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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representations in the Content of 5th Grade English Language Textbook

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A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gender Representations in the Content of 5th Grade English Language Textbook

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Abstract

This study investigates gender representation in an English language textbook taught to the students of Grade-5 in public and private schools in Punjab (Pakistan) by applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model. For this purpose, content and critical discourse analyses approaches were applied to check eight-factor gender discrimination in the said textbook. As a result, it was observed that the said textbook was highly gender biased which represented males more than females. It also appeared that the said textbook had been designed to maintain male dominance in implicit as well as explicit ways. Such state of affairs may lead to gender discrimination in practical lives. Therefore, the study suggests that both genders should be represented in an equalized proportion. This can be achieved by increasing the number of female authors and sensitizing the teachers about gender discrimination and asking them to highlight gender biased issues in education.

Keywords: content analysis, gender bias, gender discrimination, gender representation, male dominance through ELT contents, textbook analysis

Un Análisis Crítico del Discurso de la Representación del Género en los Contenidos de los Libros de Texto de 5º Curso de Inglés

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Resumen

Este estudio investiga la representación del género en los libros de texto de inglés utilizados por el alumnado de 5º curso en las escuelas públicas y privadas de Punjab (Pakistán) a partir del modelo de tres dimensiones de Fairclough. Con este objetivo llevamos a cabo análisis críticos de discurso y de contenido para comprobar ocho factores de discriminación sexual en dichos libros. Como resultado observamos que los libros de texto presentan un gran sesgo de género representando a los hombres más que a las mujeres. Así mismo hallamos que el texto fue concebido para mantener la dominación de los hombres de forma implícita y explícita. Esta concepción de los materiales de estudio puede conducir a discriminación sexual en la práctica. Por lo tanto, el estudio sugiere que ambos性es deberían aparecer equitativamente representados. Esto puede conseguirse aumentando el número de autoras y sensibilizando al profesorado sobre la discriminación de género y pidiéndoles que destaque los temas objeto de sesgo de género en educación.

Palabras clave: análisis de contenido, sesgo de género, discriminación de género, representación de género, dominación masculina a través de los contenidos de los LTI, análisis de libros de texto

Women are from Venus, men are from Mars, is a phrase which is most often used to explain the observed differences in the ways men and women feel, think or act. It implies the inevitability of difference by signifying that women and men have originated from such planets as are poles apart from one another. It also implies that men and women are as naturally different from one another as if they are separate species (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Ellemers, 2018). Such type of thinking about male and female differences has created gender inequality which has further caused a meaningful gender bias (Alba, 2018).

Gender bias has largely been observed and acknowledged in education (Blumberg, 2008; Clark Blickenstaff, 2005; European Commission, 2016; Francisco, 2007; Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Kemp, 1977; Kobia, 2009; Mahmood, 2011; Ritz, Antle, Côté, Deroy, Fraleigh, Messing & Mergler, 2014; Zeenatunissa, 1989). In fact, there has been a long history of depicting women and men in stereotypical ways in school textbooks (Bazzul & Sykes, 2011; Durrani, 2008; Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012; Kabira & Masinjila, 1997; Leo & Cartagena, 1999; Macleod & Norrby, 2002; Mirza, 2004; Siren, 2018; Ullah & Haque, 2016; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). In Blumberg's view, the depiction of gender bias in textbooks started shortly after the emergence of Second Women's Movement in the 1960's (2008). This bias in education, particularly through EFL textbooks, has been an imperceptible barrier to equality in education i.e. there is a widespread inequality in the male-female representation in the textbooks. This discrepancy regarding unequal gender representation may cause a limited understanding of the societal role which a female plays and to fewer opportunities available to the female learners to practice the target language (TL) than the male ones (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015; Brusokaitė, 2013; Ebadi, Salman & Marjal, 2015; Gershuny, 1977; Nagatomo, 2010; Nofal & Qawar, 2015; Siren, 2018).

