



Gender Representation in Textbooks of Public and Private Schools in Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract

Objectives: Emphasizing on the need to revolutionize the current perceptions of gender in education, this study aimed to study the differential representation of genders in primary level textbooks based on Single National Curriculum 2020.

Methods: This research followed Mullet's (2018) General Analytical Framework for Critical Discourse Analysis in educational research. Text presented in the form of narratives, passages, phrases and pictures in both textbooks were analyzed by decoding narrative structures, thematic coding and semiotic coding. Findings were analyzed through a critical feminist perspective.

Results: The findings were further divided into 7 themes; *position of female characters in indoor settings, position of female characters in outdoor settings, gender representation in professional roles, gender representation in attributes and natures of characters, gender representation in pictures, gender representation in ethnic and religious context and defying gender stereotypes.* Results proposed that women are underrepresented in outdoor setting and public spaces. Their characters are influenced by patriarchal, nationalist values and religious ideologies.

Concluding Recommendations: Textbooks should equally represent men and women in indoor and outdoor spaces. Primary textbooks should include more stories of women in professional roles and aim to bring their representation in the common narrative. The textbook content should be free of gender bias and promote inclusivity and tolerance in students.

Introduction

The education system, being one of the politicized institutions in Pakistan has undergone many policy changes. These policies then define how curricula is designed which further becomes responsible for social construction in educational institutes. Discourses and texts in curricula, textbooks and other documents are used as constructive phenomena to shape value systems and practices of students (Luke, 1997).

While Pakistan strives to minimize the gender gap within educational institutions on a larger scale, the discourses presented in Pakistan's school textbooks provide a setback for achieving gender equality. Gender biases and misrepresentation in discourses have been presented by the authors of the textbooks. Despite the 2001-2015 EFA action plan acknowledging the need to free the textbooks of all gender biases, the work has not been successfully implemented across the country. The chairmen and directors of textbook boards are of the view '*that gender portrayals of the textbooks should be in agreement with the status quo,*' clearly showcasing their position of privilege and satisfaction with the current status of gender representation in Pakistan (Islam and Asadullah, 2018). The need to revolutionize our textbooks keeps on growing as the current narratives not only put women in weak and subordinate positions, but also undermine their ability to think beyond traditional gender stereotypes. Traditional and orthodox roles assigned to females in textbooks are not representative of their actual work and contribution towards the prosperity of Pakistan (Shah, 2012). The right recognition will help remove biases and create a sense of awareness and social action towards gender equality.

Many recent studies in Pakistan have focused on exploring ways through which gender justice could be introduced in the education system of Pakistan. Agha et al., (2018) stresses upon primary level education being an essential time period in development of children's identities (Agha et al., 2018). Textbooks translate beliefs and values for young students and provide a foundational basis of understanding of the outer world. With Pakistan's ongoing struggle to make primary level education accessible to all children, the textbooks offer biased content in terms of gender and representation of women. Gender biases not only underrepresent women in the education sector but hold serious implications and lasting impressions on young minds.

Moreover, textbooks are the most important sources used by teachers in primary classrooms (Agha et al., 2018). When exploring gender representation in primary level textbooks, there lies a significant difference between books of public and private schools. Upon exploring national textbooks used in public schools of KPK, Ullah and Skelton (2013) discovered dominant patriarchal narratives advocating male dominance and gender specific roles. In addition, an evident propensity of situating women within the confines of the household and attributing traditional nurturing roles to them has also been highlighted (Ullah and Skelton, 2013). On the other hand, a comparative study by Nazar et al., 2017 showed major differences in perceptions of gender equality within students of public and private schools. This difference in value systems can be a result of the public-private divide in Pakistan. Private schools' students belong to the upper class in Pakistan '*which is already liberal in its orientation*' (Nazar et al., 2017). These private schools often use curriculums that have been imported from developed countries and reflect progressive and egalitarian values. Another contributing factor serving this

difference is how private schools are co-ed in nature, whereas a system of gender segregation and divide is enforced in public schools.

To cater to this divide, the Government of Pakistan and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has introduced **Single National Curriculum 2021**. This curriculum is introduced in Pakistan after the 2006 curriculum reform under General Pervez Musharraf's regime. The Single National Curriculum's vision states: *'One system of Education for all, in terms of curriculum, medium of instruction and a common platform of assessment so that all children have a fair and equal opportunity to receive high quality education. Single National Curriculum is a step in that direction'* (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan). The curriculum is to be implemented in all public and private schools of Pakistan. The first phase of SNC has been introduced since March 2021 and caters to grades Pre 1-5. The second and third phase will be implemented in grades 6-8 and 9-12 in March 2022 and 2023 respectively. 'For the first phase, the Federal government has directed all provinces except Sindh to launch the SNC by ensuring its implementation in all public and private schools as well as in religious madrasas' (Naqvi, 2021).

Moreover, Punjab Textbook and Curriculum Board has introduced their new textbooks based on SNC 2020. The textbooks are to be studied across all public and private schools in Punjab. In order to remove the gap between public and private sectors of education and to ensure quality education for all, the government aims to tackle power imbalances through the implementation of Single National Curriculum.

This study aimed to highlight the prevalent construction of gender biases in the textbooks of Pakistan and planned to draw a comparison in the representation of genders in PTB textbooks (based on SNC 2020). The research question is as follows:

- How are genders differentially represented in grades 3-5, English textbooks of public and private schools?

In a society, there lies a need to make sense of its cultural processes. These experiences are represented and communicated through narratives and stories (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008). In light of the scope of this study, the above mentioned research question is divided into two sub-questions:

1. How is gender bias reflected through narrative structures to the reader?
2. How is gender bias communicated through text and pictures in narratives?

Deconstructing narrative structures and performing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this study intended to deconstruct phrases, words, language, collection of symbols used to construct meanings. The deconstruction and reconstruction of texts were used to evaluate what belief and value system is presented in public and private school textbooks. '*Critical discourse analysis also focuses on sentence and word-level analysis, drawing analytic methods from systemic functional linguistics*' (Luke, 1997). Based on post-structuralist and post-modern discourse theory, critical discourse analysis makes use of analytical tools to break down larger systemic relations of class, gender, and culture used in educational texts. The theories are of the view that knowledge and identity is a social construct built on the use of educational discourses and texts in institutional sites.

Following Mullet's (2018) General Analytical Model for CDA, the findings have been divided under various sections. Narrative structures were deconstructed using the six-question model presented by O'Shaughnessy and Stadler (2008). Moreover, through conducting a semiotic analysis, pictures were decoded. Overall text from passages and paragraphs from the textbook was coded under various themes (thematic coding). Final results were then further analyzed from a Critical Feminist Perspective.

Moreover, this paper draws on an extensive literature review, highlighting theoretical and empirical foundations on gender construction in national and international curricula and textbooks. It addresses fundamental gaps in suggested theoretical frameworks and methodologies in relation to the underlying forces between education quality and gender inequality.

Literature Review

With the increasing understanding of gender equality, research has consistently found the existence of gender biases in education discourses. Moving ahead with this underlining perspective, many existing studies support the need to revolutionize textbooks and the curricula. Drawing contentions from various studies, this section puts forward supporting arguments and theoretical foundations. Furthermore, it highlights various methodologies mainly chosen by authors studying gender inequality in textbooks, while underlining major gaps and limitations.

Focusing on how gender inequality develops and persists in a classroom setting, textbooks and the curriculum serve to be its main underlying force. The textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education are claimed as 'pillars of quality' but fail to provide justice to gender

representation (Shah, 2012). It has been stated as an evident issue that gender inclusion has not been taken into consideration when designing National Curriculum of Pakistan 2006.

An analysis of primary level textbooks of Urdu and English in Punjab discovered that female's and male's status quo remain untouched in terms of our cultural context, and a gendered nationalist ideology is promoted through language texts (Durrani, 2008). While English textbooks showcased 62.5% of females engaged in outdoor activities and in Urdu textbooks, 66.7% of females were presented in stereotypical characters and indoor activities (household chores). Similarly, in an attempt to study the effects of language, it was put forward how language is a tool that is manipulated to construct and advocate male dominance in the wider public sphere (Khan et al., 2014). A difference was widely observed in the words and language ascribed to masculinity and femininity; more aggressive, powerful, and assertive language used for male characters while obedient, submissive, and weak voices were given to female characters.

