

Gender Discrimination in English Textbook of Class VII of CBSE Board

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Abstract

The aim of education is not only to impart knowledge to learners, but to develop their holistic and wholesome personality. In order to achieve this goal, education should be given to each and every child irrespective of caste, creed, race and gender. Right to education can be achieved if there is gender equality. Gender equality is an important component of quality education. As the curriculum is transacted via textbooks and so whatever the image of gender is printed in textbooks will have an impact on a child's thinking. A textbook should be learner-centered and nurture the minds of young people, without strengthening stereotypes and gender biases. The researcher found that girls/women are underrepresented, and third gender have never been mentioned in the textbooks. The purpose of this project is to analyze the data that reveal that gender discrimination is very evident in the textbooks.

Keywords: Gender, Discrimination, Textbook, Curriculum, CBSE

Introduction

Human beings are social beings. To live in society, Humans have to socialize, and many agents are involved in the socialization process which transmits the traditional gender roles in children. The foremost factor is the family, and the schools play the second major role in socializing the children. It is the duty of the family and school to provide the right kind of education. In schools, the aim of education is not only to impart knowledge to a group of students, but to illuminate the young minds of diverse learners and develop their holistic development- Cognitive capacity, Affective capacity, and Psychomotor capacity. The outcome of Education is to achieve Equality and Equity with regards to gender. Thus, promoting Gender equality and democracy. Right to Education is the fundamental human right and it can help us achieve gender parity in our society. As the Curriculum is executed through the textbooks, whatever the pictures of gender are depicted will have an impact on the learner's thinking. The deeply- entrenched gender bias is further diffused by the learning materials. Textbooks project a gendered vista of our world and thus encourage girls and boys to internalize the stereotyping ranks from their school textbooks. National Curriculum Framework (2005) also discerns that the textbooks are the one of the essential vehicles for fulfilling gender equality. The National Policy on Empowerment 2001 mentioned that the textbooks should be made gender-sensitive and all the gender stereotypes and biases must be obliterated. The National Policy for Women 2016: Articulating a Vision for Empowerment of Women, in its section on education, para-V mentions that continued efforts will be made for gender sensitization of the faculty and curriculum, content and pedagogies for an understanding of concepts of masculinity and femininity and gender stereotypes”.

Gender is applied to the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As it is a social construct, gender varies from

society to society and has been changing over time. Gender is hierarchical and leads to inequalities that intermingle with social, economic, political inequalities. Gender-based discrimination crosses over other factors of discrimination, such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, age, geographic location, gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. This is referred to as intersectionality. Gender interacts with but is different from sex, which refers to the different biological and physiological characteristics of females, males, and intersex persons, such as chromosomes, hormones, and reproductive organs. Gender and sex are related to but different from gender identity. Gender identity refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth. Gender inequality and discrimination faced by women and girls puts their health and well-being at jeopardy. Women and girls often face enormous barriers than men and boys to accessing health information and services. These barriers include restrictions on mobility; lack of access to decision-making power; high dropout rates in school, lower literacy rates; discriminatory attitudes of communities and healthcare providers; and lack of training and awareness amongst healthcare providers and health systems of the specific health needs and challenges of women and girls. Adverse gender expectations – especially those related to immutable notions of masculinity – also affect boys and men's health and wellbeing in an unhealthy way. For example, specific notions of masculinity may encourage boys and men to smoke, take sexual and other health risks, misuse alcohol and not seek help or health care. Such gender norms also contribute to boys and men perpetrating violence.

Literature Review

According to Dr. Mandeep Kaur (2018), writes in his research paper “Gender differences in textbooks: An obstacle on the road to gender equality in society.” that Gender issues are prevailing in society in all areas of life including education. It is in the form of curriculum, textbooks, methodology and attitude of the teachers. To reduce these gender issues, there is a need to change the mindsets of the young generation of society as well the teachers. This can be done if the knowledge given to them is gender biased free. Students prefer to study the textbooks. They have faith in textbooks. But lack of proper guidelines for curriculum and textbook development for gender mainstreaming are the reason for existing gender stereotypes in these books. So, the authors of the textbooks should be made aware of such a sensitive issue.

