

Gender Bias in Elementary School Language Textbooks

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Abstract

This paper examines the appearance of gender bias in Language textbooks in Elementary school. The research focused on Java, especially in East Java and Central Java. The research finding will be used as a recommendation for Elementary textbooks writing. Further, it is hoped that the result will be used as a pilot project of gender mainstreaming in education. This research use qualitative method. The sources of data are text books in elementary school. The data are focused on language text books i.e. Indonesian and Javanese text books which are used in East Java in 2013 and Central Java in 2014. The data deals with words and actions that describe gender bias. Data collection of this research is library documentation and the data are analyzed and classified using gender concept. The research found that gender biased images remain strongly present in elementary textbooks. The materials differentiate between men and women in the form of job types, games, and attitudes. The textbooks reinforce the stereotypical image that men dominate the public sphere and women the private sphere. Cooking, cleaning, and decorating a house and various domestic works done by women, while men performing challenging jobs and heavy manual labour. Gender discrimination also occurs in children's game; girls were shown playing with domestic toys and the boys were shown building and enacting stereotypically masculine roles such as doctor or police officer. The patriarchal society also sets the difference attitude between boys and girls. Girls should smile and be sensible while boys should be brave.

Keywords: gender roles, stereotype, games, jobs, attitudes

Introduction

The male-child preference still governs popularity over Indonesian families. This gender preference is associated with patriarchy culture that becomes the concepts of family, kinship, and socialization in Java. Patriarchy system gives males freedom, supremacy, and privilege. This position however, addresses men with responsibility of providing a living and protection over women.

Males domination over women arise inequality and cultural prejudice against women. Patriarchy focuses on meeting the needs of men in which they receive more freedom to venture various chances and seek professional satisfaction outside the home. This dominant role has contributed to the marginalization of women where they have to leave out of things they really want and lost a chance of being success. Male domination through women does not necessarily lead to a problem. According to Darni (2012:213) male domination does not create a problem as long as men follow a predetermined consequence and does not reinforce the dominance toward women. If men falsely represent the male dominance, then violence against women will exist.

Patriarchal thinking shapes the values of families' foundation. The role of gender in family members brings a great influence to the children's development. Javanese society which is deeply ingrained by Javanese paternalism leads to gender discrimination in the way women have always been placed in a subordinate position.

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The issue of gender role has captured government's concern; marked by the program of gender mainstream encouraged in every aspects of life. One of the ways is spreading the concept of gender equality at the school level. Children need to instill gender equality concept since their early age. Elementary school is the best phase for introducing and shaping gender role. The appropriate curriculum, teachers, and gender based text books are the perfect tools for implementing gender awareness toward students. The materials which are based on gender equality will generate a child that has positive view of women and gender. On the contrary, gender bias materials bring out discrimination and subordination toward women.

For many years patriarchy has embedded in the societies that create a model of social life that views women are lower than men. Although theoretically there are no rules or state policy towards gender discrimination, yet practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit woman really occurred. There is strong indoctrination to believe that women are fit mainly for domesticity and that they either had minimum or no rights (Darni, 2012:6).

Practices of gender bias currently present in official school curriculum. According to Darni et.al (2010:23) it was found that materials in elementary school are gender bias and that the teachers are not aware of it. They do not have the knowledge and the conscious of gender equity. They literally teach any materials without considering if those materials contain gender bias. Therefore, critical analysis of those materials had to be done as part of mainstreaming gender equality. The appropriate materials are needed to create a more equitable learning environment for all children. Incorporating gender base material in official school curriculum will ensure the development of gender equality.

There are eight main subjects and one local subject that are taught in elementary school curriculum; Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Social Science (*IPS*), Natural Science (*IPA*), Civic education (*PPKN*), Mathematics, Sports, Art and Skill (*Seni Budaya Keterampilan/SBK*), and Religion (*Agama*), while the local subject is Javanese (*Bahasa Jawa*). This thesis only discusses the Language concentration i.e. Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*).

Ideally, this study should be done in the whole part of Java. However, it is conducted only in Central and East Java for both places share the similar culture. West Java is excluded for it has different socio-cultural background and the language is also different compared to East and Central Java.

