Gender Representation in Indonesian ELT Textbooks: The Hidden Bias

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Abstract

Empirical research has highlighted the persistence of gender bias over centuries despite the global initiatives to promote gender equality and remove gender bias in various spheres including education. The contents of educational materials like textbooks can exert a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing the learners' views and perceptions especially about gender roles. Addressing gender bias in textbooks is necessary in fostering a more equitable educational environment equitable, hence, promoting equitable society for future generations. The present study examined gender bias in three ELT Indonesian textbooks for three levels of education (*When English Rings a Bell for Grade VII*, *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII*, and *Think Globally and Act Locally for Grade IX*). Specifically, it investigated the distribution, types and the representation of gender bias in these textbooks. It employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis to provide a more comprehensive outcomes on the gender bias presented in the textbooks. The findings indicate that gender bias is present in the three textbooks despite the urge by the Directorate General of Legislation and Regulations (2016) that textbooks must be devoid of gender stereotypes, bias, and discrimination. The portrayal of gender in the textbooks reinforces stereotype social constructs where men are depicted in leading and active roles, while women are usually shown in passive or secondary positions. This can affect the learners' conscious and subconscious views on their own attitude, career choice and social behaviour. To develop educational materials that are free of gender-based stereotypes and reflect balanced representations of both genders, concerted effort from policy makers, educators, authors and publishers are important.

Keywords gender bias, stereotyping, textbooks

INTRODUCTION

There have been numerous global initiatives like UN Women movements, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (USAID) and The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations) to promote gender equality and remove gender bias in various spheres including education, the workplace, and society at large. However, despite these significant efforts towards achieving gender equality, gender bias remains a prevalent issue in various aspects of society, including educational materials.

Educational materials serve as important learning tools in the teaching and learning process. The contents can exert a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing the learners' views and perceptions especially about gender roles. Many gender-related issues have been extensively discussed and reported in international literature of gender in the context of education, including gender representation, gender stereotyping, and the underrepresentation of women in school textbooks (Goyal and Rose, 2020; Lee and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2020; Wafa, 2021; Bachore and Semela, 2022). These studies highlighted the ongoing gender stereotypes in the learning materials, postulating how the biases can influence and

shape the learners' understanding of gender and its roles in the society, and their expectations for themselves and others based on the gender representation.

Empirical studies have also found that teachers using ELT textbooks may only focus on the syllabus requirement and not critically examine the contents with gender bias presented in the books (Fould, 2013; Salamah, 2014). Thus, they may not look into the language used, images presented, or social relationships portrayed that may overtly or covertly convey biased information against one gender or another. The content, thus, may continue to reflect and portray the traditional, outdated and restrictive reviews that can reinforce gender role stereotypes. This continuation of stereotype reinforcement seems to have aggravated the potential risks to the establishment of gender equality in textbooks. Thus, studies that examined gender bias in the textbooks over the years have perpetually seen the representation of gender bias in the educational resources (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada & Ross, 1972; Sleeter & Grant, 1991; Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Al-Qatawneh & Al-Rawashdeh, 2019; Jingxuan, Zue, Zhang & Zhou, 2021; Ahmad & Tian, 2023).

Addressing gender bias in textbooks is necessary in fostering a more equitable educational environment equitable, hence, promoting equitable society for future generations. Widodo (2016) mentioned that the Indonesian ELT textbooks are not textually free from gender inequalities or bias because any texts and tasks in such textbooks are always gender-laden. He further mentioned that the design of an ELT textbook as a curriculum document or a product of the curriculum must take gender bias into serious consideration because the country recognises gender differences. Thus, textbooks used must be devoid of gender stereotypes, bias, and discrimination (Direktorat Jenderal Peraturan Perundangan-undangan 2016 (Directorate General of Legislation and Regulations 2016)).

