Gender Role and Identity in The Primary Level Language Textbooks: A Twenty-First Century Update

Master's Thesis

EDU 602

By

Afsana Sadiq Atuly

Student ID: 14257008

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that,

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing Master Degree at BRAC IED.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

5. I would like to request to wave the embargo of the date of submission of my thesis due to COVID 19 realities.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

_____

Afsana Sadiq Atuly
Student ID: 14257008

Approval

The thesis Titled "Gender Role and Identity in The Primary Level Language Textbooks: A Twenty-First Century Update" submitted by

Afsana Sadiq Atuly
Student ID: 14257008

in April 2022 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Leadership & School Improvement on April 22, 2022.

Examining Committee

Supervisor:
(Member)

_____
Sima Rani Sarker
Lecturer, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Program Coordinator:
(Member)

_____
Manjuma Akhtar Mousumi
Assistant Professor, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

External Expert Examiner:
(Member)

_____
Nafisa Anwar
Lecturer, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Head of the Institute:

_____
Dr. Erum Mariam
Executive Director, BRAC Institute of Educational Development

Ethics Statement

I honestly tried to accurately present my research findings and include an objective discussion of the significance of my findings. All and only those who qualify for authorship were included as authors, and their contribution given in the manuscript. As I am working in the field of education, there is always a room for biases and subjective thoughts. I made all possible attempts to get rid of this kind limitations in my paper.

Data and methods used in the research were presented in sufficient detail in the paper so that other researchers can replicate the work. This is original research and not published anywhere before. The researcher here is an activist in both education and gender issues sector. This might at times have injected some bias in selecting sample from known cohort. Despite sincere efforts not to put in own personal ideas before the respondents, there might have unwilling and subconscious inclination to favorite ideas and thoughts in the process of data collection.

Besides, due to COVID 19 and some professional commitments, the data collection had to paused at times, which might have some effects on the quality of data. I tried to bridge the gap in data collection process caused by COVID 19.

The rights and confidentiality of each informant was properly honored with keen care.

My official commitments also left some discontinuation in the process of data collection; which I tried to overcome. Even though I made all possible attempts to overcome the anticipated limitations, there might have been some inadvertent errors for which I am fully answerable and accountable. Errors and inaccuracies found will be properly considered and I will be obliged to make necessary corrections accordingly.

Abstract

'He' or 'She' all belong to the same species, whatever may the nomenclature. National Education Policy (NEP) -2010 initiated an applaudable attempt to go beyond any gender discrimination in the text books of the children learning language at primary level. An enquiry on the influences of these attempts is made in this study titled, 'Gender Role and Identity in The Primary Level Language Textbooks: A Twenty-First Century Update'. The main focus of this research is to identify the depiction of gender identity and gender roles in the primary level Bangla language text books and the extent to which gender bias is reflected in the teaching-learning processes.

This is a qualitative study. The study reveals that, in the current language text-books, the presence of pictures, nouns and pronouns for male and female are found pretty similar. A fear to talk about gender in general seemed to exist. The mindset appeared as a barrier on the way to achieving desired output from the changes of curriculum brought in by the Government of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Gender Role, Gender Identity, Textbooks, Qualitative, Equality, Teaching-learning.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved father and mother for their love and support, my teachers and mentors at BRAC IED, all who are dedicatedly working to reach a curriculum free from gender stereotyping, and all the victims of gender stereotyping in the process of teaching-learning.

Acknowledgement

Words like thanks or gratitude are appearing insufficient to express my feelings of reply to those who supported me unconditionally, specially within the COVID 19 realities to finally come up with this study.   Support and help from my faculty, family and all the respondents are the pillars of my success here, if any.

Let me formally say 'thank you' to you all who have inspired me, guided me, mentored me, reminded me, advised me, and finally made me reach to this particular moment of presenting my paper. I can't but mention the names of my guiding Supervisor Ms. Sima Rani Sarker who patiently kept on inspiring me till last and my two previous Supervisors Badrul Sir and Mahboob sir who had extended all their intellectual and academic guidance to me all through.

To do something good is nothing but compiling cooperation and support from good people around. I had you all here in every bit of my stepping from the beginning to the end.

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List of Acronyms

FGD   Focus Group Discussion

GoB   Government of Bangladesh

GPS   Government Primary School

KG   Kindergarten

NCTB   National Curriculum and Textbook Board

NEP   National Education Policy

NGO   Non-government Organization

Glossary

Definitions:

Gender Equality   Gender Equality requires equal enjoyment by women, men, girls, boys and gender minorities of socially-valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. It means that all persons, regardless of their gender, enjoy the same status in society; have the same entitlements to all human rights; enjoy the same level of respect in the community; can take advantage of the same opportunities to make choices about their lives; and have the same amount of power to shape the outcomes of these choices (Matthew, UNICEF, 2021).

Gender Equity   Gender equity is the process of being fair to women, men, girls, boys and gender minorities. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women's, girls' and gender minorities' historical and social disadvantages that prevent women, men, girls, boys and gender minorities from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality (Matthew, UNICEF, 2021).

Gender Identity   Gender identity refers to how an individual feels about their own gender. Individuals may identify as male, female or as something else and their gender identity may or may not be the same as the sex that they were assigned at birth. Everyone has a gender identity and expresses their gender in a unique and personal way.

