



Published by
*Centre for Languages and
Translational Studies*

Pakistan Journal of Languages and Translation Studies

ISSN (Print) 2410-1230
ISSN (Online) 2519-5042
Volume 10 Issue 1 2022
Pages 1-15

Open Access

Gender Stereotyping in the Illustrations of Urdu Textbook of Punjab Textbook Board

Publication Details

Ayesha Zafar

Assistant Professor, University of Management & Technology,
Pakistan

Paper Received:

May 10, 2022

Email: ayesha.zafar@umt.edu.pk

Paper Accepted:

May 20, 2022

Faiza Mushtaq

Lecturer, NUML, Multan Campus, Pakistan

Paper Published:

June 30, 2022

Email: faizamushtaq@numl.edu.pk

Abstract

This research discusses the role of textbook illustrations in the ideological development of gender disparity among young learners. It analyses the images and content used in the Urdu textbook of the Punjab textbook board. Similarly, it evaluates the language of the textbook which promotes the stereotypes generally used for gender segregation in the society. Moreover, it incorporates the image categorizes of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) for the semiotic analysis by observing different dimensions identified by Goffman (1979). The findings suggest that the pictures used in the book are inappropriate for a mainstream public sector institution as they result in shaping the ideology of gender inequality among children. In conclusion, the research recommends that the textbook should use gender neutral images and content so that the young learners couldn't segregate already defined gender roles.

Keywords: Gender inequality, Curriculum design, Public Schools



Published by Licensee CeLTS. Copyright: © the author(s). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Women in Pakistani society face several social problems due to the deep-rooted patriarchal system. The gender stereotyping is a usual practice and organizations like educational institutions unconsciously practice it through the learning materials and designed curriculum. In order to investigate the possible contribution of textbooks toward gender stereotypes, this research explores gender ideologies in the textbooks of Urdu for early years. It tries to examine all those possibilities which enable the educational institutes to contribute to gender inequality. For this purpose, the Urdu textbook by Punjab Textbook Board was selected and the text of the book was analyzed deeply. Similarly, the surface and the deeper meanings were transcribed through the textual analysis and semiotic analysis which highlighted the production and reproduction of gender beliefs through the curriculum. Generally, the students have no idea of their outlooks toward the support or rejection of the gender gap in textbooks.

The distinctiveness and value system of young learners is powerfully shaped by the textbooks and the curriculum. The design and content of such material influence children's thought patterns in a certain way. Therefore, women's representation and inequality in textbooks are one of the more complicated issues. It is given more focus today than ever before. In the everyday world women slightly outnumber men. However, they are seen in a typical way. In the past two decades, women's issues in Pakistan have increasingly begun to make news, largely due to the growth of contemporary women's movements. It is all because the women's group becoming more active and vocal.

1.1 Objectives of Research

The objective of this research is to examine the illustration of gender-related stereotypes in the textbook. Moreover, it also tries to explore possible impacts of the inculcation of gender philosophy in the textbook early age learners. For this matter, the textbook was thoroughly analyzed. As a result, it provokes questions about the content of the textbooks which carry the normative constructions of the society. Furthermore, it also tries to disclose the original ideologies. Last but not the least, the final aim of the study is to highlight the areas where gender judgment might be found and hopes to suggest some beneficial steps to destroy the issue at hand.

1.2 Research Questions

The research aims to explore the following questions:

1. How gender-related ideologies are presented in Urdu textbooks in the early years?
2. How do the textbooks affect the mindset of the consumers of these books?

2. Literature Review

According to Blumberg (2009), gender biases or gender inequality is an inconspicuous issue despite the fact that it is present everywhere as universal phenomenon. Numerous social institutions maintained the gender disparity and inequality: such as, media and educational literature. Stereotypical gender roles for man and woman are strengthened by these institutions. There are some certain sets of actions which are in some certain situation ‘appropriate’ for a particular gender group, on the other hand it is highly ‘inappropriate’ for other gender group in the same situation. School curriculum plays an important and alarming role in the case of gender segregation.

