

## Occupational Gender Stereotypes in Indonesian Secondary School English Language Textbooks

\*<sup>1</sup>Sella Rohmawati, <sup>2</sup>Kristian Adi Putra

<sup>1-2</sup>Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

**\*Correspondence:**

[sellarohmawati@student.uns.ac.id](mailto:sellarohmawati@student.uns.ac.id)

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### Abstract

This discourse study examines occupational gender stereotypes in two textbooks of secondary English language textbooks published in Indonesia. Occupational gender stereotypes in two English textbooks, entitled *When English Rings a Bell*, for grades 7 and 8 were analyzed with the help of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework. The findings indicate that both textbooks encompass gender stereotypes, particularly occupation. The findings also revealed far fewer photos of women in the public domain than there were of men, indicating that women in conventional gender roles such as cooking, cleaning, watering plants, caring for children, and performing all domestic activities were far more common. Furthermore, the study found that male occupations were more common and diverse than female occupations regarding occupational gender stereotypes. Furthermore, in terms of societal responsibilities, males were demonstrated to have a wider choice of vocations than girls. Gender blindness among curriculum designers and textbook authors is a severe worry in this regard, and it must be addressed to improve awareness of gender-related occupations. The study's practical implications are that English teachers, language textbook authors, curriculum creators, and illustrators should be fully aware of the interplay between language, visual depictions, and gender concerns while constructing language textbooks to avoid unwanted insights into occupational gender stereotypes.

**Keywords:** Career choices, English textbooks, gender roles, Indonesian, occupational gender stereotypes

### INTRODUCTION

During the last three decades, gender (in)equality has been an exciting topic in education worldwide (Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Lee, 2019; Orfan, 2021). Gender

equality, for example, is a social movement in Indonesia that promotes the social roles that women can take in male-dominated sectors (Lestariyana et al., 2020). As a result, gender equality is not just about boys' vs. girls' schooling but also about the presence of gender stereotypes in the workplace, which young people must be aware of because stereotypes may impact their career choices. Much research on gender in textbooks has been widely publicized worldwide in the educational sphere (Lee, 2018; Namatende-Sakwa, 2019; Ullah & Skelton, 2013; Xiangmei, 2016). As declared by Ullah and Skelton (2013), school textbooks have been highlighted as one key contributor to the creation of gender identities and support gender discrimination and the dominant social structures of society.

Regarding gender issues depicted in textbooks, some attention has been paid to the importance of school textbooks in addressing some of the more stereotypical gender messages conveyed in the teaching and learning process, one of which is occupational gender stereotypes. Even though women today make fewer typical career choices than a few decades ago, and the gap between male and female labor participation has narrowed practically everywhere, traditional stereotyped distinctions still exist (Gadassi & Gati, 2009). A variety of gender discrepancies in occupational choices may be attributable to preconceived attitudes about specific vocations that both boys and girls internalize from a young age (Ginevra & Nota, 2017). The occupational realm is necessary to investigate because paid labor affects an individual's social standing, financial independence, and potency in social life (Koster, 2020). Since, stereotyped occupational beliefs can have a significant impact on career development by creating distorted ideas about education, training, and the workplace, influencing perceptions of the field of viable options and discouraging people from pursuing training or career paths that are considered inappropriate for their gender (Eccles, 2011).

Further, as contended by Wells and Moon (2021), the everyday reality of available resources shapes secondary school English as well as complicated institutional and discursive dynamics (e.g., textbooks). Further, as textbooks have become instruments for embedding specific values, the impact of textbooks in school can affect the conceived contents related to gender bias and may contribute to the formation of sexist views at a subconscious level (Barton, & Sakwa, 2012). However, if school textbooks embody any biases depicting the two genders in separate subcultures, students may imitate them (Bandura 2003; Foroutan 2012; Litosseliti 2006). For that reason, it is vital to thoroughly review textbooks to detect any hidden biases and to reduce the detrimental effects of biased content on students' learning experiences (Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2020). Additionally, gender, culture, and power concerns are embedded in the learning resources offered in school textbooks and imparted in the curriculum (McLaren, 1989). As a result, school textbooks have been identified as a pivotal contributor to the construction of gender identities and a reinforcer of gender discrimination and a society's prevailing social structures (Ullah & Skelton, 2013). Hence, gender discrimination must be eliminated by

changing or revising school textbooks utilized in the curriculum to limit unfairness against one gender, which impacts students' motivation and life choices.

