

GENDER STEREOTYPE PORTRAYED IN THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS FOR EARLY LEVEL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at investigating gender inequalities appear in the illustrations of textbooks for early level students in elementary school. In this research, the researcher analyzed the illustrations portraying male, female, and both genders. To carry out this research, the researcher applied survey methodology using quantitative and qualitative analysis. The researcher analyzed 2482 illustrations from 26 textbooks, 4 subjects and 4 publishers. The results show that: (1) female objects generally indicate female stereotype, (2) male objects generally indicate male stereotype, (3) illustrations showing both male and female generally do not indicate gender stereotype, (4) generally, the illustrations portraying gender stereotype deals with domestication, subordination, and marginalization of women at home or other spheres.

Keywords: picture, illustration, gender stereotype, textbook, elementary school

INTRODUCTION

Constitutionally, in Indonesia, males and females are not differentiated. Government has carried out a number of efforts to narrow gender gap as mandated by Pancasila, UUD 1945, National Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Nasional), state policy, and Ministry of Women Empowerment (Kementerian Pemberdayaan Perempuan). However, the empirical evidence suggests that females are still differentiated from their male counterpart in many areas except their biological nature—menstruation, pregnancy, giving birth, and breastfeeding—that has been understood very well (Wijaya, 1993: 3).

Heyzer (1986: 17) stated that until recently, females are given very little concern on national development plan. Very often, they do not have the same chance to contribute as development agents or development subjects. They are exploited by the whole development system which makes them marginalized.

These gender inequalities can be said as one of the practices showing gender imbalance. Actually, as stated by Fakih (1996: 12), gender imbalance manifested in the society will not be a problem as long as it does not signify gender inequality. However, the empirical evidence observed in the society tells that gender inequalities mostly lead to unfairness for women.

Gender unfairness is evident in many social phenomena. Fakih (1996: 12) argued that gender inequalities can give several tangible impacts, such as: (1) poverty, as seen in green revolution which prevents women from working in agriculture field and lead to financial

disbenefit, (2) subordination of women which unfortunately puts them in low-rank positions. Women are often said to have irrational and emotional attachment that hinder them to be decision makers, (3) gender stereotype, which promotes the narrative that women only worth doing household duties, (4) violence towards women, and (5) enormous reproductive burden and heavy workload at home.

The works done by women are often undermined since it is often said to have no economical value. It is in line with the theory proposed by Moser (in Hariadi, 1997: 5), which explains that women can act as productive and community-managing agents, not only reproductive beings (triple role). However, this theory is hardly accepted since the roles of women are often seen as something natural and inherited.

This social phenomenon which indicates male bias is stemmed from gender differences formulated from a long cultural construction. Hariadi (1997: 3) argued that gender differences happen through a long process and are affected by many issues. These issues are constructed, strengthened, socialized and shaped from social value, religious practices, and the state. Worse, since gender constructions happen in a very long period of time, some people even think that it is originated from religious principles (Fakih, 1996: 9).

Gender construction issues have strong correlation to collective behavior based on sociocultural point of view. This behavior is rooted from interaction that a person builds collectively with their surrounding. Azwar (1993: 24) argued that there are many factors influencing a person's behavior such as: culture, personal experience, and educational institutions.

One of the prominent components which also become the subsystem of educational institutions is textbooks. Textbooks can be defined as a standard book for certain subjects written by the experts on its field for instructional objectives (Tarigan dan Tarigan, 1993: 32). The content of textbooks, most importantly textbooks for elementary school level, consists of texts, explanations, and illustrations. One of the functions of illustrations in textbooks is to ease learners to understand the assigned texts, to attract learners' curiosity and to hold their attention.

The analysis of textbooks, more importantly illustrations in textbook, can become a factual sociocultural study since it has strong correlation with social construction in the society and how people react to gender issues. If the illustrations give unequal portrayal between men and women, as a result, learners exposed to those illustrations will take gender-bias behavior as something common.