In the local Indonesian scene, there have been studies on gender bias in ELT textbooks (Ariyanto, 2018; Saputra, 2019, Julianti et al., 2019; Lestariyana et al. 2020; Rohmawati & Putra, 2022; Nur Amalia, et al., 2024). However, these studies only analysed the textbooks using a single theory. For example, Ariyanto (2018) solely employed van Leeuwen's (2008) theory as the framework for analysis while Saputra (2019) utilised Brugeilles and Cromer's theory (2009). Along the same line, Julianti et al. (2019), Siregar et al. (2021), Rohmawati and Putra (2022) and Lestrariyana (2022) assessed the gender bias in the textbooks using using Porreca' (1984), Halliday and Matthiesen's (2014), Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) and Rifkin's (1998) frameworks respectively. In addition, these studies mainly used the quantitative design and each only assessed one particular text book. The present study added to the body of knowledge by examining three ELT books for three levels of education (*When English Rings a Bell for Grade VII*, *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII*, and *Think Globally and Act Locally for Grade IX*) and employed both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis to provide a more comprehensive outcomes on the gender bias presented in the textbooks. Furthermore, it combined Solomon's (1988) and Porreca's (1984) frameworks which include the aspects 'gender visibility' in social contexts which have shown little evidence in the empirical studies. The objective of the study is, therefore, to investigate the existence of gender bias in the English textbooks and can best be expressed by the following research questions:

   i.   What is the distribution of gender representation in *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII, When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII*, and *Think Globally, Act Locally for Grade IX*?

   ii. What are the types of gender bias depicted in *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VII, When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII*, and *Think Globally and Act Locally for Grade IX*?

   iii. How is gender bias presented in *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VII, When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII*, and *Think Globally and Act Locally for Grade IX*?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender bias can be simply defined as the tendency to prefer one gender over another (Reiners, 2021). UNESCO (2019) elaborates this as a prejudice or preconceptions and treatment received by people which are generated by differences in gender or gender-based functions. In other words, gender bias refers to the socially constructed expectations and roles of men, women, girls, and boys. Girls and women are expected to act in a feminine manner, whereas boys and men are expected to act in a masculine manner. Table 1 below summarises some common factor patterns as to what are considered as the acceptable masculine and feminine constructs for males and females based on Smith (1985).

Table 1 Factor Patterns of Masculine and Feminine Constructs for Males and Females

Male Constructs	Female Constructs
Coarse	Expressive of emotions
Dominant	Neat
Arrogant	Kind
Aggressive	Sensitive
Masculine	Feminine
Independent	Devotes self to others
Active	Helpful
Decisive	Aware of feelings
Feels superior	Subordinates self
Competitive	Passive
Instrumental	Expressive

These social constructs see men being more instrumental, goal-oriented, masculine, and capable of leadership than women while women are seen as expressive, sensitive, feminine, and serve subordinate role. As for the division of labour, men have been universally assigned the primary responsibility for providing for their families and running their society's social, economic, and political institutions. Women, on the other hand, are expected to carry the primary responsibility for caring for the home and family members. Research has highlighted this gender bias persistence over centuries (Savat, 2023) despite the strides in movement for gender equality.

Gender Bias in Textbooks

Textbooks can be one of the powerful factors in the construction of gender identities. This is because not only they transmit knowledge in the field, they also present social and gender norms through the contents. This can shape the learners' world view, attitudes and practices while at the same time influence and dictate what is expected in terms of behaviour, attributes and aspirations for males and females (Heslop, 2016). The strategic objective B.4 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action urged on countries to develop curricula, textbooks and teaching materials that are free of gender-based stereotypes for all levels of education. However, numerous research in several countries found that even recent publications of textbooks still contain discriminatory forms and values (Lewis & Lupyan, 2020; Cepeda et al., 2021; Semele & Miethe, 2021; Alexopoulos, Stamou & Papadopoulou, 2022; Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022) which conflicts with the concept of gender equality.

The studies on gender bias in the educational sphere also include UNESCO's analysis on 110 national curricula in 78 countries. It found the evidence of gender biases and stereotypes with the images of women being highly under-represented in the textbooks (Chavatzia, 2017). Along the same line, Sarvarzade and Wotipka (2017) in their analysis of textbooks in Afghanistan, published in the 1990s, found that women are almost non-existent from grade 1 textbooks. Although women have been represented more frequently since 2001, they are usually portrayed in passive, domestic and dependent roles. Careerwise, teaching is the only career available to women (Chavatzia, 2017). Similar findings were also observed in Iran, where an analysis of 95 primary and secondary textbooks reveal that women are under-represented in the books with only 37% of images in the books are accounted for women

(Paivandi, 2008). The study further found that nearly half of those images are related to family and education.

