

## DISCOURSE OF GENDER: CONFLICTING IDEOLOGIES VS. SOCIAL POLICIES

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### ABSTRACT

It is undeniable the influence that 'ideology' has in shaping our thoughts and how we perceive the world at large, as is undeniable the significant role it plays in maintaining the balance of power in a society. It may seem ironic how a society tries to maintain this balance of power by empowering women with equal opportunities, and at the same time—unconsciously and sometimes consciously—suppresses them by taking for granted that the norms of equality will be respected and practiced by everyone. In Malaysia, the ideologies in some school textbooks seem to imply that women are appropriate for certain jobs which are recessive in nature while men for jobs that are more active in nature. In the employment sector, the government is trying to promote women by giving them opportunities to engage themselves in all types of professions. However, some employees in the private sector do not seem to practice the government policies regarding equal opportunities and tend to reflect the ideologies of the textbooks: they tend to segregate certain jobs according to gender. This paper intends to compare the findings of two studies and elucidate how certain ideologies and policies are conflicting in nature and how they inhibit women from choosing career-advancing choices..

**Key Words:** Gender bias, ideology, stereotyping, exclusion.

### I. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

#### 1.0 Introduction

In the majority of societies the world over, males have generally been a privileged and favoured gender. Professionally, males have enjoyed a higher social status and more rapid upward mobility compared to females. Socially, females are often placed in subordinate and subservient roles as well.

Gender bias is often insidiously conveyed through social practices and language use. One of the means through which it is conveyed is print matter. The print media includes consumer materials such as trade books and magazines, advertisements, as

well as educational material. A study by Foley and Boulware [1] compared books in 1993 with earlier studies done in the 1960's and 1980's. The results showed "male characters continue to dominate in required reading instruction materials and also outnumbered their female counterparts". Frasher and Walker [2] examined widely used reading textbooks and found that male characters outnumbered female characters by a large majority.

Stereotyping of occupational roles, behaviour and personality can also be found in school reading materials. Typically, females have been represented as positive, dependent, domestic and frequently brainless and silly while males generally have been portrayed as active, independent, brave and clever. Adult females have appeared

overwhelmingly in the role of mother and housewife with few alternatives, while adult males have been depicted in numerous occupational roles [3]. Generally, female characters are portrayed as the weaker sex; they are associated with subordinate occupational roles, domestic activity, and character traits such as dependency and passivity.

It is important to address gender bias in educational materials because they are part of the educational experience that helps determine ideas and values that children come to accept as norms. There is considerable tendency for children to carry with them into adulthood misconceptions and pre-conceived ideas about the roles of males and females, which they receive in their early years. These misconceptions will lead to role stereotyping which can affect their career advancement as well as their personal lives.

### 1.1 Underlying implication

In Malaysia, the ideologies in some school textbooks seem to imply that women are appropriate for certain jobs which are recessive in nature while men for jobs that are more active in nature. They are usually depicted as maids, housewives, teachers, nurses, while men are depicted as engineers, doctors, pilots, politicians and other career oriented professions. In the employment sector, the government is trying to promote women by giving them opportunities to engage themselves in all types of professions. However, some employees in the private sector do not seem to practice the government policies regarding equal opportunities and tend to reflect the ideologies of the textbooks: they tend to segregate certain positions and jobs according to gender. In this multicultural nation women constitute almost fifty percent of the population. In order to materialise the dream of the *Rukunegara* (National Ideology) and *Vision 2020* into reality, it seems relevant for all Malaysians, irrespective of gender, to be given equal opportunities to choose, apply for and engage in all types of professions. Inhibiting such opportunities will not only hamper the nation in the long run but will also be wasteful of potential talents which could bring immediate and long-term benefits for Malaysia. This paper intends to show how certain ideologies are conflicting in nature and how these conflicting ideologies inhibit women from making career-developing choices.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Gender bias / sexism / sex role stereotypes

Gender bias refers to prejudice based on partial evidence, which can be strong, rigid and capable of distorting perception and other thinking activities [4]. Banfield [5] defines *gender bias* as “the systematic oppression and exploitation of human beings on the basis of their belonging to the female sex, which is tightly linked with language”. He further notes that words such as *he*, *man* and *mankind* are often used to represent all human beings. Whenever a generic term is needed, we often use the masculine as the proper noun and to a lesser extent *he* or *she*. This illustrates the inequality between men and women in language use.