2.1 Gender Disparity through Textbooks

Fahim (2010) says that textbooks play an imperative role in the shady representation of women as weak and inferior. As per the research of Stromquist (1990), such gender insensitiveness nurtures the brain of the student and develops their thinking pattern, beliefs, values and behavior in a specific direction. On one hand, such texts create a biased version of gender roles while on the other hand; it promotes the idea of stereotypical gender roles in so-called ‘natural’ behaviors. The books of school textbooks control the mind of young children because they are the direct ‘consumers’ of these books and then fashion them in a certain way.

Similarly, Kereszty (2009) says that the construction of young learners’ behaviors, views and attitudes is done with the help of images. According to Frawley (2008), children learn quickly from pictures which depict specific ideologies. These ideologies are inculcated with the help of certain mediums; which includes the text of the books also. While they internalize the gender ideologies the best, the images along with the text of the books play an important role in making this process easy and smooth. These images pave the way for them to launch this think pad for the children and then to make them think in a specific way. These images construct the ideology precisely in the same manner in which these images are presented to them. Ellis (2002) has also observed that the images of textbooks are gender-biased.

Different researches have proven the fact that gender stereotyping in the curriculum has always been ignored or dealt with as a very low-key issue. Therefore, women are portrayed as emotional, dependent, and powerless figures. Jassey (1998) describes that

their roles are restricted in conventional domestic settings. Ahmed (2006) explains that all the textbooks of different subjects including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Islamiat, and Hindi convey the same stereotype that the major duties of the women are very demeaning. In the curriculum, boys and girls are portrayed in different gender roles. Likewise, the activities of both genders are also defined in a different manner in textbooks Liu (2002).

However, later on, attention was paid to this inequality. In this regard, a gender audit of the textbooks was also carried out by different countries in order to get rid of the gender-biased presentation. According to World Bank (1999), the resolution behind this revision is to eradicate the rareness and the passive roles that are attributed to the female section of the society. Moreover, the women will be portrayed in non-stereotypical roles.

2.2 Research on Textbooks in Pakistan

There are numerous studies in the history of the sociological scenario of Pakistan that were carried out for the purpose of defining the portrayal of both the genders i.e. men and women. These researches were carried out, particularly with the reference to society in general and Pakistani society in particular. These studies resulted in the presence of a great amount of gender bias, discrimination, over-representation of one gender and invisibility of another gender.

Zeenat-un-Nisa (1989) has carried out a research and noticed the base of the sexes. The roles of both the men and women are drawn rather than defined on the basis of the territory. The scenario of separation of employment is also haggard on the foundation of their masculinities. Men are always symbolized as the breadwinner or the decision-maker of the family. On the other indicator, women are the homemakers who perform the tasks of the private and domestic spheres. These are the formulaic stereotypical roles that not only exist particularly in Pakistani society; rather stereotypical representation of men and women is the widespread observable fact. Men are represented as the active and productive agents of society. They are mostly remarked as 'doers' of the action. While, on the other hand, women are always presented as passive and submissive roles.

Mattu & Hussain (1986) laid stress on the ideology where gender roles are titled in the textbooks in general and in Urdu textbooks in particular. In the primary level textbooks, the worldview is portrayed. Men occupy the central positions while women are marginalized. This kind of representation inevitably portrays bias and inequality among the genders. This inequality inscribes on the young and budding minds of the students and eventually, they consider it a very natural phenomenon.

In another study, Mirza (2004) analyzes the primary school textbooks of the Punjab Textbook Board and the results reveal that from 105 textbooks for different grade levels, there are approximately 78% of the textbooks that are written by the male content writers. On the other hand, there are only 6% of the female writers. There is a stark difference in the representation of the writers of both genders in the process of production of the textbooks. This imbalance in the number of writers has resulted in the form of misrepresentation, over-representation, or the under-representation of both genders in the textbooks.

