**Research Paper**

# Gender Representation in English Language Textbooks of Primary Education

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**Abstract**

Textbooks are carriers of social change. It is through textbooks and classroom experiences that from the stage of childhood in the school itself, students start learning to accept gender socialization, social norms, beliefs, gender roles, inequality, and bias. Hence, the need to make the textbooks gender neutral arises because their analysis is necessary for this; it is in this light that the present study has analyzed English textbooks at the primary level of education in India to examine the incubation of gender stereotypes and bias. These were coupled with content analysis and qualitative and documentary research. The major findings reflect that gender patriarchy and bias are reflected in English textbooks. Overall, the results indicated that males were more prominently featured in textbooks, both in images and in text. Females were still underrepresented, had fewer diverse occupations, and were often depicted doing household chores in three textbooks. However, there were some positive portrayals and efforts to challenge stereotypes, with examples of gender-neutral language and activities shared by both genders. The findings of this study can also be used to shape policies at the state or national level in creating and applying guidelines for gender-neutral content in educational materials. These guidelines would guide the efforts of a textbook development agency, writers, and teachers in creating gender-sensitive curricula and textbooks.

**Keywords:** *Gender representation, Stereotypes and Bias, English Language, Textbooks, Primary Education.*

## INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are among the most essential, affordable, and accessible educational resources that provide students with foundational knowledge and influence their thinking (Zhou et al., 2021). According to Saleem and Zubair (2013), textbooks play a crucial role in shaping individual and societal behaviors. Texts' content and messages can have positive and negative effects on children's cognitive, emotional, and social development because they convey implicit or explicit images and narratives (Sever, 2004). Textbooks are believed to strongly impact students' perceptions of gender, shaping their cultural heritage, and contributing to the formation of gender identity (Ullah et al., 2014). They also have the potential to influence gender stereotypes and social power dynamics (Kobia, 2009). Textbooks significantly contribute to the formation of gender models for boys and girls and reinforce gender stereotypes (Ozer er al., 2019). Primary schools, recognized as a critical stage in education, are strategically important for shaping students' perspectives on humanity, molding attitudes, imparting knowledge, and developing fundamental skills (Halimatussakdiah et al., 2021). The primary-level curriculum plays a key role in shaping young learners' mindsets, influencing their behavior, and addressing gender biases (Ali & Hussain, 2019). As a central component of this process, textbooks help instill desirable attitudes in children (Sumalatha, 2004), making primary-level textbooks a subject of research across different societies. The representation of gender in school textbooks has long been a research focus, with scholars highlighting the persistence of masculinity and femininity stereotypes in educational materials. Over the past few decades, the discussion of gender in education and textbooks has gained importance, emphasizing the significant role that textbooks play in promoting specific gender ideologies or values (Ariyanto, 2018). The relationship between gender and textbooks is reciprocal because textbooks both reflect and shape gender norms within a culture (Aydinoglu, 2014).

Therefore, gender in textbooks has a significant impact on students' learning experiences and attitudes (Ansary & Babaii, 2003). This article aims to analyze gender stereotypes and bias in the imagery and text depicted in English language textbooks used for primary education by the School Education Department of West Bengal, India.

Previous research on gender bias and stereotypes in textbooks has identified significant underrepresentations and stereotypical portrayals of females, particularly in the Indian context. Studies by Kadri (2022), Bhattacharyya (2017), and others have highlighted that female characters are often depicted less frequently and in subordinate roles than male characters (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Nandi et al., 2020). International studies show similar patterns, with males dominating verbal space and social roles, while females are portrayed as less independent and more limited in roles and resources (Vu & Pham, 2021; Tyarakanita et al., 2021; Orfan, 2021). The main limitation of these studies is their focus on general patterns rather than specific textbook illustrations and their lack of attention to recent instructional material updates. This study aims to address these gaps by critically examining pictorial depictions in current primary education textbooks from West Bengal, providing a detailed analysis of gender representation and offering new insights into how these biases can be mitigated. The scientific merit of this research lies in its novel approach to a focused examination of textbook imagery and its potential to inform equitable educational practices.

This research offers a unique perspective by focusing on the text and imagery used in English language-language textbooks and unraveling the subtle ways in which gender stereotypes are perpetuated through content. By conducting a study in West Bengal, the research contextualizes its findings within the sociocultural nuances of the region, providing valuable insights into the intersectionality of gender and culture in educational material. The focused study also provides valuable insights that can inform educational policies and content development to foster more inclusive and equitable learning environments.

This paper addressed gender representation in the English language textbooks of Class III, IV, and V at the primary level of Education in West Bengal, highlighting existing biases. This study examines the reflection of gender representation in the English language textbooks used in III, IV and V at the primary level of Education in West Bengal. Five aspects of the textbooks were analyzed to assess gender representation: (i) Representation of Male and Female Nouns, (ii) Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Theme of the Text, (iii) Representation of Male and Female Generic Construction, (iv) Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Titles, (v) representation of male and female imagery.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Gender representation is always critical in primary education because the early years of schooling are a formative age when children begin to develop an understanding of societal roles and identity, including gender. The content of textbooks during this period molds young minds and impacts how children perceive themselves and others as either belonging to a man or a woman (Jennae Bulat, 2016). When gender stereotypes or biases are included in these materials, they reinforce traditional and unequal roles by limiting children's aspirations and maintaining social inequalities.