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination shown against people (especially women) because of their sex. Graddol and Swann [6] define sexism as any discrimination against women or men because of sex, and made on irrelevant grounds. Although according to this definition, discrimination may take place against women or men, in practice, discrimination against women has been seen as more frequent, and has most concerned those who oppose sexism.

Bornstein [7] states that sex stereotypes reflect “oversimplified attitudes about males and females, while completely ignoring individual differences”. This disregard for individual differences may apply to a range of domains, such as career, intellect, personality, character trait, physical appearance, social status and social role. Those who differ from these stereotypes are ostracized, denying individuals the wide range of human potential that is possible. Generally, the terms refer to discrimination against a particular gender. They manifest an ideology that represents certain beliefs and assumptions which disproportionately favouring one gender over the other.

### 2.1 Policies vs. ideologies

There are many policies (international and local) which encourage and promote women to pursue careers not only in the realm of science and technology but also whatever other careers they choose. As a result of four UN Conferences (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995) one of the four areas of action identified as essential for the advancement of

women in science and technology suggests that there needs to be improvement of career opportunities for women scientists, engineers and technologists so that women are participating in science and technology decision-making processes and in directing the development and application of science and technology at all levels [8]. In 1997, the Regional Bureau for Asia and the Pacific of UNDP committed itself to utilising science and technology for gender equality in sustainable and equitable development [9]. In 1996 at the conference on Regional Science and Technology Cooperation, the Ministers of Science from APEC countries endorsed a recommendation recognising the importance of removing barriers and promoting the full contribution of women to science and technology and strengthening the exchange of men and women across the region [9].

In Malaysia the primary objective of the National Policy for Women (NPW), which supports women's participation and contribution in science, seeks to integrate women in all sectors of national development [10]. The Women Affairs Department (HAWA) through its National Action Plan (NAP) for the women of Malaysia includes, among other actions, to replace stereotype images of women in texts with images that portray women in a more positive image and to increase the intake of girls into vocational and technical schools [11]. The 'UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979' [12] (acceded to by Malaysia on 05/07/1995) on equal employment for women, which in *Part I Article 11*, states:

1. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular:
  - (a) The right to work as an inalienable right of all human beings;
  - (b) The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment;
  - (c) The right to free choice of profession and employment, the right to promotion, job security and all benefits and conditions of service and the right to receive vocational training

- and retraining, including apprenticeships, advanced vocational training and recurrent training;
- (d) The right to equal remuneration, including benefits, and to equal treatment in respect of work of equal value, as well as equality of treatment in the evaluation of the quality of work;
- (e) The right to social security, particularly in cases of retirement, unemployment, sickness, invalidity and old age and other incapacity to work, as well as the right to paid leave;
- (f) The right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction.

However, despite the above policies, which seem to pave the way for women to think and act ambitiously and take up the challenge in the male dominant society, the mindset of many people seem to be governed by the traditional gender biased ideology. Growing up with the ideology that society has certain expectations of women and that they are supposed to enter only those professions which society has reserved for them, some women take it for granted that this is the way of the world. They do not even question the fact they are being marginalised or oppressed because they accept their role in society. This acceptance of their passive roles in the male dominated society is fostered from a very early age; it is usually males who get preferential treatment at home and at school. Sometimes parents, unintentionally or intentionally, undermine girls' confidence, self-image and aspirations. Societal and cultural stereotyping can also convey powerful messages to girls to avoid technical and scientific subjects [13]. Preferential treatment of boys and the bias of girls by teachers can also leave a negative impact on the self-confidence and performance of girls [13].

Even the reading materials seem to encourage this trend. English language textbooks are not screened for gender bias and stereotypically portray women as gentle, passive and tentative occupying the roles of caregiver and caretaker with career options rarely expanding beyond the realms of women dominated professions like teaching, nursing, secretarial and clerical work.

In the real world, the reflections of the implications of the ideology of the English language textbooks can be perceived merely by opening the recruitment sections of newspapers. Despite the fact that government policies discourage the marginalization of women and encourage them to enter the male dominated professions, women are still marginalized—implicitly, explicitly and sometimes strategically.