Turner-Bowker (1996) opines that the textbooks teach the learners about which behaviour is inappropriate or appropriate for them. In addition, the said books work as a source from which the learners acquire gender stereotypes. These stereotypes between female as well as male sexes can clearly be seen in different domains such as economy and politics. Many measures have been taken to bridge the gap between male and female

stereotypes. However, it is evident from the results of a number of studies on gender, e.g. Blumberg (2008), Durrani (2008), Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012), Hamdan and Jalabneh (2009), Khurshid, Gillaniz and Hashmi (2010), Kobia (2009), Lesikin (1998, 2001), Ram (2008), Samadikhian and Shahrokhi (2014), Shah (2012), Shteiwi (2003), that this gap has not so far satisfactorily been abridged in the EFL/ESL textbooks (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010; Brusokaite, 2013; Foroutan, 2012; Ndura, 2004; Nofal & Qawar, 2015; Siren, 2018; Stockdale, 2006).

It is important to mention here that the researchers and scholars rely to seek guidance from critical discourse analysis for the examination of textbooks for different purposes. The reason behind it, according to Fairclough, is that Critical discourse analysis is a discipline which helps uncover concealed as well as visible socio-political values and norms. It is, in fact, a multi-disciplinary approach which discovers political as well as social contexts in order to unveil ideologies, social power abuse, hegemony and dominance (1989, 2001). Therefore, critical discourse analysis, being a multi-functional approach, has diverse applications in various fields and education also falls among these fields. A significant application of CDA, which has greatly succeeded in attracting the interest of many scholars as well as researchers in the field of education, is the textbooks' analysis in general and ELT materials' analysis in particular. Now, with the help of CDA, it has become very easy to analyze textbooks from different dimensions e.g. ethnicity, gender representation, cultural factors etc. (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015).

Designing a textbook, especially an ELT textbook, requires consideration of a number of factors such as ethnicity, age, class, mental level, gender, purpose etc. However, it is doubtless to say that the examination of any textbook can unveil the patterns through which the contents of a textbook are being included and even excluded to hide or highlight any particular factor. Thus, realizing the gravity of the claims based on sound findings of above researches, this study aims to examine the representation of males and females in the English language textbook taught in all public and some private schools to the students of Grade-5 in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan in the light of Fairclough's (1989, 2001) three dimensional model. For this purpose, it intends to seek answer of the following question:

Have both genders been equally represented in the English language textbook for 5th Grade taught in public and private schools in Punjab, Pakistan?

A limitation of the study is that it focuses on one textbook only. Therefore, its results are not generalisable. For this purpose, another study with a larger sample would be required.

Review of Related Literature

A large number of researchers have conducted studies to examine gender representation in school textbooks employing content analysis method on texts as well as illustrations. One of these studies on English language textbooks was conducted by Ram (2008) who examined gender biases in primary school textbooks taught in public sector schools in Pakistan. Ram conducted a content analysis of textbook illustrations and the results indicated that they reflected gender biases as found in Pakistan. Female representation (30.1%) was considerably lower as compared to male images (69.9%) and women were presented in stereotyped roles. For example, the occupational role of women was restricted to traditional ‘women professions’, such as nurse, and household work was typically shown to be a female’s only domain.

Durrani (2008) conducted a study to explore the ways by which textbooks as well as national curriculum constructed Pakistani identities and gender reciprocally. She approached her study through the representation of a particular Pakistani identity version. Her research revealed multi-dimensional aspects including national identity, inequality, power, socio-cultural heterogeneity etc. Gender discrimination was also the focus of her study and she observed that males were shown in superior roles regarding military and leadership whereas, women were limited to subjugated ones. Moreover, girls were represented through two female icons only whereas the boys were represented through many religious reformers, conquerors and martyrs. In addition, females were found to be excluded from paid jobs and their role was limited to being ideal women for care and nurture.

Khurshid, Gillaniz and Hashmi (2010) conducted a research to examine gender representation in secondary school level textbooks through image analysis and noted that the images depicting females had been less-depicted with discriminatory representation. So far as the activities were concerned, women were shown to be involved in religious and domestic activities.