Several studies had also been carried out on Indonesian textbooks and revealed similar findings to those in the international contexts. For example, Damayanti (2014) found that there is often more proportion of males than females in the Indonesian primary school English textbooks. The analysis pointed out that gender roles that apply to men and women are described in an asymmetrical manner where men are portrayed with well-paying careers while females are depicted more on their domestic roles and reliant of males. Another relevant study by Suhartono and Kristina (2018) also discovered that males are represented in Indonesian textbooks far more frequently than the opposite gender. The findings revealed that male photographs dominate the category of human images with up to 1113 images (62.8 percent), while female images only reach 663 images (37.2 percent). Similar findings of the portrayal of male and female stereotypes and the inequitable proportions of male and female representations in the ELT textbooks were also reported in the recent studies (Fatmawati et al., 2022; Fithriani, 2023; Nur Amalia et al., 2024; Indri et al., 2024; Ghani et al., 2024).

The evidence from these empirical studies shows that gender biases continue to persist and are perpetuated in textbooks. The present study contributes to the body of knowledge by employing robust frameworks for analysing and addressing gender bias in the textbooks rather than quantifying images like in the empirical studies and, hence, can offer more comprehensive findings.

Frameworks in Analysing Gender Bias in Textbooks

Most societies hold beliefs or have certain perceptions and expectations of how men and women should conduct themselves. These might involve characteristics of gender-biased costumes, activities, areas of expertise and social roles. There have been numerous theories formed which are often used for analysing and addressing gender bias in educational materials. These include the Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987), Standpoint Theory (Harding, 1991), Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992), Feminist Pedagogy (Hooks, 1994), Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), and Hidden Curriculum Theory (Jackson, 1968). These theories posit how societal expectations and norms can shape the behaviours and traits that are associated with each gender from different aspects like gender identities, social and political identities, roles and relations, and expectations. The current study employed Solomon's (1998) and Porecca's (1984) theoretical perspectives that provide a robust framework for indentifying gender bias in the textbooks. This theoretical framework includes aspects that are described in the Feminist Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis, Hidden Curriculum Theory, and Social Cognitive Theory.

Aspects of Gender Bias

Solomon (1988) and Porecca (1988) provide the following aspects for the analysis of gender bias: i. *stereotyping*, ii. *invisibility* or *omission*, iii. *selectivity* or *imbalance*, iv. *fragmentation* or *isolation*, v. *linguistic bias*, vi. *unreality*, and vii. *gender visibility*.

Stereotyping occurs when individuals are portrayed based on generalised constructs about their gender characteristics and roles in the society. Stereotyping disregards the diversity, complexity and variation that exist within any group of people. Thus, stereotyping reinforces the fixed ideas on specific qualities and behaviours of men and women in the private and public spheres like character traits, occupations, and activities and interests. In educational materials, it is common to see boys being depicted as adventurous and independent while girls are portrayed as playing more passive roles (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009).

Another aspect of gender bias is *invisibility* or *omission.* This occurs when one gender, usually females, is entirely or partially excluded from the text. This exclusion implies that that gender group has less value, importance, and significance in the substantive areas discussed in the material. This can occur, for example, in the absence of female characters, lack of female role models, or fewer illustrations of females compared to males. If they occur in the text, usually they will be portrayed in passively undertaking the background roles instead of depicted in leadership positions like males (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Along the same line, *selectivity* or *imbalance* is found when the information given in the content highlights certain types of information like accomplishments, attributes or behaviours in favour of one gender while downplaying those of the other gender. This selective information can lead to a biased portrayal of gender roles and achievement (Blumberg, 2007). This includes highlighting traditional role of males and females, omitting contributions of one gender, and illustrating examples of one gender's achievement while marginalising the other gender's contributions.