In order to reduce and eventually eliminate the degree of marginalization of women the ideology and the mind-frame of people—whether they are men or women—in general need to change. Men need orientation with the fact the women are just as capable as they are, and adopt a more inclusive mind set while women need to be given more confidence about their capabilities and endurance of raising to the challenges in the male dominated professions.

However, in order to foster a more inclusive ideology in men and confidence building mindset in the women, government policies promoting equal employment opportunities alone is not enough. The ideology of an inclusive society, where everyone is equal and has equal opportunities in the professional world, need to begin very early, at home and in the schools—parents as well as teachers should promote the notions of equal opportunities and not influence the minds of the younger generation with stereotypical ideology.

The inclusive ideology can be enhanced further if the Malaysian Textbook Bureau (set up by the Ministry of Education in 1974) and textbook writers are made aware of the issue of gender bias in English language textbooks. In theory and / or principle, the Malaysian educational system is geared toward the need to produce holistic and integrated individuals in terms of their intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical growth (KBSM, 1987) regardless of ethnicity or gender. This ideology can encourage both males and females to develop positive personalities and behaviours, and the ability to play flexible roles that contribute to the success of the individual and the nation. Therefore, Malaysian textbooks that are employed as core learning materials should be screened for gender bias.

## 2.2 Language and power

There is no doubt that there exists a relationship between language and power. This relationship between language and power is “manifested in different spheres of society, be it academic, professional, commercial, and political” [14]. However, this does not mean that every structure used in English Language carries ‘hidden power’ or some form of implication. Hence, in educational sphere, these ideological assumptions and power dominance make their presence felt in the realm of gender bias. This basis is insidiously conveyed through social practices and language use.

According to Fairclough [15] ‘the exercise of power, in modern society, is increasingly achieved through ideological workings of language. Among the various modes of communication, language has assumed a significant role in the sustenance of various social processes [16]. Those who control the discourse of a society (primarily through language) have the power to control, sustain or reshape the ideology of that society; in doing so they manufacture consent, thereby legitimizing their agendas, which thence become part of the social setup or structure [16].

## 2.3 Ideological assumptions

Ideological assumptions and, power dominance exist in any society and are reflected in social practices and language use; and as Omar [14] says above that the relations between language and power is present in the different spheres of society, whether academic, professional, commercial and political.

Eliminating or reducing gender bias language and practices from oral and written communication is an initial step in the process of freeing the mind from biases that exist in a society, but this step can only come about if there is awareness of bias. Elements of bias that have become conventionalized often go unnoticed because conventions are seldom questioned. Hegemonic conventionalization usually occurs as a result of the ‘order of hegemony’—the process by which a hegemonic power is naturalized in a society and subsequently becoming part of the societal ideology [17].

#### 2.4 Research in classroom gender bias

While increasingly many women pursue higher education and careers, society still raises its girls with the option not to work for a living. However, current demographic statistics point out that nine times as many women as men are single parents, thus forcing more women than before to make a living. It is because women have not been directed on career paths from the start, they often must settle for lower level jobs. Thus, women continue to be funnelled into traditionally female occupations. In order to keep up with recent technological trends, girls must be introduced at a young age to scientific and engineering fields, or else they may enter these fields too late. If this is the case, women will remain at the low end of the service-oriented pay scale. The traditional roles of men and women dictate the focus of that which boys and girls learn in school. Thus, if girls continue to be bypassed when considering technical work, women will never be changed. In order to rectify the cycle, these stereotypical roles must be re-evaluated, and girls must be encouraged to pursue more technical careers [18].

It is easy to see that when children enter school, they already act according to social expectations for gender specific behaviours. Research shows that schools have been known to perpetuate the stereotypical gender roles [19-23]. While the educational system is not solely responsible for sexism or its resolution, educators can hold deeply entrenched beliefs and behaviour regarding gender, which reinforce societal expectations of these sex roles.

#### 2.5 Research in Malaysia

Gender studies in Malaysia are very limited. However, one such study was conducted by Saedah Siraj [24] in which she examined gender stereotyping depicted in the Malay language elementary reading textbooks. The analysis focused on the manner in which five Malay language textbooks portrayed males and females in written texts and pictures. It also examined the changing status and roles of Malaysian women and investigated whether these changes were adequately depicted in the selected books. She found, besides other findings, that at the occupational level, males were portrayed in various types of jobs, but females appeared only as

teachers. With regard to gender biased research in recruitment advertisements, so far there has been no studies done in the Malaysian context.