Mahmood (2011) discussed the features of a good textbook and investigated the absence or presence of these features in the textbooks endorsed by the Ministry of Education, Pakistan in the light of curricula. He collected the data from 51 Pakistani curriculum experts using eight features of quality textbook as an instrument. Results revealed that the approved textbooks lacked in many of the desired features and among these features gender bias was also prevalent.

Shah (2012) conducted a research to explore the gender inclusion in English language textbooks taught at the secondary school level in Punjab, Pakistan. Through content analysis technique of textbooks, interview and questionnaire, she observed that equal gender inclusion in the said books was almost indiscernible. The representation of females was not in equal proportion with the males. Female roles appeared to be orthodox ones. Most of the female role models depicted in the said textbooks were associated with the religion of Islam. On the basis of these findings, she concluded that women formed more than half of the total of Pakistani population but still they were completely ignored.

Similarly, Ullah and Skelton (2013) studied gender bias in the textbooks of different subjects including social studies, Urdu and English taught to the students of Grades 1-8 in Pakistani schools. Their study revealed that the said textbooks were full of stereotypical representations and gender-biased messages. Through this study, they invited the attention of the concerned persons towards the issue of gender-blinded curriculum and textbook designing.

Azhar, Khalid and Mehmood (2014) conducted a corpus based comparative stylistic analysis of British as well as Pakistani English Fiction books with an aim to examine gender representation in terms of attitude and status. They based their corpus on the instances of ‘she is’ and ‘he is’ in connection with the complements coming after them. Through corpus analysis process with the help of AntConc, they found that the gender depiction was relatively characteristic of the cultures it was related to. The

appearance of ‘he is’ and ‘she is’ in British English Fiction was balanced whereas the representation in Pakistani English Fiction was based on the inferiority of women and the superiority of men.

Nofal and Qawar (2015) conducted a study with an aim to investigate gender representations in an ELT textbook taught in Jordan. As a result, they found that male characters were socially, visually and linguistically over-presented. The ratio of females-males appearance in illustrations and texts was 1:3. They also found that men monopolized more societal roles than women. On the basis of these results, they concluded their study that the ‘Action Pack 10’ had failed to reflect the modern Jordanian society where women were highly admired and given excellent positions.

In another study Ullah and Haque (2016) analyzed 24 textbooks for Grades 1-8 of Social Studies, Urdu and English subjects from feminist point of view, particularly in the light of social constructionist theory of ‘gender’, to study the representation of girls and boys. With the help of qualitative content-analysis technique, they reached a conclusion that the said school textbooks were replete with gender-bias illustrations which might affect adversely on the identity formation process of the children.

In her review of various studies and reports, Masud (2017), reached a conclusion that the textbooks taught in Pakistani schools were not presenting males and females in equal proportion. She regarded it a matter of the serious concern which needed to be immediately controlled in larger interest of posterities. In this regard, she suggested some measures i.e. number of female writers be increased, writers should be sensitized about gender biases and the teachers should be trained to highlight issues concerning gender bias.

Islam and Asadullah (2018) took public secondary school English language textbooks from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia and Pakistan to perform a quantitative content analysis to spot gender stereotypes using 21 categories of representation and exclusion in terms of quality as well as quantity. Results of their study revealed pro-male bias in textbooks. Females were observed to be represented in inferior quality. Their occupations were observed to be traditional as well as less prestigious mostly featured with passive and introverted personality traits. So far as the quantity of women representation in the said countries’ textbooks was concerned, the study stated it being 40.4% which was observed to be involved in domestic as well

as in-door activities. Under-representation of females in Pakistani textbooks, in terms of quantity as well as quality, was found to be robust to the selection of grade-specific, province-specific and subject-specific textbooks, as well as the type and range of categories.

