




Unveiling Gender Biases: A Critical Analysis of Gender Representation in ESL Textbooks Prescribed by Punjab Textbook Board

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ABSTRACT

This research gives an overview of the existing gender differences prevalent in our society by exemplifying how even our educational textbooks are not devoid of these dissimilarities. The goal of the study is to thoroughly compare the representations of both genders in the two textbooks of Punjab used for classes i.e. 4th and 5th. The study aims to investigate how the women are treated differently in the ESL Textbooks taught in primary sections of the schools of Punjab. It evaluates the reasons of why the women are treated stereotypically in the same books. Through content analysis, the results indicated that both textbooks had a gender-biased approach. Simultaneously, it discovered somewhat fixed attitudes on characteristics, professions, and activities appropriate for individuals of both sexes. The findings also confirmed the reality that women, in the textbooks are not described as valuable as men. The recommendations have also been offered at the end of this study on the basis of findings in order to accentuate the need to revisit the material in ESL textbooks prescribed by Punjab Textbook Board that would contribute to the improvement of the English textbooks in order to curb the effects of existing stereotyping material.

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1. Introduction

Women and men have traditionally interacted in various ways, and this topic has been debated for hundreds of years. Feminist movements in the 1960s, however, highlighted male power over women and criticized a patriarchal structure. The majority of linguistic analyses focused on the creation of language by men. For instance, the works of Labov (2006) mostly studied male speech. In contrast, some linguists, worked on the way the women were treated in different fields. In markets, in offices and even at homes this aspect is quite visible. Women do jobs and work to support the family financially but it is considered their duty to do domestic chores while men are considered free from these duties. In the textbooks this inequity is noticeable in the form of written texts and pictorials. The men are shown to be given preference to women. Thus the current study plans to see this disparity in the textbooks. It explores how the textbooks treat women.

Gender discrimination means to treat an individual differently on the basis of gender in academic field, extracurricular activities, discipline, class room management, class enrollment, physical education, grading or athletics etc. Prejudice or unfairness based on a person's sex or gender is known as gender discrimination. Although it may impact anybody, women and girls are disproportionately affected. The idea that one sex or gender is inherently superior to another has been connected to stereotypes and gender roles. Mostly in male dominated societies, the women are neglected in many fields as they are shown less powerful as compared to men. This difference starts from the birth of the girls and boys (Ali et al., 2022).

Gender discrimination, is any act which specially negates opportunities or incentives given to someone based on their gender. In almost the whole world, in approximately all fields, men are given advantage. Because most allegations of favoritism center on the discrimination against women in favor of men (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2018).

The developing countries like Pakistan are special victim of this difference. Discrimination is visible in many fields and even the textbooks are not devoid of it. The discrimination is visible in written texts and pictorials. The men are shown to be given preference to women.

Text in education has the capacity to shape people's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. It is a weapon for the advancement of national identities and may increase the privilege of particular groups in society, especially men's dominance over women (Smith, 1994). Educational institutions use both implicit and explicit methods to perpetuate, shape, define, enhance, and promote gender norms and disparities.

It is important to look at how curriculum and textbooks might position boys and girls unequally and build them as gendered subjects, even though research has mostly focused on unequal access to school and inequalities in enrollment rates for girls and boys (Durrani, 2008). According to Kereszty (2009), textbooks represent what it means to be a child in a certain setting, which includes acquiring gender identity through socialization. Elementary school textbooks are especially important because they form children's actual knowledge about the abilities they are expected to learn, which might differ for boys and girls and can serve as the foundation for gender stereotyping (Kereszty, 2009).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Despite great advancements made in many nations toward gender equality, a persistent problem exists in educational materials, notably textbooks. The insufficient portrayal of women in textbooks across a range of academic areas and educational levels is a troubling and frequently noticed issue that is addressed in this study. The unequal portrayal of both sexes in textbooks is a serious problem since it can promote gender prejudices, reinforce stereotypes, and limit students' educational opportunities.

1.2. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To investigate how women are portrayed in ELT textbooks for class 4th and 5th of Primary schools
- To recognize and classify gender stereotypes that are present in textbook material

1.3. Research Questions

- (i) How are women treated in the ESL textbooks taught in primary schools of Punjab?
- (ii) Why women are treated in a different way as compared to men in the ESL textbooks prescribed by Punjab Textbook Board?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study is significant for those researchers who intend to research on feminist theory. It is also useful for school teachers who teach the students and instruct them about this theory so that they may have a better understanding of this difference. This research is significant for educationists and book publishers who consider that women are not only busy in domestic chores but also in prestigious jobs. Overall this study is a good addition in the field of ELT.