Accordingly, cultural stereotypes and direct discrimination against gender-role socialization processes contribute to these gendered behaviors. Moreover, women have traditionally been assigned conventional social and occupational labors and portrayed as socially inferior to males in English textbooks (Gupta & Yin, 1990; Harashima, 2005). In this regard, gender and education research has found much evidence that textbooks play a significant role in gender socialization within schools (Lee & Collins, 2008). The textbook is one instrument for expanding students' awareness of themselves and their surroundings. Researchers have delved into them to see what social values they deputed (e.g., gender-related value). Gender bias can be found in textbooks all over the world in various forms (Blumberg, 2008). Additionally, Iranian and Pakistani textbooks analysis, for example, find that women are mentioned less frequently than men (Durrani, 2008; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). When women and girls are depicted, they are seen as mothers and nurturers in the domestic. In a similar vein, Gouviás and Alexopoulos (2018) argued that school textbooks, particularly at the elementary (primary) school level, function as transmitters of social conventions and standards about behavior and gender roles. However, changing textbook representations of women won't help much if companies aren't willing to hire more women and assign positions based on gender (Asadullah, et al., 2018). At the same time, they asserted that when conducting social campaigns aimed at changing attitudes toward gender roles in the home life context (e.g., sharing household tasks and childcare), it would be difficult to achieve or even impossible, if school textbooks continue arising women in traditional gender stereotypes.

Another study concerning gender roles also has conducted by Barton and Sakwa (2012). They report on how an English-language textbook commonly used in Ugandan secondary schools fosters gender stereotypes that are ubiquitous in society by using a mixed-methods analysis. This indicated that women are positioned to dominate in the kitchen in one of the sections, titled 'The Kitchen in My House,' a typical stereotype reflecting a dichotomy between men's and women's interests. It can instill stereotypical perceptions of their roles in the house in students. Another finding explicated those males are allocated to high-status positions such as judge, doctor, and manager, while females are relegated to traditional nurturing occupations such as nursing and waitressing. Following that, Gebregeorgis (2016) uses Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis to examine how gender was formed in the English for Ethiopia Student's Book for Grade Four. Despite Ethiopia's gender-sensitive education and training policy, inactivity-based representations show unequal gender construction. In the public and formal sectors, women are put at a lower level. In contrast with the previous study, a study by Lee (2018) looked into the government's efforts to promote gender equality among pupils through modern Japanese EFL textbooks. He looked at three popular textbooks that had just been

released recently. Both genders are equally represented in the findings, and they enact domestic roles such as mother and father, sister and brother, and aunt and uncle. Furthermore, the current study discovered that males were depicted in familial roles at a higher rate than females. Additionally, the author argues that the Japanese government should educate textbook authors, publishers, instructors, and students about gender issues to foster a gender-equal society.

Moreover, regarding gender-related issues in the Indonesian context, a critical discourse study by Ariyanto (2018) looked at how girls and boys were depicted in the mandatory Indonesian junior high school ELT textbook's visuals and verbal texts (Grade 7). The selected textbooks represented gender stereotypes both visually and textually under critical micro-semiotic textual analysis. Another study in 2018 was conducted by Setyono, that is in Indonesia, he looked at how women are portrayed in EFL textbooks for senior high school students in gendered visual and textual discourses grades 10-12. From a critical feminist perspective, the textbooks portrayed equal representations of women who are capable in the same way that men are. Gender bias and stereotypes, on the other hand, were still present in various gendered discourses. Another study conducted by Lestariyana, et al. (2020) undertook a critical discourse study to examine female representation in Indonesian junior high school English textbooks in grades 7 and 8. Gender stereotypes persisted, with women associated with household activities and depicted in a narrower range of professional roles. In a similar vein, Suwarno, et al. (2021) make known that gender stereotypes in academic and non-academic achievements, home obligations, and interests or hobbies may still be found semiotically in textbooks. Despite this, the textbooks' authors utilized a roughly equal number of male and female illustrations throughout the textbook.