Research Methodology

Content of the Study

The content for this study has been taken from the book of English language taught to the students of Grade-5 for the academic year 2017-18. This book is supposed to be taught in academic session 2018-19 as well. This book is prepared and published under the supervision of Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB), Lahore, Pakistan. PCTB is patronized by the Government of Punjab, Pakistan and its textbooks are taught in all public and some private sector schools in Punjab Province.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of analysis of the data, the study relies on the following process:

Content Analysis. Content analysis, according to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), as cited in El Kholy (n.d.), is a systematic study of non living data forms, cultural products and texts. It helps the researchers analyze different objects in a systematic way by interpreting the themes contained in them (Reinharz, 1992). In the views of Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007), content analysis has great appeal for feminist researchers i.e. they can employ it to examine the degree to which female issues are explored. Moreover, feminist researchers, according to Reinharz, may utilize content analysis technique to “identify patterns in authorship, subject matter, methods and interpretation. Findings for such studies are then used to generate or test hypotheses relevant to feminist theory and concerns or to press for social change” (1992, p. 155).

Critical Discourse Analysis. The establishment of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a well defined discipline, according to El Kholy dates back to the late 1980s when it appeared as a programmatic development in European discourse studies led by Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak (n.d.). Now, it has emerged as one of the most influential fields of discourse analysis (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). CDA explores the relationship between linguistic choices within the texts and talks with regard to particular socio-cultural contexts in which these texts and talk function. Thus CDA, according to Van Dijk, is mainly concerned with investigating the ways dominance, social power abuse and inequality are reproduced, enacted and resisted by text and talk in different social and political contexts (1999). Thus, it attempts to lay down such aspects of social contexts as might affect the aspects of a language. Since, critical discourse analysis focuses on how language as a cultural tool mediates the correlation of privilege and power in social interactions, the researchers from the field of education have started using it as a means to interpret, describe or explain different educational problems, such as gender inequality.

Model for Analysis. For the interpretation of data, the study employs Fairclough's (1989, 2001) three-dimensional model. The three dimensions are, in fact, three different kinds of constraints i.e. "constraints on contents, relations and subjects" (p. 61). Fairclough (1989, 2001) stresses that these constraints are "relatively immediate and concrete terms" (p. 61). It is important to mention here that the power behind the discourse which has "long term structural effects of a more general sort" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 61) is the main focus of this study. Fairclough (2001) says that "achieving coordination and commonality of practice in respect of knowledge and beliefs, social relationships, and social identities" (p. 62) require a number of mechanisms which vary from society to society. He classifies these mechanisms in different kinds which are acknowledged universally i.e. (1) "inculcation" and (2) "communication" mechanisms (Fairclough, 2001, p. 62). For the analysis of this study, the mechanisms which are "imposed in the exercise of power in a largely

hidden fashion” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 62) have been addressed and investigated.

Procedure of Analysis. Study utilizes eight-factor procedure, as adapted from Amerian and Esmaili (2015), to examine the content of the said textbook in a systematic way i.e. inclusion/exclusion of males and females, male and female societal role, male and female semantic role, male and female titles, masculine generic construction, order of appearance, activities both genders involved in and pictorial representation of both sexes.

Results

Discrimination through Exclusion or Inclusion

Concept of inclusion means the depiction of one gender more than the other and the exclusion means less or no depiction of one gender than the other. Over-inclusion of one gender in something, whether texts, talks or images implies that, that particular gender has great worth as compared to the gender which is less included or totally excluded (Kim, 2014; Yaghoubi-Notash & Nouri, 2016).

Inclusion-exclusion of genders has largely been observed in the English language textbook taught to the students of Grade-5 studying in public and private schools of Punjab Province. Representation of males is much more than females in all respects. Only two females have been mentioned within the book by name whereas males have been mentioned 12 times by their names. Moreover, males have been observed to be mentioned with proper nouns whereas the women have been mentioned with common nouns and pronouns and even these mentions are much less as compared to men. Similarly, there are 13 lessons in the said textbook out of which only one lesson has been titled after a female name whereas two lessons have been named with male names. All of this shows that female inclusion in the said textbook is much less as compared to that of males.