2.3 Role of Curriculum in the Social Segregation of Genders

According to Ashton (1983), surrounding and environment help in the development of students' behaviors and attitudes. Therefore, the school culture including the curriculum is the hub for the selected transmission belt for conventions. The text books are another important source of transmission of societal norms which are learnt by the learners in their early ages. They learn it in a very silent rather implicit manner. Duveen (2000) states that the activities of both the boys and girls are defined differently in text books which promote their disparity. In the process of learning at a very tender age, they have the tendency to absorb and accept the 'input' as something 'normal'.

In the books of Punjab textbook board, men are over presented which highlights them as an active and productive agent of a society. On the other hand, the other stratum of the population is presented as a dependent one. Thus, it results in the development of the attitude that both the genders have different social roles and a fine line has been drawn for the implementation of these self-assumed roles. Similarly, later on this behavior is considered quite normal when that one gender is all invisible while the other is over presented in different segments of the social structures. However, Apple (2004), presents an argument that gender power contest within the heart of curriculum. Likewise, the content in the text books is purposeful for restructuring and reshaping the structure of values and norms of the society.

2.4 Semiotics and the Construction of Ideologies

Visual symbols and images construct the interpretation of the meaning of a text in a certain way. Somehow, they are influential in the construction of behaviours, attitudes and ideologies. Pictures used in the children's books consequently fulfil the purpose of mind making. Similarly, Schema or Schemata plays an important role in the process of internalized social construction. 'Gender Schema Theory' by Martin et al. (1990), explains both "social learning theories" and "cognitive development theories" and explains that mental images consist of both the genders and fits their gender schema.

Children, by looking at the pictures, assume the social ideologies and the socially assigned roles. These images construct the ideology precisely in the same manner in which these images are presented to them. Therefore, the images in the textbooks should not generate the gender sensitive sentiments.

3. Research Methodology

This research study carries out a semiotic visual and textual analysis of the images that are illustrated in the Urdu Text Book of grade one. The book is published and designed by Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board, Lahore in 2018. The rationale to select this book was its wide circulation as it is an approved textbook by the Govt. of Punjab and is taught across Punjab in all public schools. The research study incorporates a qualitative research method in order to investigate the unequal representation of men and women in the text and through the images. Moreover, it tries to find out the ways through which femininities and masculinities are constructed during the initial levels of learning which later plays an important role in the creation of specific power relations. Furthermore, it probes the ideology behind the formation of gender disparity through certain inclusions and exclusions.

4. Data Analysis

This section explores the gender disparity presented in academics and education, particularly in the illustrations of the Urdu language textbook used in class one in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. There was a total of eight images which were analyzed by using the techniques of semiotic analysis.

4.1 Gender Differences in the Choice of Professions

Panday (2007) says that men are considered stronger than women and this ideology is conveyed through textbooks. It was observed that all the status-oriented and financially stronger professions are designated for men as they are considered the dominant members of the society. In contrast, women are socially marginalized in some specific fields. Similarly, the textbooks transmit this perception that men are more rational, professional and ambitious that is why they can choose more technical professions whereas ladies are mainly for household chores or limited professions. Such illustrations unconsciously make the mind of their readers and they perceive the differences between men and women accordingly. Image 1, selected from page no. 76 is an evidence that the professions like teachers are restricted to females while, on the other hand, more technical professions like engineers and doctors are considered men's professions. This ideology is strengthened through image 2 on page 84 in which a doctor is a man. Gupta & Lee (1989) also state that men are frequently depicted as strong and powerful, whereas women are shown as passive, yet sexually appealing.



Figure 1: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.76

Goffman's (1979), discussed differences in gender roles are obvious in image 1 as both the female characters are dressed in a casual and unprofessional manner according to the constructed definition of femininity. Similarly, Women's contoured bodies in both images 1 and 2 depict the positions of submissiveness and powerlessness.