Methodologically speaking, previous textbook studies that focus on occupational-related gender stereotyping in English textbooks which were analyzed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) remain rare. The current study proposed to fill the gap in exposing the content of ELT textbooks regarding the representation of occupational gender stereotypes in *When English Rings a Bell textbook* utilized in Indonesia secondary schools, it explores the portrayal of the frequency of stereotypes on occupational roles in the field of educational role beliefs. Considering these concerns, this research will employ the framework suggested by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to examine the visual pictures in junior high school ELT textbooks used in Indonesia, revealing that occupational stereotypes and gender segregation are the most powerful influences on people's decisions. Hence, to examine how the two genders are represented in those two ELT textbooks, the study aims to delve into males and females visually portrayed in occupational divisions of *When English Rings Bell* textbooks, as well as to know the extension of the visual pictures in Indonesian junior high school ELT textbooks reflect the occupational gender stereotypes. As declared by UNESCO (2017) that learning materials should have contents of various gender representations and gender equality. In this regard, since the 1970s, at the time when materials for teaching English as a

foreign language (TEFL) have been thoroughly investigated (Mustapha & Mills, 2015; Risager, 2018), overviews show that, contrary to UNESCO's directions, the appearance of women in both texts and images were less frequently than men, as well as they more portrayed in low-status occupations in both older and newer materials (Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022; Keles et al., 2021; Sunderland, 2015).

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The content analysis method was applied in this analyzed study. As mentioned by Krippendorff (2004), content analysis uses a set of processes to make accurate inferences from text and graphics, written texts, audiovisual materials, and photographs are all examples of data that can be used in content analysis. The information gathered in this study, on the other hand, was primarily focused on visual representation. The amount of coverage and gender representations in both textbooks of *When English Rings a Bell* can be determined using such a report.

### **Instruments**

The main aim of this study is to examine how males' and females' occupations are represented visually in *When English Rings a Bell* (WERB) textbooks in grade 7 and 8 secondary school. Hence, the data in this study came from those two ELT textbooks. They were chosen because their materials are written with numerous gender-related issues in mind. Furthermore, the scarcity of thorough studies on occupational gender stereotypes in ELT textbooks prompted us to execute this study. Therefore, this present study wanted to look into occupational biases in the *When English Rings a Bell* textbook, the critical sources for teaching English to students in grades 7 and 8, and see how occupational representations were evoked. EFL textbooks are also viewed as sociocultural artifacts that reflect the character or moral values and play a significant function as a valuable agent, as well as a tool for learners to strengthen relationships with various regions of the world (Setyono & Widodo, 2019; Widodo, 2018; Whitehead, 2015). Thus, it is critical to investigate the issue of gender biases in these textbooks to identify areas where the ministry of education should make quick changes. Considering textbooks' ostensibly tremendous influence on students' knowledge, it is timely to begin research on ELT textbooks used in Indonesia, ensuring that materials are free of sexist images. This research presents the outcomes of a textbook study aimed at determining how men and women are depicted in English language textbooks when it comes to occupational gender stereotypes.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

This present study focused on analyzing selected visuals of two English Language textbooks used in most secondary schools in Indonesia. Accordingly, Low and Sherrard (1999) conveyed that the relevance of pictures' impact originates from readers' assumption that they (photos) are objective slices of reality, giving them authority and beauty. Further,

to determine how occupational gender representations are depicted in the textbooks, as mentioned earlier, a Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) approach was used. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) methodology for analyzing the 'grammar of visual designs' are based on Halliday's (1978) Systemic Functional Linguistics' metafunctional elements. While visual modes differ in terms of how social semantic system choices are realized, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) noted that the semiotic code of language and the semiotic code of pictures (and other visuals) each have their own quite particular means of realizing what in the end are perhaps quite similar semantic relations. However, this study only employed two metafunctions: representational meaning, which portrays people or characters as those aspects present in the image, and interactive meaning, which may explain the power connections and attitudes established between image-makers and viewers.