2. Literature Review

Gender discrimination, is said to be any action that expressly deprives an individual or group of chances, advantages, or rewards because of their gender the act of determining who gets to do what by taking a person's gender into account males are favored in practically all professions because the majority of discrimination complaints allege that women are treated unfairly in favor of males. Thus it is not only physical difference but also a worldwide concept which makes one gender deny the advantages, benefits, or benefits

received by an individual or organization as a result of being the part of that particular gender.

According to Alavi (1991) a civilization having established views that are also quite traditional in character is referred to as being in a strict patriarchal society. One gender group rules in such a society before the other. One assumes leadership and the other is enslaved; one becomes a despot and the other is defeated. Consequently, this "one" (here denoting the male gender) and "other" (here denoting the female gender) become two distinct poles of a magnet; two poles that exist together but have a separate status and worth. Of course, there is a male gender group with a higher value on one side and a female gender group with a lower value on the other. When one person is in a position of authority and the other is following orders, a power connection is created. According to this concept, men are regarded as emblems of dominant authority in Pakistan, while women are either their subjects or, to use more frank language to, or their female servants.

2.1. Gender Differences in Books

The contents of a book are actually what a society believes they ought to be. Books written in a given civilization often serve as a reflection of the ethics, values, beliefs, practices, and traditions of that society. A child's education must include children's literature. They are used to impart information on a variety of topics as well as provide instruction on their immediate surroundings. Children gain knowledge about the world around them, including how things work, how people interact, and what values society expects of them, etc. In books, everything is therefore illustrated. The civilization shown is the real one. Characters in them that are real persons or instances of real people. Therefore, such texts may be used to impart a society's culture to its future generations. Children's reading can enable the incorporation of beliefs about oneself and others, social roles, and the environment, as noted by Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada, and Ross (1972) typically, children's books are written with the aforementioned objectives in mind.

2.2. Women Representation in Textbooks

According to research by Durrani (2008), the uneven depiction of women in textbooks is creating gender identities and hierarchies. A sample of students were asked to draw what they thought of as "us" (Pakistanis); none of the images made by the male students depicted women. There were few paintings of female students, but these depictions included women engaging in stereotypical occupations like cooking. Only 4.1% of the male students who were asked to choose a symbol from the textbooks chose a feminine icon. The girls who chose female role models, on the other hand, revealed that they did so because the woman was a "good wife or mother" (Durrani, 2008). Discussions around these disparities in representation and prejudice in school textbooks are crucial since they affect children's motivation and life decisions (Ullah & Skelton, 2016). The gendered role models that students are exposed to influence how they feel about themselves and who they are (Campbell, 2010). According to Griffith (2010), curriculum has the capacity to "naturally" bias women into particular professions. This is in line with research done in Pakistan, which reveals that females see physicians and teachers as role models in fields they may desire to, but relatively few choose non-traditional careers like pilots or engineers, for instance (Ullah & Skelton, 2016; UNESCO, 2004). Males are therefore shown as superior, whilst females are portrayed as inferior. In books, men are given the better jobs and the heroic actions, while women are given the menial chores that seem to have no worth.

2.3. Research Gap

The insight for the current research is taken from the study of Islam and Asadullah (2018) whose research is entitled as: "Gender Stereotypes and Education: A Comparative Content Analysis of Malaysian, Indonesian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi School Textbooks". It is an extension of their study and it narrowly focuses only on class 4th and class 5th ESL textbooks prescribed by the Punjab Textbook Board. At this level, to the best of my knowledge, no study has yet been conducted.

3. Methodology

3.1. Method

The present study used theory based quantitative content analysis (Coe & Scacco, 2017) which is a research technique in which the characteristics of written and visual

content are methodically classified and documented in order to be studied. It is a sort of mixed method in which the recurrent ideas are emerged as themes just as content analysis or thematic analysis, but it is different from pure content analysis that it also calculates the number and percentages of the contents in a text. To comprehend the subject matter's desired messages, the researcher classifies the material into themes and subthemes and finds out the categories and the numbers and percentages of the relevant contents.