A recent study revealed that primary level Sindhi textbooks are promoting patriarchal ideologies and overall discriminate against female citizens in terms of gender representation (Agha et al., 2018). In a depiction from pictures and texts, women are shown in subordinate positions as secondary citizens when compared to roles of men in the society.

Focusing on the textbooks used in public schools of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, gender discrimination can still be widely seen in illustrations presented to students (Ullah and Skelton, 2013). Portraying women in subservient gender roles and men in more authoritative positions in the domestic setting, these textbooks were designed to reinforce traditional discourses of

masculinity and femininity. The existence of these portrayals encourages women to stay within private and limited public domains, whereas men are part of a wider public domain.

Conversely, with regards to private schools, English textbooks of grades 6, 7 and 8 showed majority of male characters in narratives and texts (Khan et al., 2014). Stories presented brave men being celebrated for their power and accomplishments. These books were compiled by a foreign textbook board and were written by male authors. Khan et al. (2014) emphasized on how writers are responsible for adding and omitting issues in books, which directly impacts children's learning. Contrary to these findings, Nazar et al. (2017) brought into focus, views on gender equality in students of English-medium private schools in Lahore, Pakistan (Nazar et al., 2017). These students provided positive responses on gender equality in comparison to other students of Urdu-medium schools and the Madrassas.

In order to understand gender disparity in our previous educational curriculum, it is equally important to identify the gaps within our teaching system (Halai, 2011). Pressing on the need to provide gender awareness to teachers in KPK, Halai (2011) focuses on the eradication of gender inequality within classrooms nationwide. Teachers held biased beliefs in terms of gender roles which were manifested in how they taught mathematics to female students as compared to male students.

Some were of the view that girls are naturally going to be involved in household chores, thus learning mathematics might not seem necessary in their case. Likewise, it is equally important to study the concept and origins of hidden curriculum in Pakistan. Hidden curriculum can be defined as the beliefs and values that are implicitly taught to students in schools. Teachers view gender inequality as an inevitable component in our textbooks, as it is part of our daily lives

and the contemporary society (Shah 2012). The aforementioned perspectives held by teachers are set indicators for our education system to include and implement gender equality through educational texts and discourses.

Moving on, examining the presence of gender stereotypes in school textbooks in four countries in South and South-East Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh; Islam and p (2018) discovered higher female exclusion in Pakistani textbooks. Findings showed that professions attached to female characters are traditional, and lower in prestige and income. Highlighting another country with a predominant Muslim population, a study was conducted in public and private schools of Ankara, Turkey (Kalayci and Hayirsever, 2014). The aim was to identify the appropriateness of an activity “Towards Equality” in an educational textbook. As the students belonged from lower, middle and upper socioeconomic levels, they had differential views on gender roles. In addition, *The Portrayal of Women in Nationally-Endorsed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks for Senior High School Students in Indonesia* (Seytona, 2018) is a study aimed to target representation of women in English textbooks in Indonesia. It stresses upon the need to study English as a language that has further implications upon transcultural and feminist ideologies. The author conducted a Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis and further suggested the authors of English textbooks to keep in mind the influence of language on gender perceptions in the minds of students.

Stories presented in primary level textbooks tend to leave a mark on young minds. The glorification of nation’s defense in terms of highlighting male national heroes, military leaders and fighters continues to prevail in textbooks of primary level education in Pakistan (Khan et al.,

2014). When texts and figures are observed closely, it is evident how narratives in textbooks are focused on male heroes with supporting female character(s).

Khan et al. (2014) explained gendered nationalist ideology in educational textbooks as follows:

Fatima Jinnah, a legendary figure in the country's history— sister of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation—contributed to the lot of the Pakistani nation on her own steam but her description and achievements are overshadowed by the personality and stature of her brother. Thus, in English 6 (G) she is projected as a female type who excels in life owing to her brother's support and charisma. The text, rather than focus on her achievements, mostly describes her in relation to her brother by including extracts such as, 'the younger sister of Quaid-e-Azam ... looked after his health and comfort ... she loved him dearly ... she worked day and night for his comfort' (Khan et al., 2014).

Moreover, the curricula and textbooks promote the association of Pakistani identity with being a Muslim while simultaneously showing masculine figures as national icons (Durrani and Halai, 2018). In terms of historical representation, male religious identities and heroes are given more representation as compared to females (Agha et al., 2018). According to UNESCO's (2004) study on textbooks (for Class 1 to 10th) in Pakistan, *'representation of women's historical struggle in the independence movement in the subcontinent had also been neglected in the textbooks analyzed. Only 0.9% of the historical personalities in the textbooks were females.'*

Jabeen et al. (2014) focused on the intersection of gender and national identities in the education text and students' beliefs (Jabeen et al, 2014). While stressing upon the significance of education for the development of cohesive nationhood, a cross-section was discovered between

gender, national identity, and the Islamic ideology. Female students held stronger religious and nationalistic perspectives in relation to male students. 84.4% male national icons were shown in Urdu and Social Studies textbooks whereas only 15.1% were female national icons. Illustrations showed women in traditional dress code (shalwar-kameez-dupatta), apparently strengthening Pakistani identity.

With the introduction of Single National Curriculum in Pakistan, the government aims to target imbalances and inequalities within the education sector. As the curriculum has been introduced very recently, limited research is available on the issue at hand. Naqvi (2021) discusses the implementation of SNC with regards to educational disparities in Pakistan. While it is important to cater to the divide between public and private sectors of education, it is equally essential to tackle many other educational inequalities (Naqvi, 2021). Dropout rate of girls from schools being the most important issue at hand, the author urges the government to take drastic measures to ensure that children have equal access to education despite their class, gender, ethnicity and religion. Cultural barriers placed on girls deprives them of attaining higher education which should be their fundamental right. With measures to inculcate a definite curriculum, the ministry needs to address various issues that lie behind and ahead of the formation of Single National Curriculum.

Moving on, recent studies have conceptualized gender equality in education using dominant theoretical approaches. Aikman et al. (2011) presented a set of four development theories as following:

Human Capital Theory proposes the allocation of capital and resources to be equal for all genders. It ensures the exclusion of barriers on girls' learning abilities in education. Secondly,

Human Rights – Power Perspective talks about overcoming the historical practices and unjust power structures to maintain education quality in terms of gender equity. Thirdly, *Post-colonial Critique* recognizes gender equality as a reform that is validating multiple languages, knowledges, pedagogies, and educational spaces. Lastly, *Development as Social Action for Empowerment* frames gender with poverty and violence while intersecting them with equalities of rights within the education system. It deals with injustices taking place apart from school settings that are affecting learning performance of both genders.

Implementing the above mentioned frameworks on an analysis of a research programme on education quality (EdQual) in Rwanda, gender inequality was identified as a major implication towards designing policies and developing research agendas for largescale projects (Aikman et al., 2011). Education should be inclusive of girls of different social, ethnic, linguistic, and economic backgrounds.

In light of different socioeconomic backgrounds, Khan et al. (2014) and Durrani (2008) presented their work from a critical post-structuralist stance. The discourses, including texts and images from textbooks, were unfolded using a Foucauldian perspective to build '*ways of constituting knowledge, together with social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations*' (Durrani, 2008). In addition, social learning theory and cognitive development theory focus on the psychological impact of reading gender biased texts on young female students (Khan et al., 2014).

Moving forward, the next section explores methodologies used by researchers to study gender representation in textbooks in Pakistan. Additionally, certain gaps and limitation are identified to expand the scope of this study.

Since the past two decades, authors have commonly focused on qualitative content analysis to analyze gender stereotypes in textbooks in developing and developed countries (Islam and Asadullah, 2018). Islam and Asadullah (2018) completed their study on gender stereotypes in textbooks of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia using content analysis ensuring reliability and appropriateness of the data. As stated, it has proved to be the simplest method that involves Cohen's 4 Cs (coding, categorizing, comparing, and concluding) in order to reach purposeful results. Moreover, concerning sensitivity analysis, a total of 10 public school textbooks from Pakistan were analyzed.