In this research, gender concept was used to analyze Elementary text-books curriculum. Gender comes from British word which means 'sex' (Echols, 1983:265). However, Saptari (1997:89) argues that gender is not limited to sex or biological differences, it is more related to the differentiation of symbol and social status because of sex. It is important to note the difference between sex and gender. Sex refers to the biological differences between male and female while gender is a system of social stratification and differentiation on the basis of sex. Humm (2002:178) states that a sex difference is natural, while a gender difference is social construction. Further, Moose (1996:3) explains that gender relations are part of social relations, referring to the ways in which the social categories of men and women; feminine or masculine. The tools to legitimate that role are performance, cloths, attitude, personality, occupation, sexuality, the role in the family, etc.

Gender is basically 'sex' differentiation, yet gender role is social construction. People start to create the set of social and behavioral norms are considered to be socially appropriate for individuals of a specific sex. Mufidah (2004:9) explains that it requires long term process to advance gender role. Gender role determined by series of factors which are socialized and constructed to socio-cultural background. This belief then strengthened by myth and religion where finally gender feels as a God's destiny. Therefore, general understanding of what is gender is needed to open society's perception that gender role is not God's will but it is social construction which is formed through a long historic process.

Gender roles differ from place to place. Gender role in Java is quite different compare to gender role in Bali or Minang. It is because different societies that have a completely different socio-cultural background could affect different gender role.

In Java many people continue to believe that gender is God's destiny. This concept comes from patriarchal thinking that shapes the values of Javanese culture. In addition, Javanese Kingdom and Feudalism (at the ages before Indonesian independence) both legitimate male domination over woman.

Darni (2013:68) says that hard jobs such as hoe, climbing, and carrying heavy loads are for men, while domestic jobs such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, and caring roles are for women.

Research Method

This study use qualitative method. The sources of data are text books in elementary school. The data are focused on language text books i.e.

Indonesian and Javanese text books. Totally there are nine text books; two Indonesia text books and two Javanese text books which are used in East Java in 2013, two Indonesian text books and two Javanese text books which are used in Central Java in 2014, and one 2013 Thematic Curriculum book which is used in Central Java. According to Sunarto (2001:135) qualitative research deals with words and actions. In this research, words are quotation used in the text books to describe gender bias. While actions refer to various activities portray in the text books that describe gender bias. Data collection of this research is library documentation. The literary sources are language textbooks for Elementary school; Indonesian language and Javanese language. Descriptive method is used to analyze the data. The description and interpretation of the data are classified using gender concept. Since identification and classification stages, data has been analyzed through gender concept.

Discussion

Gender biased images remain strongly present in elementary textbooks. Conversely, the data shows that gender bias in school books depict gender discrepancy more often than gender equality (Darni, 2013:68; 2014:81; 2012:74). In Indonesian and Javanese language textbooks, gender biased tendencies exist in the form of children's games, occupational division of children's labor to occupational division of adults' labor.

1. Gender Bias in Children's Games.

Young boys have different games from young girls. Boys play marbles, football, and kite flying as shown in the quotations below:

Amri : Apa yang kamu lakukan saat istirahat?

Elan : Aku membaca buku cerita. Bagaimana dengan kamu?

Amri : Aku jajan di kantin.

Elan : Setelah itu apa yang kamu lakukan?

Amri : Biasanya, aku bermain kelereng dengan Tedi dan Sagi (Marnoto, 2006:69).

Amri: What are you doing at recess time?

Elan: I am reading short story. What about you?

Amri: I am eating in the canteen.

Elan: What are you doing after?

Amri: Well, I usually play marbles with Tedi and Sagi

The conversation between Amri and Elen describe a game which is performed by young boys. They are playing marbles; an outdoor game experience and a challenging play. This game is targeted for boys. As supported by Purwati (2007:74) in her Indonesian textbook for Central Java. In addition, Yatmana (2010:20) also portrays that marbles only played by young boys.

Another challenging games performed by young boys appear in Indonesian textbooks written by Nurcholis (2007:105). In this textbook, young boys are portrayed playing kite flying in the field. It is a challenging activity for sometimes the rope stuck on a tree or breaks in the air that make the boys have to climb or jump. Climbing a tree is a risky move, boys may felt and injured. The similar evidence could be found in Javanese textbooks written by Lasmirin (2009:79); used in East Java and Javanese textbooks written by Yatmana (2010:30) which is used in Central Java. Clearly kite flying refers to boys; none of the girls play the game. It is a gender stereotype that shapes our mind and instills our beliefs that kite flying is boys' game.

Football also considered as boys' game. All of the textbooks; both Javanese and Indonesian language textbooks refer football as boys' game. Football was played in a group of people and involved more physical activities; they have to run, pass the ball, and use complicated techniques to score and win the game. It is also game that contain risk for the players may hurt and experience a fracture.