Gender Norms   Gender norms are informal, deeply entrenched and widely held expectations or rules about how each gender should behave. Every society has distinct gender norms because gender itself is not fixed, but

the concept of gender norms has at its core the notion of unequal power relations and prestige between men and boys, and women and girls, or of a gender minority. Gender responsive education: Identifies and addresses the different needs of girls, boys, women and men to promote equal outcomes. Does not explicitly seek to redress gender inequalities. Gender sensitive: Shows awareness of gender differences and inequalities but does not necessarily address them. Intersectionality is the understanding that a person's identity is made up of multiple, intersecting factors such as age, poverty, class, race, ethnicity, caste, language, migration or displacement status, HIV status, disability, gender identity and/or sexual orientation, which combine to both benefit and disadvantage them, and which cannot be separated (Matthew, UNICEF, 2021).

Gender Roles **Gender roles** in society means how we're expected to act, speak, dress, groom, and conduct ourselves based upon our assigned sex. For example, girls and women are generally expected to dress in typically feminine ways and be polite, accommodating, and nurturing.

Active roles The role assigned has financial benefit for the labor.

Passive roles The role assigned does not have financial benefit for the labor.

Teaching-
Learning The entire environment of teaching and learning comprising of the mindset, materials, methods and process.

Stereotype A stereotype is a widely held, fixed idea or image of a particular type of person or thing. Whole school approach: A whole school approach is a strategy that takes into account the inter-connectedness of schools, communities, and families in order to improve the school environment for students, staff, and community members.

Chapter: 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

"Of the other lower officers, I shall make no mention," wrote the Greek historian Herodotus (c. 485–425 B.C.E.) ". . . but I must speak of a certain leader named Artemisia, whose participation in the attack upon Hellas, notwithstanding that she was a woman, moves my special wonder." …. "She was the only naval officer to survive the defeat of the Persian armada. Herodotus commended Artemisia for her courage, or andreia in the Greek language. To exhibit andreia for a woman was literally impossible, since the word connoted manliness." (Kuhlman, 2002). In world history the role and perception regarding women had always been annexed by the mindset of gender in existence.

History is dominated by men because they write it, they teach it and they uphold it. That 'in history there were women too' (Miles, 1993) still remains as a great reminder. To get away is to go a long way. May be things need to be revisited from early childhood education.

How and when gender identities are developed in children? – Both developmental psychology and sociology have many theories and models to explain this. Experts believe that both nature (e.g., Biology) and nurture (e.g., Environment) act together in reciprocally causal, interactive ways to produce gender differences. If we focus on how nurture impact gender identity development, we can identify different spaces where children get introduced with gender norms and learn from external stimulus such as family, school, books, playground, etc. Schools are major contexts for gender socialization, in part because children spend large amounts of time engaged with peers in such settings.

School is formally charged by law as a legitimate agent of socialization to educate our children (Richardson, 1977 cited in Evans and Davies, 2000). The formal education in this

"legitimate agent" is given through textbooks. Though, textbooks are prepared by experienced educators and go through multiple iterations to reduce biases as much as possible, it is not free from gender biases. In the studies conducted in different countries show that most textbooks are mostly written by men (Gershuny, 1977 cited in Dominguez, 2003) where women suffer from low visibility, male references outnumber the female one and (Hartman and Judd, 1978 cited in Dominguez, 2003) and males are overwhelming shown to be aggressive, argumentative, and competitive (Evans and Davies, 2000). In the context on Bangladesh, researchers have found that all Bangladeshi school textbooks, in the secondary level, suffered from a pro-male bias regardless of whether they're based on a secular or religious curriculum (Asadullah, et al., 2018).

Gender bias in textbooks remains difficult to reverse and is present in far more countries than the gender gap in enrolment. (Asadullah and Islam, 2018).

Research evidences suggest that during the formative age, every single content relating to gender role leaves long lasting impact on the knowledge, attitude and behavior at the grown-up stage of life. So, what content in which context is presented before the children and in which process it is being approached seem to be very important for upcoming real-life situations.

In Bangladesh a serious attempt was in process to reinvent the books of children in a way that is free from gender bias or stereotyping. This is where lies the rationale of this study to critically look closer into the facts whether the situation has changed positively to reduce gender bias or stereotyping in the language learning books of the children. Only a change in the contents of those books may not stand enough to change the mindset of the teachers both male and female to really successfully communicate the students through bias-free teaching-learning environment. This area needs serious and keen attention to make a shift in existing

paradigm of both the context of the text books and the teaching-learning mechanisms; a combination of which is expected to make a real difference.

Given the prevalence of gender biases in text-books around the world, and its impact on students' long-term conceptual formation of gender role, this research hopes to look into children's language book in the primary level and explore how gender role has been portrayed through a rigorous text analysis. Therefore, the main focus of this research is to identify the depiction of gender roles in the primary level Bangla language text books and subsequently the extent to which gender bias, if any, is reflected in the teaching-learning processes in practice. This research is expected to:

- Bring to table the depicted gender roles in Bangla Language text books adapted at the primary level;
- How far the teaching-learning process and environment is influenced by gender bias;
- Explore good practices in the existing books of language learning; and
- Explore some way forward to resolve the issues that might come out of the findings from the qualitative data obtained through interviews, classroom discussions, and FGDs.