Another aspect that can be used to identify gender bias is *fragmentation* or *isolation*. This occurs when information about one gender group, like achievement, contribution or presence, is isolated from the main frame of the text. Fragmentation can lead to the perception that the achievement or contribution from this group is less important compared to those from the other gender. Fragmentation often leads to a perception that these contributions are less important or peripheral. Gender bias from the fragmentation aspect is shown when achievements of one gender is mentioned separately, not in the main text (Sleeter & Grant, 1991). In addition, information about one gender is insufficiently provided and not connected to the themes presented in the text.

Another pertinent aspect in gender bias identification is *linguistic bias*, which is defined as the use of language that excludes, undervalues, or subsumes members of one group or gender. Linguistic bias can be influenced by race/ethnicity, gender, accents, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Linguistic biases are commonly manifested in the forms gendered pronouns, titles, descriptors, and the ordering of words and names. Collectively, these linguistic biases reinforce the traditional gender roles and marginalise certain genders (Porecca, 1984).

Unreality is another aspect highlighted in this framework. It is the omission or distortion of facts of real-life struggles. Unreality is often manifested by the narrow presentation of stereotypical view of genders which exclude the actual reality of people's experiences. An example of this is portraying women as passive and submissive and reduce the visibility of achievements of those who have excelled in many fields (Anyon, (1980).

Another aspect that is considered critical in identifying gender bias is *gender visibility*. Stockdale (2006) claimed that gender visibility refers to the proportion of men and women featured in textbooks. To easily see the appearance of gender in textbooks, the person's name can be used as a type of gender marker. Gender visibility can be examined under two aspects: *firstness* and *masculine generic constructions*. The former refers to the practice of mentioning men first in texts before women, as if 'the masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine' (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p.34). To investigate gender firstness, the current study examined all instances in textbooks where the two genders were mentioned together and determined which appeared first. As for the masculine generic constructions, usage of the masculine as a generic pronoun, which has its roots in English grammar, is another example of gender biasness. In most cases when reading words like man, person, etc., and pronouns like everybody, and somebody in EFL textbooks, people rarely conceptualise females (Porreca 1984). One technique is to use paired pronoun phrases such as he/she, him/her, his/her, and s/he.

METHODOLOGY

The current study employed content analysis as the research design. Three textbooks entitled *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VII* (WERB VII), *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII* (WERB VIII) and *Think Globally Act Locally for Grade IX* (TGAL IX) based on the 2013 National Curriculum were examined. All the three books were written by the same authors and published in 2017, 2017 and 2018 respectively by the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture. Data for analysis were procured from the reading texts, dialogues and images provided in the books.

A document checklist based on Solomon's and Porecca's of gender bias aspects described in the previous section was used to record the findings. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis were used. The portrayal of male and female was measured by the number of their occurrences in the data. The frequency counts and percentage were used to record the existence of gender bias in the books. As for qualitative analysis, the underlying messages of text were inferred based on the presence or absence of the gender bias evidence in the texts. The data analysis was later validated by two inter-raters, who were the experts in the field of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics. Table 2

shows an example of the data display and analysis.

Table 2. Data Display and Analysis

Book: *When English Rings a Bell for Grade VIII*					
Aspect of Gender Bias	**Page No**	**M**	**F**	**Evidence**	**Explanation**
Stereotyping	64		√	My sister and I get up early every day. We make the beds and clean the house. We also help mother to prepare the breakfast for the family. But before that, we never forget to do some exercise. We are just like other people. We take care of our home. When we get home, we do the housework ourselves. We wash the dishes. We also clean the bathroom. We water the plants too.	✓ A stereotype depicting a domestic obligation of girls at home. ✓ A girl is socioculturally assigned to perform a traditionally feminine role (doing domestic chores in the kitchen, cleaning the house, cleaning the bathroom, etc)
Masculine Generic Construction	69	√		Dear Aunty Melvin, Congratulations for the new baby! I cannot wait to play football with him! Your nephew, Kiki	✓ The pronoun 'him' and 'football' depicts the male generic construction that football is a game related to male.