An article “*UNESCO report reveals covert gender bias in school textbooks.*” (2021) published in the newspaper – The Tribune reveals that while showing men as doctors and women as nurses, only portraying women in subjects pertaining to food, fashion or entertainment, showing women in voluntary roles and men in paid jobs, are among the gender stereotypes pointed out in the report, it also takes note of attempts by few countries to revise the textbook images to reflect more gender balance. In Afghanistan, women were almost absent from grade 1 textbooks published in the 1990s. Since 2001, they have been more present but in passive and domestic roles as mothers, caregivers, daughters, and sisters. *They are mostly represented as dependent, with teaching being the only career open to them,*” the report said. The share of females in secondary school English language textbook text and images was 44 pc in Malaysia and Indonesia, 37 pc in Bangladesh and 24 pc in Punjab province, Pakistan. A Malaysian primary school textbook suggested girl risked being shamed and ostracized unless they protected their modesty.

At the 14th International Language, Literature and Stylistics Symposium, Nazife Aydinoglu, a researcher from Turkey highlights in her paper “*Gender in English language teaching coursebooks* (2014), that Gender equality hasn't been achieved in Turkey in the 21st century in

spite of all the efforts by governments, local administrations, universities and non-governmental organizations. Violence against women, secondary status of women in social, political, and economic life, women's limited access to education are all urgent problems that need to be solved in our society. Education is considered to be the best way to improve gender equality, but the language used for education can unintentionally reinforce gender inequality, stereotypes and sex segregation. Therefore, it is crucial that the language in the textbooks should be devoid of gender bias and this is, of course, true of the textbooks written to teach a foreign language.

Jane Sunderland, one of the early analysts of English Language textbooks, states that "Learning English productively and receptively can be learning or relearning a gendered discourse role (1994:7).

Another study entitled "*Gender Bias in Elementary School Language Textbooks*" conducted by researchers -Darni1 & Fithriyah Inda Nur Abida reveal that Gender-biased tendencies are still embedded in elementary textbooks and continue to dominate the pages of school books. Current elementary language textbooks differentiate between boys and girls in the form of job types, games, and attitudes. There is a strong stereotypical image that men dominate the public sphere and women the private sphere. Cooking, cleaning, and decorating a house and various domestic works done by women, while men perform challenging jobs and heavy manual labor. Gender discrimination also occurs in children's games; girls were shown playing with domestic toys and the boys were shown building and enacting stereotypically masculine roles such as doctor or police officer. The patriarchal society also sets a different attitude between boys and girls. Girls should smile and be sensible while boys should be brave. Clearly the socialization of gender roles and the use of a gender-biased hidden curriculum led to an inequitable treatment for boys and girls. Efforts need to be made to combat gender bias in educational materials for education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination. A revelatory research paper "*Gender Bias in School Mathematics Textbooks from Grade 1 to 12 in Palestine*" (2020) written by Muneer J. Karama from the Palestine Polytechnic University highlighted that the textbooks represented female professions included making cakes, cooking, sewing, baking, raising children and harvesting fruits and vegetables. In contrast, males were shown in the following professions: Trader, carpenter, painter, driver, construction worker, engineer, shop owner, math teacher, dentist, scientist, farm owner, football player, designer, accountant, president, scholar, researcher, and manager. This qualitative analysis shows that males were presented in the highest status professions, while females were represented as having limited occupations in society and as staying at home, cooking, and cleaning.

Need of the Study

Gender inequalities have existed from primordial times. Even in this modern-day age where more people are becoming globalized and exposed to many new innovative ideas still the gender-based biasness are very much alive and thriving in our thought process. Education is the only powerful force that can act like a catalyst and annihilate these discriminations based on gender but our education school textbooks are the tools which children rely on to gain knowledge. But sadly, our textbooks which are supposed to depict gender equity are rather replete with gender unfairness. In order to probe more deeper, this project has been undertaken as it would shed more ray of light on this bigotry deeply established and the findings would create awareness in our curriculum developers, textbooks creators to undo their unconscious gender prejudices and create gender-sensitive textbooks thus promoting democracy in a its true sense.

Objectives of the paper

- To identify numerous examples presented in the different chapter with reference to gender discrimination in the English language textbook of class VII- ‘Honeycomb’ of CBSE.
- To list the number of pictures given on male and female in each chapter English language textbook of class VII- ‘Honeycomb’ of CBSE.
- To examine the contents of the English language textbook of class VII- ‘Honeycomb’ of CBSE.