1.2 The Research Topic

The 'Research Topic' is *Gender Role and Identity in the Primary Level Language Textbooks: A Twenty-first Century Update*. In fact, the 'Research Title' and the 'Research Topic' in this study stands as same. Through the policies of NEP-2010 the GoB had updated the previous education systems to facilitate gender equality at all level of education. At the very early age children build their ideas relating to gender identity and gender role. It is really a matter of great importance, how gender equality is reflected in the process of teaching learning guided by the textbooks followed at primary level.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

In Bangladesh, the textbook for learning language traditionally used to portray girls in the passive role and boys in the active roles of any economic activity (Haq and Alam, 2010). During past few decades things started changing at the conceptual level leading to a change in the existing contents of the text-books approved and followed. Things are quite encouraging at the level. But the real change takes time and depends largely upon the total procedure starting right from curriculum design up to the end of the teaching-learning procedure.

The recent updates in the textbooks need a close examination along with the experience and adaptability of the teachers to accept the changes and practice in accordance. Without a clear understanding of the real-life situation improvements as expected may be slowed or even barred due to some hidden problems. This study is a humble attempt to reach the core setbacks to address and redress the issues of concern. The study shall also focus little light on the existing pre-primary language learning books adapted by different Kindergarten (KG) schools, in order to find out the missing link, if any, between pre-school books and the NCTB approved text books.

1.4 Research Questions

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in Bangladesh has untaken lot of efforts to update the contents of the primary level text-books with special attention to gender issues (GoB, 2010). How far these attempts were changing the curriculum and also the real-life teaching-learning environment in a gender sensitive process is the major focus of this study. 'Women have less participation in writing textbooks. Hence the texts of textbooks appear with gender insensitivity and biased to male chauvinism. The same account happened in editing and drawing cover and layout of the textbooks (Haq and Alam, 2010).

Gender Stereotyping in the Primary Level Language Textbooks Mandated by the Government in Bangladesh is a contemporary concern of academia and the teachers as well. This study, as its main focus, puts the question, how far gender stereotyping is reflected in the contents of the approved text books of language learning at the primary level.

Research Question:

How do primary grade language text books and classroom practices (teacher's action) depict gender identities and gender roles and how does that influence the students' understanding of gender role and identities?

In order to address this research question, the following two key questions and related sub-questions were formulated.

The Key questions are:

Key questions 1: How do primary grade language text books and classroom practices (teacher's action) depict gender identities and roles?

> a. **Sub-question 1:** How is language learning connected to students' understanding of the gender roles and identities around them?
>
> b. **Sub-question 2:** How are the current language textbooks and classroom practices incorporate different gender identities and gender roles?

Key question 2: How does the use of language text-books and language teaching-learning process influence students' understanding of different gender identities and roles?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The research is conducted to find out how the curriculum introduces gender equality through teaching leaning. Gender equality is focused internationally and the curriculum is changed to ensure that gender equality is attained in the schools. However, if the teaching

learning practices does not reflect it, the change will not translate into the mindset change of the students. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to find out how the teaching learning process address gender equality in the classroom. This study is intended towards unveiling:

- the existence or non–existence of gender stereotyping in the primary level language learning books approved by NCTB;

- pattern and extent of gender stereotyping pre-primary first books of the alphabet used by the kindergartens or parents to search for the effective linkage, if any, between NCTB books of learning language and the books used as the first book for children by the kindergartens or the parents.

- reveal the portrayal of gender bias in the process of teaching-learning.

1.6 Significance of the Study

In Bangladesh, government is showing keen interest to overcome the age-old shackles of gender stereotyping in the text books of language learning at primary level. A lot of applaudable step were recently taken as well. But it is very significant at this stage to critically analyze using scientific tools whether the changes brought in are consistent, viable, acceptable and effective. The existing context of the understanding and an expected shift in paradigm is to be examined closely. In this perspective this kind of study is very pertinent for policy response in order to improve the real-life scenario of gender stereotyping traditionally rooted in the growing economy of Bangladesh.

This study will focus on both the curriculum and the teaching learning. It will figure out the classroom practices which will help the researcher to see how the classroom practices develop the gender perception in children. Though the enrollment shows gender parity, without practices in the classroom, students will not have gender awareness. This study therefore will help to understand how the classroom teaching learning practices should be altered to make sure that the classroom environment also ensures gender equality.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

'Boy' or 'Girl'? This is normally the first question we ask about a new born baby. Right after their birth children are categorized by Gender as the first label of human life. They do not know it, but this label will follow them and style their actions and beliefs throughout their lives (Archer, 2008). Gender refers to culturally based expectations of the roles and behaviors of males and females. Gender roles and identities have been perceived always with bias in literature. It is really very interesting to recall how women and their role were being perceived through the ages by even the great authors and philosophers who shaped the mindset of the people:

Women – A Flash Back

"But what is woman? - Only one of nature's agreeable blunders."
- HANNAH COWLEY, '*Who's the Dupe?', (1779).*

"Disguise our bondage as we will, 'T is woman, woman, rules us still."
- THOMAS MOORE *'Sovereign Women' The Complete Poems of Thomas Moore (2008).*

"It is a woman's business to get married as soon as possible, and a man's to keep unmarried as long as he can."
- **G. BERNARD SHAW**, *'Man and Superman' (1902).*

"She who ne'er answers till a husband cools
Or, if she rules him, never shows she rules;
Charms by accepting, by submitting sways,
Yet has her humours most when she obeys."
- **ALEXANDER POPE**, *'Moral Essays, Epistle to a Lady* (1735, addressed to Martha Blount)', "Of the Characters of Women".

