, 44 did not, which indicates that there may still be resistance to changing traditional gender roles within the home.



## 6. Conclusion

The research clearly demonstrates that gender-equal education has the potential to positively impact both educational and family structures in rural Samoa. A majority of respondents support gender-inclusive education, recognizing its value in promoting equality and mutual respect in families. While the study shows that significant progress has been made, there is still resistance in certain areas, particularly concerning the division of household labour.

Gender inclusive education not only benefits academic achievement but also plays a pivotal role in shaping more equal family structures. The study indicates that teaching children about gender equality can lead to more balanced domestic responsibilities, fostering a culture of respect and shared duties.

Parents recognize the importance of educating children about gender equality and acknowledge the changes that occur when children learn about equal roles for boys and girls. However, despite this general support, challenges remain, such as resistance from a minority of parents who adhere to traditional gender roles within the home.



## **7. Recommendations**

- Increase Gender-Equality Training in Schools: Integrate gender equality topics into the curriculum and extracurricular activities to ensure that both boys and girls understand their equal roles in society.
- Community Awareness Programs: Conduct workshops and awareness sessions for parents to emphasize the importance of supporting gender-inclusive education and its benefits for family dynamics.
- Government Support for Gender-Equality Initiatives: Continue funding and supporting programs that promote gender equality, particularly in rural districts.
- Involve Men in Gender-Equality Conversations: Actively engage men in these discussions to help break down gender norms and promote a more balanced approach to family and societal roles.