Figure 2: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.84

Similarly, in image 2, the woman is not maintaining eye contact which represents women's submissiveness and powerlessness. It symbolizes a male dominant position in society.

4.2 Women Portrayal as More Feminine: Confused and Not Alert

The third image on page 75 is portraying the inactiveness of the female teacher because she is standing behind the rostrum and smiling at the student. Moreover, she is holding the rostrum for support. Again, it proves Goffman's (1979) concept of

femininity in which he says that women are always shown less confident in images and advertisements because they always hold a man or any object for support.



Figure 3: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.75

As per the model of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the direction of the look, the size of the frame, and the viewing angle all are playing important roles in order to depict women as careless and less serious in comparison to men.

4.2 Depiction of women and men in a stereotypical role

The following image 4 below illustrates the real status of a woman in a patriarchal society. It shows that both, male and female have different social roles and the role of a woman is mainly confined to home and less dominant. It strongly supports the stereotype that all household chores are the responsibility of a woman. Therefore, such tasks are not considered the responsibility of a man. This gender difference carries an unequal representation of both genders in society because it shapes the mindset of boys that the job of a mother is only to cook, serve and teach. Moreover, it also shapes the girls' mindset in accepting their future role as household workers.



Figure 4: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.83

Similarly, illustration 5 below from page 84 reinforces the socially constructed concept of gender discrimination. This illustration is in continuation with the previous image. It explains that in the absence of the mother, another female i.e. grandmother, performs the same duties.



Figure 5: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.84

In contrast to these two images above, the next image 6 illustrates a different meaning. The grandfather in the image is actively teaching the kids and his social role is depicted differently from the previous two images where ladies were involved with household chores. The image highlights the supremacy of men in society in terms of cognition and intellect. The grandfather is a male and a doer of the action so his character is not indulged in the less important household tasks. On the other hand, he is busy with intellectual work. This image also supports the dominant position of men in society that is why they are more active and assertive. In contrast, women's politeness and inactiveness show their subordinate position in the social hierarchy which is limited to certain tasks. All three images depict social semiotics. These images indicate the explicit patterns of ideological representation.

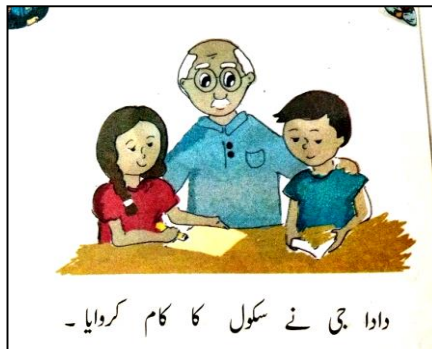


Figure 6: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.87

Gender Stereotyping in the Illustrations of . . .

In the same way, Image 2 on page 84 represents strong evidence regarding the stereotypical gender roles as men are considered apt at decision-making and taking leadership roles. Moreover, a man always prefers his duties and daily activities over a woman's important tasks. Women have a secondary role while men have a primary role when they are portrayed in a collaborative task. Hence, men are portrayed in executive roles whereas women are more pictured on receiving ends.



Figure 7: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.104

In the given picture above, the female character is again busy with household chores. She is taking care of her family and her role is again limited and depicts specific characteristics. The textbooks employ the same rhetoric in the conveyance of ideological and cultural messages as the linguistic system. Therefore, students receive plenty of information from them. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), such conceptual patterns develop the identity of the participants because they refer to symbolic structures or symbolic attributes.