* M – Male
  F – Female

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal numerous evidence of gender bias in the three textbooks examined. As evidence, almost every chapter in the textbooks contains gender bias. They exist in the forms of images, dialogues and descriptions. The following section presents the findings and discussion of the data analysis based on the research questions set for the study.

The distribution of gender representation in the textbooks

The analysis shows unequal representation of males and females in *When English Rings the Bell for Grade VII* (WERB VII), *When English Rings the Bell for Grade VIII* (WERB VIII), and *Think Globally Act Locally for Grade IX* (TGAL IX). Table 3a shows the distribution of gender representation in the textbooks.

Table 3. Distribution of Gender Representation

Textbook	Male	Female	Total
When English Rings the Bell for Grade VII (WERB VII)	33 (53.2%)	29 (46.8%)	62 (100%)
When English Rings the Bell for Grade VIII (WERB VIII)	26 (60.5%)	17 (39.5%)	43 (100%)
Think Globally Act Locally for Grade IX (TGAL IX)	23 (60.5%)	15 (39.5%)	38 (100%)

As can be seen from the table, males are represented more compared to their female counterparts in the three books. All the books contain more than 50% of male representations with WERB VII, WEB VIII and TGAL IX having 53.2%, 60.5% and 60.5% respectively. This is in line with findings from previous studies on ELT textbooks that there were less female representations compared to the male ones. Such findings also confirm Cook's (2015) discovery that gender biases demonstrated in the recent textbooks were comparable to those found in the textbooks published 15-20 years earlier.

Further analysis pointed that the unequal representations of male and female in the textbook are largely due to the topics or themes presented in the books. How the author approaches the topics or themes are related to the gender stereotypes or constructs that are deeply ingrained in the subconscious mind. Thus, when the topic revolves around football, for example, males will be chosen as the representatives. Vu and Thuy (2020) in their research found that authors' decisions on male and female representations in their writing were influenced by both their conscious and unconscious bias. According to an author interviewed, while the choice of male or female characters in the books was not considered from the standpoint of gender (in)equality, it was a habit, a natural act for the author to choose male for paying sports or female for cooking. In the same study, Vu and Thuy (2020) reported that another author claimed that that she had rarely paid attention to the gender issue prior to writing the books, and it came as natural when designing an exercise with five sentences, the subject 'he' would be used four times, while 'she' only once. Such accounts may have sustained the perpetual evidence of unequal representation of males and females in the educational materials.

Types of gender bias in textbooks

The analysis shows that gender bias in the aspects of stereotyping, invisibility, selectivity, unreality, firstness, and masculine generic construction are evident in the textbooks although to varying frequencies. Fragmentation and linguistic bias, on the other hand, seem to be absent in the materials examined. Tables 4a, 4b and 4c show the detailed occurrences of the aspects for each book.

Table 4a. Gender bias in When English Rings the Bell for Grade VII

Aspect	Male	Female	Total
Stereotyping	5 (8.1%)	4 (6.5%)	9 (14.5%)
Invisibility	7 (11.3%)	4 (6.5%)	11 (17.7%)
Selectivity	15 (24.2%)	15 (24.2%)	30 (48.4%)
Fragmentation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Linguistic bias	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unreality	3 (4.8%)	4 (6.5%)	7 (11.3%)
Firstness	2 (3.2%)	2 (3.2%)	4 (6.5%)
Masculine generic construction	1 (1.6%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.6%)
TOTAL	**33 (53.2%)**	**29 (46.8%)**	**62 (100%)**

Table 4b. Gender bias in When English Rings the Bell for Grade VIII

Aspect	Male	Female	Total
Stereotyping	5 (9.3%)	1 (2.3%)	6 (13.9%)
Invisibility	5 (11.6%)	4 (9.3%)	9 (20.9%)
Selectivity	11 (25.6%)	5 (11.6%)	30 (37.2%)
Fragmentation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Linguistic bias	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unreality	3 (7.0%)	2 (4.7%)	5 (11.6%)

Firstness	1 (2.3%)	5 (11.6%)	6 (14.0%)
Masculine generic construction	1 (2.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.3%)
TOTAL	**26 (60.5%)**	**17 (39.5%)**	**43 (100%)**