Shah (2012) adopted a mixed method approach when examining gender inclusion in English textbooks in four major cities of Punjab: Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Mirpur AK and Murree (Shah, 2012). Their study conducted a quantitative content analysis on textbooks of Punjab Textbook Board (PTB). Similarly, while critically analyzing Urdu and English textbooks through textbook analysis, Durrani (2008) acknowledged that their study was limited to recognizing gender stereotypes in primary level PTB textbooks only (Durrani, 2008).

In addition, Ullah and Skelton (2013) performed a qualitative content analysis to identify gender biases in 24 textbooks of the textbook board of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The *examination goes beyond simply counting words and images in text but seeks to understand the broader social reality and context*' (Ullah and Skelton, 2013). Contrary to the findings of the above mentioned studies, the qualitative analysis performed in this research puts forward many text excerpts taken from the books that directly reflect the dominant patriarchal culture in KPK. Concerning the *'national curriculum draft in Urdu, and grade V textbooks produced by the NWFP Textbook Board and approved by the Federal Ministry of Education (Curriculum Wing)'*

Chaudhary et al. (2014) performed a textual analysis to discover the relation between nationalism and gender. Covering gender inequality in textbooks, they also highlighted the effects of glorification of Islamic nationalistic views on religious and ethnic minorities in Pakistan (Chaudhary et al., 2014). Similarly, representing local culture and beliefs, Agha et al. (2018) conducted their analysis on Sindhi textbooks undergoing the process of thematic coding (Agha et al., 2018). Despite limiting their analysis to five Sindhi textbooks at primary level education, their study was able to argue over showcasing women in private spheres, performing domestic roles only.

Parallel to the aforementioned cases, while the textbook boards of respective provinces do provide a broader picture of Pakistan's education system, there also lies a pressing need to recognize the difference between curriculums of public and private schools in the past years (before SNC). Afridi (2018) talks about the growing number of private schools in Pakistan while adding, *'for the past decade, the private education sector—especially at the primary level—has been one of the fastest-growing subsectors of the education industry in Pakistan. Between 1999–2000 and 2007–08, the number of private schools increased by 69 percent, as compared with a mere 8 percent increase in the number of government schools'* (Afridi, 2018). This divide has further created discrimination within school systems in terms of delivering quality education.

In a comparative analysis, Nazar et al. (2017) performed a qualitative study concerning students' ideas of religious tolerance, gender equality, and bellicose attitudes (Nazar et al., 2014). Putting forward three types of schooling systems in Pakistan; Urdu-medium, English-medium and the Madrassas, the authors covered a wide range of demographic and socioeconomic viewpoints. Discourses, texts and languages studied within the confines of the school majorly

impact the development of a constructive set of beliefs and values (Luke, 1995). This in turn, helps a student understand and make sense of the world around them. While it is important to study behavioral patterns across students of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, it is equally essential to study the power dynamics underlining these differences.

In reference to critical discourse analysis and its application in education, this study enhances the existence of gender stereotypes in primary level textbooks in light of the existing power imbalances in the education sector. In relation to political and socioeconomic realities, intertextuality in discourses help identify the representation of genders in both school systems. As methods evolve, this research enhances the scope of current academic conversation by highlighting prominent patterns observed between the discourses present in primary level public and private school textbooks. *'This means that dominant discourses in contemporary cultures tend to represent those social formations and power relations that are the products of history, social formation, and culture'* (Luke, 1997).

Methodology

Following the growing interest and need to revolutionize educational discourses in school textbooks, this study aims to perform a Critical Discourse Analysis in light of a feminist perspective. In presentation of post-structuralism, it was proposed that CDA is the study of knowledge and language where certain assumptions lie behind the texts and discourses produced in writing. In order to reveal these suppressed assumptions, critical discourse analysis deconstructs knowledge and language presented in traditional literature. CDA studies discourse and languages in a social context with regards to power imbalances. It attempts to unveil power relations in the society that are communicated to the public through language texts. In relation to

this educational research, the General Analytical Framework presented by Mullet (2018) provides a thorough understanding of how ‘connections between educational practices and social contexts’ (Mullet, 2018). Her framework is divided into 7 stages of analysis as following:

Table 1

Mullet’s General Analytical Framework for CDA

Stage of Analysis	Description
Select the discourse	Select a discourse related to injustice or inequality in society.
Locate and prepare data sources	Select data sources (texts) and prepare the data for analysis
Explore background of each text	Examine the social and historical context and producers of the texts.
Code texts and identify overarching themes	Identify the major themes and subthemes using choice of qualitative coding methods
Analyze the external relations in the text (Interdiscursivity)	Examine social relations that control the production of the text; in addition, examine the reciprocal relations (how the texts affect social practices and structures).
Analyze internal relations in the text	Examine the language for indications of the aims of the texts (what the texts set out to accomplish),
Interpret the data	Interpret the meanings of the major themes, external relations, and internal relations identified in stages 4, 5, and 6.

Under the 4th stage presented in the framework above, this study utilizes a mixed method approach of qualitative analysis.

This study’s research question asks, “*How are genders differentially represented in grades 3-5, English textbooks of public and private schools?*” To carry out this study further, the aforementioned research question has been divided into two sub-questions as follows:

1. How is gender bias reflected through narrative structures to the reader?

2. How is gender bias communicated through texts and pictures in the textbooks?

To recognize gender representation in textbooks, this study selected narratives from the given textbooks. Understanding how a story contributes to wider meanings in a cultural context, this study uses English subject textbooks used in public and private schools. The targeted grades are 3, 4 and 5. Selecting an English textbook from each grade, a total of three textbooks are analyzed. Narratives selected from each textbook have the following selection criteria:

1. Stories can be fictional and non-fictional in nature.
2. The core problem of the narrative communicates ideas of gender or gender roles.

A study of the narrative structures unveils the hidden meanings in the narrative (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008). This research attempted to study the narrative structures from the lens of the culture and value system it is grounded in. In answer to the first sub-question, this study utilizes O'Shaughnessy's and Stadler's six-question criteria to deconstruct and analyze narrative structures. The questions ask:

1. *Who and/or what makes things happen in the narrative?*
2. *What structural roles do people have in the narrative?*
3. *Whose point of view do we see things from and whose voice narrates the action or dominates the dialogue?*
4. *What is the dominant discourse or the hierarchy of discourses?*
5. *Are women positioned differently from men in the narrative?*
6. *What does the ending tell you about the ideology?*

(O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008)

The answers to these questions were connected to differential representation of gender in terms of dominant roles and agency. Furthermore, for the second sub-question, text from the books (including narratives) were manually coded in the process of thematic coding. A deductive coding method was followed using the following themes, 1) representation of feminine and masculine roles, and 2) dominance and agency. Passages, sentences, words, labels, phrases, dialogues, collection of symbols and outfits presented in the stories were studied to generate codes. Moreover, semiotic analysis was conducted to study and decode meanings from the pictures presented in the textbooks. The decoded texts from the above mentioned analyses are further categorized into themes. In summary, this study's methodology is conducted in the following three steps:

Step 1: Narratives (fiction + non-fiction) were selected from the textbooks to analyze representation of gender. The narrative structures were analyzed through O'Shaughnessy's and Stadler's six-question criteria (O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008) to deconstruct and analyze narrative structures.

Step 2: Thematic coding was performed on text that communicates ideas of gender and gender roles. The text was decoded in a separate code sheet under themes.

Step 3: Pictures were analyzed through conducting a semiotic analysis.

Step 4: Collected data was divided into themes and discussed in the 5th and 6th stage of the analysis framework.

In the last stage of analysis, collected data (from narratives, passages and images) is further analyzed in light of Critical Feminist Perspective. The explanations are presented within the cultural context and realities present in Pakistan.

Data Analysis & Results

In light of conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis, this study looked at discourses in the realm of education. Discourse, in definition, is the ‘*creative use of language as a social practice*’ (Mullet, 2018) and discourses serve as the only medium to locate and decode certain ideologies, beliefs, values and agendas that are concealed and hidden under certain texts presented in educational textbooks. When examining Primary level English subject Textbooks of grades 3, 4 and 5, in order to deviate meanings and to conclude towards ideologies, this study applied 7 stages of analysis presented by Mullet (2018). The *General Analytical Framework for CDA* (Mullet, 2018) was utilized in the following steps/stages:

Stage 1: Select the Discourse

The discourse examined for this paper was to study differential gender representation in textbooks of public and private schools of Pakistan. Moreover, this study examined the unequal power relations within gender in terms of representation of roles, dominance, agency and status quo.