For instance, if boys are depicted as leaders or are more frequently shown to be physically active in textbooks, while girls appear in a passive or nurturing role, this would foster the idea of restrictive roles for children of each gender can do or to which they should aspire (VVOB, 2022). On the other hand, if textbooks portray diverse and equitable representations of gender, this is likely to empower boys and girls to widen their scope of interests and careers, an initiative to defeat the dominating harmful stereotypes from an early age (Kadri, 2022; Jennae Bulat, 2016). While children are easily influenced, in their primary education circles, messages conveyed by textbooks

related to gender may have a more persistent impact.

In turn, the available learning resources to be used must be evenly balanced in terms of gender representativeness to ensure an excellent context to raise a new generation of learners with not just limited definitions of roles but instead not biasing toward any single interaction between men and women. This will require justice for a balanced society (Jennae Bulat, 2016). This demands a critical re-look at how gender is depicted in primary school textbooks to ensure inclusive and empowering education for all children (VVOB, 2024).

In the Indian context, several studies on gender bias and stereotypes in textbooks have highlighted that females are often underrepresented and stereotyped (Kadri, 2022; Bhattacharyya, 2017; Kuruvilla & Thasniya, 2015). Nandi et al. (2020) found that textbook illustrations often depict disproportionate numbers of males versus female figures, with female characters being less represented. Ahmad and Shah (2019) observed that gender is imbalanced in textbooks, with males being shown in dominant and influential roles and females being depicted in subordinate and less significant roles. Kharbanda and Lodhi (2015) noted that female characters appear less frequently than male characters. Similarly, Kharbanda and Lodhi (2015) reported a greater number of references to men than to women. Sumalatha (2004) also found that textbooks predominantly feature men.

International studies on gender bias and stereotypes in textbooks have revealed consistent patterns of male overrepresentation and female underrepresentation across various contexts. Vu and Pham (2021) highlighted that while males are given more verbal space and are depicted with greater social properties, females are portrayed with limited independence, choices, and resources. Similarly, Tyarakanita et al. (2021) found that textbooks often depict males in more prominent social roles than females, both in textual and visual content. Suwarno et al. (2021) identified that gender stereotypes are embedded in portrayals of academic and nonacademic achievements, domestic chores, and hobbies. Siren (2018) reported an overrepresentation of men and traditional portrayals of gender roles, although some textbooks also featured patterns that challenged these stereotypes. Orfan (2021) observed that female characters were significantly underrepresented compared to males and were often relegated to fewer social roles, with male characters leading dialogs and narratives. Namatende-Sakwa (2018) explored how women are constructed through discourses that depict them as emotional, appearance-focused, and dependent on men, contrasting sharply with the rational and physically capable portrayal of men. Lee and Collins (2008) similarly found that textbooks perpetuate the stereotype of women as weaker and primarily confined to domestic roles.

Therefore, this focused study was conducted after examining various earlier studies and recent academic publications. Although many studies have reviewed recent journals, they have not addressed gender stereotypes and bias in the text and illustrations of primary education English language textbooks from West Bengal, India. There has been limited exploration of this issue in the Indian context. Therefore, this study focused on a detailed examination of the text and illustrations in these English textbooks.

**RESEARCH METHOD**
**Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative and documentary approach. Document review, a qualitative research method, involves the systematic evaluation of textual and electronic documents (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005; Bowen, 2009). Qualitative research is particularly effective for in-depth exploration of specific problems or topics (Creswell, 2013). In this study, textbooks were treated as documents and were analyzed using content analysis techniques. Documents typically present information through a mix of text and visual elements, such as images and

diagrams (Prior, 2003). Content analysis, as described by Cohen et al. (2007), seeks to uncover meaning and interpret phenomena within a social context. This technique, which attempts to make replicable and valid inferences from texts (Krippendorff, 2004), is widely used in social science to identify patterns and draw conclusions based on message content (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1976). This study specifically explored gender stereotypes and biases in primary school English language-based textbooks (from class III to class V) by employing content analysis to assess the portrayal of male and female text and images. West Bengal is a culturally diverse area with a great history of social reform movements, thus providing a good context for investigating the framing of gender representation within educational resources. In West Bengal, education systems are well established, and textbooks are used throughout the state. The importance of deconstructing the role that gender plays in foundational learning at the primary level.

**Sample/ Data and the Data Sources**

Out of the 19 textbooks, three English language textbooks named i) "Butterfly" for class III; ii) "Butterfly" for class IV; and iii) "Butterfly" for class V; have been chosen through the purposive sampling technique as samples in this study. Primary Education Board, School Education Department, Governt. of West Bengal, India was the publisher of the textbook. This textbook has only been implemented in government primary schools. However, most private schools have different textbooks than government primary schools. Private school textbooks were not included in this study. The validity of research data was assessed using credibility, transferability, triangulation, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Scott, 1990).