Discrimination through Stereotypical Representation

The term gender stereotype refers to the roles ascribed to the genders based on their perceived or actual sexes (Alters & Schiff, 2009; Basow, 1992; Gochman, 2013). It is also popularly known as a sex role (Levesque, 2011). Gender roles are usually centered on the conceptions of masculinity and femininity (Alters & Schiff, 2009) although there are variations and exceptions (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015).

Gender stereotypes have also been found in the said textbook. Man has been shown as a reformer, saviour, lawyer, politician, teacher, scientist and manager whereas, woman has been shown as a mother, aunt and wife. Woman has been mentioned in one major role only i.e. teacher. But this happened in one lesson only. The rest of the book ascribes key roles to males only. This clearly shows that the content of said textbook is gender biased i.e. male dominated.

Discrimination through Semantic Roles

In semantic roles females have been depicted in inferior positions to those of males i.e. they are shown dependent to men. Men have been shown enjoying key positions like; teachers, lawyers, providers, managers whereas females have been shown as housewives. Only two females have been mentioned in roles shared with males i.e. of a teacher and the other one is by Arfa Karim who is attending conferences and visiting abroad. But these representations are much less as compared to those of men.

Discrimination through Titular Representation

English language uses different titles for both genders. It uses Mr. for males and Mrs., Miss and Ms. for females. According to feminists these differences in the ascription of titles for both genders are a major cause of gender discrimination. However, here the case is otherwise. Males have been called by their titles many times in the book. The use of Mr. has been found to occur frequently. But female title has been used much less in frequency. It is surprising to note here that only two females have been called by their

names and only one of them has been called by the title i.e. ‘Miss Nadia’. Other than ‘miss’ no female title has been used in the textbook. In comparison, male title has repeatedly been used in the book as ‘Mr. Jawad’, ‘Mr. Wasif’. This also shows unequal and biased representation of male and female genders.

Discrimination through Order of Appearance

‘Order of appearance’ means being in first or second mention in a discourse. It is thought that first in mentions is given more worth than the one in second mentions. In this textbook, male superiority and dominance has been shown by mentioning females after the males in textual stretches. There are 31 total co-mentions of males and females in the same sentences out of which 20 times males have been mentioned at first positions.

Discrimination through Representation in Activities

This part signifies the activities which males and females are involved in. Content of the book shows that all social and outside activities including sports, going to school, homework, working in offices or fields have been monopolized by the males. Whereas, females have been shown to be restricted to household chores except two females, one of them is a student and other is a teacher. It appears that there is a typical pattern governing the activities ascribed to both genders in which females are depicted in inferior activities to males.

Discrimination through Male Generic Construction

Male generic construction is also known as androcentrism. It is the conscious practice of placing a masculine view point at the center of one's worldview regarding history or culture and thereby marginalizing femininity culturally (Liddell, Scott, Jones & Barber, 1968).

The concept of androcentrism also seems to be prevailing in the textbook under study. Males have been mentioned with names, proper nouns, titles like Mr. CEO, king, Quide.e.Azam, Jan's father, uncle. Whereas, females

have been mentioned as wife, wives, woman, mother, and old woman. It is important to mention here that the book uses nouns or pronouns related with both genders. However, the frequent use of boy(s), man, men, he, his and him means that the textbook has been constructed from androcentric point of view.

Discrimination through Pictorial Representation

Ten pictures have been shown in different lessons of the textbook. In all of these pictures male dominance is quite visible. Males have been depicted in eight whereas females have been depicted in two pictures only. Moreover, there is not even a single picture representing a female independently i.e. in both of the pictures female has been shown with man. This is the indication of female's dependence on males.