"Man for the field and woman for the hearth;
Man for the sword and for the needle she;
Man with the head & woman with the heart;
Man to command & woman to obey;
All else confusion."
- **ALFRED LORD TENNYSON**, *'The Princess', (1847).*

"There seem to be people all around me
I can't speak my heart in case they hear me
Weeping is wasted here, it is stopped by walls,
My weeping always comes back to me."
- RABINDRA NATH TAGORE, *Bodhu from Manoshi,* (1890).

Gender is associated with the development of human civilization through the ages. The very stage of social and economic development decided and changed the gender role throughout human history. Every society has its own legacy and the historic pathways to reach the present-day realities. Bangladesh is passing through a transitional phase from a traditional society towards a developing economy and emerging as a role model and dynamic center for changes in beliefs and practices. Time is changing fast. The books approved by NCTB and adapted by the primary schools are instruments of changes in the mindsets of both the teachers and learners regarding gender roles.

2.1 The Beginning of Gender Stereotyping: The First Book

Children are the best resources of the world. It is very important to know about the first book of Alphabet children are going to touch.

A study on the information collected from 32 books (20 male authors and 12 female authors) available in market and adopted by different pre-schools or kindergartens for learning Bangla Alphabet published or reprinted within 1987 to 2009 shows more than two third of the illustrations made by both male and female writers are of the 'Males'.

Rahman and Begum (2010) observed:

- ☐ Gender bias and gender stereotyping are frequently found in the children's first books of alphabet;

- ☐ Gender differentials in demonstrating gender stereotypes are not found to be prominent;

- ☐ Cover pages are less gender biased;

- ☐ Contents of the books are not always age-proportionate/child friendly;

- ☐ Violent illustrations;

- ☐ Plagiarism is evident in rhymes and contents;

- ☐ In-depth research/study is required in this field.

The first book that goes to the children needs more attention to be paid. There seems to exist a lot of gray areas that may be brought to light through more in-depth research and studies on children's first book of alphabet used in Bangladesh (Rahman and Begum, 2010).

2.2 Children in the School: Feminine and Masculine Behavior

Calvert and Husto found that children at age six can identify female or male commercials. By age seven and maybe as early as age four, children begin to understand gender as basic component of self. When children enter school, books begin to play a huge influence on children. Books are the medium used to teach social studies framework which provides learning cultural, geographical, ethical, historical and cultural literacy. Through illustrations books define standards for feminine and masculine behavior (Narahara,1998, cited by Anja Sovic and Vlasta Husa, 2015).

> Mykol C. Hamilton, David Anderson, Michelle Broaddus & Kate Young observed: First, common sense suggests that gender bias in books matters – that, stereotyped portrayals of the sexes and under-representation of female characters contribute negatively to children's development, limit their career aspirations, frame their attitudes about their future roles as parents, and even influence their personality characteristics. Second, experimental research strongly suggests that gender bias in picture books is harmful to children. Schau and Scott (1984) reviewed 21 studies on the effects of sexist versus nonsexist children's instructional materials (e.g., male versus female characters; sexist versus nonsexist generic pronouns), and discovered a consistent tendency for sexist materials to strengthen children's biases. (Hamilton, et al.,2006).

Nevertheless, many masculine and feminine characteristics are not biological at all, they are learned, acquired. Gender schema theory suggests that youngsters develop a sense of femaleness and maleness based on gender stereotypes and organize their behavior around these (Taylor, 2003 cited by Anja Sovic and Vlasta Husa, 2015).

2.3 Gender Stereotype in the Text Books

Schools are one of the places where the children get to introduced with different social expectations and norms including gender norms. It is typical for a teacher to choose a fairy tale where the princess is rescued by a brave and charming prince. It is also typical for the teacher to say things like, 'Jibon acts really brave and he can take responsibility and Sonia is really caring and she is really good with children'. This sentence is absolutely fine to hear, however, if thought critically, this sentence indicates certain behavior for male and female children which later develop certain attitude in children based on their gender (Rayaprol, 2010). Therefore, it is important for the teachers to ensure that students do not face different expectations based on their gender, specially through the text books.

2.4 How Gender Issues Were Addressed in NEP 2010

Aim of the National Education Policy 2010 is:

- to remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion and creed and **to eradicate gender disparity**; to develop non-communalism, friendliness, global fraternity, fellow-feeling and respect for human rights.

Bangladesh is considered one of the role models to attain gender parity in education. Also, in terms of success in the results, the female children are ahead comparing to male students in secondary level. However, this is not enough to make sure that female children are getting an environment where they are receiving same future aspiration from school level.