In Indonesia, gender bias issue appears in textbooks for elementary school learners seem to be the product of "government's policy". Logsdon (1985: 260) in his study found out that texts and illustrations in a civics (Pendidikan Moral Pancasila) textbook adopting 1975 curriculum frequently display unequal role division between male and female gender at home. Father is portrayed as someone with higher status and respect while mother only stays at home. Girls typically help mother with household works while boys generally help father to do more economic work.

These gender bias facts are still around until now. On a study entitled "The Analysis on Illustrations Portrayed in Elementary School Textbooks 1994 Curriculum" (Iriaji, 1999: 65-66), it is concluded that the illustrations in elementary school textbooks for all grade levels published by Depdiknas tend to show gender bias. As an example, illustrations portraying women indicate 89.07% of female stereotype. Women are only responsible of domestic and reproductive works: cooking, doing laundry, taking care of kids and the like. Eventhough some of them have a job, their position is still much lower compared to men. It can be seen

from the selection of jobs they enrolled, such as nurse or secretary. On the other hand, 88.24% of male stereotype is represented by illustrations which show men as they work to earn money.

Based on the gender bias problems mentioned above, the researcher conducted this study to give further analysis on the meaning interpreted from the illustrations of elementary school textbooks which feature men, women, and both.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research combined both qualitative and quantitative approach. Quantitative approach is adopted to conduct a survey about elementary school textbooks published by many existing publishers. Branen (1997: 43) stated that quantitative data gathered from a survey can be a baseline for the following research stages. The textbooks taken from the survey result are then analyzed using content analysis method. Based on Arikunto and Suharsini (1996), content analysis, also known as documentary study, is regarded as a part of descriptive study. A practical example on the use of content analysis can be observed when we analyse a document. Holsty (in Azwar, 1993: 36) defined content analysis as any techniques aimed at generating conclusion by finding a certain characteristic on the data objectively and systematically.

The first stage that we have to do in applying content analysis method using quantitative approach is to make statistics on the frequency indicating how many times the observed gender phenomenon appear in the textbooks. At this stage, the analysis is focused on the message representing gender stereotype. Next, the researcher applied qualitative approach to analyze the data further. This quantitative analysis is done once the researcher is able to complete the first stage and describe the trends observed in the illustrations portraying gender stereotype. The objective to conduct the second analysis is to find out the impact of the selected illustrations based on three main issues: subordination, marginalisation, discrimination.

The data in this research are taken from elementary school textbooks (for grade 1 and 2) which include civics (PPKnPS), Bahasa Indonesia, Mathematics and Science from various publishers. Based on the survey done to several schools, there are 4 publishers which books most commonly used: Erlangga, Yudhistira, Intan Pariwara/Cempaka Putih, and Regina. The researcher takes 26 books from these 4 publishers for this study.

The research instrument was developed by the researcher himself and was tried out to two raters. These raters were to analyze the picture being taken for the research. The analysis done by these two raters were checked by the researcher to see the degree of agreement. To make sure the reliability of the research data, the researcher tried to analyze the problem happened during the try-out process and make an evaluation based on it. The data collection process was then assisted by the two raters to analyze the illustrations on the textbooks chosen for each subject.

RESULT

The research result shows that there are 2482 illustrations taken from 4 books published by 4 publishers. The number of female objects is 661 (27%), male objects is 817 (33%) and the number illustrations featuring both male and female objects is 1004 (40%).

The trend indicates that 379 illustrations (57%) signify gender stereotype towards women and 282 (43%) does not signify gender stereotype towards women. 68% of illustrations in civics book, 54% of illustrations in Mathematics books and 79% of illustrations in Science books

indicate gender stereotype towards women. Interestingly, in Bahasa Indonesia books, 53% of the illustrations do not carry any gender stereotype meaning. Based on the publisher category, it is found out that two publishers, Erlangga (68%) and Intan Pariwara/Cempaka Putih (64%) imply gender stereotype towards women while Yudhistira (62%) does not imply the same thing. Regina, uniquely, shares the same percentage of 50% illustrations pinpointing gender stereotype towards women and 50% of illustrations which are not. From the 25 textbooks included in the study, 16 books (64%) imply gender stereotype towards women and only 9 books (36%) do not imply the stereotype.

