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**IRD 318 assignment**

**Question: Is Gender Relations Changing in the 21st Century? What are the areas of change and the factors driving it.**

 Gender relations refer to relations between men and women that are socially determined by culture, religion, or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being. These are the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another. These relationships between men and women, as they exist in most societies, are characterised by the marginalisation of women in decision making and other forms of power sharing in the home and places of authority.

Over the past decades, there has been a shift in the gender relations between men and women especially in western societies which has resulted in the redefinition if gender roles. More and more women are working, getting degrees, starting business and getting involved in country leadership and politics. This has created a shift from the usual sexist and unequal gender relations between men and women to more equitable interaction between the two sexes. The roles of women are still developing and changing, depending on need, circumstance and personal choice. Men and women both are establishing their roles within the twenty-first century society.

Since the dawn of the first wave of feminism in the 19th century and the other subsequent waves in the 20th century, there has been a slow but steady change in gender relations which is now more prevalent since the dawn of the twenty first century. The 21st century has seen a shift in gender roles due to multiple factors such as new family structures, education, media, and several others. With the demise of the male breadwinner family, there has been something of a ‘paradigm shift’ in gender relations. More women have become aware of their rights especially in third world nations which has resulted in calls for a more equal society. Various forms of gender based violence have been tackled especially sexual violence, which led to the me too “me too” movement that started in America and quickly spread to other countries across continents. Male victims were not exempt as many male survivors of sexual violence also shared their stories. This was a major change from the usual female centered approach to sexual based violence. Globalization also played a huge part in this. The interconnectedness the internet and social media give has enabled women across various parts of the world and various cultures to connect and share stories and empower each other. Many women who formerly felt isolated found online communities were women they could relate with interacted. Male victims who find it very difficult to get help encountered many support groups online. It is fair to say the age of social media is one of the driving mechanisms of the change in gender relations.

The changing gender relations in the 21st century has resulted in an active strive for gender equality in all aspects of society. From the government, to offices to schools and families. Gender equality is now an important goal of multiple societies especially in developed countries. Third world countries and Islamic countries have lagged behind due to cultural differences with western nations, but have shown promising growth in the recent decades. Saudi Arabia for instance gave recently gave women the right to drive and banned the marriage of girls under eighteen years of age. Other Middle eastern and North African countries have also recorded increased participation of women in government. The same can be said for Arab countries.

In conclusion, gender relations in the 21st century is very progressive and has resulted in a more equitable distribution of resources shifting gender roles in various parts of the world.