Gender stereotyping and gender socialization is still a common phenomenon in almost every social setting. School is not an exception in this regard. Therefore, it is important to figure out how gender is playing a role in school and how the teachers are acting to make sure that the students, regardless their gender, are getting an equitable environment and gender balanced books.

2.5 The Present Context

In terms of meeting the MDG, Bangladesh is one of the countries that has attained gender parity in the primary sector. (2014, Gender Economics Division (GED) Bangladesh Planning Commission). Indeed, gender parity is an important indicator to understand whether the female children are getting the access of education or not. However, a wider approach is necessary to address the presence of gender inequality in the classroom environment (2011, Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation). For instance, learning content of education such as curriculum, text books and teaching learning practices also need to address gender equality to recognize that promotion of gender equality in education goes beyond access.

The government of Bangladesh has taken different initiatives to make sure that gender parity is attained in all sectors of education. Female stipend program for the secondary school is one of the very successful initiatives taken by the government. There are initiatives taken to ensure that the text book and curriculum also encourage equality and gender-neutral content. However, there are still issues in the classroom practices that interfere gender neutral practices in the classroom. Social stigmas regarding women, perception regarding gender role, and social and cultural expectation about women few reasons that lead to gender biased classroom practices.

It appears from all the above expressions that the gender-based mindset was deeply rooted in the minds of even the most creative personalities in history. The influence knows

no bounds as the researchers mentioned.   A change is a need accepted by the planners in the noble education sector. Efforts are on the motion. Reviews and insights appear to be most important at this crossroad of traditional legacies and updated motions. This is an attempt on the queue. An examination of the existing state of things regarding the frequency of gender stereotyping in the widely used text books for million of children is a real need of the time.

"Amar Boi" is the subject that enhance the language competencies among children along with taking about social norms. This study therefore will try to see how the content of this subject is taught in the classroom to understand the classroom practices in terms of gender equality.

2.6 The Conceptual Framework

Text books   approved, printed and circulated by NCTB are widely used being a learning material for millions of children. Gender identity and gender role in the contents of the language learning books impacts their concepts of gender-based outcomes in the society. On the other hand, the teaching – learning environment also leave serious impact the mental development of the children basing on the books they use. The depiction of gender in language learning in the early age impact children to build their understanding about gender identities and gender roles. Different gender identities and gender roles matters in this respect.

Also, the language learning environment in the early age impact children to build their understanding about gender identities and gender roles. Consistency of the contents of the text books with the elementary first books of language learning adapted by kindergartens or taught by the parents is very important as well. In different modes of teaching-learning (text-books, and classroom practices), gender identities and roles are supposed to be addressed.

As such, the Conceptual Framework of the study stands as follows [Fig:1]:
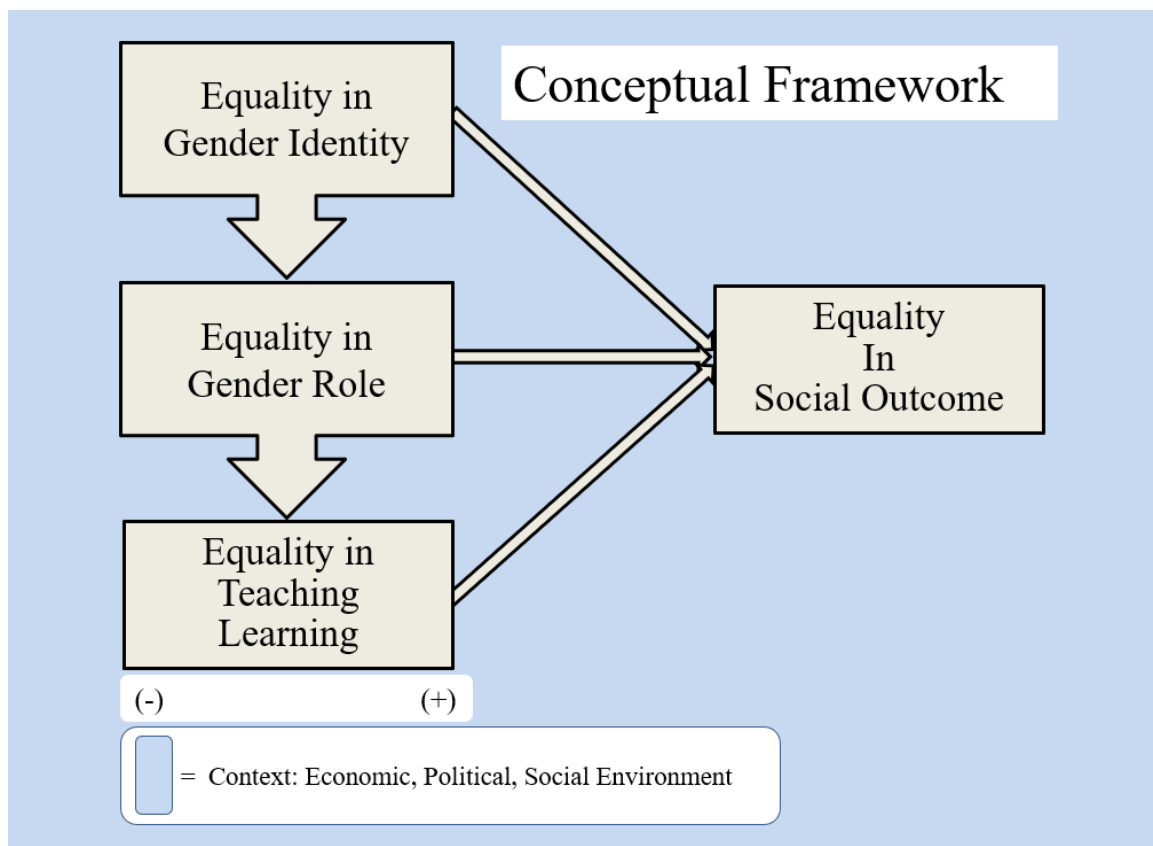
[Source: <u>An Empirical Study of Gender Discrimination and Employee Performance among Academic Staff of Government Universities in Lagos State, Nigeria</u>. *World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Social, Human Science and Engineering Vol:8 No:1*, 2014, p-104] https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Daniel-Gberevbie.]