#### 2.6 Effect of gender bias on readers

The bias and short-sightedness practiced by largely ignoring and minimizing the role of women in books can actively do real psychological damage to female students. Studies [25-27] found that girls and boys differ greatly in their psychological requirements in life. If this is not addressed, it may result in girls having problems such as poor self-images, ambiguous career goals, poor or non-existing career planning and a general failure to achieve their highest potential once they graduate from college. Especially in the workplace, despite efforts to attain greater job equity between women and men, the majority of women are still found to enter jobs that have traditionally been women's jobs. These jobs are usually lower paying and offer less opportunity for career advancement than men's jobs.

A study was carried out to determine attitude changes in children, after exposure to stories about women in traditional or non-traditional occupations. Ashby and Wittmaier [28] found that women, who were exposed to stories about women in non-traditional stories, rated traditionally male-jobs appropriate for girls compared to those who heard only traditional stories. Girls in the study who heard stories with women in traditional roles showed a clear tendency to make more traditional, stereotypical responses. They concluded those students' attitudes towards sex-typed careers can be changed by exposure to career information containing non-traditional role models.

Similarly, McLaughlin [29] claimed that students' perception of their career options are seriously restricted by exposure to commonly available career-education materials that differentiate occupations as appropriate for males or females. Hurwitz and White [30] found that "high school students' attitudes were less stereotyped after they read non-sex typed career information".

Frasher and Frasher [3] claim adult females have appeared overwhelmingly in the role of mother and housewife with few alternatives, while adult males have been depicted in numerous occupational roles. According to Temple [31], girls in their passive role tend to be caretakers, mothers, princesses in

need of rescuing, and characters that support the male figure.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is loosely based on some of the findings of two postgraduate researches—“Gender Bias in Malaysian English Language Textbooks Used in Secondary Schools” (M.A. thesis) [32] and “Discourse of Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements” (ongoing Ph.D. thesis) [33]. Both the studies are descriptive in nature and focus to some extent on the notion of marginalization and / or exclusion of women from certain professions.

The data for the first study was acquired from four form four English language text books used in Malaysian schools while that of the later from the recruitment sections of the daily and weekly English newspapers *The Star* and the *Sunday Star*, collected over a period of 30 months—that is, from September 2001 to February 2004.

The implication of this paper is non-experimental and exploratory in nature. It tries to suggest a connection between the sexist ideologies that we grow up with and how they seem to translate or materialize in the real world. The materialization of gender-biased ideologies may prevent people from practicing the policies, which promote and pave the way for equal opportunities in the employment sector and / or profession world.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Findings

The findings from the ‘Gender Bias in Malaysian English Language Textbooks’ study suggests that women are passive, tentative and occupy less career-oriented jobs. They are portrayed as caregivers or caretakers and rarely try to take up challenging professions, which are usually dominated by men.

Table 1 presents data on the job categories for male and female characters in textbooks written by male and female writers.

These data suggests that male characters were portrayed in all categories of occupations except domestic. Female characters were depicted in the following categories: Service, Economy,

**Table 1: Job categories for male and female characters in order of frequency, found in the 4 textbooks**

Job Categories	Male		Female	
	F	%	F	%
Service*	50	28.6	12	6.9
Economy / business†	32	19.3	8	4.6
Administration‡	23	13.1	7	4
Political§	10	5.7		
Medical	8	4.6		
Domestic≈			7	4
Armed force	6	3.4		
Sports	4	2.3	1	0.6
Artistic and Spiritual	3	1.7	1	0.6
Entertainment	2	1.1	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>78.9%</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>21.1%</b>

\* Postman, police, plumber etc.

† Shopkeeper, manufacturer, salesman, fisherman, etc.

‡ Manager, director, teacher-in-charge, teacher, principal.