Stage 2: Locate and Prepare Data Sources

The data for this study is used from PCTB’s Primary Level English Textbooks based on Single National Curriculum 2020. The textbooks are of grades 3, 4 and 5. Narratives, passages, sentences, phrases, words, collection of symbols and pictures have been used for data analysis. A total of 19 narratives (non-fiction and fiction) and were selected based on the criteria; the core

problem of the narrative communicates ideas of gender or gender roles. A total of 45 pictures were selected and overall text in the form of 29 passages were decoded for the analysis.

Stage 3: Explore the Background of Text

The source is Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board who published these textbooks on the basis of Single National Curriculum 2020. The textbooks were adopted and sent by the Education Reforms and Textbook Development Wing of the School Education Department, Government of the Punjab, and have been approved by the National Review Committee.

Stage 4: Code Texts and Identify Overarching Themes

The narrative structures were decoded using O'Shaughnessy's and Stadler's six-question criteria.

1. Who and/or what makes things happen in the narrative?
2. What structural roles do people have in the narrative?
3. Whose point of view do we see things from and whose voice narrates the action or dominates the dialogue?
4. What is the dominant discourse or the hierarchy of discourses?
5. Are women positioned differently from men in the narrative?
6. What does the ending tell you about the ideology?

(O'Shaughnessy and Stadler, 2008)

A similar criteria was followed to decode text passages in the textbooks.

Secondly, pictures were decoded under the process of semiotic analysis. They were decoded separately on a code sheet using the codes: sign, signifier, signified, photographic technique, denotation and connotation (ideology/implied narrative/cultural connotation).

Thirdly, an overall thematic coding was conducted to further deconstruct narratives, pictures, passages and also to decode sentences, phrases and passages. This section provides results that were reported on the basis of simple count by looking at feminine and masculine roles as well as how each gender has been portrayed in terms of dominance and agency. A total of 13 stories were narrated from a males' point of view, whereas 6 were narrated from females' point of view. Out of a total of 342 pictures in all three textbooks, 215 male characters were shown and 127 female characters. In text, 75 actions and verbs were associated with the male gender and 67 with the female gender.

A pattern was noted when looking over certain activities, roles, attributes, nature and appearance of male and female characters in all three textbooks. From a total of 87 representations in outdoor settings, 64 males and 23 females were represented. In reference to indoor activities, 15 male and 20 female characters were represented indoors. These characters were shown to be involved in domestic chores in texts, narratives and pictures. Over about 10 females were shown to be involved in domestic/house chores, whereas only 2 males were shown performing certain house chores.

With regards to display of actions, professions and attributes within the divide of both genders; over 11 male characters were shown to be in leadership roles as opposed to females where only 1 character in a leadership role was presented in a narrative. 15 males and 5 females

were presented as role models to students in the three primary level textbooks. Role models were either national heroes who served and fought for the country or religious personalities in Islamic history. No female personalities were discussed under the realm of role models within the given two categories while 12 male military heroes and 5 religious personalities were talked about over 8 occasions within the textbooks. In display of certain professions i.e., schoolteachers, only 5 male teachers and 14 female teachers were either shown in text or pictures. On the other hand, while talking about sports and games, 17 males were shown to be either playing outside in playgrounds or playing a specific sport in a field. Whereas only 2 females were observed being involved in a certain game/sport. In relation to associating certain types of activities and actions, the majority of young girls were displayed to be playing with either toys, dolls or studying or taking care of plants and household items within an indoor setting. There were over 31 instances, where only women were exhibited in a caring and nurturing character that not only takes care of household activities but nurtures children too.

Coming back to pictures and animations displayed in the three textbooks, characters (both male and female) were shown to be dressed in a certain attire and dress-up. In relation to showing characters within Pakistan's cultural and social context, 65 females wore traditional dresses (shalwar, kameez, dupatta, headscarves) whereas only in 24 instances, males were shown wearing traditional Pakistani clothes (shalwar, kameez). In opposition, 67 male characters were displayed in modern attire (shirt, trouser) whereas only about 10 female characters (including elder women and young girls) were shown in untraditional and modern clothing.

The above mentioned results have been summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 2.*Descriptive Statistics (count) of Observed Themes in Textbooks*

Themes	Codes	Male	Female
Representation of Masculine and Feminine Roles	Indoor Activities	15	20
	Outdoor Activities	63	23
	Domestic Chores	2	10
	Sports	17	2
	Emotional Attributes	0	31
	Traditional Clothing	24	65
	Untraditional Clothing	67	10
	Teaching Roles	5	14
Dominance and Agency	Leadership Roles	11	1
	Role Models	15	5
	Names/Pronouns	100	91
	Military Professions	12	0
	Other Professions	3	5
	Religious Personalities	8	0
Other	Pictures	215	127
	Verbs/Actions	75	67
	Narratives/Narration	13	6

The results obtained from thematic coding, narrative and semiotic analysis were further divided and categorized under various themes. These *overarching themes* are interlinked with each other and also provide substantial information to unveil latent ideologies and frames that are indirectly communicated to primary level students.

Theme 1: Position of Female Characters in Indoor Settings

Moving forward, the first theme grounded within the data obtained through analyses is how women are shown in indoor settings in narratives, pictures, passages and other forms of text. Female characters are presented and quoted to be involved in certain actions are in majority working within the confines of their homes or a certain indoor setting i.e., school.

“Sara’s mother was working in the kitchen. Sara went to the kitchen to help her mother. She decided to wash the dishesafter that they cooked food and cleaned the kitchen.”

(Passage 17, English G4, p.104)

“.....someone is at the door, her mother called out from the kitchen”

(Narrative 17, English G5, p. 128)

“My father reads the newspaper every day.” & “My mother washes clothes.”

(English G5, p. 116)

In the above mentioned examples, it is evident how older women (especially mothers) are portrayed as characters that are mainly involved in household chores. This portrayal not only limits women from public spaces and confines them within a setting of a home but also bounds their skills and expertise to household chores. In today’s age, women are moving towards financial independence and are working in the formal sector. In order to bring this narrative towards the common public narrative, it is important to show women/mothers in roles other than housewives.

“My name is Bano. I live in a small house. I call it a ‘Happy Home’There is a small garden in front of the house. I love to water the plants in the evening. I also keep a white kitten as a pet. I call it kitty. My grandfather tells me that a happy family home supports children and helps them grow in their abilities and skills.”

(Narrative 1, English G3, p. 24)

The narrative shows a young girl talking about her “happy home” which includes her siblings, parents and grandparents. She is shown to be involved in her daily activities including watering plants in the garden and playing with her pet named ‘kitty.’ It is evident that she is involved in a house chore at such a young age. In the example mentioned earlier, Sara goes to the kitchen and

helps her mother is cooking dinner and washing dishes. In another instance, in a picture (English Grade 4 p. 122) a girl is shown watering plants at home. When girls at such a young age are reported to be working in homes, it automatically creates an ideology that girls are supposed to stay at home and help their mothers in household work. In textbooks, young girls should rather be seen involved in playing some sport/with toys which further enhances their ability to grow their skills and abilities to work in the wider public sphere.

Theme 2: Position of Female Characters in Outdoor Settings

Under this theme, portrayal of female characters in outdoor setting/public spaces is discussed with reference to inclusion of men and exclusion of women from outdoor activities i.e., sports and games. Several pictures (*English Grade 5 p. 54, English Grade 4 p. 55, English Grade 3 p.69, 71, 76, 78*) show men and young boys playing sports and games outdoors. No women are shown to be playing alongside the men or separately. This excludes women from public spaces and also limits their opportunities to explore the world outside.

“....I decided to bring back the same scenery with the help of my father, sister and brothers. I requested my father to give us responsibilities. My elder brothers took charge of bringing the fertilizer from the market and planting new plants. My sister opted to water plants in the afternoon and I had the responsibility of taking care of the nests.....”

(Narrative 11, English G5)

In relation to exclusion of women from outdoor activities, above mentioned is another example of how female characters are shown in roles within the house i.e., the brothers were in charge of getting fertilizer “from the market” (role outside the house) while the sisters were in charge of taking care and watering the plants (role inside the house). The distinction between stereotyped

gender roles is evident in the text of the narrative. Especially when noting that the writer is targeting students between the age of 7-10 years, the language in text holds a significant value in the cognitive and learning process of young minds.