This framework suggests that in order to make a classroom environment gender equal, there are several things that need to be focused on. Depiction of gender identity and gender role in the text books are to equalized to achieve an equal gender-based social outcome.

However, without having an equal learning process which ensure gender equality, it will not be possible to attain an external social outcome which is gender neutral and that is the main focus of this research. A combination of gender-neutral approach in different stages of teaching learning ensures that the outcome is gender-neutral. Therefore, this research will focus on all the parts of teaching learning that includes gender neutral social outcome. The social outcome is reflected in the classroom discussions and FGDs. Idea and understanding of the students and the teachers as well will help to framing a concept of the existing state of things. This paper is thus based on a constructive approach of concept development out of the data revealed through the process of the study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

A scientific methodology is a system of explicit rules and procedures upon which research is based and against which claims for knowledge are evaluated (Nacmias, 1996). Scientific research should not be equated with the collection of original data. In fact, some research topic can be examined through analysis of data already collected and compiled (Babbie, 1990). So, data from both **primary and secondary** sources were used for this study. Existing literature available both as printed copy either as hard-copy book or as e-book are consulted. Data available from online sources are also collected and compiled.

Literature review reveals a good number of studies during recent past decades about the strong presence of gender-bias in identities and role in the books used before the recent changes after the NEP-2010 was in place. But after the changes were in place only a few research attempts are notable. This study, through collecting primary data, might have been able to look specifically into the presence and extent of biases, if any, in gender identities and gender roles in the text books introduced by NCTB. As such, data from both primary and secondary sources are considered.

3.1 Research Approach

This Study followed a qualitative approach to data to have an insightful conceptual view of the influence of the presence of gender roles and identities in the language books. Quantitative is sometimes portrayed as being unimaginative but well suited to providing certain types of factual, descriptive information – the hard evidence. On the other hand, qualitative researchers attempt to understand behavior and institutions by getting to know the persons involved and their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and emotions (Nacmias, 1996). The qualitative approach thus helped the researcher to better understand how gender is

perceived by the stakeholders. In-depth interview, observation and document analysis were conducted to understand how the classroom practices introduce gender to the students and how it helps to attain gender equality in the classroom. The qualitative approach was chosen to focus on and look deeper into the existing issues of concern and sensitivity. Qualitative methods are often regarded as providing rich data about real life people and situations and being more able to make sense of behavior and to understand behavior within its wider context (Vaus, 1985).

3.2 Research Site

For the convenience of collecting quality data and the COVID 19 situation, Dhaka was taken as the research site and the data was collected from two different government primary schools (GPS) situated in Uttara and Dhanmondi. Government Primary School AA was selected from Dhanmondi (heart of the city) and Government Primary School AB from Uttara (semi-urban). One school was selected from the heart of Dhaka city and the other was picked from the neighborhood Uttara in order to reach a balanced set of data relatively free from urban bias. Both of these schools had been adapting the NCTB approved textbooks under study. It was logically assumed that a mix in the level of urbanization would reveal relatively unbiased findings at the end. The schools were closed for a long period of time and the students are not very aligned with the syllabus, therefore, the research had to wait for observing the classroom where relevant gender specific topic was taught which made the data collection process lengthy.

3.3 Research Participants

School teachers, and students of the school are the main focus of the research here as the intention was to find out the depictions of gender identities and gender roles in the text books and the teaching-learning practices along with the effects of it on the students. Two

government primary schools have participated in this research and a clear ethical guideline was maintained while conducting this research. Teachers were selected from amongst the trained ones. The teachers had also been teaching here for more than 3 years. The parents were absolutely volunteers to participate. Both of the teachers were female. Male teachers were not available. The parents of the students who have participated in this study was informed by the school teachers and after getting their verbal consent, the head teachers have given the permission to conduct the students FGD as the students are below 18. The students are from grade 5 and used the education material and text books provided by the government throughout their five years of education. Equal number of male and female students have participated in the FGD, however, both the teachers who have participated in the in-depth interviews are female as there were no male teacher present in the schools during the time of the research.