Discussion

Eight-factor investigation of the textbook shows that gender bias is deep-rooted in its content. Results validate the claim by Azhar, Khalid and Mahmood (2014), Durrani (2008), Islam and Asadullah (2018), Khurshid, Gillaniz and Hashmi (2010), Masud (2017), Mirza (2004), Ram (2008), Shah (2012), Ullah and Haque (2016), Ullah and Skelton (2013), Zeenatunnisa (1989) that Pakistani textbooks are replete with gender bias. According to Amerian and Esmaili (2015) it can be an organized and systematic manipulation of the content, in which both sexes, particularly females, have been presented in a way by which, females appear to be inferior to males. Gender bigotry is apparent in all spheres of life represented in the textbook except the household roles or activities. Thus, males and females have not equally been represented in the textbook even in such activities as can be considered suitable for them. Moreover, passive activities have been ascribed to females and active as well as highly esteemed activities have been ascribed to males. Furthermore, limiting females to domestic roles only shows stereotypical as well as androcentrical treatment against females.

According to Masud (2017) and Smith (1991) education has the power to structure attitudes, perception and behaviour of human beings. It is used as an instrument to promote national identity and boost the privilege of some social groups over the others including males' over females'. These privileges particularly inequalities are defined, reproduced, shaped, reinforced and promoted through education in implicit as well as explicit ways. Hidden curriculum can be taken as an example for signifying implicit ways of promoting privileges in favour of certain social groups. Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland (1997) exemplified a relationship between a hidden curriculum and its implications for pedagogical and cognitive development through gender inequality in dialogues. According to them, if the examples of a dialogue between the members of one sex are less depicted, the learners of silenced sex will participate less in dialogues. Similarly, if the member of one gender starts dialogue most frequently, the members of other gender will grow as passive participants in conversations or dialogues. This factor negatively influences on learners' cognition. As a result, they automatically start refraining from playing such roles as are professionally or linguistically restricted in education system. Results of this study and some others mentioned above depict males in privileged and females in non-privileged or marginalised positions. This marginalisation in textbooks indirectly prepares female learners to accept privileged roles for man and unprivileged roles for themselves. As a result, according to a United Nation Development Program's report by Jāhāna (2015) and a World Bank's (2011) report females remain marginialised in as well as outside of the household.

Thus, such a positioning of females and males, as described in above paragraph, may have negative effects i.e. it can deliriously affect female learners (Lesikin, 1998, 2001) by creating the feelings of alienation, devaluation, exclusion and inferior expectations in them (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012) resulting in limiting the behavioural, linguistic and social roles of female learners (Amini & Barjandi, 2012). In this way, it can limit females' career choices as well as worldviews and distort their self-image as well as the image of the males (Britton & Lumpkin, 1977), can raise learners as gendered subjects (Durrani, 2008), can limit the learners' future scope (Ndura, 2004) and above all, it may lead learners sense of what is normal for females and males (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012). It is because, as Vitz

(1986) has explained, “the facts, interpretations, and values taught today’s children will largely determine the character of tomorrow’s citizenry” (p. 4). Therefore, such type of depiction in the textbooks signifies what it means to be a child in a particular context, which includes the learning of gender identities in the process of socialization.

Textbooks are specifically more critical in this regard. For, they figure the realistic knowledge of things children are assumed to learn and are used say, Sumalatha and Ramakrishnaiah, as effective tools to develop the desirable attitudes in learners (2004). Sometimes, in the view of Yasin, Hamid, Keong, Othman and Jaludin, textbooks work as a channel for the indoctrination of sexism (2012) which can scheme as gender stereotyping in young minds (Kereszty, 2009).

In Pakistani textbooks gender discrimination is prevalent (Azhar, Khalid & Mahmood, 2014; Durrani, 2008; Khurshid, Gillaniz & Hashmi, 2010; Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Mahmood, 2011; Masud, 2017; Mirza, 2004; Ram, 2008; Shah, 2012; Ullah & Haque, 2016; Ullah & Skelton, 2013; UNESCO, 2004). In Pakistan, national identity presented in the textbooks creates an “understanding of relative positioning of religion and gender in relation to nationhood” among the children (Durrani, 2008, p. 599), Pakistani textbooks reflect pro-male bias (Islam & Asadullah, 2018), depict gender disparities as found in Pakistani societies (Ram, 2008) and lack in many of quality features among which equal representation of gender is dominant (Mahmood, 2011). For example, a study on 194 textbooks, taken from all the four provinces of Pakistan, found that the national curriculum at school level mirrored gender to a great degree (UNESCO, 2004). The study also revealed that the textbooks contained only 7.7% representation of females. Among most of them were taken from Islamic history.