**Instrumentation**

The researchers were a key tool in the study (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020). Additionally, documentation served as another instrument, as in Lee and Mahmoudi-Gahrouei (2020). To address the research questions, the study used two types of data: (1) visual representations (photos and illustrations) and (2) written text representations.
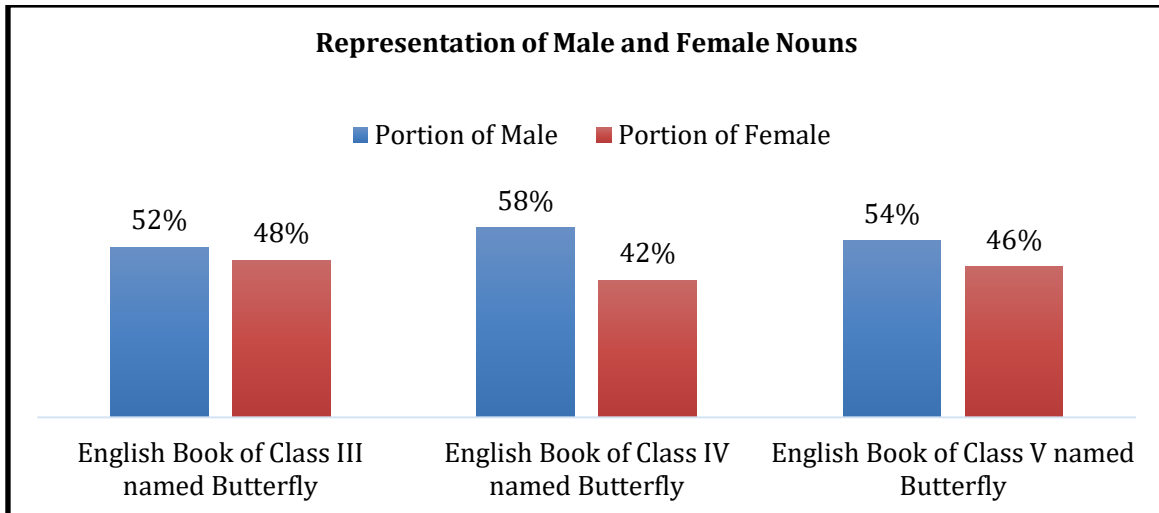
**Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

The researchers systematically gathered data through content analysis, employing a meticulous approach. They conducted a thorough examination of the textbooks, scrutinizing each page as outlined by Collado and Atxurra (2006). The textbooks were examined in two primary categories: gender representation and typical activities assigned to males and females. First, the textbooks were selected. Next, these textbooks were thoroughly analyzed, with all content related to gender and value representation collected. The content was then categorized into various dimensions and coded accordingly. Then, the information was interpreted, and a detailed explanation was provided. Finally, a conclusion was drawn.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**
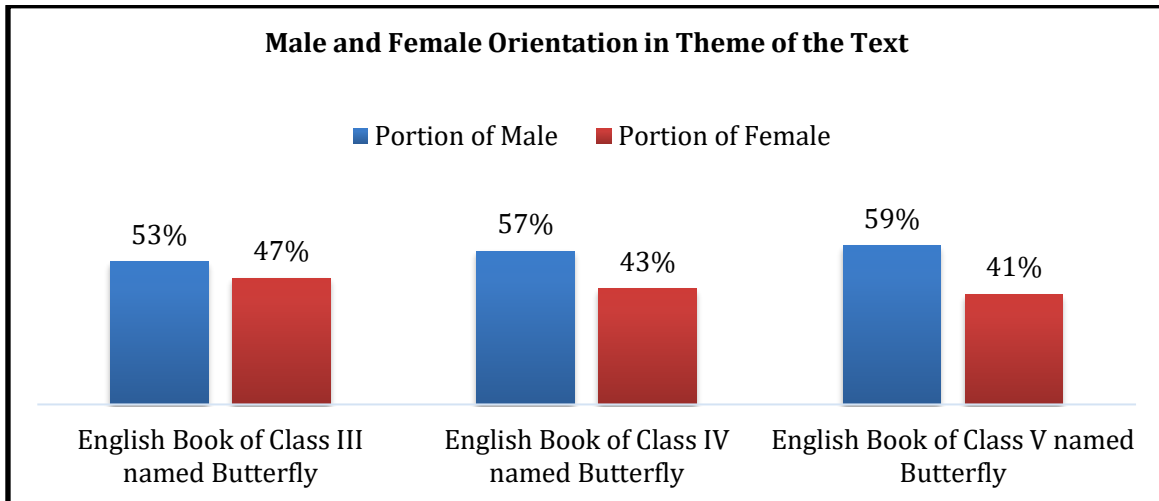**Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Nouns**

Graph 1 represents the proportion of male and female nouns in English textbooks titled "Butterfly" used in Classes III, IV and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. Class III English textbook shows that male nouns comprise 52% of the content, whereas female nouns comprise 48%. Class IV English textbook shows that male nouns comprise 58% of the content, whereas female nouns comprise 42%. Class V English textbook shows that male nouns comprise 54% of the content, whereas female nouns comprise 46%.