3.4 Sampling Procedure

A purposive sampling method had to be undertaken due to the qualitative approach followed for the study. The COVID 19 realities left least of options for the researcher to look for and choose from plenty of alternatives. The schools chosen both from pure urban and neighborhood were understood to have been educating children from all walks of life as a government primary school. The researcher was familiar having basic information about the school.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Appropriate data collection methods were sought to be coined following the research approach. As the enquiry is of qualitative in nature related to the textbooks, an analysis of the same was coined as the first step into the issues of concern. The text books and the curriculum are the documents that ensure that gender equality is projected through them. In this segment, attempts were initiated to look through the documents and figuring out how

gender issues are addressed in the documents following few guidelines. The text books and the curriculum are the documents that ensure that gender equality is projected through them. Guideline for analyzing textbooks is annexed as Appendix-A.

In-depth interviews are treated as one of the effective tools to collect qualitative data. Two such interviews were conducted during this research. At first, to understand and analyze the content of the Language Book, an interview was conducted with a specialist who can explain the thought behind the creating the book and how did they ensure gender equality. Another interview was conducted with the teachers responsible to ensuring a gender equal classroom and incorporate gender equal perspective in teaching learning practices.

Data were collected through informed choice. Privacy and confidentiality had to be properly honored by the researcher. To ensure informed choice a letter for consent was signed and served by the researcher to the Head of the institutions to get consent and permission (Appendix-B). Before collecting data, due consent and permissions were obtained. In the interview process, attempts were undertaken to look through the documents and figuring out how gender issues are addressed in the documents following set guideline (Appendix-C).

Classroom environment remains as a major factor for communication of ideas. No matter how much equality the books depict, children learn from their experience. They imitate what they have in front of them and do similar activities. Now, if the classroom environment is not projecting gender equal practices, the students are not supposed to be able to gain awareness about gender equal society and they will be victim of gender imbalance. Therefore, to understand the classroom practices, a classroom observation was attempted. The intention behind the classroom observation was to identify how the teacher share different gender roles with the students and if there are any particular biases present while talking about gender roles and identities. Teacher's action in the classroom had been the main

focus during this observation. The questions/prompts for classroom observation are attached as Appendix: D.

Focus Group Discussions are also treated as a revealing tool of the accurate state of things related to human attitude and behaviors. To know how the gender roles and identities were understood keen listening to the teachers were deemed useful. Then the students were told to explain what different gender roles and identities mean so that there the alignment in the classroom can be traced. The questions/prompts used while conducting the FGD with the students are attached as Appendix-E.

On consideration of the context above along with the principles of accuracy, reliability and convenience the following data collection tools were used:

- ☐ Analyzing the primary level language books;

- ☐ Interview of the Head teacher and Assistant Teacher;

- ☐ Observing classroom; and

- ☐ FGD with the students.

The motive behind choosing different data collection tools is to see how the same text-book and the teaching learning methods are impacting the students and how the mindset of the teachers and students are constructed regarding gender roles and identities. The data was triangulated through different tools in order to get an in-depth understanding about the mindset and how text-books are particularly influencing the mindset; as many different issues can influence developing different mindsets.

3.6 Role of Researcher

This study was based on collecting data in person. The researcher had to personally contact all the informants and discuss will prolonged patience. The epidemic COVID 19 caused denial of meetings and FGDs for a while. But the data collection process was revived

and rearranged to ensure quality data. The researcher had to wait until the respondents had been feeling comfortable to sit and talk freely.

The researcher faced challenges within herself being an activist both in the field of education and gender issues. To avoid the chances of bias with personal thoughts and ideas the data collection guidelines had to be attentively framed and followed. Attempts were made to objectively follow the tools in hand. Whenever any subjective expressions came in the researcher had to quickly fall back to the set guidelines. The analysis was done basing on the recorded findings avoiding subjective ideas and thoughts. Enough consultations were done with the learned Guide and advices were taken into consideration. As there had been a gap of timing in data collection due attention was given to ensuring continuity and consistency.

3.7 Data Analysis

Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the larger meaning of the data (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) identifies six steps followed in the process of qualitative data analysis. The very first step requires the research to organize and prepare the data for analysis through transcribing interviews, optimally scanning material, and cataloging each visual material among others. The second step according to Creswell (2013) is reading or looking at all the data. The third phase in qualitative data analysis is coding the data. In this case, a researcher organizes the collected data by categorizing the images and text and then labeling the categories with a term.

In the fourth step, the coding process is utilized to come up with a description of the people, setting, or categories/themes for analysis. The fifth step mandates the researcher to advance the manner in which themes and descriptions will be represented in the qualitative narrative. The last step is making an interpretation of the findings or the results. The phase requires a researcher to ask him/herself about the lessons gained.

These six steps were followed to understand clarity of concepts regarding gender role and identities, behavior process, and creation of environment for gender neutral teaching and learning. The form of data collection was consistent with many grounded theory studies: the collection of face-to-face interview data. Text books were analyzed. Moreover, classroom discussion and FGD were also done to collect data from the participants in the study. The researchers engaged in a structured approach to grounded theory data analysis.

In this study, to interpret data content analysis was done. All the information collected through textbook analysis, interviews, classroom discussion, and FGD were put together. The collected information was then arranged, thoroughly read, understood, and presented following the steps mentioned.