For male illustrations, the trend reveals that 561 (69%) of the pictures imply gender stereotype towards men and 256 (31%) pictures do not imply the stereotype. Based on the subject category, civics (78%), Mathematics (90%) and Science (84%) indicate gender stereotype towards men at different percentage. For Bahasa Indonesia textbook, it is found out that 55% of Bahasa Indonesia textbooks do not show gender stereotype towards men. Based on the publisher category, 3 publishers pinpoint gender stereotype towards men: Erlangga (73%), Yudhistita (58%), and Intan Pariwara/Cempaka Putih (89%) while Yudhistira (62%) does not indicate male stereotype. From the 24 textbooks featuring male objects, 20 textbooks (83%) signify gender stereotype towards men and only 4 books (17%) do not signify the stereotype.

Lastly, the trend also provides data on how much the illustrations featuring both male and female objects suggest gender stereotype. 394 (35%) of the illustrations signify stereotype towards both genders and 610 (65%) does not signify the stereotype. based on the subject category, it can be concluded that civics (52%), Bahasa Indonesia (69%), Mathematics (88%), and Science (65%) do not suggest stereotype for both genders. As observed throughout the study, 4 publishers: Erlangga (67%), Yudhistita (61%), Intan Pariwara/Cempaka Putih (56%), and Regina (57%) do not imply stereotype towards men and women. From the 26 textbooks featuring both genders in their illustrations, 13 books (50%) still pinpoint gender stereotype while the other 50% do not.

DISCUSSION

One of the main functions of having illustrations in textbook is to ease learners to understand the text provided in the book. Aside from that, illustrations also help to attract learners' curiosity and to hold their attention. Communication process happens at this phase since learners can refer back to their experience and to a set of cultural value they have been accustomed to live with. Among those values is gender ideology which explains the position of men and women in society and how the society gives stereotype to both entities. In this study, the illustrations collected as the research data are analyzed further in terms of domestication towards women, publication issues among men and subordination of both men and women.

Gender Imbalance Portrayed in the Illustrations Featuring Women

Based on the illustrations on Social Science textbook published by Erlangga publisher for first grade students of elementary school, it is found out that the illustrations mostly demonstrate role division in a family which has been practiced in daily basis. Women, in this case, are visualized as the second sex whose responsibility mostly revolves around domestic works at home. Women are depicted as someone only worth doing reproductive works: cooking, doing laundry, taking care of kids, buying groceries and the like.

The following illustrations taken from Social Science textbook for grade 1 of elementary school cover the topic about self identity. The issue appears in this picture is domestication of women in the family.

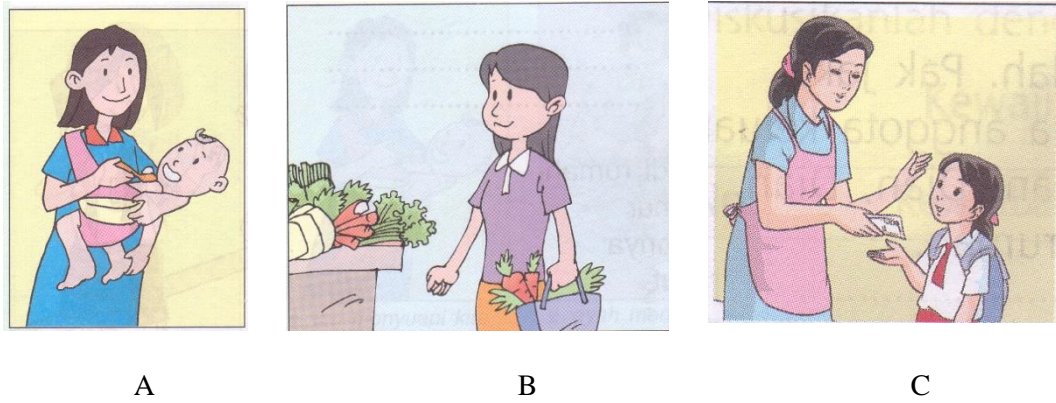


Figure 1. Gender stereotype on illustrations featuring women

(Source: Thayeb dkk. 2004: 6, 8 dan Rahim, dkk. 2004: 12)