Table 4c. Gender bias in When English Rings the Bell for Grade IX

Aspect	**Male**	**Female**	**Total**
Stereotyping	5 (13.2%)	1 (2.6%)	6 (15.8%)
Invisibility	1 (2.6%)	2 (5.3%)	3 (7.9%)
Selectivity	11 (29.0%)	5 (13.2%)	16 (42.1%)
Fragmentation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Linguistic bias	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Unreality	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Firstness	1 (2.6%)	7 (18.4%)	8 (21.1%)
Masculine generic construction	5 (13.2%)	0 (0%)	5 (13.2%)
TOTAL	**23 (60.5%)**	**15 (15.4%)**	**38 (100%)**

Tables 4a, 4b and 4c show that all aspects of gender bias are evident in the books except for fragmentation and linguistic bias. On the whole, selectivity occurs the most frequently in WERB VII, WERB VIII and TGAL IX: 48.4%, 37.2% and 42.1% respectively. It is found that most of the selectivity aspect in the books revolves around activities and occupational roles where males are always illustrated with activities and occupations that take place outside the home like playing football and policemen. Females, on the other hand, are always portrayed with activities that are associated with domestic chores as well as professions that are shared by both genders like teachers. This is inline with the findings from previous studies such as those of Ismael and Mohammadzadeh's (2022) and Kimmel's (2004) that show that men are perceived to have fewer ties to the house and their jobs are assigned outside the home while women are depicted in typical gender roles such as cooking, cleaning, and childrearing.

Other aspects of gender bias occur but in varying frequency in the books. In WERB VII, invisibility is the second most occurred gender bias aspect (17.7%), followed by stereotyping (14.5%), unreality (11/3%), firstness (6.5%) and masculine generic construction (1.6%). There is no occurrence reported for fragmentation and linguistic bias (0%). As for WERB VIII, invisibility is also the second most occurred gender bias aspect (20.9%). This is followed by firstness (14.0%), stereotyping (13.9%), unreality (11.6%) and masculine generic construction (2.3%). No occurrence is reported for fragmentation and linguistic bias (0%). TGAC IX shows firstness (21.1%), as the second most occurred gender bias aspect, followed by stereotyping (15.8%), and invisibility (7.9%). None is found on unreality, fragmentation and linguistic bias (0%).

The analysis also indicates quite similar patterns of gender bias in all the books, that is, males are represented more compared to women in most of the aspects examined. In WERB VII, males are represented more in terms of stereotyping (8.1%), invisibility (11.3%) and masculine generic construction (1.6%). Males and females are equally represented in the aspects of selectivity (24.2%) and firstnes (3.2%). In terms of unreality, however, more representation of females is evident although the difference in frequency is marginal. In WERB VIII, males are represented more in the aspects of stereotyping, invisibility, selectivity, unreality and masculine generic construction. Only in the firstness aspect that females are represented more. In TGAL IX, males are also portrayed more in the aspects of stereotyping, selectivity, and masculine generic construction. They are portrayed less in the aspects of invisibility and firstness.

The Presentation of Gender Bias in Textbooks

The analysis shows that gender bias are prevalent throughout the textbooks overtly and covertly. Bias aspects such as stereotyping, invisibility, selectivity, unreality, firstness and masculine generic construction are presented in WERB VII, WERB VIII and TGAL IX in the forms of images and dialogues that describe the elements of roles, occupation and activities.

The most common form of presentation of the gender bias in the books is a combination of images and dialogues. Figures 1a and 1b are some of the many illustrations of female gender bias in the form of images and dialogues found in the books.
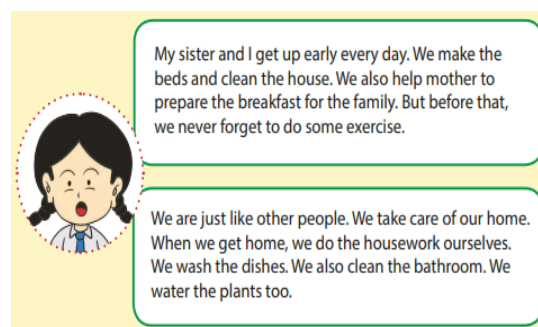
Source: WERB VII (p.4)   Source: WERB VIII (p.94)