§ Prime Minister, Sultan

≈ Housewives

(Source: Unpublished M.A. thesis of Sanda Kumari d/o Chandran, *Gender Bias in Malaysian English Language Textbooks Used in Secondary Schools*, University Putra Malaysia)

Administration, Domestic, Sports, Artistic and Entertainment. Male characters outnumbered females in all categories especially service (28.6%), Economy (18.3%), Administration (13.1%), Political (5.7%) and Medical (4.6%). The most frequent type of jobs for males in Service were *police, inspector, mechanic, driving instructor, plumber, gardener, bus driver, chauffeur, fireman* and *postman*. This indicates they provide invaluable service to the public. Next, 32 males (18.3%) monopolised the Economy or Business category as *shopkeeper, manufacturer, salesman, fisherman, glass manufacturer, trader, businessman, engineer, farmer, and environmentalist*. Again, they contributed to the development of the economy and business of the country. Administration is equally important, as 23 men (13.1%) were working as *spokesman, principal, headmaster, managing director, professor, school counsellor, and director*. This indicates that males are represented being responsible for the management and running of larger organizations.

Most notably, often, compared to females, males also appeared in the medical field as *doctors*,

surgeon, medical doctors and dentist and in the political arena as *Prime Minister, Sultan, Senator, Culture and Tourism Minister* and *Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports*. About six men were involved in the armed forces, four in sports, three in artistic / spiritual and two in entertainment. The males were not involved in domestic jobs. This is an agreement with the study done by Etim [34]. He indicated that males were portrayed in position of authority, as being in prestigious professions and as those who solve society's problems.

Females, on the other hand, were portrayed in the service industry as *receptionist, announcer, director, airhostess, hairdresser, stewardess, secretary, and fashion designer*. About eight females (4.6%) were involved in economy / business as *saleswoman, rubber tapper, machine operator and hair dresser*. They also contributed to the administration sector especially in the education field as *teacher and headmistress*. Females also appeared in domestic jobs as *maid, housewives and washerwoman*. This finding is related to the study conducted by Frasher and Walker [2]. They found females were seldom portrayed in occupational roles outside the home and those who did, held only traditionally female jobs. The females were not involved in politics, armed forces, and the medical field. There are jobs stereotyped for the males. The quantitative analysis suggests that there is a greater tendency to portray males in paid employment outside the home and some females in unpaid employment within the home as maid and housewife.

The findings from the 'Discourse of Exclusion' study suggest that among other criteria of exclusion women are marginalized or excluded from certain positions or professions. The language that is normally used to exclude (implicitly or explicitly) comprises of *Male ... are encouraged to apply, Male with minimum PMR result, Male, Preferably male, (Male), Males preferred, Male applicants preferred, Male applicants only, Van Sales Man, Delivery Man, Draughtsman*.

Women are usually discouraged from applying for technical positions and therefore have to resort to clerical or official positions (Figure 1, Sample 1). It can be seen in Sample 1 that for only men are eligible to apply for the positions of *Engineer, Customer Service Executive, Boilerman*, while women are only able to apply for the position of *Technical Clerk*. In the first two positions

(*Engineer, Customer Service Executive*) it is specifically stated that the positions are for men; the third position is sexist in nature as the title of the position (*Boilerman*) indicates as to which gender can apply for the post. Among all the four positions, women can apply to only one (*Technical Clerk*) which involves desk job and rather recessive in nature. The *Technical Clerk* position is rather like a secretarial job with limited career prospects / options.

The engineering field is usually a male dominated profession, as can be seen from all the three samples, which finds it difficult to accept women. The women who are accepted usually occupy clerical positions like *Technical Clerk* (Sample 1) or *Account Clerk* (Figure 2, Sample 2). Such lower positions usually do not offer bright career prospects like *Engineers* (Sample 1), *Production Engineers* (Figure 3, Sample 3), *Sales Engineers* (Sample 2). By opening the pages of a newspaper and turning to the recruitment section, it becomes quite apparent that women are marginalised and / or excluded from applying for certain positions.

They are usually marginalized explicitly (*Male applicants only, Male*) or implicitly (*Preferably male, Males preferred, Male applicants preferred*), or subtly by the use of sexist language (*Van Sales Man, Delivery Man, Draughtsman, Boilerman*) or and certain semiotic devices like words within parenthesis / brackets (*male*), fonts which use **bold** UPPERCASE lettering, sometimes *italicised* or contrasting background. All these strategies send the message that women cannot apply to all the jobs and positions that are available, despite the fact that they may have the appropriate qualification, experience / expertise, and have the potential and capability of carrying out the responsibilities of those particular jobs and / or positions that they are prevented from applying.