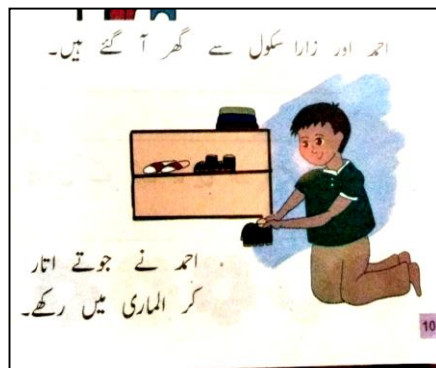


Figure 8: Urdu - Class 1 by Punjab Text Book Board p.101

Similarly, in image 7 on page number 101, a male child character is illustrated as a responsible child. The image carries the conceptual representation of a gender-biased stereotype which depicts the social norms and cultural practices. It supports the conceptual representation of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The male child is presented as responsible, disciplined and mature which carries the concept of men as independent, disciplined and mature in comparison to women.

4.4 Textual and Content Analysis

This section briefly talks about the content and textual analysis of the Urdu Textbook. The preliminary glance represents that the roles and responsibilities of women were categorically defined within the context of their family units. They earn respect because they take care of their families. Moreover, they were shown in the sphere of indoor and domestic activities rather than outdoor and economical activities. Similarly, the textbook lacks the inclusion of any female popular personality. Kotsalidou (2003) elaborated in her research that Pakistani textbooks never portray the struggle of women. However, it is evident from history that there were many famous females who actively participated in the struggle of Pakistan. The overall analysis depicts the following described qualities of males and females based on their genders:

Table 1: The Described Qualities of Males and Females Based on Gender

Female	Male
Emotional	Rational
Indoor chores	Outdoor duties
Domestic	National/ international
Female Children	Adult Males
Passive/ obedient	Active/ Decision maker
Leader	Follower

The visual analysis was focused on finding the alert participant, gaze direction, visual techniques, and space in which the participants were presented. Similarly, the content and textual analysis in the Urdu textbook revealed that men were represented as powerful, independent, goal-oriented and useful members of society. In contrast, women appeared as less active and more reactive and socially less weak and influential.

5. Discussion

The detailed semiotic analysis of selected illustrations enables us to reach the conclusion that there is gender discrimination prevalent in the Urdu textbooks for the elementary classes. The content of these books carries gender insensitivity and shapes the mindset of the young learners. Such illustrations depict prescribed goals for specific genders and both the genders are demonstrated in different ways. Such kinds of portrayals which are based on gender disparity even strengthen the ideology of gender discrimination. It shapes the mindset which develops derogatory behaviors toward women and treats them as powerless.

5.1 Production and Reproduction of Gender Stereotyping at Early School Years through Textbooks

Different gender stereotypes were produced and reproduced through the textbook. The portrayal of women characters was weak and powerless. After the detailed analysis of selected illustrations, it was noticed that the female characters were marginalized. Their roles and duties were confined to domestic activities. They were shown busy performing different household duties including cleaning, cooking, and taking care of the families. They were shown as passive characters who cannot make the decisions in their lives. However, men were shown as brave, powerful and heads of the families.

5.2 Influence on the Mindsets of the Textbook Consumers

Such stereotypes were analyzed influential in shaping up the mindsets in general. The tendency of illustrating women as a short-heighted being or as a weak creature was established through this discrimination. Similarly, it was conveyed that sports are for men, while the indoor games were for girls. The intellectual and prestigious occupations like doctors, engineers and lawyers were reserved for the men while the women were mostly grandmothers, mothers and the teachers only. In Pakistani context, women are doctors, lawyers and pilots but in textbooks they are not given the due occupancy.

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

Academic textbooks are considered an important tool in the construction of socio-political beliefs. Moreover, they shape the attitudes of the young learners. It is the need of the hour to alter the gender-related stereotypes in the Urdu textbook of Grade 1, published by the Punjab Textbook Board. Following are a few proposed recommendations for this purpose:

- The policymakers shouldn't represent women as weaker creatures and as if they cannot participate in any intellectual activity. Equal representation should be given to men and women in almost every field and profession. Moreover, their roles shouldn't be restricted to their domestic lives.
- Men's characters mustn't be glorified. Famous Pakistani women's personalities should be represented in a respectful manner in order to acknowledge their efforts. Moreover, prejudiced material against women should be removed from the syllabus.
- Women curriculum designers should also be the part of syllabus/ content designing committee.