Figure 1a: Female Gender Bias Depicted in Images and Dialogues

Source: WERB VII (p.8)   Source: WERB VIII (p.91)

Figure 1b: Male Gender Bias Depicted in Images and Dialogues

The images and dialogues in both sources clearly depict gender bias towards males and females. The images and dialogues may seem common and devoid of any bias as these are the usual scenarios in the social environment, that is, females are supposed to do household chores like cooking and cleaning the house as shown in Figure 1a. Males, on the other hand, are illustrated as involving in outdoor and more 'manly' activities like camping and repairing a vehicle. The images also shows how males and females are dressed; females are portrayed in how the society perceives as 'proper' and 'ladylike' dressing, and males in men's wear dressing. Society that is used to the social constructs may not see any harm of these images and dialogues being presented in the books as it is the social expectation – the way women dress, the chores, and even the invisibility of men in the kitchen and in the list of chores. The wordings in the dialogue, "We are just like other people…" accentuates the norm and expectation of the female's role in the society. By perpetually portraying images of genders in their stereotypical roles, textbooks reinforce the society constructs and expectation which can shape learners' understanding of the norms for their genders, hence, influencing their interests, self-esteem, and even career aspirations (Sadker & Zittleman, 2009; Blumberg, 2008). The biased images and dialogues also represent unreality of the current social scenario where more women are now involved in the fields that have been culturally dominated by men, and vice versa for men.

Gender bias can also be found in the form of context description or narratives. Figure 2 show the gender bias in the context description in the books.
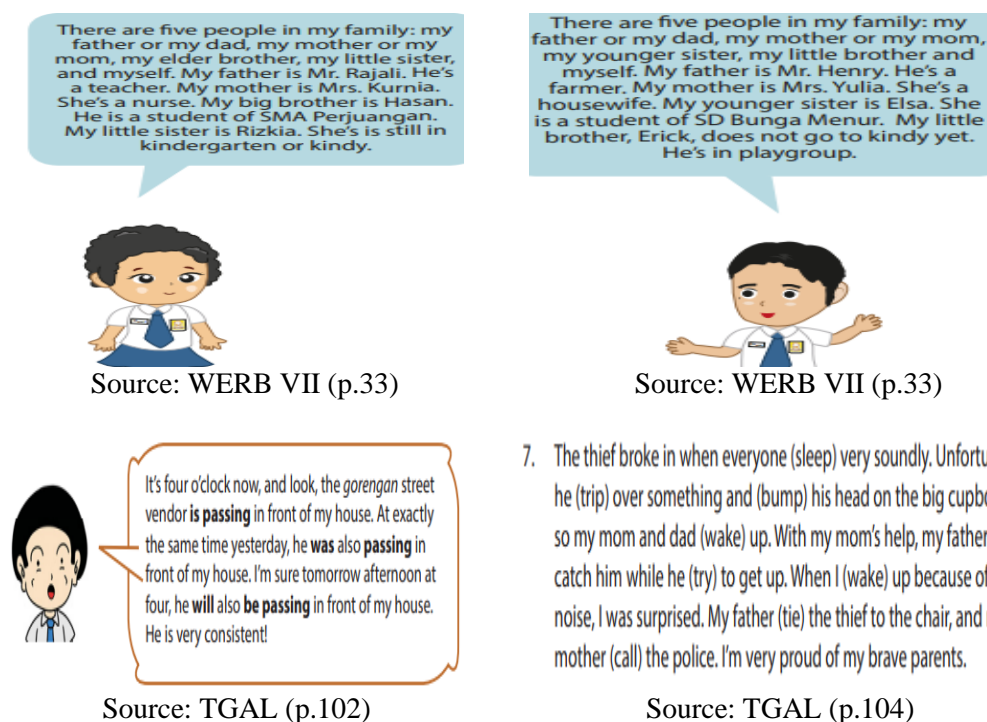

There are five people in my family: my father or my dad, my mother or my mom, my elder brother, my little sister, and myself. My father is Mr. Rajali. He's a teacher. My mother is Mrs. Kurnia. She's a nurse. My big brother is Hasan. He is a student of SMA Perjuangan. My little sister is Rizkia. She's is still in kindergarten or kindy.