#### 4.1 Implications and recommendations

At the occupational level, males were portrayed in various types of jobs, the police force (policeman, inspector), manufacturer, engineer, environmentalist, managing director, professor, surgeon, dentist, prime minister and senator. However, females appeared only in limited traditional occupational roles as receptionist, air hostess, secretary, teacher, headmistress, maid, housewife and washerwomen. The implications of these two distinct groupings are that women hold

**Shin-Etsu**

**Shin-Etsu Polymer (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd.** located in Section 26, Shah Alam is a well-known manufacturer of rubber contact and related products.

In line with our expansion program, we invite suitably qualified Malaysians to fill the following positions:

**ENGINEER**

- ◆ Diploma in Mechanical / Electrical / Electronics.
- ◆ Male, 35 years of age or below.
- ◆ Experience in PLC, trouble shooting design work, parts, jigs and tools preferably in a manufacturing environment.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE EXECUTIVE**

- ◆ Degree / Diploma in any discipline.
- ◆ Male, below 30 years of age with some working experience in a manufacturing environment.
- ◆ Ability to communicate well in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Japanese.
- ◆ Outgoing, friendly and cheerful personality.

**BOILERMAN**

- ◆ Certificate of competency for steam boilers / engines or equivalent.
- ◆ Minimum 2 years relevant working experience in a manufacturing environment.
- ◆ Willing to work on shift.

**TECHNICAL CLERK**

- ◆ Female, with minimum SPM / STPM or equivalent and 1-2 years relevant experience in engineering and QA.
- ◆ Good organisational skills with the ability to provide administrative support with minimal supervision.
- ◆ Computer literate.

An attractive remuneration package commensurate with experience and ability will be offered to the successful candidates.

Interested applicants are requested to write/fax-in/e-mail their brief but comprehensive resume, stating current and expected salary together with a recent passport-sized photograph (NR) not later than **12 October, 2001** to:

Human Resources Department,  
**SHIN-ETSU POLYMER (MALAYSIA) SDN. BHD., Lot 52, Jalan Sepintas 26/13**  
 Kawasan Perindustrian HICOM, 40000 Shah Alam, Selangor Darul Ehsan.  
 Tel : 03-511 1161 Fax : 03-511 1181  
 E-mail: hasman@spm.shinpoly.co.jp or hasnida@spm.shinpoly.co.jp

Figure 1: Sample 1

(Source: Selected sample from the ongoing Ph.D. thesis of Muhammed Shahriar Haque, *Discourse of Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements*, University of Malaya)

‘lesser’ jobs of little importance, thus categorizing them into ‘inferior’ job holders.

Males dominated in most job categories. They mostly appeared in service, economy / business, administration, political, armed forces and sports. This finding indicated that males were involved in a wider variety of job categories while females

were limited to service, economy / business, administration and domestic. The implication of this, is that the role of female is limited to jobs of lesser importance. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Frasher and Walker [2], whereby it was found that females were seldom portrayed in occupational roles outside the home. If they did, they held only traditional female jobs.

Nichias Corporation, a Japanese International Manufacturing Company with 106 years history currently employing 700 personnel in their ISO 9001 accredited Malaysian factory, is expanding its sales operation and seeking suitable qualified candidate.

**SALES ENGINEER**

- Male
- Knowledge in Mechanical Engineering
- 1-2 years working experience
- Good communication skill
- Self-driven, aggressive, able to work independently or as part of a team
- Possess own transport and willing to travel outstation
- Fresh graduates are encourage to apply

**ACCOUNT CLERK**

- Chinese female
- Minimum SPM with credits in Mathematics and Accounting
- Computer literate

Please mail your personal bio-data, resume and passport size photograph to:-

*Attention to:- Ms Sam/ Mr Hah*

**NICHIAS FGS SDN. BHD.** (203309H)  
 Lot 3, Lorong SS 13/3D,  
 Subang Jaya Industrial Area,  
 47500 Subang Jaya, Selangor.  
*(Only shortlisted candidates will be notified)*