Playing with cars also boys game. Young girls cannot play toy cars. Nurcholis (2007:176) writes in Indonesian textbooks for 4th grade (used in East Java) that only boys who can play toy cars. It can be seen that the textbook reinforce gender stereotypes regarding games. Further, it is also connected to drive a car; driving a car can be risky, danger, and need courage. Therefore, driving a car or playing toy cars is men's activity. Lasmirin portrays this situation in her Javanese textbook.

"Pak Wahyu lunga numpak mobil"

"Pak Wahyu drives a car" (Lasmirin, 2009:4)

"Pak Brojo tindak Bojonegoro numpak mobil merci"

"Pak Brojo went to Bojonegoro by Merci "

In those quotations, both of the drivers are men. This case indicated that car stereotypically drive by men. On the contrary, girls are associated with indoor games or domestic activities. Young girls play dolls. Marnoto (2006:7) describes two young girls are playing baby dolls; they are carrying the dolls as a mother carrying her baby. This is the evidence of a gender biased hidden curriculum where girls are associated with domestic field.

Nurcholis (2007:126) adds similar to the play of baby dolls, young girls are having their activities inside a house (indoor activities). He portrays several girls hand in their hands together and sing a song. Purwati (2007:106) also explain Indonesian traditional game: 'dakon' game which is played by two young girls. The game started when the two players pick the 'biji bekel' from right end hole and fill other holes one by one until they reaches each other mother; the big hole in the left of the board. The game is over when all the seven small holes on one side of the board are empty. The winner is the player with the most pieces. Although we can see a competition here, it is not challenging enough. It is not even highly competitive compared to footballs or kite flying.

2. Occupational Division of Children's Labor

Boys and girls have jobs differentiation on the basis of sex. Girls have to deal with domestic activities such as cooking, cleaning and caring the members of the family. Suyoto (2010:60) in his Javanese textbook describes a young girl who was washing a number of plates in the kitchen. This girl was not only washing her own, but the rest of the family members. Clean a house also regarded as girls job. Manoto (2006:36) describes a girl did a household chore from cleaning a table to making a bed. It is quite obvious that girls had to handle domestic responsibilities.

Saben esuk latare disapu dik Arini (Lasmirin, 2009:83).

Every morning Arini cleans the yard.

Arini has to deal with domestic activity, none of men or boys that clean a house for it is a girl's responsibility. The beauty and cleanness of a house are women's job. Lasmirin (2009: 23) and Purwati (2007: 74) explain that women also responsible of making a house cozy and beauty; they need to watering the flowers, clean the garden, and decorate a house. Purwati (2007: 12) adds that young girls addressed by child care responsibilities; they have to taking care care their little brother or sister when their mother went away. Furthermore, all of Indonesian and Javanese textbooks wrote that cooking is girls and women's job. Look at the quotation below.

Pada hari Minggu, Rima membantu ibu memasak.

Rima sangat senang membantu ibu di dapur (Darisman, 2006:117).

On Sunday Rima was helping her mother cooking in the kitchen.

She was so happy to help her mother in the kitchen.

The quotation shows that girls are associated with cooking activity. Boys are free from domestic role, including cooking in the kitchen.

Sari : Hai, Tin! Mau kemana?

Tina : Mu ke warung. Kamu dari mana?

Sari : Dari warung Bu Mirah

Tina : Belanja, ya? Mana belanjaanmu?

Sari : Tidak, aku hanya disuruh Ibu menipkan kue di warung Bu Mirah (Marnoto, 2006:70).

- Sari : Hi Tin, where are you going?
 Tina : Market. Where are you from?
 Sari : Bu Mirah's store.
 Tina : Shopping? where is your groceries?
 Sari : No, I just sell some cakes in Bu Mirah's store.

In this story telling, Tina went shopping to buy kitchen stuff and Sari made some cakes. The quotations represent women's responsibility of domestic roles i.e. goes shopping, cooking, and child care responsibilities.

Women still undertake a disproportionate share of domestic responsibilities. Men are eliminated for domestic roles are not well-suited to their male characteristics. Nurcholis (2007:25) describes that boys and men may perform cleaning activities but they do it outside the house. They do the cleaning stuff at school or in a neighborhood. These textbooks reinforce the stereotypical image that men dominate the public sphere and women the private sphere. Lasmirin (2009:79), Purwati (2007:109), and Yatmana (2010:30) state that boys' dominant role in this gender type jobs are doing community services and making a kite for kite flying.