Source: WERB VII (p.33)

There are five people in my family: my father or my dad, my mother or my mom, my younger sister, my little brother and myself. My father is Mr. Henry. He's a farmer. My mother is Mrs. Yulia. She's a housewife. My younger sister is Elsa. She is a student of SD Bunga Menur. My little brother, Erick, does not go to kindy yet. He's in playgroup.

Source: WERB VII (p.33)

It's four o'clock now, and look, the *gorengan* street vendor **is passing** in front of my house. At exactly the same time yesterday, he **was** also **passing** in front of my house. I'm sure tomorrow afternoon at four, he **will** also **be passing** in front of my house. He is very consistent!

Source: TGAL (p.102)

7. The thief broke in when everyone (sleep) very soundly. Unfortunately, he (trip) over something and (bump) his head on the big cupboard, so my mom and dad (wake) up. With my mom's help, my father could catch him while he (try) to get up. When I (wake) up because of the noise, I was surprised. My father (tie) the thief to the chair, and my mother (call) the police. I'm very proud of my brave parents.

Source: TGAL (p.104)

Figure 2: Gender Bias Depicted in Description and Narratives

The description and narratives in Figure 2 depict gender bias towards males and females. The boys' description of their families (WERB VII, p 33) show the elements of firstness and stereotyping. Both boys mention the male characters first, that is, their father before mother, and brother before sister. Stereotype on occupation for male and female is also reinforced in the boys' description of their parents' jobs, i.e the fathers as a teacher and a farmer while the mothers as a nurse and a housewife. The occupational stereotypes are also highlighted in the next two narratives (TGAL, p.102 and TGAL, p.104) where the street vendor and thief are classified as men based on the pronouns 'he'. As mentioned earlier, this adds to the elements of selectivity and unreality; the contents are not inclusive of the other gender in the occupations which do not portray the present real life scenario.

Additionally, the gender bias is also emphasised in the last narrative (TGAL, p.104) where males are painted as strong and heroic while females are described as assisting the males. The use of descriptive or contextual information like this can underline stereotypes and may shape the learners' perceptions of their own potential. They may think that only certain occupations are defined for one gender, or strengths and leadership are male domains (Lee & Collins, 2008)

CONCLUSION

Textbooks is regarded as an important source of information in the teaching and learning process. However, textbooks can also play an important role in shaping the world view of the learners. This is because textbook often presents contents that reinforce social norms and values that may not reflect the diverse living experiences of the members of society. What learners see in the textbooks can have profound effects on their attitude which they develop and bring into their adult life.

Empirical studies on educational materials have highlighted that the content of many textbooks continues to reflect traditional gender roles. The portrayal of gender in textbooks often reinforces stereotype social constructs where men are depicted in leading and active roles, while women are usually shown in passive or secondary positions. Perpetual words and images that emphasise these stereotypes may reinforce societal expectations as students may internalise them as the norm. In

addition, gender norms and values can influence aspirations and dictate expected behaviours and attributes for males and females. This can affect the learners' conscious and subconscious views on their own attitude, career choice and social behaviour.

The issue of gender bias in educational materials is an important but often overlooked problem. The on-going efforts to promote gender equality have been undermined by the perpetual contents of traditional gender roles in textbooks. If a textbook is a powerful tool in reinforcing the social norms and behaviour, it can also be used to challenge the discriminatory norms and values. To develop educational materials that are free of gender-based stereotypes and reflect balanced representations of both genders, concerted effort from policy makers, educators, author and publishers are important. The contents of the available materials should be reviewed and revised to identify and correct biased representations. Besides, more diverse role models from all genders should be included, showcasing the diversity of their contributions. Authors can also include realistic portrayals of experiences from both genders to reflect the real world. This may help to demolish the stereotypes and promote a more equitable society.

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