Male and female domestic and occupational roles are the coding categories for data analysis: domestic (e.g., cooking, cleaning) and occupation roles (e.g., teacher, zookeeper, policeman), along with the gender of the corresponding character. This study attempted to develop analytical categories as occupational gender-neutral as feasible and then decided which representations appeared to be stereotypical or not based on our theoretical framework. To put it another way, to look at how genders are represented in different occupations and then determine whether those portrayals are stereotypical. In their study, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) addressed active participation, gaze direction, visual approaches, body presentation, and participant space. Furthermore, to study the occupational gender-stereotypical representations in ELT textbooks, these authors' dimensions have been adjusted and adopted as Domestic Role Beliefs and Professional Role Beliefs (Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022). The purpose was to see if and to what extent the content of the textbooks under investigation reproduced stereotypical gender images. By answering those research questions, the outcomes of this study can provide crucial and practical insights into gender-related language textbook content. For a better teaching and learning process, textbook authors, illustrators, and EFL teachers should incorporate the proportional representation of males and females in language textbooks, particularly the equality of occupational division.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **Female and Male Visuals in Domestic Roles**

The pattern of gender duties in family and household relationships is one of the most fundamental concerns in gender studies. Gender roles have been discovered to be strongly tied to the socialization process; hence educational alliances enact a significant division in determining gender roles. In other words, the defined role of women in the home and society is a direct result of educational institutions' gender indoctrination. Accordingly, this critical problem has been considered in this analysis. Gender roles within and outside the house show how gender occupation division has been depicted in school textbooks.

Females are underrepresented in occupational divisions, as shown in Table 1. Textbooks contain more male public domain than female public domain, indicating women in stereotyped gender roles such as cooking, cleaning, watering plants, caring for children, and doing all household tasks. Table 1 depicts both males and females performing traditional roles such as cooking, cleaning, caring for children, watering plants, and waking up sons; the depiction of all items is consistent throughout textbooks. The table depicts the male-to-female ratio in traditional roles; there is a total of 19 characters in both male and female roles. Male characters account for  $n = 5$  (26.3%) of the total, while female visuals account for  $n = 14$  (73.7%). Female characters in domestic roles outnumber male ones by a large margin, and they are frequently allocated housework and domestic activities such as cooking and cleaning (Ismael & Mohammadzadeh, 2022). It is clear from the data on male and female domestic duties that males are less perceived as linked or performing domestic chores, but rather their jobs are allocated outside the home. In other words, as addressed by Kimmel (2004), school textbooks represented females or women in stereotypical gender roles, such as cooking, cleaning, and child-rearing, while boys were shown participating in outdoor activities.

Table 1. The domestic roles analysis

WERB	Gender	Cooking	Cleaning	Caring for children	Watering plants	Waking up son
Grade 7	Male	1	-	0	-	1
	Female	3	-	5	-	0
Grade 8	Male	1	2	-	0	-
	Female	2	2	-	2	-

Further, Table 2 provides the results of the WERB visual analysis for grades 7 and 8 based on the male-to-female character ratio. In comparison to male characters, female characters are underrepresented in WERB textbooks. As one might assume, males are represented with a high frequency concerning occupational depictions. WERB textbooks discuss the visual depictions of male and female characters with male characters depicted by  $n = 24$ . (55.8 %). On the other hand, female characters are depicted by  $n = 19$  (44.2 %), indicating that male characters are more well-represented in both ELT textbooks. Similar to Keles, Mansouri, and Yazans' (2021) findings, women are responsible for taking care of children and serving their husbands. Women are also responsible for household chores no matter whether they work outside. Hence, textbooks authors, designers, and illustrators need to be aware that their number of choices of visual images can influence the information provided by the textbooks.