“One sunny morning, Ayla decided to go to the park with her elder brother Fahad.....”

(Passage 18, English Grade 4, p.117)

The passage shows a young girl who goes to the park but her elder brother accompanies her. The implied narrative goes into two directions; a young child is accompanied by an elder in a public place and a girl goes to the park with her elder brother. In light of the second narrative, the implication that a girl/woman has to be accompanied by a male member of the family is evident in various pictures as well (Grade 3 p. 49, 103, 104, Grade 4 p. 116, Grade 5 p. 35, 36, 85, 96). Stereotyped ideas of gender roles and a certain sort of positioning of women in outdoor settings can create prejudice/bias in the minds of primary level students. In comparison, there were no instances observed where young boys were chaperoned by an older female relative in public spaces.

Theme 3: Representation of Gender in Professional Roles

In the professional realm, there are a number of examples of various women who have excelled in professions of education, politics and other professions. A narrative written with the title, “Women as Role Models” in English Grade 5, p. 26 provides representation to four women who have created history. The narrative talks about Fatima Jinnah, Dr. Ruth Pfau, Arfa Karim and Samina Baig and their careers and life stories. However, the biography starts with a paragraph quoted below:

“History depicts that whenever females get suitable circumstances, they perform well and achieve their goalsOur women have always been a great support for men. They are equal to men in terms of spirit, hard work, achievement etc.”

(Narrative 10, English Grade 5, p. 26)

When critically analyzing text, the language and choice of words play an important part in projecting certain ideologies in the audience. As mentioned in the example above, women should not need “suitable circumstances” to be able to excel and achieve their goals. The circumstances should always go in favor of women and legitimizing their potential. Moreover, women who have served the country and are role models for the nation should be given equal representation as men. Women’s role in the wider context should not be limited to being “great support for men.”

Similarly, a narrative titled “Pride of Pakistan” (English Grade 4, p. 35) talks about national heroes who served the military and sacrificed their lives for Pakistan. However, the narrative is not gender inclusive as it is narrated by a young boy who visits the Pakistan Army Museum and also, only male national heroes have been discussed in the narrative. In light of serving and sacrificing life for the country, Marium Mukhtiar serves as the prime contemporary example for young girls and boys. She was the first female Pakistani fighter pilot who was martyred in the line of duty. It is equally important to give equal representation to women in professions that are deemed to be conventional masculine professions (Khan et al., 2014). In result, it is evident that the authors of the textbooks are choosing to reinforce predetermined ideas of gender and gender roles.

Moreover, the lack of representation of women in leadership roles is another aspect that leads towards differential representation of genders in professional roles. Benazir Bhutto, who was not only the first female Prime Minister of Pakistan but was also the first female Prime Minister in a Muslim-majority country in the world, is a role model for many women including those who want to pursue careers in politics. Exclusion of women in power-leadership roles from the biography “Women as Role Models” or the narrative “Pride of Pakistan” leads towards the argument of representation of women in nurturing and caring characters. For example, Fatimah Jinnah was quoted as “*Mother of the Nation*” (Grade 5, p. 27) and Dr. Ruth Pfau as “*Mother Teresa of Pakistan*” (Grade 5, p. 27). In a similar context, the profession of teaching has also been repeatedly mentioned in the textbooks. Teaching as a profession is said to be female led and has been associated with a nurturing and motherly quality. Out of the 19 instances, 14 female and only 5 male teachers were given representation in all three textbooks.

In another example, a group of male doctors are shown in a picture (Grade 4, p. 35). They are sitting together on a table with “Covid-19” written in the background. The text with the picture says, “*Look at the pictures and imagine the problems faced by the community.....when there was a pandemic, people came out to help each other.*” (Grade 4, p. 34). During the pandemic, a number of female doctors (including Dr. Yasmin Rashid, Health Minister Punjab) served as frontline health workers and risked their lives to save the public. Additionally, all the nursing staff was shown to be women even though there can be and 'are' male nurses in Pakistan as well.

Theme 4: Gender Representation in Attributes and Natures of Characters

“Azlan, Ayesha, Meerab and Ali were group members. They were asked to make a project on.....Azlan misbehaved with the other group members. He was trying to hide his laziness. Even though their project was going to be late, Ayesha was patient with Azlan..”

(Passage 21, Grade 5, p. 2)

Under the theme of attributes and natures of characters, with examples it is shown how women are shown to have nurturing, patient and caring attributes. The example mentioned above shows how a female student chooses to be patient with a male member of her group. Similarly, female characters are shown to be involved in particular activities that are conventionally feminine. For example:

“Sara and her friend went to the park. The weather was very pleasant. There they saw many beautiful things like flowers, swings and colorful butterflies. They enjoyed the fresh air and had a lot of fun.”

(Passage 15, Grade 4, p. 9)

“One day Mahnoor was playing in a park with her friends. She noticed that people were plucking flowers, killing the insects and making the park dirty. She was so upset. She wanted to save the insects and the environment...”

(Passage 16, Grade 4, p. 17)

“Nida was walking slowly to the school....she saw a poor beggar on the street....she felt sorry for the beggar so she quickly took out her lunch box. She generously gave it to him.”

(Passage 19, Grade 4, p. 97)

All three examples portray young girls to have empathetic and caring natures and how they have the tendency to care about their environment and surroundings. This contributes towards early conditioning of young girls who set presuppositions in mind. In opposition, a dialogue between father and his son is reported as:

“Mohsin: Baba, I have been playing in the playground with my friends.

Father: Have you prepared for the text?

Mohsin: Oh no! I just forgot I had a test tomorrow.

Father: There is always a time for play and a time for study....be careful next time.”

(Grade 4, p. 82)

The example mentioned above and earlier in the start, both portray young boys as reckless and careless individuals. However, there are instances where boys are shown in caring roles but in comparison to the passages in the same textbook (Grade 4) that show girls to have nurturing attributes, the divide and differential representation is evidently observed.

Earlier, when discussing older women portrayed as housewives involved in household chores and indoor activities, an opposing pattern is observed in portrayal of older men. Men (as shown in the examples below) are either involved in specific roles that take place or are concerned with the outside environment or they are shown to be rational and practical in nature. For example:

“My grandfather tells me that a happy family home supports children and helps them grow in their abilities and skills.”

(Narrative 1, English G3, p. 24)

Bano (lead character) who is a young girl is being given advice on building happy families by her grandfather. The dialogue is of a nurturing/parenting nature that is usually given to women of the families who are supposed to build family ties in the future. This piece of advice comes from an elder wise man of the family.

Two examples from Grade 4 textbook state:

“Finally the day came when we took the school bus to go for our historical trip to Pakistan Army Museum. My close friend and classmate, Tashif, brought his diary along with him. it was his hobby to collect pictures and information about Pakistan Army as his uncle was an army officer....Tashif’s uncle had told us many stories about Pakistani soldiers.”

(Narrative 5, p. 35)

“Good afternoon Dad, I have something important to show you, Ahsan said while taking off his school bag.....There is always traffic jam in front of my school....That’s not good. We should inform the traffic police about this issue. As a good citizen, it is our moral duty to help the police by informing them about traffic issues, said his father.”

(Narrative 8, p. 117)

Another narrative from Grade 5 textbook:

“On his way back home, Suleman noticed a banner about a cattle sale for Eid-ul-Azha. He rushed towards his father and expressed his desire to buy a goat for Eid....Father smiled and said, OK, my dear son. We will go to the cattle market on Sunday.”

(Narrative 15, p. 97)

A dialogue from Grade 5 textbooks goes:

“Adam: I want to save money. What should I do, Dad?”

Dad: Just follow some rules properly to spend money in your life...just set a goal that you will not spend money on extra things and only buy what you need.”

(Grade 5, p. 112)

All the aforementioned examples show older men being in positions of power. They are either shown in professional leadership roles or have command over practical and rational decisions. The examples show that the setting of narratives is outdoors or concerned with matters of the outside environment. They are not only narrated by boys, but the dominant discourse also lies in the hands of older male characters. In comparison to representation and position of female

characters in narratives, their roles are subservient and more concerned with the matters inside the home.