3.2. Data Collection Source

The ESL textbooks of English for class 4th and 5th published by Punjab Textbook Board Lahore taught in primary section were chosen as the study's primary source of data. There are poems, and short stories etc. in this book. Basically primary section was focused and two books were selected i.e. the ESL textbooks of class 4th and 5th for the purpose of analysis for the current study.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The contents of the two ESL textbooks for class 4th and 5th were critically analyzed and different categories of discriminations were identified and then classified under different themes. The various aspects of gender discrimination were recognized in quantitative content analysis. The frequency and the percentage of the data are presented in the form of table 1 which summarizes the results:

Table 1: Ratio of Gender Discrimination in the ESL Textbooks

Category	Frequency		Percent (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Economic Performance and Participation	21	18	55	45
Labor Participation	45	35	56	44
Employment	13	5	72	28
Better Jobs	10	3	76	24
Pictures	101	58	64	36
Games Participation	20	9	68	32
Social Roles Participation	11	7	61	39
Representation as superior	28	11	72	28
Authors of the Chapters (Poems)	5	1	83	17
Personal Pronouns	68	17	80	20
Use of Adjectives	36	11	76	24
Heroic Deeds	5	0	100	0

The results show that 55% of male have good economic positions while percentage of females is 45% and also these are ordinary unpaid tasks, as a housewife, as a mother, as a nurse etc. It shows that males have dominant position as compared to women and women are mostly involved in domestic chores which according to many people are regarded less important tasks. Thus, discrimination is very much visible in this section. Further, in books by Punjab Textbook Board (henceforth BTB), the only characters that perform home duties are females. The tasks which are performed outside home are regarded important while the domestic chores are not considered important. As Pakistan's domestic economy continues to grow quickly, an increasing number of women are leaving the home to pursue careers. Gender discrimination in the workplace against women has therefore gotten worse. But here we again find that the role of women as depicted by PTB is quite inferior or it has less value as compared to males.

The issue of workplace discrimination against women is becoming a significant societal issue and not only a matter of moral development. Sex discrimination against working women may be illegal, even in states where legislation protecting women's equality in the workplace exist. As we can see in the pictures shared in PTB there is a women was working as a nurse while a doctor was a man. A woman could be a doctor and a male could be seen as a nurse. Although in Pakistan women are working side by side with a man. Pakistan's internal economy is still in a relatively underdeveloped state, and women's significant labor resources might help spur national economic growth. Women also take on the role of raising the next generation at the same time.

Women in our society are a low paid worker. They work hard like men but they are considered as a low potential worker .for example the wages of male tailors, tailoring cost for stitching a dress is more than that of women. The people in this society think that male are 100 % accurate and the females are on the average. So, in PTB women are shown as a low profile worker, mother, a housewife, a nurse, or a care taker. By studying the data, the researcher finds that the gender discrimination is very much visible in term of employment. Females are not only exploited in professional fields; they are also subjugated when they are paid.

There are many pictures in the books. When totally counted, it was found that the ratio of females in pictures is 36% and that of males is 64%. Thus again males are dominating over the females. The sure reason is that the women are given less importance as compared to men. So discrimination is again very much visible. In contemporary culture, Girls and women are expected to behave in a feminine manner, whereas boys and men are expected to conduct in a masculine one. In this usage, "sex" refers to the biological differences between men and women. The major or secondary sex traits that are biologically ascribed to males and females can result in a person being treated differently depending on their actual or perceived gender identity. That is why there is a noticeable dissimilarity in the pictures drawn in the concerning books.

In these two textbooks, there are total 39 instances or mention of the games, in which 20 times a male character has shown to be participating in games and women characters have been shown to be taking part in various games only 9 times. Again, there is a big difference in representation.

Pakistani women lack social value and status because they are not recognized for their roles as producers and providers in many spheres of society. Sons are preferred because of their productive role, which necessitates the division of household resources in their favor. In order to compete for resources in the public realm, male family members obtain more education and training, while female family members receive domestic training to become nice mothers and spouses. as in PTB you can see mostly men are doing better jobs ,boys are doing conversations with their male teachers. Women's prospects to compete for resources in the public sphere are constrained by a lack of skills, limited employment options, and social and cultural norms. Due to their increased social and economic dependence, women are now the object of male dominance in all spheres of society. Women are showed as farmer, a house hold worker, a care taker, a nurse and she has nothing as her own resources. However, patriarchy is not evenly distributed. There are many forms and degrees of female oppression and servitude, depending on social classes, geographic locations, and the rural/urban divide. Patriarchal institutions are much stronger in rural and tribal contexts where local customs establish male power and domination over women's lives. Women are bought, sold, and swapped in marriages.

Throughout the textbooks, men have been portrayed to be superior and can make decisions on their own. 28 times men have been given the role of a superior being and only 11 times women have been given this role. They are only allowed a few chances to make decisions for themselves in order to alter the circumstances of their existence. In contrast, Women from middle- and upper-class families have more access to education and employment opportunities, and they also have more control over their lives. The most powerful aspect of the social and cultural context is how both men and women internalize patriarchal ideals. Women internalize the patriarchal ideology as they learn to function as women in society, and they play a crucial part in conveying and reproducing the gender ideology through the socialization of their offspring. The development attempts have mostly disregarded this facet of women's life.