**Representation of Male and Female Nouns**

Graph showing "Portion of Male" and "Portion of Female":
- English Book of Class III named Butterfly: 52% / 48%
- English Book of Class IV named Butterfly: 58% / 42%
- English Book of Class V named Butterfly: 54% / 46%

**Graph 1.** Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Nouns

**Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Theme of the Text**
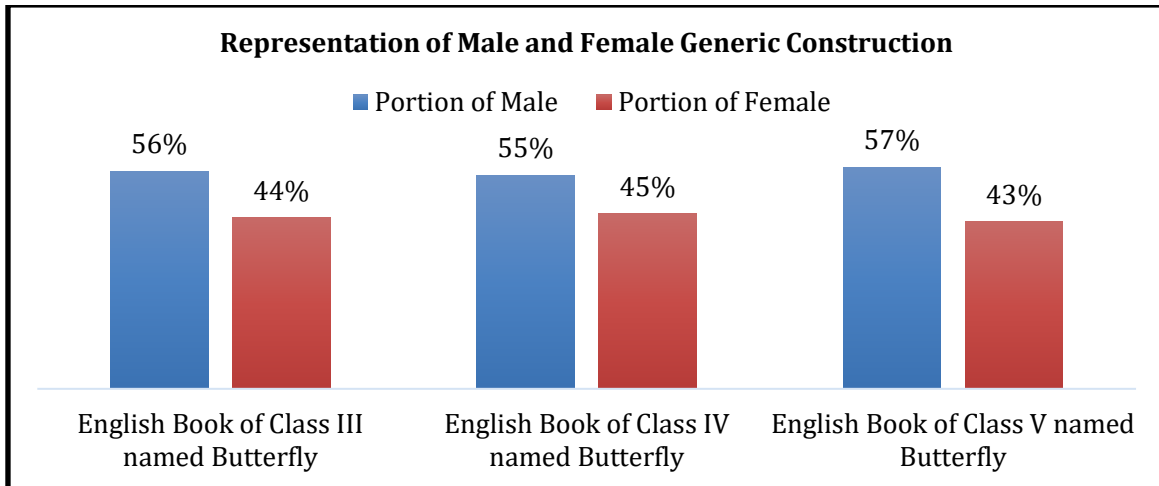
Graph 2 represents the proportion of male- and female-oriented themes in English textbooks titled "Butterfly" used in Classes III, IV and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. The Class III English textbook shows that a portion of male-oriented themes comprised 53% of the content, whereas 47% of female-oriented themes. The Class IV English textbook shows that a portion of male-oriented themes comprised 57% of the content, whereas 43% of female-oriented themes. Class V English textbook shows that a portion of male-oriented themes comprised 59% of the content, whereas 41% were female-oriented themes.

**Male and Female Orientation in Theme of the Text**

Graph showing "Portion of Male" and "Portion of Female":
- English Book of Class III named Butterfly: 53% / 47%
- English Book of Class IV named Butterfly: 57% / 43%
- English Book of Class V named Butterfly: 59% / 41%

**Graph 2.** Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Theme of the Text

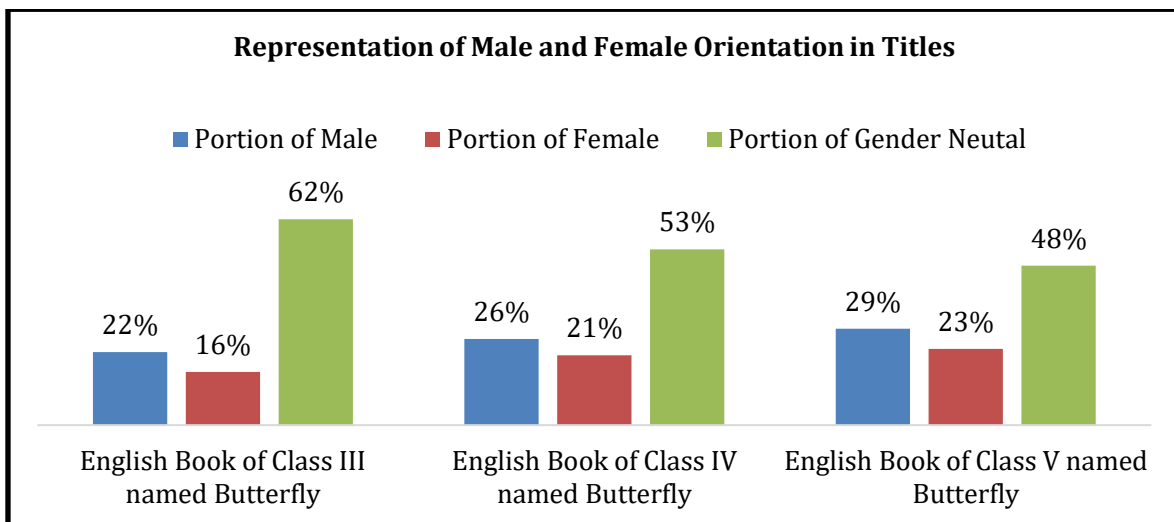**Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Generic Construction**

Graph 3 represents the proportion of male and female generic constructions in English textbooks titled "Butterfly" used in Classes III, IV and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. Class III English textbook shows that a portion of male-generic constructions make up 56% of the content, whereas 44% of female-generic constructions. Class IV English textbook shows that a portion of male-generic constructions comprise 55% of the content, whereas 45% comprise female-generic constructions. Class V English textbook shows that a portion of male-generic constructions comprised 57% of the content, whereas 43% comprised female-generic constructions.