According to Apple (2004), "hegemony is not supernatural rather it is the part of the society where we all live" so it is the need of the hour to represent both the genders equally in current affairs, family portrayal and even in the history whether political or religious. Similarly, gender-related stereotyping and its illustration should be eliminated from the curriculum in order to represent the status of the women as equal, strong and independent members of the society.

References

- Ahmed, F. B. 2006. Male Bias in School Texts. The Tribune Online Edition. Chandigarh, India (Feb. 26). <http://www.tribuneindia.com>
- Apple, W. M. 2004. *Ideology and Curriculum*. New York: Routledge.
- Ashton, E. 1983. Measures of play behavior: The influence of sex-role stereotyped children's books. *Sex Roles*, 9, 43-47.
- Blumberg, L. R. 2009. The invisible obstacle to educational equality: gender bias in textbooks Rae Lesser Blumberg Published online: 7 April 2009 _ UNESCO IBE 2009
- Duveen, G. 2000. Introduction: The power of ideas. In G. Duveen (Ed.) *Social representations: Studies in social psychology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Ellis, J. 2002. Stre: Subservience: Gender Bias in West Bengal School Textbooks. *Manushi*, 128:23-24.
- Fahim, K. A. 2010. Gender Issues and Textbooks: Gender Bias in Pashto Primary School Textbooks in Afghanistan. Karlstads University. Unpublished
- Frawley, T. J. 2008. Gender Schema and Prejudicial Recall: How Children Misremember, Fabricate, and Distort Gendered Picture Book Information. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 22(3), 291-303.
- Goffman, E. (1979). *Gender Advertisements*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gupta, A. F., & Lee, A. S. Y. (1989). Gender representation in English textbooks used in the Singapore primary schools. *Language and Education*, 4(1), 29-50.
- Jassey, I. A. 1998. "Gender in Elementary School Texts." *Japan Quarterly* 45 (January- March):87-93.
- Kereszty, O. 2009. Gender in Textbooks. Practice and Theory in Systems of Education, 4(2), 1-7. Retrieved from <http://www.freeweb.hu/eduscience/0901Kereszty.pdf>
- Kotsalidou, E. (2003). The ideology through the language textbooks of primary school. *Education Issues* (12), pp. 23-39.
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2006). *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Liu, Y. 2002. Socialization of the Gender Role as Seen from BaoBao's Family Classroom. *Chinese Education and Society* 35(5) (September-October): 3-13.
- Mattu, A. & Hussain, N. 1986. Gender Biases and Stereotypes in School Texts*. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN ASIAN SCHOOLS: Pakistan Curriculum Jungle, An analysis emerging out of the SAHE consultation on the undergraduate core curriculum in Pakistan, Ed. Hamid Kizilbash, SAHE, Lahore, 1986.
- Martin, C. L., Wood, C. H., & Little, J. K. (1990). The development of gender stereotype components. *Child Development*, 61, 1891-1904.

- Mirza, M. 2004. *Gender Analysis of School Curriculum and Text Books* UNESCO, Islamabad. Copyright © 2006 UNESCO, Islamabad, Pakistan. This publication is available at: UNESCO Office # 17, St. 8, F-7/3 Islamabad, Pakistan
- Pandey, K. 2007. *Gender Issues and Indian Textbooks*. New Delhi: Author The Convention on the Right of the Child, 1990. articles 32.1/32.2
- Stromquist, N.P. 1990. Gender Inequality in Education: Accounting for Women's Subordination. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 11:2:137-153
%%<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1392827> Accessed 19 December 2018
- World Bank. 1999. *Engendering Development: Through gender equality in rights, resources, and voice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Zeenat-un-Nisa. 1989. *Sex Discrimination in Education: Content Analysis of Pakistani School Textbooks*. Netherland Institute of social Studies.