Methodology

The Researcher examined the textbook English language textbook of class VII- ‘Honeycomb’ of the Central Board of Secondary Education. The researcher analyzed all the chapters and categorized them based on examples and pictures based on sexes - Female, Male and Other sex.

Analysis & Interpretation of Results

The data which are collected from the textbook analysis are analyzed quantitatively in the following table

S. No	Name of Chapter	Author of Chapter		Female examples	Male examples	Female pictures	Male pictures	Third gender picture
1	Three questions	Leo Tolstoy		0	6	0	3	0
2	A gift of Chappals	Vasanth		4	3	3	2	0
3	Gopal and the Hilsa fish	Surya (F) Narendra Bijweall		1	6	1	15	0
4	The ashes that made trees bloom	William Elliot Griffis		3	5	1	2	0
5	Quality	John Galsworthy		0	5	0	4	0
6	Expert detectives	Sharada Dwivedi (F)		2	4	1	2	0
7	The invention of Vita-Wonk	Roald Dahl		0	5	0	0	0
8	Fire; Friend and Foe	Dorothy Hinshaw Patent (F)		0	4	0	8	0
9	A Bicycle in good repair	Jerome K. Jerome		0	2	0	3	0
10	The story of cricket	Ramachandra Guha		0	3	0	15	0

1. EXAMPLES-

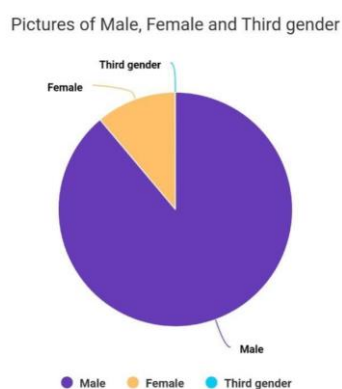
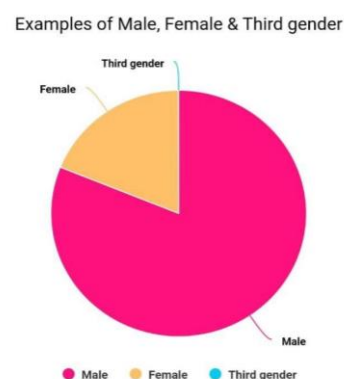
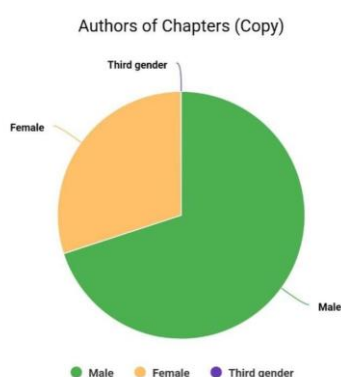
- Total examples in Class VII English book= 53
- Total examples of Females = 10 (18%)
- Total examples of Males = 43 (81 %) T
- Total examples of Third Gender = 0

2. AUTHORS-

- Total Authors= 10
- Female Author = 3
- Male Author= 7
- Third Gender Author = 0

3. PICTORIAL REPRESENTATION-

- Total pictorial representation in book= 54
- Total visuals of Females = 6 (11%)
- Total visuals of Males= 48 (88%)
- Total visuals of Third Gender = 0



Chapter wise Analysis

- The researcher analyzed the textbook having 10 chapters and discovered that overall, there are 53 examples of Females, Males and Third Gender. And out of which, Females examples are 18%, Male examples are 81 % and sadly, no examples are present of Third Gender.
- The majority of visuals are of Males – 88%, followed by Females- 54% and no visuals depiction of Third Gender in the textbook.
- The total authors are 10 and out of which 3 are Females, 7 are Males and nil for Third Gender.

The investigator analyzed the chapters as below:

Chapter One: Three Questions- This chapter shows the story of a male king who wants to find out the answers of his three questions; when the right time is to begin something, which people should he listen to, what is the most important thing for him to do. Many male examples came forward to answer these questions but Finally king got an answer from a male priest. In the story there is no example of female or third gender.

Chapter Two: A gift of chappals - This story tries to portray simplicity and innocence of children. Mridu visited her aunt and cousins Ravi and Meena. They all gave food to kitten, chappal to beggar. The female author well portrayed both the male and female gender in story but didn't mention any third gender.