**Representation of Male and Female Generic Construction**

- Portion of Male
- Portion of Female

| | English Book of Class III named Butterfly | English Book of Class IV named Butterfly | English Book of Class V named Butterfly |
| Portion of Male | 56% | 55% | 57% |
| Portion of Female | 44% | 45% | 43% |

**Graph 3.** Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Generic Construction

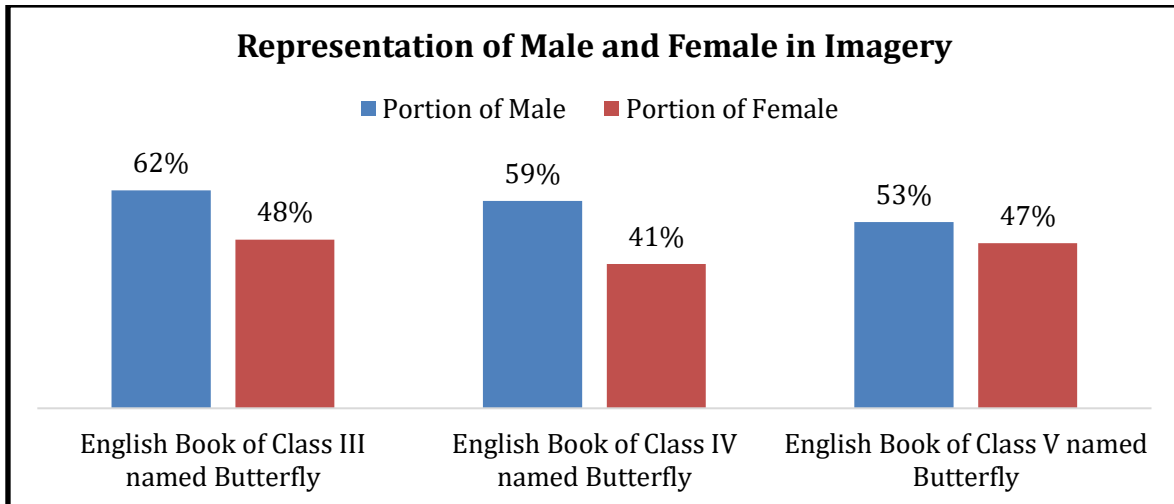**Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Titles**

Graph 4 represents the proportion of male and female orientation in titles in English textbooks titled "Butterfly" used in Classes III, IV and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. Class III English textbooks show that a portion of male orientation in titles makes up 22% of the content compared to 16% of female orientation in titles and Gender Neutrality depicted in titles 62%. Class IV English textbooks show that a portion of male orientation in titles makes up 26% of the content compared to 21% of female orientation in titles and Gender Neutrality depicted in titles 53%. Class V English textbook shows that a portion of male orientation in titles makes up 29% of the content, compared to 23% of female orientation in titles and 48% of gender neutrality in titles.

**Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Titles**

- Portion of Male
- Portion of Female
- Portion of Gender Neutal

| | English Book of Class III named Butterfly | English Book of Class IV named Butterfly | English Book of Class V named Butterfly |
| Portion of Male | 22% | 26% | 29% |
| Portion of Female | 16% | 21% | 23% |
| Portion of Gender Neutral | 62% | 53% | 48% |

**Graph 4.** Proportion of Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Titles

**Proportion of Representation of Male and Female in Imagery**

Graph 5 represents the proportion of male and female imagery in English textbooks titled "Butterfly" used in Classes III, IV and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. Class III English textbook shows that a portion of male and female imagery constitutes 62% of the content compared to 48% of female imagery represented.

**Representation of Male and Female in Imagery**

■ Portion of Male   ■ Portion of Female

| English Book of Class III named Butterfly | English Book of Class IV named Butterfly | English Book of Class V named Butterfly |
|---|---|---|
| 62% 48% | 59% 41% | 53% 47% |

**Graph 5.** Proportion of Representation of Male and Female in Imagery

Class IV English textbook shows that a portion of male and female imagery constitutes 59% of the content compared to 41% of female imagery represented. Class V English textbook shows that a portion of male and female imagery constitutes 53% of the content compared to 47% of female imagery represented.

**Table 1.** Examples of Images related to Gender Stereotypes and Bias



**Figure 1.** Child care by female (Source: Butterfly-III; p.67)

Picture suggests that the recurring portrayal of women as primary caregivers in educational materials reinforces traditional gender roles. This depiction can subtly communicate to young learners that childrearing is a natural and expected responsibility for women, potentially limiting girls' aspirations to explore careers or roles beyond the domestic sphere. Additionally, such representations may perpetuate the belief that men are less involved or less capable of performing caregiving tasks, thus reinforcing gendered divisions of labor and reducing the visibility of shared parenting models.
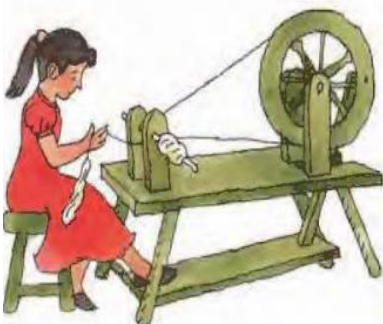


**Figure 2.** Spinning by female (Source: Butterfly-III; p. 106)

Picture suggests that the gender bias perspective could highlight how the depiction of women engaging in traditional domestic roles, such as spinning, reinforces stereotypical gender norms. Spinning and other textile-related activities have historically been associated with women, symbolized by their confinement to household tasks and reproductive labor. This portrayal can subtly suggest that women's primary role is in domestic or craft-based work, limiting their representation in more diverse, modern, and leadership roles.