The illustrations above indicate that women are widely acknowledged as someone only capable of doing reproductive works. Mothers, or in this case women, are left at home to handle domestic works traditionally. The terms more commonly used in feminism study is domestication and housewifization of women.

The type of reproductive works are more frequently illustrated in civics textbook for grade I and II of elementary school published by Erlangga publisher, Cempaka Putih publisher and Regina publisher; Bahasa Indonesia for grade I published by Intan Cempaka publisher, grade II published by Erlangga publisher, Mathematics for grade II published by Erlangga and Yudhistira, and Science for grade I published by Erlangga and Yudhistira publisher. Some of the works depicted in the illustrations are taking care of kids and preparing foods for the family members at home.

Domestication of women at home as illustrated in the books aforementioned indicates that women are regarded as the second class who do not deserve a position higher than men. Their job is simply to stay at home and handle all the household chores while men should be served by women since they are in a much higher position.

Gender Imbalance Portrayed in the Illustrations Featuring Women

The illustrations featured in Social Science textbook which signify gender stereotype.

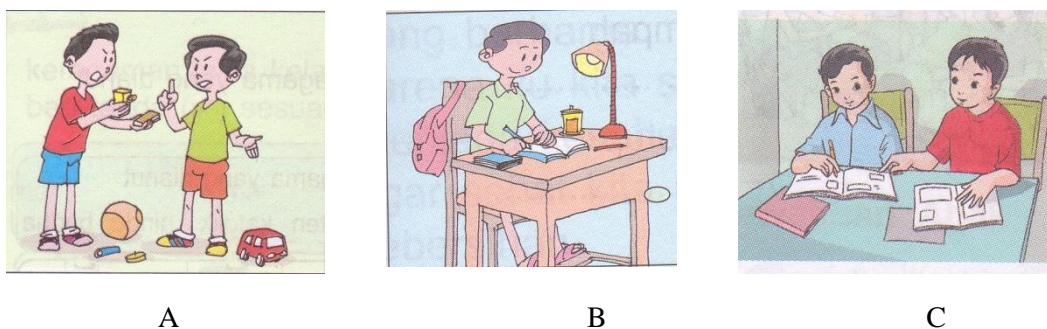


Figure 2. Gender stereotype on illustrations featuring women

(Source: Thayeb dkk. 2004: 36, 47 dan Rahim, dkk. 2004: 12)

The illustration shows that men are acknowledged with wider public roles who possess social characteristic and a quality to be productive. Public roles here mean that the role itself is related to someone's position outside the domesticity which bears more serious

responsibility. This resulting implication that the public role is having productive characteristic or delivers profit from material side rather than reproductive domestic roles. In the professional working environment with patriarchal system, productive public role frequently trusted to men. Playing with car toys, soccer and such shows appropriate representation of boys as they are expected to be workers at car manufacturers or soccer players to make a living. The boys in the pictures are also depicted as diligent children, it shows that the boys are expected to continue their study and find jobs in order to earn money. On the contrary, females are considered as the second sex which makes females are not worthy enough to be illustrated as diligent kids.

Gender Imbalance Portrayed in the Illustrations Featuring Both Men and Women

The illustrations representing men and women in Social Science textbook that indicate gender stereotype.