Chapter Third: Gopal and the Hilsa fish- In this story everyone talks about Hilsa fish in the market, courtyard of kind and everywhere. Frustrated with this, the king challenged Gopal to bring Hilsa fish. Only one female example is shown in the whole story who was Gopal's wife, else all pictures and characters are of male. This completely shows the dominations one gender in story from name of characters to male king in power and also pictorial representation.

Chapter Four: The ashes made the trees bloom - This story is about an old couple who are very kind and live with their pet dog. These couple had a very envious and greedy couple neighbour who killed their dog to fulfill their greed. Story shows both genders in a balanced way through pictures and examples, but the central role is of male in the story while female is only in supporting ways. No mention of the third gender is observed.

Chapter Five: Quality- This is a story of the Gessler brothers and their art of shoemaking. How passionate they are about making shoes and the quality they give to their customers. But the story is highlighting gender stereotypes as representing only male in a role of shoemaker and avoiding female. There is no consideration of third gender in story.

Chapter Six: Expert Detectives- This is a story of two children Nishad and Maya who are curious to know about their neighbour Mr. Nath and both keep on assuming different things about him, his face scar always attracts both the kids. While Maya thinks he is a criminal, Nishad doesn't agree and wants to be friends with him because he feels Mr. Nath is very lonely. Story shows 2 examples of female Maya and her mother. But no third gender example.

Chapter Seven: The invention of Vita-wonk- This is a story of Mr. Willy Wonka, who invented Vita-wonk a drink which reduces age but it was reducing age upto minus, thus he tried to invent a reverse drink which will increase the age. In the story there is no example or picture of female or third gender.

Chapter Eight: Fire; Friend or Foe- This chapter focuses on showing fire as a necessity and dangerous. Chapter is showing gender stereotypes by displaying only male pictures as a firefighter and while rescuing people from fire. No example or picture of females in helping to extinguish the fire and no third gender examples.

Chapter Nine: A Bicycle in Good repair - This is a story of two male boys who opened their bicycle and then tried to reassemble all parts of the bicycle. Story is not giving examples or pictures of females and third genders. Author could have shown girls in the role of cycle assembler; it would break the mindset of females being weak.

Chapter Ten: The story of cricket - This is a chapter highlighting every aspect of cricket, its history of origin, importance in England, laws related to Cricket and majorly focuses on the term Bat. Chapter shows only pictures of male playing cricket and popular male cricketers associated with this sport. No examples and pictures of female cricketers.

Discussion & Findings

- After analyzing the English language textbook 'Honeycomb' of Class VII of CBSE board. The researcher came to know that the maximum examples in the book were of male and very less of female, showing data of 81% male examples and 43% female examples.
- Researcher also concluded that the visual representation is also very biased and male visuals are 88% and female pictorial visuals are only 11%
- Researchers analyzed a very serious issue that there is no example picture of any third gender. Neither in any story the author has talked about them. This is leading to lack of awareness about the third gender among the children which will ultimately create a gap in the society and children will not accept them as a normal part of the same society.
- Researcher observed that in the book, even in today's time the stories selected by the boards are showing gender stereotype in chapters for example male being in role of protector (firefighter), being sporty (Cricketer) and more strength(shoemaker), while females are in gentle role of caregiver mother, wife, and the supporting people.
- Researchers noticed that even the number of authors is unequal, while male authors are seven and stories of female authors are only three.

Concluding Remarks

Gender discrimination has been abundant in our textbooks. Textbooks are the direct tool for transacting the curriculum. Textbook examined in this project is currently the part of the syllabus of CBSE board for Class VII. The textbook after detailed examination can be conclusively concluded that gender biasness favoring Males is conspicuous and copious. The Females are not given equal representation in examples and pictorial display in the textbook scrutinized by researchers. The researcher did not find any representation of Third Gender in the entire textbook.

In order to eliminate Gender discrimination from the Education system, the textbooks should portray equal examples and illustrations of Females, Males and Third Gender as textbooks are directly accessed by learners and can leave a far reaching impact in their thinking regarding gender biasness. To conclude, the textbooks have to make gender-sensitive, gender inclusive language, and equal representation of all the three genders have to be depicted so as to cultivate gender sensitive and humane citizens of our nation.

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Internet Resources

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