**Figure 3.** Male as a police officer
(Source: Butterfly-III; p. 111)

The perspective of gender bias could suggest that the depiction of a male in the role of a police officer reinforces traditional gender stereotypes that associate men with authority, strength, and public service while excluding women from such roles. This portrayal reflects societal norms that view men as protectors and leaders, which can limit children's understanding of gender roles by implying that such professions are inherently masculine. This subtly discourages the idea that women can also serve in positions of power and responsibility, thus perpetuating a biased perception of career opportunities based on gender.

**Table 2.** Examples of Images related to Gender Stereotypes and Biases
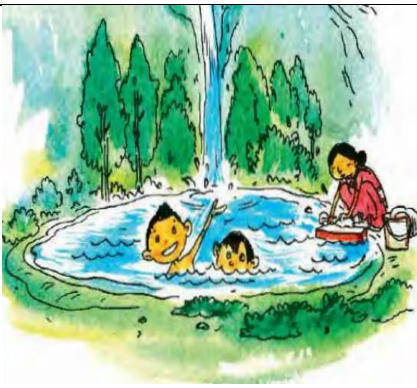


**Figure 4.** Washing clothes by a female
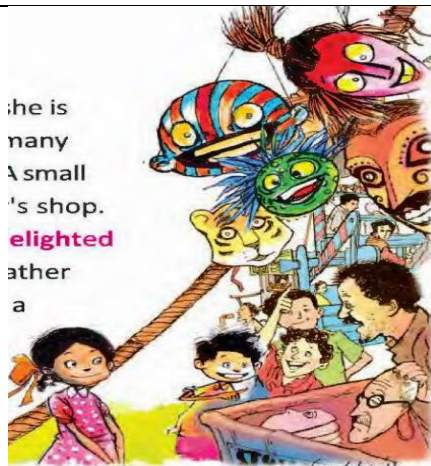(Source: Butterfly-IV; p. 9)

The above depiction implies that domestic chores like washing clothes are inherently linked to women's responsibilities, thereby perpetuating the stereotype that household work is predominantly a female duty. Such portrayals reinforce the idea that women belong in the private, domestic sphere, whereas men occupy more public, professional roles.



**Figure 5.** Sweeping by a female
(Source: Butterfly-IV; p. 16)

Pictorial depictions reflect gender bias, particularly in workplace contexts where tasks are assigned based on traditional gender roles. In many cultures, domestic chores like sweeping have traditionally been associated with women, reinforcing the stereotype that household duties are primarily female responsibilities. When such representations are uncritically included in educational materials, they risk perpetuating gender-based expectations and subtly conditioning young minds to accept unequal gender roles as natural or inevitable.

**Figure 6.** Male as a shopkeeper
(Source: Butterfly-IV; p.27)

The depiction of "Male as a shopkeeper" reflects a subtle but pervasive form of gender bias, reinforcing traditional gender roles in which men are associated with economic and public-facing roles. By consistently portraying men in such professional capacities, this reinforces the stereotype that men are more suited to roles that involve business acumen, responsibility, and interaction with the public. This type of representation marginalizes women from these spaces and implies that they are less likely to occupy positions of ownership, commerce, or financial independence. The absence of female shopkeepers in this narrative perpetuates the notion that women do not have agency in commercial spheres, which can contribute to a cycle of underrepresentation in entrepreneurship and business leadership.

**Table 3.** Examples of Images related to Gender Stereotypes and Bias



**Figure 7.** Male as a shopkeeper
(Source: Butterfly-IV; p. 34)

The portrayal of "Male as a shopkeeper" subtly reinforces gender bias by upholding traditional roles that link men to economic and public-facing positions. This consistent depiction of men in professional settings reinforces the belief that men are better suited for roles requiring business skills, responsibility, and public interaction. These representations exclude women from these roles, implying that they are less likely to engage in positions of ownership, commerce, or financial independence. The lack of female shopkeepers in these depictions further suggests that women lack agency in the commercial sector, contributing to their underrepresentation in entrepreneurship and leadership.



**Figure 8.** Serving food by females
(Source: Butterfly-IV; p. 38)

"Serving food by female" can be interpreted as reflecting traditional gender roles and biases in society. In many cultures, serving food is often associated with women, reinforcing the stereotype that caregiving, nurturing, and domestic responsibilities are inherently female duties. This not only perpetuates the notion that women are confined to the private spheres of home and kitchen but also diminishes the value of their roles outside these spaces.



**Figure 9.** Female as nurse
(Source: Butterfly-IV; p.45)

The nursing profession, often depicted as a nurturing and caregiving role, is frequently associated with women because of traditional views that emphasize women's natural inclination toward care, empathy, and emotional labor. This stereotype reinforces the idea that certain professions, especially those centered around caregiving, are inherently "female" jobs, while more authoritative or leadership positions in healthcare, such as doctors, are reserved for men. This biased representation limits the

perception of women's capabilities and reduces their roles to those of support rather than as leaders or decision-makers in the medical field. This reinforces a narrow view of gender identity.