A comparison was drawn between male and female authors and it was found out that only 16 % of female authors and 84% of them are male figures. Gender inequality is experienced again here. In the textbooks of PTB majority of titles are neutral. In contrast, titles containing human characters tended to favor masculine characters over female ones. Thus distinction is very much visible again here. Our society gives preference to males as compared to females.

Totally the pronouns are 85. Among them 17 were addressed to females while 68 have been used for males. The ratio is 80% for males and 20% for females. 26 times all-purpose human beings were described using male pronouns, which were used 18 times less frequently than masculine nouns. Mostly "he" is general for all the participants including male and female but she is only used for females. In writing he precedes she because in a male dominating society like ours, males are given preference and the same preference is visible in the current book.

In total, 47 different adjective categories have been employed to describe both men and women. However, since there were 36 adjectives used for male gender and only 11 for female gender, the majority of the adjectives were employed to describe male personalities. The majority of positive and uplifting words, such as noble, courageous, fantastic, amazing, confident, etc., were used to characterize male characters, whereas female characters were portrayed with moderate and restrained qualities, such as sweet, caring, and loving.

Heroic is defined as a powerful, brave individual or a tale about an individual who exhibited these traits. Pakistani society's social and cultural environment is dominated by patriarchy. Men and women live in separate conceptual universes. A woman's legal, ideological, and physical area is referred to as her "home," whereas a man controls the outside world. The purdah system and the idea of honor in Pakistan assist to uphold the erroneous conceptual separation between the interior and exterior worlds. Since it is associated with the notion of masculine honor and *izzat* (honor), women's sexual behavior is seen as a potential threat to the family's respect. Women's movement is therefore heavily restricted and regulated by the purdah system, sex discrimination, and abuse directed at them. .By analyzing the data of PTB there is a percentage of 0% for the female while percentage is 100% for the male. All the chapters are about the heroic deeds of men. The chapters include the valorous deeds of Quaid-e-Azam. Inventions and Discoveries, Happy Prince, Sports and Sportsmanship. These are the few chapters about the heroic deeds of men .if we look around us beyond the boundaries of patriarchal system there are so many heroic deeds of a women .There are a lot of women in our lives who are heroes.

"*Hazrat Khadijah bint Khuwaylid (RA)* is one perfect role model, who was one among the most beautiful souls ever. She was a renowned business woman. Her business was not just restricted to her country, but it was an international one. Fatima Jinnah, also known as *Mder-e Millat* (Mother of the Nation), was a prominent figure in the founding of Pakistan as well as a Pakistani politician and dentist, was Muhammad Ali Jinnah's younger sister. Marium Mukhtiar, a fighter pilot from Pakistan, who perished while operating a wrecked Pakistan Air Force (PAF) aircraft but all these women are badly neglected in the textbooks. Thus again discrimination is visible.

5. Conclusion

Gender discrimination is very much prominent in each and every sphere of our life and the text books are also not devoid of it. Females are considered as inferior beings in many spheres of life and especially in a society like Pakistan. We return to our research questions to see whether they have been answered or not in the light of our research findings. The content of the ESL books of class 4th and 5th were critically analyzed through quantitative content analysis. It was found that both the textbooks have pro-male contents. Women have been treated as inferior creature to men. They have been given less coverage in the content of the books. From the pictures to the messages in the lesson, they have been given less representation which was the concern of research question one. For the research question two, the various factors were identified through which the women were unequally and treated with bias. These factors were categorized under 12 themes. Through the use of these themes or factors, the counterpart of men were treated differently which supplied an answer to the question 2 of the research.

This study reveals the fact that the textbooks are also a crucial tool for gender representation. The text books also portray the mindset of the society. Thus, the curriculum designers must exercise extreme caution when creating texts for young readers since they are so important in influencing how youngsters perceive gender. Children are our future so they should not grow having this discrimination in their minds. In order to decrease gender

prejudice, authors should concentrate on language as well as substance, particularly with regard to the content terms mentioned above. The authors of textbooks have to create a systematic method for analyzing gender concepts in the material. The inclusion of gender neutral content in textbooks may be ensured by strengthening a few helpful rules that are currently in place. Last but not least, teachers may contribute to this process by helping students recognize and focus on the language of texts for gender concepts and by cautioning readers about the presence of prejudiced beliefs imposed through the context.

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