3. Gender Stereotypes about Occupation

Division on adults' labor is not far different from the division on children labor. They are separated into definite groups; men and women. Women play domestic roles, while men gain professional work outside the house.

Marnoto in his Indonesian textbook for 2nd grade, separate male and female into two opposite sphere. Men work in the office while women play the role as a housewife.

Ini Pak Wisnu

Pak Wisnu seorang pegawai kantor

Ini Bu Rianti

Bu Rianti seorang ibu rumah tangga (Marnoto, 2006:26).

This is Mr. Wisnu.

He is an office employee.

This is Mrs. Rianti.

She is a housewife.

Mr. Wisnu has professional job outside the house, while Mrs. Rianti plays her role as a housewife. The roles are stereotyping, gender inequalities appear in the textbook. The roles are equal when both Mr. Wisnu and Mrs. Rianti work as employee, or when Mr. Wisnu helps Mrs. Rianti with her domestic jobs.

Women are closely associated with domestic work; educating and nurturing children. Lasmirin (2009:51) wrote in her Javanese textbook that 'teacher occupation' were consistently women while 'doctors and police officers' were all men. This text book reinforce the stereotypical image that women's main job was to educate and look after children, whereas men's job required bravery and firmness. Besides being a teacher, women are also associated with food processing and cooking activities. Purwati (2007:60) describes women doing a trade in a market, selling cakes, vegetables, and various kitchen ingredients.

In household activities, women main activity is cooking. Most of the authors describe cooking as women primary job: Marnoto (2006:36), Nurcholis (2007:62), Darisman (2006:15), Lasmirin (2009:37), Purwati (2007:17), and Suyoto (2010:36). Child care responsibilities are the next, Suyoto (2010:10) describes how a mother carrying the baby beside her younger daughter. This portrait shows that young girls should behave according to gender roles.

Other domestic work is decorating a house; arrange the flower vase and garden. In this case only girls or daughter who help a mother. Boys are described bought some new cloths, while men were selling fish and broilers.

While women are confined to domestic activities, men are regarded to seek a job outside the house. All of the textbook writers believe that men occupation are hard and demand physical strength. Suyoto (2010:109), Purwati (2007:39), Marnoto (2006:68) describe men work in the field; plough and hijack the rice field. In this case only boys or son who help a men or a father. Darisman (2006:22) portrays men work as fisherman and porters and Warsito (2009:25) describe a man who works in power plants. All of the work described are danger and require strong physical.

4. Attitude

Boys and girls have been distinguished since their early childhood. The different attitude towards boys and girls appear since the pregnancy. In the womb baby boy was showered with pray and hope of becoming a gentleman. While a baby girl was hoped to be pretty and obedient. When they were born young boys and girls raised in line with our own representations and with the expectations society places on each sex. Little girls should smile and be sensible, little boys should be brave. The values impact the child's understanding of expected social behavior; that men have to be active and tough and female have to be passive and submissive. This situation occurs in Marnoto (2006:39) textbook. The book describes when a girl thorns by a rose pricker she will cry. In fact, when girls feel hurt about anything they will cry. On the contrary, boys should be strong and brave, therefore, boys should not cry. The difference attitude between boys and girls also appear in children's games. Boys are portrayed as strong and brave. In football game, the passing ball can create hilarious and vociferous from the audience. In contrast, playing dolls that dramatize the story and talk does not create the greatest excitement. These differences are in line with the saying that boys are strong and brave, therefore, boys should not cry.

Conclusion

The authors of the elementary textbooks have not use of gender equality as a parameter in the curriculum. Gender-biased tendencies are still embedded in elementary textbooks and continue to dominate the pages of school books. Current elementary language textbooks differentiate between boys and girls in the form of job types, games, and attitudes. There is a strong stereotypical image that men dominate the public sphere and women the private sphere. Cooking, cleaning, and decorating a house and various domestic works done by women, while men performing challenging jobs and heavy manual labour. Gender discrimination also occurs in children's game; girls were shown playing with domestic toys and the boys were shown building and enacting stereotypically masculine roles such as doctor or police officer. The patriarchal society also sets the difference attitude between boys and girls. Girls should smile and be sensible while boys should be brave. Clearly the socialization of gender roles and the use of a gender-biased hidden curriculum lead to an inequitable treatment for boys and girls. Efforts need to be made to combat gender bias in educational materials for education is the tool that can help break the pattern of gender discrimination.

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