**Figure 10.** Mend shoes by a male (Source: Butterfly-IV; p.45)

Picture portrayed that stereotype by associating specific task-shoe-mending tasks with men. This association implies that certain types of work, particularly those involving manual labor or craftsmanship, are inherently male-dominated activities. Such representation limits the perception of gender roles by suggesting that shoe mending, and perhaps by extension other similar professions are not typically suitable for or performed by women.

**Table 4.** Examples of Images related to Gender Stereotypes and Bias



**Figure 11.** Cooking food by female (Source: Butterfly-IV; p. 99)

Cooking food exclusively with females perpetuates traditional gender roles that position women as primarily responsible for domestic tasks. This stereotype reinforces the idea that caregiving and household duties, including cooking, are inherently feminine roles that can marginalize women and men. Women may be confined to a limited societal role, whereas men may be discouraged from participating in or learning essential life skills, such as cooking, due to their societal expectations. This division often contributes to unequal power dynamics, where women are expected to manage the household in addition to professional responsibilities, while men's involvement in these tasks is seen as optional or secondary. Over time, such stereotypes can hinder gender equality by limiting the opportunities for both sexes to share domestic responsibilities equally.
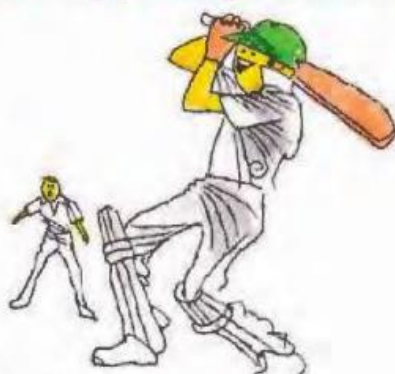


**Figure 12.** Playing cricket by male (Source: Butterfly-V; p.16)

"Playing cricket by male" reflects a stereotypical assumption that cricket is predominantly a male sport. This implies that males are naturally inclined or more capable of engaging in cricket, whereas females are less suited to the game. Such an interpretation reinforces traditional gender roles and perpetuates the notion that sports, particularly those considered physically demanding or competitive, are primarily meant for men. This marginalization of female participation and ignores the growing involvement and achievements of women in cricket, thereby contributing to the systemic gender bias that limits opportunities for women in sports.

**Fig 13.** Playing football by male
(Source: Butterfly-V; p.22)

"Playing football by male" from the perspective of gender bias could highlight how the association of football males reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes. This statement subtly implies that football is an activity primarily for men, potentially excluding women from the sport or undermining their participation. It reflects a broader societal bias in that physical, competitive, and outdoor activities are often considered masculine, while women are stereotypically linked with less physically demanding or indoor activities. This can discourage girls from pursuing sports like football, perpetuating inequality in access, opportunity, and representation in athletic spaces.

## Discussion

*Representation of Male and Female Nouns*

The findings reveal a prevalent trend in which male nouns are more frequently represented than female nouns in English textbooks targeted at Classes III, IV, and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. This observation suggests a significant gender bias in educational materials, echoing findings from various studies that highlight a similar prevalence of male representation across different contexts and educational resources. This observation aligns with previous studies that documented similar tendencies in various educational material (Crawfurd et al., 2024; Benavot & Jere, 2022; Ullah et al., 2014; Lee & Collins, 2008). The disproportionate representation of male nouns can significantly influence students' perceptions of gender roles. Research indicates that when textbooks primarily feature male characters and terms, they inadvertently shape students' understanding of societal norms, suggesting that certain traits and careers are predominantly aligned with masculinity. This alignment may lead to students developing skewed expectations of gender roles, limiting their perception of opportunities available to boys and girls (Crawfurd et al., 2024; Benavot & Jere, 2022). The bias toward male nouns reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, which can have lasting implications on students' self-esteem and aspirations. Studies have revealed that children exposed to gender-biased materials tend to internalize these stereotypes, which can adversely affect their engagement and participation in various activities. The consistent portrayal of males in authoritative, active roles while females remain underrepresented or depicted in passive capacities contributes to a curriculum that maintains outdated views on gender (Benavot & Jere, 2022; Para, 2024; Alber, 2017).

*Representation of Male and Female Orientations in Theme*

The findings indicate a consistent trend of male-oriented themes being more prominently featured than female-oriented themes across the English textbooks for Classes III, IV, and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education, indicating a potential gender bias in the portrayal of themes within the textbooks. This is based on previous findings (Camera, 2016; Lee & Collins, 2008; Ali & Hussain, 2019; Ozer et al., 2019). The dominance of male-oriented themes in textbooks can significantly impact students' perceptions of gender roles and contribute to the reinforcement of stereotypes. Researchers have noted that when educational resources portray male characters in leadership roles while relegating females to domestic spheres, it fosters an environment in which

students internalize these biases, affecting their aspirations and self-image (Camera, 2016; Benavot & Jere, 2022, Ullah et al., 2014). The identified trend toward male-oriented themes correlates with broader measures of gender inequality (Alber, 2017). Prior studies have pointed out that textbooks tend to mirror the prevailing social attitudes of their contexts, where women are depicted as domestic roles and men as authority (Crawfurd et al., 2024).