Theme 5: Gender Representation in Pictures

Under this theme, gender representation in pictures is discussed with reference to the use of various tools i.e., objects, props, settings and clothes. As mentioned in Table 2., out of 342 pictures, the majority of representation is given to male characters (215 pictures of males and 127 pictures of females).

In terms of settings, it is observed that when men are represented in pictures, they are most likely shown in an outdoor setting. Young boys are either involved in games and outdoor activities i.e., playing on the ground, cycling, sitting on benches, walking or running (*Grade 3 p. 57, 69, 71, Grade 4 p. 118, Grade 5 p. 55, 67, 77*). Older men are involved in activities like driving a car (*Grade 4 p. 118*), reading/ working on a laptop (*Grade 3 p. 24*), out with their children (*Grade 4 p. 8*) or having discussions with colleagues (*Grade 4 p. 35*). In opposition, women are usually shown within homes i.e., teaching (*Grade 5 p. 25*), feeding their children (*Grade 4 p. 89, Grade 5 p. 22*), involved in a house chore (*Grade 3 p. 98, Grade 4 p. 122*). When in outdoor settings, they are accompanied by men (*Grade 3 p. 49, 94, 104, Grade 4 p. 8, 116, Grade 5 p. 36*).

In terms of props and objects, there is a difference between portrayal of young boys and girls. Two pictures on the same page are shown with the text, "*Look at the pictures. They show what true friends do for one another.*" (*Grade 5, p. 67*) First picture shows two girls sitting together in what seems to be a room inside a house. They both are sitting together on a table with a book in

front of them. They both are studying together. The second picture shows two boys who are in a playground. One has fallen down on the ground from his bicycle and the other one is helping him get up.

Similarly, another set of pictures in Grade 4 (p. 88) textbook shows a girl, dressed in traditional attire, sitting in her room and playing with her toys (dollhouse, dolls, stuffed toys). She later cleans her room to show the importance of tidiness and cleanliness. In the same textbook (p. 55, 56) young boys are seen playing cricket in the field and later sitting on a bench in a park. There are no girls in the pictures. The pictures are shown in the narrative, “*Valuing Others*” (p. 56). The boys in the pictures talk about how one friend has been rude to another friend and did not invite him to become part of his cricket team. A noticeable difference is observed in the representation of both genders with the use of photographic techniques and props. Girls are usually seen playing with toys inside of homes while boys are seen with sport equipment outside in the park.

Moreover, the observable wide difference in appearance of male and female characters also proves differential representation of both genders in all three textbooks. Majority of women are seen wearing traditional clothes i.e., shalwar kameez, dupatta even when in indoor settings (Grade 3 p. 2, 23, 24, 98, 103, 104, Grade 4 p. 6, 33, 99, Grade 5 p. 25, 26, 36, 75, 98, 110, 127). When shown in outdoor settings, older women as well as in some instances young girls too, are wearing headscarves (Grade 4 p. 5, 49, 104). In contrast, the majority of men are shown in modern attire (Grade 3 p. 23, 24, 57, 60, 69, 73, 103, 104, 113, Grade 4 p. 6, 8, 33, 35, 46, 55, 56, 80, 87, 99, Grade 5 p. 32, 36, 54, 55, 67, 77). They are shown wearing shirts and pants.

Theme 6: Gender Representation in Ethnic and Religious Context

Earlier when discussing women in traditional Pakistani clothes, it is evident that the attire not only reflects our culture but also represents a particular sect within Islamic ideology i.e., women in full coverage (*Grade 3 p. 2, 23, 24, 98, 103, 104, Grade 4 p. 6, 33, 99, Grade 5 p. 25, 26, 36, 75, 98, 110, 127*) and even young girls in headscarves (*Grade 4 p. 5, 49, 104*). This particularized representation of one religion shows that the textbooks do not show diversity to young students. However, under topics of different festivals and cultures, there are women shown wearing sarees and playing Holi (*p. 94*). In order to integrate a sense of diversity, there still lies a need to add such examples in the common narrative. Stories about young Hindu, Christian, Parsi, Sikh, Kalasha children need representation in textbooks. There should not be religious bias in primary level English subject textbooks.

In a similar context, when talking about different ethnic cultures in Pakistan, only then are men and women shown wearing Sindhi, Balochi, Peshawari dresses (*Grade 4 p. 67, Grade 3 p. 93*). In order to be more inclusive, there is a need to write separate narratives about children from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds who are involved in similar activities that other children are shown to be involved in.

Additionally, there is an exclusion of representation of various important female personalities in the Islamic history. In the chapter of “*Great Caliphs Islam*” (*p. 2*), women are mentioned only in relation to the men in the chapter. However, personalities like *Hazrat Khadija (RA)*, *Hazrat Fatima (RA)*, *Hazrat Aisha (RA)* and *Hazrat Hafsa (RA)* have served in this history of Islam and

have gained importance and recognition for their work. Representation of important female personalities within Islamic context is essential for educational growth.

Theme 7: Defying Gender Stereotypes

As important as it is to look over differential representation of genders in primary level textbooks, it is equally essential to observe how at many instances, there is an effort made to break certain stereotyped gender roles.

Grade 3 textbook (p. 24) displays a set of pictures that do not align with the perceived narrative of gender roles in our society. The first picture shows a family sitting together; the daughter is working with her father on the laptop while the mother is teaching her son. The second picture shows a young boy serving tea to his grandfather. In a wider social context, girls are said to be involved in household chores and not in technological work. In the pictures discussed above, not only are young girls and women shown in positions of expertise but also young boys are involved in serving food to the elderly of the house.

In Grade 4 textbook (p. 67), men and women of different ethnicities are shown in a picture under the title, “*Colours of Pakistan.*” Women are seen wearing dresses of diverse cultures and ethnicities and a differently abled woman is also shown sitting on a wheelchair. This is an important aspect as differently abled people should be given equal representation in the public domain. Similarly, narratives titled “*Valuing Others*” (Grade 4, p. 56) and “*The Day of Silence*” (Grade 3, p. 59) talk about differently abled children. A passage from Grade 4 textbook (p. 62)

also talks about Helen Keller, who was an American author and a disability rights advocate who was a role model for millions of people.

A narrative in Grade 4 textbook (p. 99) is titled as “*Be Aware, Be Safe.*” It refers to child abuse and stresses upon the need to be safe in public spaces. A girl and a boy talk to their mother about their encounter with a stranger. The mother then sits them down and explains to them as to why it is important to avoid strangers in public places. With the rising problem of child abuse in our country, the narrative is breaking a barrier and talks about sexual abuse which is considered as a taboo in our society.

Moreover, in Grade 5 textbook (p. 26) there are four animated pictures of women shown in various professions i.e., doctor, pilot, nurse, chef. It is accompanied by a question, “*Do you like seeing your mother in any of the above mentioned professions? Why?*” The text and the picture bring together an important narrative and presents it to young students. Working women who are also mothers need separate recognition and representation in textbooks which is essential for young girls and boys to observe and value.

Stage 5 & 6: Analyze the external and internal relations in the text

In this section, final results will be analyzed with reference to the external and internal relations within the text itself. Textual interpretation will be discussed while utilizing the above mentioned themes to identify and “*examine social relations that control the production of the text*” (Mullet, 2018). Interrelations and connections between themes will be identified to determine hierarchy within dominant social practices, frames and ideologies.

While talking about the position of women and men in outdoor and indoor environments, the theme presented how women are positioned differently from men in narratives, text and pictures. In relation to their positioning, it was also observed that women are less likely to be seen outdoors as compared to men and are mostly accompanied by men (as shown in pictures). This limits the representation of women in public spaces and also creates a sense of dependency on men. The idea of underrepresentation of women can also be related to less participation of women in outdoor activities i.e., sports. With reference to many pictures (page numbers mentioned in the previous section), a noticeable pattern was observed where only young boys and men were taking part in sport. This notion leads towards the narrative of how sports is a male dominated field. Lower representation of girls in sport/outdoor activities in textbooks limits their ability and desire to participate in the outer world.

Moreover, majority of the stories were narrated by male characters. These stories were mostly about issues regarding outdoor activities, games, sports or outdoor environment problems. They either go to their fathers for advice or help or try to solve it themselves. When characters of mothers are involved, the narrative is usually concerned with showing a more caring, loving and nurturing aspect of life i.e., telling the truth, caring about family and friends. This specific characterization of women under caregiving roles not only restricts their roles within the family and household but also excludes them from the wider public domain. It also limits the representation of their work that they do outside of homes i.e., working women and women in leadership roles. This could also be geared toward teaching women to see or 'make sense of the world' from the male (patriarchal) perspective.