**Figure 2: Sample 2**

(Source: Selected sample from the ongoing Ph.D. thesis of Muhammed Shahrir Haque, *Discourse of Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements*, University of Malaya)

An Engineering Company specializing in the design and manufacturing of Transportation and Environmental Equipment urgently requires suitable candidate for the position of:-

**1. PRODUCTION ENGINEER**

- Male in early 30's with Degree in Mechanical Engineering
- 2-3 years working experience preferred
- Well organized, ability to plan & execute production program
- Possess good leadership, interpersonal and communication skills
- Knowledge of drawing software such as Autocad 2000 & Mech Desktop
- Valid driving license & possess own transport

**2. STOREKEEPER**

- SPM
- Minimum of 2 years working experience in store & logistic functions
- Able to handle forklift
- Valid driving license

Interested candidates write-in with full resume, a n.r. photo, contact no. current & expected salary to:-

**The Executive Director**  
 P.O. Box 104  
 43300 Seri Kembangan

**Figure 3: Sample 3**

(Source: Selected sample from the ongoing Ph.D. thesis of Muhammed Shahrir Haque, *Discourse of Exclusion: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Recruitment Advertisements*, University of Malaya)

The portraying of stereotyping ideals and ideologies about men and women in the English language textbooks can have lasting consequences. Children and adolescences usually develop their ideas about the world at an early stage, which lasts well into their adult lives. The textbooks by depicting gender bias ideologies seem to suggest that women have a limited or restricted role to play in the male dominant society and women by accepting such a perspective perceive this view as normal. Hence, in the real world when they are marginalized or prevented from applying for certain positions they accept this and do not feel that they are being discriminated.

The initiatives and policies taken by the government to foster equal opportunities tend to become redundant as the ideologies of the common people are conditioned to accommodate the male dominant ideologies. It appears that there is a conflict of interest, as the ideologies of the textbooks clash with the ideologies of the social policies. In order to resolve the problem, the issue of gender bias in school textbooks should be thoroughly studied and a criterion to monitor such an issue should be included by the Malaysian Textbook Bureau regarding the writing and publishing of textbooks for schools. Furthermore, the government should take measures to make the parents, teachers and the common people more aware of gender bias issues in society. The issue of marginalization and exclusion of women from applying for certain positions should also be taken seriously by the government as well as the society. Women constitute almost fifty percent of the total population of Malaysia and they have every right to apply to any position and choose whatever profession they desire. When they are deprived of such fundamental rights, merely because certain people do not choose to practice the equal employment policies, it is time for the government to take serious initiatives.

## V. CONCLUSION

The notions of stereotypical portrayal of women in school textbooks and the society at large is an issue that should be focused upon even more than at present. The minds of the younger generation should be positively motivated by practicing the ideology of optimism, fairness and equal opportunities for all. If not, the attitudes that male and female students develop may be reinforced by what they read in school. By continuing to depict a

gender-biased portrayal of male and female characters and situations, society is legitimizing the ideology that this is the natural order to things. Ideology plays a very significant role in maintaining the balance of power in society. It is indeed an irony that society is trying to maintain the balance of power by empowering women with equal opportunities, and at the same time suppressing these opportunities by legitimizing a gender-biased ideology.

In this contemporary age, the so-called era of globalization, the notions of inclusiveness is being professed by societies in order to create a state of homogeneity and uniformity [16]. With people increasingly becoming “conscious of the environment they live in and the ideologies that influences their lives ... at the macro levels, they sometimes tend to overlook the asymmetrical or unequal power that may be lurking or embedded in the micro levels of their social structure” [16].

It is apparent that there is gender bias in Malaysian secondary school textbooks and it is a cause for some concern. It is also apparent that there is strategic (implicit and explicit) marginalization and / or exclusion going on in recruitment advertisements. Such an unhealthy practice, despite the laws and policies to promote equal employment for all, should be the concern of the people in power (the government) as well as the society. The government should not be complacent and take for granted that the norms of equality will be respected and practiced by everyone. Stereotypical ideologies coupled with the hegemonic instances of exclusion is not only unethical but also have the “potential of having far reaching consequences that may lead to the degeneration and degradation of the moral values of this multi-cultural society, ...” [16]. Since ideologies influence the way we perceive the world at large, conflicting ideologies may inhibit the way people make meaningful decisions and appropriate choices in life.

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