The context in which females are generally depicted in Pakistani textbooks is also gender biased. Mostly, females are represented as being powerless, tolerant, dependent, pious, and caring and nurturing children and husbands (Durrani, 2008; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). In the view of Mirza (2004) females are represented with passive attributes e.g. dear, noble and modest whereas males are represented with bold attributes e.g. brave and truthful. In addition, females are depicted in typical womanistic roles like cooking, washing dresses, cleaning, and raising the children. Similarly, in

professional sphere the role of a woman is restricted to limited fields i.e. teaching, etc. (Durrani, 2008; Masud, 2017; Ram, 2008; Ullah & Skelton, 2013; UNESCO, 2004). Zeenatunnisa (1989) summarised these roles by calling them as ‘service-oriented’ roles for females and ‘power-oriented’ roles for males whereas, Shah (2012) termed these roles as ‘orthodox’ ones. Females, in Pakistani textbooks, are also represented in inferior quality as compare to males and their occupations are shown to be traditional as well as less prestigious mostly featured with passive and introverted personality traits (Islam & Asadullah, 2018). Azhar, Khalid and Mahmood (2014) described this presentation as based on male superiority and female inferiority.

Such a systematically discriminated representation of genders is conditioning the young children as gender conscious individuals. It is interesting to note here that Durrani conducted a study on children in 2008. She asked some boys and girls to draw the image of ‘us’. She observed that none of the male participants drew a female portrait. On the other hand, female participants drew female portraits but they were shown in domestic activities. Then she asked the participants of her study to pick the icons of their choice from the textbooks. She noticed that most of the boys selected male icons and girls opted for female icons. When she asked about the reason for opting female icons, her female participants replied that they opted for ‘good wives or good mothers’.

Biased representation of both genders and gender-specific conditioned learning and growth of children in our country where women form more than half of the total population is not justified. For, there is a fear that it may raise the children as gender subjects (Durrani, 2008), affect negatively on the personalities of the females. As a result, they may fail to realize their potentials (Amerian & Esmaili, 2015). Moreover, it may also adversely affect the identity formation process of the children (Ullah & Haque, 2016). Therefore, efforts should be made to represent both genders in equal share. Such as: (i) textbook adoption committees should be formed to evaluate the textbooks for the factual coverage of race, class and gender. Moreover, teachers should call for publishers to have a balanced ratio of genders in the textbooks. Wherever, textbooks fail to ensure equal gender representation, the teachers should themselves supplement the material to balance the

coverage of both genders (Chick, 2006); (ii) regular in-house trainings should be conducted on gender issues, to devise evaluation checklists for the identification of gender stereotypes and development of a more gender inclusive curriculum (Kobia, 2009); (iii) a pool of textbook assessment experts having shared understanding of the criteria for textbook review and evaluation should be formed (Mahmood, 2011) and (iv) an increase in the number of female writers and sensitization of teachers as well as writers regarding gender bias should be ensured to eliminate gender bias in the school textbooks (Durrani, 2008; Masud, 2017) which, in the view of Ullah and Skelton (2013), are based on ‘gender-blinded designing’.

Conclusion

The textbooks, particularly English language textbook taught to the students of Grade-5 in public and private sector schools in Punjab, Pakistan, are gender biased. There is an unequal representation of both genders in the said textbook where males are shown in dominant and influential positions whereas, females have been shown in comparatively dependent and inferior positions. Thus, the content of the textbook seems to be systematically manipulated in favour of males. This practice is against the fair-treatment principle of both genders. Therefore, special measures should be taken to eliminate gender bias from the textbooks so that we might have a sound society where both genders be treated equally.

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