Table 2. The sex-based division of labor

Categories	Men	Women	Total
Men (boys)/women (girls) who work in the public sector for a living	24	19	43

In terms of visual representation of transitivity, the female's division case communicates that the essence of a woman is a housewife who only does housework and takes care of children and kitchen needs. On the other hand, other images depict domestic activities that women traditionally perform. Some home tasks performed by women/girls are represented in the images below (Fig. 1). Cooking, watering plants, caring for children, and food shopping are all depicted in the artwork. As depicted in the picture (left side), a mother prepares breakfast for her daughter before she goes to school, named Siti. The drawing shows her right hand holding a ladle while she greets her daughter. It can be seen that cooking for the family is a wife division. Also, the other three pictures portray watering plants, looking after children, and grocery shopping that is stereotypically associated with female work. As a result, it can be deduced that females are accustomed to engaging in such activities. The current empirical findings supported a long-held assumption that household duties are considered feminine labor, and it also mirrors previous gender-based discourse research (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Law & Chan, 2004; Lee & Collins, 2010).



Figure 1. Women/females in domestic tasks

### Female's Occupational Roles

In contrast to their prominence in domestic settings, females were illustrated in the public realm far less frequently than males, and when they were, they were assigned to a small number of jobs, including a nurse (1 time) and zookeeper (2 times). Furthermore, females have been represented in school teaching (19 times). Nonetheless, there were much fewer images of women in the public domain than men. In addition, the research revealed that women were also found to be less likely to hold key/traditional roles. Based on these findings, society can argue that traditional gender roles for women in the public sphere solely stress caring, nurturing, and mothering (predominantly teaching, nursing, and preparing foods). These findings are consistent with those of other studies conducted around the world. For example, teaching has traditionally been regarded as a desirable profession for women because it corresponds to the stereotype of women as primary cares for young children (Newman, 1994; Oyler, Jennings, & Lozada, 2001). As seen in Figure 2, women are referred to as caregiver characters (When English Rings a Bell for Class VII, 15, 127; When English Rings a Bell for Class VIII, 91).





Figure 2. Sample pictures related to women as a nurturing doers

Unpaid household work is a social practice within domestic tasks (Lestariyana et al., 2020). The difference between men and women in doing household duties was discovered in this study (i.e., while the domestic chores tend to be stipulated for females, the male's contribution is depicted only in a particular situation). The boy has to sweep a classroom as his picket schedule with girls, as depicted in Fig. 3 (p. 103).



Figure 3. Male in doing picket schedule in the classroom

### Males in the Diverse Occupational Roles

The findings demonstrate that men are shown in various occupations (see Fig. 4), whereas women's work division outside the home is limited to specific occupations. For the visual representation of social actors in social roles, male occupation shows them frequently more active than women are still visible. Visually, males are also depicted in varied occupations in existential processes as they have high status on a prestige hierarchy, which is linguistically then defined as 'male-dominated.' To begin with, a picture of a policeman seen on the left attempting to assist an elderly woman in crossing the roadway. The work of men portrayed in this textbook can be classified as risky employment if drivers are reckless or drive at speeds exceeding the maximum limit. Furthermore, only one picture of a policeman is portrayed in both textbooks examined, and a guy depicts it. Consequently, this gives rise to the perception that a police officer only intends for a man. However, it should be emphasized that, in line with Miller and Haywards' (2006) findings, the extent to which occupations were regarded as segregated was higher than the level to which they were stereotyped for both boys and girls.



Figure 4. Men/males represent diverse occupations

A man who works as a Scoutmaster depicts in the second photograph. A Scoutmaster's primary responsibility is to teach those youth leaders. This includes educating kids on collaborating with and motivating other youth and learning how to plan. People may differentiate between men's and women's employment based on the feminine qualities of women after seeing this photo and the preceding one (policeman picture). To put it another way, women who are stereotypically calm and thought to be unsuitable for leadership roles that require strength and assertiveness (Setyono, 2018). In a similar vein, Trimbrel et al. (2022) asserted that leaders are power agents. As a result, agentic characteristics such as toughness, assertiveness, decisiveness, competitiveness, confidence, boldness, and independence are required of them (Eagly et al. 2020; Prentice & Carranza 2002). Because preconceptions separate responsibilities and behaviors based on gender identity, and males are associated with traditional roles in the public domain, the term "leadership" is the type for them. The following picture depicts a farmer plowing a field in the scorching heat, almost like the previous two pictures. This demonstrates that only men represent in work linked to strength and physique. As addressed by social role theory, the biological distinction between males and females has resulted in different tasks being given to them (e.g., men undertake draining work and women do non-draining work) (Meeussen et al., 2020). In the last picture, a librarian assists a female student who wants to borrow or return books. Further, based on the four images above, there is a disparity in the sorts of work done by men and women. They also have high on their dominance in terms of angle of occupational depiction, which gives the picture a sense of power (van Leeuwen, 1996).

