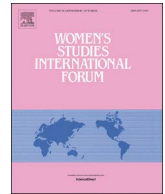


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Exploring the representation of gender and identity: Patriarchal and citizenship perspectives from the primary level Sindhi textbooks in Pakistan

Nadia Agha^{a,*}, Ghazal Kazim Syed^b, Deedar Ali Mirani^c

^a Department of Sociology, Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur, Sindh, Pakistan

^b Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, Pakistan

^c Department of English, Government Islamia Arts and Commerce College, Sukkur, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the representation of men and women in Sindhi language textbooks from Year 1 to 5 in Sindh, Pakistan. Pictorial representations and accompanying text from these books were analysed using thematic coding. The pictorial and textual analysis confirms the salient features of patriarchal ideology being reproduced through the textbooks. The pictures and text portray women as secondary citizens in the society – those who are inferior to men and cannot access the public sphere or do anything, independent of male supervision. We argue that patriarchy prevails through the textbooks as women's familial roles are mostly depicted as engaged in household tasks and performing their assigned roles. The findings from this research can be used to develop pedagogic practices for gender equality in Pakistan.

Introduction

The interpretations of gender create differences between the sexes and are often disadvantageous to women (Kochuthara, 2011). Human identities are biologically constructed as sex while gender is a social categorization, which divides people into boys and girls and men and women (Lorber, 1994). Gender plays a central role when it comes to representation. Misrepresentation of gender and underrepresentation of women in textbooks has been studied as important issues in education (see UNESCO, 2011).

Patriarchy is well entrenched in most South Asian societies where men dominate social life. They are the breadwinners, considered responsible for continuing lineage, and are the ones who inherit family property. Patriarchy is a “kinship-ordered social structure with strictly defined sex roles in which women are subordinated to men” (Moghadam, 1992: 35). Women in South Asia are usually confined to households and their roles as wives, mothers and daughters – the service providers – are emphasised. This results in severe gender inequality in the region (Agarwal, 1994; Dube, 1998, 2001; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Khan & Hussain, 2008; Sathar & Kazi, 2000). Although South Asian societies are going through some transition due to globalisation and modernisation, women's traditional roles as mothers and wives still persist (Dube, 2001; Verma & Larson, 2001). The emphasis on these traditional roles results in women being confined to the home with no active participation in public life. Furthermore, their status is

considered lower due to their limited roles and this creates severe gender inequality. Such widespread gender inequality can be seen in various spheres of life.

This paper focusses on representation of men and women in Pakistani textbooks and its impact on the understanding of gender and citizenship. We answer the following main research question, through this paper, exploring the representation of gender in textbooks:

Do Sindhi textbooks promote patriarchal ideology and discriminate against female citizens in terms of gender representation?

Gender-based analysis in textbooks in Pakistan: a review of relevant literature

Primary level education is an important part of developing children's identities. In the Pakistani context, as textbooks play a central role in the primary school classrooms, they could be a source of establishing an outlook to society in the minds of their young learners. This translation of values from the books to young minds can either help build a new social order or support the prevailing one. Therefore, the representation of gender and identity in textbooks is of considerable importance. Textbooks, in Pakistan, are argued to be biased in depiction of citizenship and gender identities, inspiring girls and boys to adopt the gender identities designed for them (Dean, 2007). Gender bias in textbooks is not highlighted as much as it should be, because the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: nadia.pathan@salu.edu.pk (N. Agha).

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country is still struggling to achieve equal access to primary education for all. However, we argue that gender bias in textbooks is important, as it has significant implications. Textbooks can leave a lasting impression on the young minds. Representation of such bias in the textbooks could contribute towards under-achievement and under-representation of girls in all sectors. Furthermore, it could also help propagate the view of women as inferior citizens.

Gender is a basic principle when it comes to organising and administering schools in Pakistan. Gender segregation is visible in Pakistan's education system as most of the government-owned primary schools are commonly divided on the basis of sex (Halai, 2010). There are, however, some exceptions where boys and girls might go to the same primary school in the case of some villages which have only one school or in the case of most private schools in rural and urban settings.

Primary education (Class One to Five, for ages 5–10), in Pakistan, is under the jurisdiction of provincial textbook boards. So, textbooks for Sindh province are published under the supervision of a provincial body called Sindh Textbook Board, Jamshoro. The textbooks have been evaluated by the Investigative Committee of Textbooks at the Bureau of Curriculum, Sindh and are core curriculum books taught alongside other subjects. These textbooks are the only approved Sindhi language textbooks taught at all primary level public-sector schools (for both girls and boys). There is one textbook for each class and for each subject. No decisions in terms of choice of textbooks are to be made by the teachers. Some private schools also choose to teach these textbooks, though they are not required to teach them by law (Ministry of Education, 2007). The *Government of Sindh's Curriculum Implementation Framework (2014)* does not state how often the textbooks are required to be revised by law. However, it does say that the need for a revision was felt “in order to prepare young students to cope with the challenges of socio-economic demands and technological changes” [pp. 1] in 2006. The curriculum was then revised and updated in 2007. However, the new textbooks were not introduced in the schools in Sindh until 2012.