Underrepresentation in professional and leadership roles is also associated with how women are perceived as symbols of honor. The cultural norm, which is heavily influenced by Islamic ideology, reinforces women to stay indoors (chaardiwari) while the man (who is the sole earner of the house) remains outdoors and earns for the family. This automatically leads towards the argument of gender stereotyped roles in our society. The ultimate job of a woman is considered to be taking care of household chores and the physical, social, psychological and emotional needs of her children and family. With regards to the positioning of women in indoor settings in the textbooks, the ideology is clearly being integrated into the minds of young students who are in the cognitive process of developing their set of values and norms.

In connection with underrepresentation of women in public spaces, women were observed in a specific type of clothing/attire. Shalwar, kameez and dupatta are known to have originated from South Asian culture which has been adopted by Pakistan too. This attire was observed to dominate women's appearances in the textbooks. The ensemble is not only reflective of Pakistani culture but also reflects upon Islamic ideologies of dressing up for women. When talking in reference to differential representation of both genders in the textbooks, this ideology caters to a particular set of values that are observed in the wider social setting in Pakistan. The ideology not only dictates women on their dressing but also narrates their position in the society. The idea of women being subservient to men in the society is backed up by socio-cultural norms and dictators of religion in our country. Despite various examples of resilient powerful women in the Islamic history, the public narrative of Islam is dominated by male religious scholars whose perspectives are integrated into various social processes in Pakistan.

The above mentioned values and norms that are grounded within certain ideologies are presented to the readers in an indirect way. The communication does not take place explicitly. These ideologies and values are integrated through dialogues, phrases and language (examples given in the previous section) which are used as tools of socialization to maintain the status quo within our society.

Stage 7: Interpret the data

This stage of the analysis will be covered in detail in the next section. The themes and identified ideologies and set of values will be revisited in light of critical feminist perspective.

Discussion

Discussed earlier in the introduction chapter, this study demonstrated differential representation of genders in primary level textbooks of public and private schools. Furthermore, it aimed to delve into representation of genders in narrative structures, pictures and text provided in the textbook. In the previous chapter, the results obtained showed that differential representation of gender exists in textbooks taught at primary level education. The results also demonstrated that females were underrepresented in the wider public sphere i.e., politics, religion, and their abilities were restricted within the confines of their homes. Women were represented as having caring, nurturing and affectionate natures. The data suggested that at most instances, their roles were limited to housewives and mothers. Women in leadership roles were represented in a separate chapter [Women as Role Models (Grade 5)], excluded from the wider narrative.

This study utilizes a critical feminist framework presented by De Saxe (2012) to understand how the data obtained reflects biased gender representation in terms of agency, power and differential forms of racism and sexism. In light of Chela Sandoval's theoretical framework, De Saxe (2012) argues that '*critical feminist theory is a valid methodology for reworking our educational institutions to better reflect equity, emancipation, and true liberation*' (De Saxe, 2012). In order to transform the dominant narrative and bring a social change from within educational institutions, it is vital to observe the intersection of race, class and gender.

Critical feminist theory suggests using '*narratives as a method for recognizing or fighting oppression*' (Luke 1992; De Saxe, 2012). Conversely, data suggested that the narration and dominant actors within narratives affixed to male characters. Majority of the fictional stories revolved around male characters in lead positions and focused on the events and circumstances of their lives. In that sense the prospective readers (including both male and female students) are being influenced to empathies with male characters and understand the world predominantly from the male perspective.

While most male oriented narratives were based in outdoor environments, female led stories were based on activities in indoor settings/within their homes. There was an observed absence of female-led fictional narratives or narratives on women based on historical events. The need to integrate such narratives might lead to a greater understanding of women representation in the wider public sphere and imagining women in leadership roles.

The perception of women being given more representation can not only dismantle gendered power relations, but also challenge the dominant discourse revolving around 'nurturing'

attributes of women. The idea of a woman being caring, nurturing and soft-hearted is reinforced through text, in the form of narratives, pictures and passages in primary level textbooks. This is not just a mere idea but it derives from an agenda-based learning that ultimately affects students' worldview and in turn their lives. The agenda to reinforce traditional discourses of femininity and masculinity also impacts students' career choices in the future (Triechler and Frank, 1989). While our textbooks are heavily influenced by religion, culture and nationalism, they are also reflective of other factors like citizenship, environmental problems, health and family values.

In reference, *“a critical feminist perspective considers issues of power as well as bringing out elements of affect, social justice, marginalization, and contextual links among both students' and instructors' social, political, historical, and cultural locations”* (Collins, 1990; Lather, 1991; Howell et al., 1999). Wider constructions of gender, culture and power are reflected in textbooks and curriculum (McLaren, 1989; Ullah and Skelton, 2013) and they are implicitly communicated through texts presented in the form of narratives and pictures to students. In light of the above mentioned factors influencing textbook production, it is important to note that textbooks can be made progressive and inclusive within the Pakistani context. We witness multiple examples of female role models and female representation in leadership and political realms and their representation in textbooks and the classroom discourse is vital for students and teachers both. Confining women to roles within indoor settings and underrepresenting their roles in public spaces, students (especially young girls) may develop a subservient identity and ultimately choose to conform to society's predetermined roles for women and in that sense can become the instrument of their own physical and mental subjugation (Campbell, 2010). Additionally, women were shown deprived of financial independence in the textbooks. This associates with the debate

proposed by feminist scholarship. The ideology further associates with women being subservient to men and dependent on them financially. As discussed earlier, the text proposed is heavily influenced by religion and constantly reinforces ideas of women staying indoors (chaardiwari) while the male counterpart is the sole earner of the family.

Parallel to the findings of Khan et al. (2014), this study was able to identify how language has been used as a tool to integrate dominant discourses of the male identity. While the male characters were given more dominant, rational and practical tones, they were also assigned roles that were related to the worldly matters. Additionally, majority of stories were narrated by males, which provides an overview of a society deeply rooted in patriarchy. Similarly, Durrani (2008) discussed the occurrences where male voices were interlinked with ideas of nationalism and patriotism. This study found out that males embodied patriotism as narratives in the text presented brave men as the protectors of the nation. This intersection between gender and national identities was also argued by Jabeen et al. (2014). In relation, nationalism in Pakistan is extensively connected with religion as discussed by Agha et al. (2018) and Durrani and Halai (2018). The cross-section of the three aspects (gender, nationalism, religion) is another finding of this study where more recognition lies at the hands of male figures in the history of Pakistan and Islam. Women were underrepresented under the above three mentioned realms. The textbooks reinforce a basic philosophy within which the idea of reinforcing gender stereotypes is couched along with reinforcing religious and other types of stereotypes that are rooted within our culture.

Similar to findings of Ullah and Skelton (2013), the results obtained reflect that textbooks communicate gender biases within Pakistan's social and cultural context. Women were not only

underrepresented in terms of their potential and capabilities to express themselves in the wider society, but women of color, class, religion, race and ethnicity were not given sufficient representation in primary level textbooks too. In reference to Lather's (1992) critical inquiry in the field of education; she defined it as taking "*into account how our lives are mediated by systems of inequity such as classism, racism, and sexism*" (Lather, 1992). Images of women in similar facial expressions, attire, class and social setting were observed in all three textbooks. This limits the opportunity to showcase many examples of women who belong to various ethnicities, race and classes in Pakistan. While existing cultures and ethnicities are shown in separate chapters in textbooks, there still lies a need to treat diversity as part of a whole narrative presented to students. Stories of young girls and boys (of Balochi, Pashtun, Punjabi, Kashmiri, Kalasha, Sindhi backgrounds) should be added as a source of inspiration and a step towards inclusivity in textbooks. Stories about various religions should also be incorporated to build students' knowledge and to develop a sense of tolerance towards other religions existing in Pakistan. In a similar context, while women are shown wearing headscarves and traditional dresses that reflect Islamic ideology, women of other cultures and religions should also be included in the wider narrative. An example can be of a female character with a Christian/Hindu origin name, wearing dresses appropriate for their identities, can be given representation in textbooks. In addition, women belonging to vulnerable classes were least represented in the textbooks. A monotonous identification was given to women throughout in the three textbooks, shown in traditional clothing and situated in a similar setting i.e., a house or park. Women belonging from marginalized and disadvantaged classes could have been given equal representation in the textbooks i.e., house help, junior staff in schools. This would not only give

rise to an increased sense of tolerance within students but also increase self-esteem of students belonging from minority groups in Pakistan.