*Representation of Male and Female Generic Construction*

The findings indicate a notable trend where male-generic constructions are featured more prominently than female-generic constructions in the English textbooks for Classes III, IV, and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. This observation aligns with previous studies that documented similar tendencies in various educational materials, highlighting a pervasive gender bias against female representation in textbook content (Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Crawfurd et al., 2024; The Educator, 2024). Studies have revealed that when female generic constructions are underrepresented, girls may feel less empowered and may not envision themselves in roles reflective of leadership or accomplishment (The Educator, 2024). Furthermore, this discrepancy reinforces male dominance across various contexts, which can lead to significant psychological impacts on young female students' potential and capabilities (Benavot & Jere, 2022; Camera, 2016).

*Representation of Male and Female Orientation in Titles*

Findings revealed that English textbooks titled "Butterfly" used in Classes III, IV and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education reveal across all three grades, the majority of titles in each textbook are gender neutral. Using gender-neutral titles in textbooks is essential for promoting student equality. Research has established that gender-neutral language contributes to reducing stereotypes and biases that can influence young learners' perceptions of gender roles (Khalid, 2017).

*Representation of Male and Female in Imagery*

The findings indicate a significant imbalance in the portrayal of male and female imagery, with male imagery being more prominently featured in the English textbooks for Classes III, IV, and V used by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. This reinforces previous research showing that educational materials often reflect pervasive gender biases that favor male representations, sidelining female imagery in both visual and textual contexts This is by previous findings (Crawfurd et al., 2024; Nandi et al., 2024). The disproportionate representation of male imagery can shape students' early understanding of gender roles from a tender age. Research suggests that textbooks featuring predominantly male characters can perpetuate stereotypes, making male figures synonymous with authority and competence, while female figures are often relegated to domestic or passive roles (Benavot & Jere, 2022; Camera, 2016; Alber, 2017). This can influence not only girls' self-esteem and aspirations but also boys' perceptions of gender roles, potentially limiting their understanding of equality and shared responsibilities (The Educator, 2024; Lee & Collins, 2008; Ali & Hussain, 2019).

**CONCLUSIONS**

This research effort has detected a hue of gender bias in the content of English textbooks used in Classes III, IV, and V under the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. The findings point to male-oriented slant along such different dimensions as representation of nouns, thematic orientations, generic constructions, and imagery. Male nouns have consistently dominated female nouns, simply reflecting and furthering stereotypical images of sex roles. This type of imbalance in education can be very influential in creating negative attitudes in students' minds toward traditional gender roles and stereotypical conservative thinking.

Furthermore, it seems that a strong bias toward masculine gender is perpetuated at the expense of female gender through the dominance of themes and male-generic constructions found within these textbooks. Such bias is likely to affect young students' self-esteem, aspirations, and worldviews, especially those of girls who may struggle to imagine themselves as leaders or positions of achievement.

Although most of the titles used in these texts are neuter, the general content favors male domination, especially in images. This uneven treatment of gender through educational material not only affects students' perceptions of their roles in society but can also perpetuate stereotyping, which might act as an obstacle to the struggle for education and society-wide gender equality.

These findings confirm earlier research that described such biases in educational materials from around the world. The main reason for addressing such biases is the realization of equity in an educational setting, where it might foster self-imagining among all students regardless of gender into diverse and empowered roles. Therefore, there is an urgent need for these textbooks to be revised by authorities concerned with education and policymakers so that the concept of gender can be represented in a more balanced way to empower both males and females to struggle for their goals.

The study on "Gender Representation in English Language Textbooks of Primary Education" has significant implications for educational policy, curriculum development, and teaching practices. This highlights the pervasive influence of textbooks on young learners' perceptions of gender roles, reinforcing or challenging societal norms from an early age. If gender bias or stereotyping is identified in these educational materials, there is a need for immediate reform in textbook content to promote gender equity and inclusivity. By addressing such biases, educators and policymakers can work toward creating a more balanced representation of gender roles, fostering equality and empowering both boys and girls to see diverse possibilities for their futures. Additionally, this study provides a foundation for further research into how gender representations in textbooks influence students' social development and identity formation, prompting a reevaluation of the cultural messages conveyed through educational resources.

## LIMITATION OF RESEARCH

The limitations of this study were that only three textbooks on primary-level English Language could be covered due to insufficient time. Second, it focuses on a specific region. Third, this research was conducted on five specific dimensions.

Future research should include more primary-level English textbooks from all grades to analyze appropriate gender bias and balance a broader spectrum of educational material. These studies should broaden their geographical scope to facilitate comparative analyses of how gender is represented or otherwise in textbooks in different cultural and regional settings. Other areas in which future studies could be conducted more in-depth include language usage, the images of non-binary identities, and roles in extracurricular activities. All of these would be integral to understanding the content of gender representation in a much greater detail. Longitudinal studies that track time may indicate changes in educational materials over time with changes in social attitudes toward gender equality. Better specification of gender portrayals would be feasible through the inclusion of qualitative content analysis with quantitative analysis, and research into students' perceptions of gender roles in textbooks would help reveal the impact these materials had on shaping their understanding of gender and identity.

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