Textbooks are an integral part of Pakistani primary classrooms. Teachers rely on the knowledge presented in the textbooks. They are used as the main, and at most times the only, learning resource and occupy most of the class time. This is, however, a statement based on observation and understanding of the context on our part, as educationists. Further research on teachers' attitudes towards the use and importance of textbooks in the classrooms can help to understand these contextual issues better.

Although attainment of equality is visible in national policies and plans, the topics taught and materials used are far from being gender sensitive. Textbooks of English, Urdu and Pakistan Studies are strongly biased against women (UNESCO, 2004). According to Ullah and Skelton (2013), national textbooks of English, Urdu and Pakistan Studies, in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, follow a patriarchal ideology and promote gender inequality. In their content analysis of the textbooks taught from Class One to Eight, Ullah & Skelton revealed that these books promote patriarchal ideology in four main areas i.e. male dominance, male and female gendered roles, emphasis on the patriarchal family structure, and sports as the domain of men.

Current portrayals of women's role in the private sphere of life may lead to the belief that they are secondary to men as citizens. Marshall and Bottomore (1992: 18) define citizenship as “a status, bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed.” Feminist proponents of citizenship argue that the private sphere of life, including home and family, should be considered as part of citizenship as it is important to the female half of the population (Kiwani, 2007; Prokhovnik, 1998). It is important in terms of women's identity, rights and duties to think about family and home as part of a citizen's active life. Prokhovnik (1998) further argues that women do not need to be liberated from the private sphere of their life to participate in public life and ‘become’ citizens, both men and women already

act as citizens in both public as well as private spheres of their lives. However, the restriction of men's and women's roles in both the private and the public sphere needs to be analysed through the lenses of textbooks, as textbooks represent the social world we live in. This study addresses this gap by bringing in the issue of patriarchy and how it affects women's social lives in a rigid patriarchal gender order.

The discussion of private and public spheres of life is especially true in developing countries. Acharya et al. (2010) conducted a study in Maharashtra, India on young people's participation in civic life and their involvement in performing duties. The findings showed a huge difference in participation levels of men (55%) and women (21%). The researchers suggested that in the Indian context young people, especially women, have limited opportunities to be involved in civic action. They found that the participation of women in civic spheres of life, including activities such as voting and paying taxes, was very low as compared to men. Pakistan, being a socially similar context, experiences a similar divide between the roles of men and women in public and private spheres of life.

Moreover, the representation of men and women in textbooks is strongly unequal. Women suffer from underrepresentation. Men and boys are more visible than women and girls. So much so that women's contribution to history has largely been ignored in textbooks across the country. A study by Khurshid, Gillani, and Hashmi (2010) looked at representation of gender in Urdu and English secondary school textbooks in Pakistan. The pictorial and textual analysis showed that women were represented far less than men in the form of historical, religious and fictional characters. In terms of historical representation, more male religious characters are found whereas women's representation as heroes is infrequent (Ullah, Ali, & Naz, 2014). According to UNESCO's (2004) study on textbooks (for Class 1 to 10th) in Pakistan, only 7.7% female personalities were represented in the textbooks analysed, among 251 overall personalities. The study also reported that representation of women's historical struggle in the independence movement in the subcontinent had also been neglected in the textbooks analysed. Only 0.9% of the historical personalities in the textbooks were females.

Apart from biases and underrepresentation, gender stereotyping can commonly be seen in the national textbooks. Many international reports on national textbooks argue that gender stereotyping is common in textbooks worldwide (for example Gooden & Gooden, 2001; Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006; see also Ullah et al., 2014). The case is more extreme in the Pakistani context. Jabeen, Chaudhary, and Omar (2014) conducted a discourse analysis of English and Urdu textbooks in Punjab, Pakistan. They found that the textbooks presented a limited role of women in society and a lot of gender stereotypes were highlighted through the text. Despite the focus on eliminating gender biases, the material in the textbooks portrays men as “macho” and women as “gentle”. The pictures in the textbooks focus on women's traditional domestic roles and show them engaged with their household tasks such as fetching water and doing house chores (Ahmed, 2006). This may lead to the belief that women are not supposed to participate in the social life outside home. The representation of gendered identity in textbooks facilitates the social construction of gender. For example, the female characters represented in Pakistan Studies textbooks are the Prophet's (PBUH) wife and daughter. The roles of the prophet's wife and daughter are emphasised for being a dutiful wife and a good mother. In contrast, male identity is carefully dealt with in the textbooks. They are represented in leading roles such as military and religious leaders (Durrani, 2008).

Studies conducted in this area are usually quantitative and descriptive in nature. They deal more with numbers rather than analysing how and why women are dealt as secondary citizens in Pakistani textbooks. A critical debate on how patriarchy is prevalent through and supported by textbooks and how textbooks endorse men's power is not included in such studies. The studies mentioned above describe how women's roles are represented in society and how often they appear in

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