In contradiction, when discussing women dressed in traditional attires while males were observed wearing modern clothing in majority, it can be argued that the influence of western cultures on the males is accepted and even encouraged to some extent. Along with being given representation under subjects of religion and nationalism, they were also shown to be responsible for traversing the lines between the western culture and our culture in order to ensure the social and economic existence of their families in the society or outside world (as the outside world is dominated by western technology and financial systems etc.). Whereas it is less acceptable for women because their job is the perpetuation (from one generation to another) of the Pakistani culture as part of their overall duty as the 'nurturer'. If men were allowed to traverse the line between cultures to perform their roles as 'providers' (in the public domain), women were always presented in traditional attires and in home-spaces to emphasize their role as nurturers (of the future generations) and in that sense the preservers of traditional culture in the personal (household) domain.

Moving along the lines of curriculum and textbook development keeping in mind religious and cultural identities in Pakistan, the Single National Curriculum English Grade 1-5 clearly suggests equal and balanced representation in textbooks. Under the topic of Competency 5: Appropriate Ethical and Social Development (p. 20) it is quoted, *“Students need to appreciate and feel a sense of interconnectedness with their community and the world at large and develop attributes such as tolerance, respect, equality and gender equity in them which is the basic*

essence of Islam and other religions.” Additionally, it also stated under Rationale for Competency 2: Reading and Critical Thinking Skills – Standards 1, 2, (C2, S1, S2): (p. 15) “*Texts should be chosen carefully, ensuring that themes highlighted by competency 5 – appropriate ethical and social development – are covered across the board in English language textbooks. For example, themes of cultural diversity, sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and global citizenship should feature in textbooks recurrently. All reading material in the textbook should require learners to work at the level slightly above their respective ability, only then will they be stimulated enough to stretch themselves cognitively.*”

The aforementioned quotes were taken from the document *Single National Curriculum English Grade 1-5 2020*. It is evident that the government and Ministry of Education has explicitly taken steps to be more inclusive. However, the text excerpt taken from the SNC documents serves as an example of false consciousness, creating the belief that the text imbues diversity and sensitivity towards diversity while in reality it reinforces stereotypes and traditional paternalism.

Moreover, under the section of Themes and Subthemes (p. 59), the curriculum states: “*The following themes along with their sub themes are suggested for selection of topics and content of teaching material. These themes should primarily nurture ethical and social attitudes relevant to Pakistani context, and also create an awareness, tolerance and understanding of global audiences. The chosen material should demonstrate gender and cultural neutrality, and should not contain any biased/prejudiced material.*” A separate theme labelled as *Gender Equality and Equity* (p. 60) is added for selection of text and textbook development. Under this theme, the subtheme for Grade 1-3 is *Little boys and girls are equal* and the subthemes for Grade 4-5 are, 1) *Importance of female education*, 2) *Gender balanced roles in domestic setup*, 3)

Gender balanced access to basic needs (p. 60). In reference to the above mentioned themes and quotes taken directly from the curriculum document, there is an evident gap between the guide given by the Ministry of Education and the knowledge of textbook authors, publishers and evaluators.

The textbooks used for this study were developed by Punjab Textbook and Curriculum Board and were approved by the National Review Committee. While the Single National Curriculum promises ‘access to uniform educational attainment’ (Naqvi, 2021) it is essential to study the application of its values through textbooks. The gap between the ministry and Punjab government leads towards a thorough process of examination of textbooks being developed. The content not only reflects gender biases and stereotypes, but it is also heavily influenced by traditional religious values and beliefs. The aim is to teach English as a language which should not perpetuate any specific religion based agenda. The content should be free of bias and moreover should promote inclusivity and tolerance in students. With the ongoing situation of religious sensitivity in our country, subject textbooks should be developed keeping in mind the cognitive levels of students. Primary level students should not be taught religious exclusivity under the realms of subjects like English. This agenda not only exhibits religious bias in students but also limits representation and opportunities provided to women. When women are showcased within homes wearing traditional Islamic clothing through channels of education and media, it reinforces ideas that were presented by the Islamization Movement introduced by General Zia-ul-Haq in his era. Moreover, these books in general are not geared towards imbuing a capacity for critical thought in the children in general.

While previous research has majorly focused on gender representation within a social context, this study's results demonstrate that biased and differential representation of genders draw on wider values, frames and ideologies. These values are not just perpetuated in our society by influence of culture and religion, but also through policies and agendas presented by governmental and institutional bodies. The results also indicate a need to study how policymakers have manipulated educational institutes and textbook content to inculcate religious and cultural values. The politics behind textbook development and production serves as a separate area where further research can be conducted. Furthermore, this research draws on major implications of religion on textbook content that is reflective of a certain Islamic sect and its ideologies. As previously mentioned, this can be referred back to General Zia-ul-Haq's era and his movement of Islamization in Pakistan. The motive behind inculcating fundamentalist values were explicitly mentioned back in 1977, but not in today's age and government. There still lies a growing need to investigate where women are given equal representation in terms of education, professional roles, leadership roles, within and outside of their homes in the Single National Curriculum of Pakistan.

Further recommendations to devise a more inclusive and gender neutral plan for educational institutes can be to include more stories of resilient women who served the country and can also be regarded as heroes and pride of Pakistan. As our textbook content is influenced by nationalism, it also serves as a major motivational factor for young students and their growth within the setting of Pakistan. When female-led narratives would be added in textbooks, it would also provide relatable stories to young girls. It would enable them to express themselves and move away from traditional discourses set for women in our society. Moreover, women should

be included in designing and development of curriculum and stories. When females are given more opportunities in decision making roles, their impact would not only be beneficial for representation of women in textbooks but would also affect their representation in the workforce and government positions. In light of doing further research and using previous studies, policymakers should incorporate research in future education policy making processes to counter further prejudices and biases that impact children's socialization and conditioning.

However, the methodological process and research aims of this study were constrained by the limited period of time available and smaller sample size. This study selected only three textbooks which were part of primary education level. The Single National Curriculum had introduced books for grades 1-5 in its first phase of implementation. The sample was limited to three books because of late availability of books in the market as the textbooks are not available online in the form of e-books. Furthermore, the research aims were broadly looking over differential representation of genders in narratives and pictures limiting the time and scale to focus on one or more specific ideology behind production of content in textbooks.

Conclusion

This study's research questions aimed to look at differential gender representation in textbooks of primary level education by examining narrative structures, pictures and text. The textbooks were introduced under the Single National Curriculum 2020 which was recently introduced by the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, it aimed at unveiling the hidden beliefs, values and ideologies communicated through text in the books. Texts were analyzed by conducting a critical discourse analysis through a feminist perspective. The results significantly

depicted that there was differential representation of genders in textbooks and women were underrepresented in public spaces. In addition to the unequal number of males and females presented in textbooks, women were observed in traditional roles and attires while men were represented in leadership, professional and decision making roles. It was indicated that lower representation of women stemmed from deeper ideologies of culture and religion in Pakistan. It is suggested to policymakers, textbook authors and evaluators to move away from traditional discourses of masculinity and femininity and be more inclusive of egalitarian values. It is by virtue of these values that society can evolve, in pursuit of social justice for all.

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Appendix A

**FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE****(A Chartered University)****Institutional Review Board****IRB Approval Certificate****IRB Ref:** IRB-293/07/2021**Date:** 30-07-2021**Project Title: Gender Representation in Textbooks of Public and Private Schools in Lahore, Pakistan****Principal Investigator: Hania Afzal****Supervisor: Dr. Mohammad Vaqas Ali**

Institutional review board has examined your project in IRB meeting held on 30-07-2021 and has approved the proposed study. If during the conduct of your research any changes occur related to participant risk, study design, confidentiality or consent or any other change then IRB must be notified immediately.

Please be sure to include IRB reference number in all correspondence.

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