In terms of societal roles, the table demonstrates that males have a broader range of occupations than females, who have a more limited range of occupations. These findings are consistent with Elmiana's (2019) findings that males have a broader range of vocations than females, who have a more limited range. Table 3 shows per textbook (grade 7 and 8) in which professions men and women are described most frequently. It can be seen that there are 11 types of professions in both English textbooks. The most frequent profession is teacher, both for males and females. However, 16 pictures depict the female teacher profession while the male one depicts in 12 pictures. In other words, though both genders have the same most frequent profession as a teacher, the numbers of female teachers were higher. It means the findings match most typically their professions. Moreover, the professions of nurse and zookeeper, particularly in kitchen chores and taking care of animal sick, qualify for the

female category 'caretaking.' As alluded by Lestariyana et al. (2020), specific jobs or occupations are gendered from a sociological and psychological standpoint. Teaching and nursing, for example, are considered female-dominated occupations, whereas farming, engineering, and construction are considered male-dominated occupations. In other words, occupations for males in the textbooks are wide and varied, while they are constrained for females. More importantly, the textbooks' failure to include women in discussions about further career options and qualifications (with the highest job status) reflects the (still) widespread belief in Indonesian society that women cannot and should not have higher placement status.

Table 3. The frequency representation of each female and male occupations

Profession	Grade 7		Profession	Grade 8	
	Men	Women		Men	Women
Teacher	7	5	Teacher	5	11
Household taker	1	8	Household taker		6
Policeman	1	-	Singer	1	-
Office man	1	-	Zookeeper	5	2
Scoutmaster	1	-	Librarian	1	-
speaker	1	-	-	-	-
Farmer	1	-	-	-	-
Nurse	-	1	-	-	-

The ultimate origins of gender disparities in behavior are explained by social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012); that is, gender stereotypes are generated from observations of group role behaviors. Through the socialization process in early education, the division of labor is one of the plenty factors that may influence gender role beliefs. For instance, men's socialization to the employment role, especially in male-dominated occupations, favors a pattern of relatively assertive behavior, whereas women's socialization to the domestic role fosters a pattern of facilitative and nurturing behavior. These profoundly ingrained preconceptions are encapsulated in English proverbs like 'A man's castle is his home; a woman's place is in the family' (Lee & Collins, 2009). In sum, in terms of occupational gender stereotypes, the study indicated that male occupations were more common and diversified than female occupations. In addition, males were shown as having a more excellent range of vocations than females in terms of social duties.

## CONCLUSION

The present study has provided insights into gender construction in secondary school English-language textbooks published by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MONEC). Regarding the current study's findings, textbooks in developing nations like Indonesia are still significantly biased towards women. The findings showed that women were

underrepresented in gender inequality, including visibility in occupational divisions and various jobs. In other words, females were underrepresented, and the roles assigned to male characters were high-status occupations, and those of females were mainly low-status occupations. If the school curriculum continues to portray women primarily as homemakers, sustaining conventional gender stereotypes, social initiatives to change gender roles inside households, for example, sharing domestic responsibilities, will be unsuccessful. As a result, more precise standards for textbook authors and teachers are essential for gender equality. It can begin with a policy of equal visibility in teaching materials for male and female imagery connected with various occupational activities and household chores, regardless of gender. Overall, it can be summed up that occupational gender stereotyping is prevalent in the visual depiction in the two English textbooks because females are frequently shown as caregivers. Even the career types depicted in those textbooks showed a disparity in male and female employment categories.

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