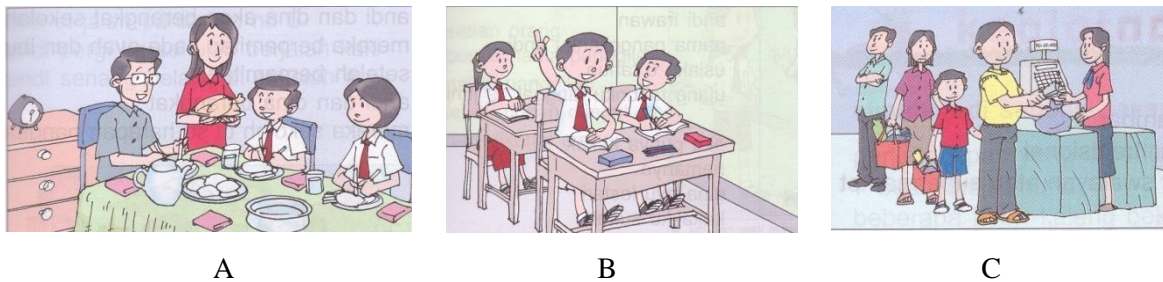


Figure 3. Gender stereotype on illustrations featuring both men and women

(Source: Thayeb dkk. 2004: 1, 3 and 103)

The illustration (3A) with both men and women as objects shows the tendency that men have higher social role characteristics than female, which also means that women is the subordinate of men. This subordination puts women into various unimportant positions, because they are considered as irrational/emotional beings and incapable to appear as decision makers. At home, women are often put into less important role, as in domestic life that women tend to give service for the family especially husband, while men as dominant paterfamilias decide everything in the family. It means that women are considered unworthy to be given a chance and to take decisions in the family.

Thus, also illustrated in 3B that men possess more superior role compared to women. The illustrated object in the picture depicts an active student who dominates the learning activity because male student is considered smarter and later will have important roles in the society. For the illustration depicted in (3C), there is a woman working in public sector but she is in lower professional level, which is as a cashier and not as the shop owner.

Based on the analysis of the illustration, the result suggests that what occurs in education field related to the justification of male positioning is inclined to public-productive domain and male is also more dominant and/or superior, for when this issue pulled out within the context of patriarchal cultural social system, this happens because the development of gender stereotype masculinity values and it is also internalized, believed, and even passed on through generations. There is also justification in role positioning for woman that leaned to area of domestic-reproductive.

The masculinity value regards men as rational, tough, strong, independent, and firm beings. On the contrary, femininity value that socially embedded to women gives sense that women are emotional, weak, sensitive, dependent, infirm, and submissive beings. The truth is that, these values are just social construction and not the nature given by God. It means that both

man and woman are equally potential to own masculinity and femininity characteristics. In fact, there are men that emotionally unstable and women that incredibly act rational.

This phenomenon of gender inequality shows that the illustrations are utilizing the stereotype of men's masculinity value, by visualizing boys as a mark of representation in the illustrations of Elementary school textbook course, the male figure considered as subject with roles that leans to public-productive characteristics and not as an object as occurred towards female.

CONCLUSION

Based on study of the inclination in gender stereotype it can be concluded that there is gender inequality for women on the illustrations inside elementary school textbook course. Women that represented in the illustrations using sign system in the form of figure and it is observably that there are stereotyping, discrimination, marginalization, and subordination. Gender inequality which prescribed on the illustration inside elementary school textbook course started from social system views, culture and society's economy which passed on and constructed through generations. As a consequence, this resulting in the illustrations' depiction that mostly subordinates women in every field and leads to gender inequality. The design of the illustration itself became manipulative, that the depiction will also strengthen and defend the gender equality which positioned women at domestic, marginalization, and subordinate position.

The gender inequality and cultural problem inside the illustration act as regulation system in education, which means the system is one of strategic variable for the foundation on totality process of individual development, and this also engaged with the act of shaping and internalizing social behaviors, in case this issue needs to be handle and taken care immediately. The given suggestion towards this problem is strategic steps to improve on the subsystem/ educational devices, especially for the textbook which contributes to create and construct the gender inequality. One of the best efforts is by doing development for the manual in making textbook illustration with gender perspective.

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