3.8 Ethical Issues

The researcher here is an activist in both education and gender issues sector. This might at times have injected some bias in selecting sample from known cohort. Despite sincere efforts not to put in own personal ideas before the respondents, there might have unwilling and subconscious inclination to favorite ideas and thoughts in the process of data collection. Besides, due to COVID 19 and some professional commitments, the data collection had to be paused at times, which might have some effects on the quality of data. The rights and confidentiality of each informant was properly honored with keen care.

3.9 Credibility

The researcher had keen interest in education, developing education materials, educating the under-privileged children from her early age. The researcher had been working in the education sector for about seven years designing curriculum for early childhood education. This topic is the 'right thing at the right place' for her.

The researcher is an activist in education and gender issues for pretty long time. She had completed her PGD from BRAC IED and also had undergone a number of training and courses on child education and curriculum development from both national and global organizations. She got herself involved with few organizations working for quality education for the children. The idea of this research was developed and submitted to BRAC IED following due procedures in partial fulfilment of the Masters Course in Educational Development and School Improvement. The study was conducted with approval from BRAC IED.

3.10 Limitations of the study

Observation from only one class might not be enough to understand how much gender bias is there in the classroom. Moreover, the gender perspective can be faced by children in different places. However, in the classroom, it will only be possible to see only one classroom. Sometimes some teachers might have more biasness than others. So, if only one class is observed, we can have a biased reflection based on the perspective of one person. This is one of the major limitations of the study. Moreover, the proposal of this study was developed and submitted in the year 2016. Due to some unavoidable commitments and circumstances the study unfortunately got delayed. This time gap also might have left some setbacks for this study.

Chapter 4

Results

The findings are presented below based on data collected from both document analysis and primary data analysis. Initially, the language text-books from grade 1 to grade 5 were reviewed to identify how the gender roles and the gender identities are represented through pictures, nouns and pronouns, and different occupations and assigned roles. Then primary data was collected from two Government Primary Schools in Dhaka city through FGDs, interviews, and classroom observations. The data has been organized according to categories, based on research questions, and themes have been identified within each category.

4.1. Depiction of gender roles in the Bangla language Text-book

In the current language text-books, the presence of picture, noun and pronoun for male and female are pretty similar.

	Picture			Noun			Pronoun		
	Male	**Female**	**Other**	**Male**	**Female**	**Other**	**Male**	**Female**	**Other**
Grade 1	23	26	0	7	8	0	14	19	0
Grade 2	29	27	0	11	8	0	17	10	0
Grade 3	33	31	0	9	6	0	21	18	0
Grade 4	30	35	0	10	9	0	24	22	0
Grade 5	27	32	0	7	12	0	16	15	0

Table 1: Representation of Nouns and Pronouns in the Language Text-books by Gender.

If we go deeper, the roles are also diverse. If we look at the grade 3 language textbook, we can see that both men are women are in active income generating roles. The school teacher roles in two places are women and other income generating roles, such as the

king and the shopkeepers are men. In addition to that, there are different aspiring stories in the book such as the story of the language martyrs (Bhasha Shahid Der Kotha) and the story of a famous artist (Ekjon Potuar Golpo). In both cases, the characters are men. There is another poem where it talks about "Ideal boy" (Adorsho Chele) which also refers to a boy. We can see a very similar trend in the grade 4 text-book as well. There are two poems, one about a sister (depicting female character) where the sister is shown weak and presumably dead (Kajla Didi) whereas the poem about the son depicts his fearlessness and power (Birpurush) where he protects his mother from robbers. Additionally, though Kajla Didi is about a sister, the narrator is the brother who is trying to protect things for the sister to come back.

In terms of non-binary gender identities, none of the language text-book has reference to that. This also means in the school system, especially from the language text-books, students do not get any language exposure to anything other than binary gender identities.

In addition to that, if we look into the writers who have contributed in the books, most of them are male writers. Following table exhibits the numbers of writers who have contributed in the books and the gender that they identify themselves (in public sphere) –

| | Writer | | |
	Male	Female	Other
Grade 1	5	1	0
Grade 2	5	1	0
Grade 3	8	1	0
Grade 4	9	1	0
Grade 5	10	1	0

Table 2: Representation of Writers in The Language Text-Books by Gender

Here, we can see that even when with the grades are increasing, the number of the poems and stories are increasing. However, if we look into the ratio between the male and female writers, we can see that only the male writers are getting preference. There is no story or poems of anyone who does not fit into the binary gender identities.

4.2. View on Gender Roles

Conversation with different stakeholders such as school leaders/head teachers, assistant teachers and students revealed that there is a fear to talk about gender in general. It took some time for people to open up as there is a perception of being wrong or saying the wrong thing about gender related topics. It was also prevalent that there are several different notions about the idea of gender roles which are – a) Gender roles and identities being "someone else's" topic to worry about, b) Gender roles are biological, c) Changing gender roles is not natural, d) Connection between gender roles and religion.

4.2.1. Gender roles and identities being "someone else's" topic to worry about

Though it was not mentioned directly, in side note and implications, the idea of gender roles and identities being elite topic came up multiple times. In the assistant teacher's interview, one has mentioned –

"Our students are from the disadvantaged communities and they don't need to think about gender roles and identities. Their major concern is getting food on their plate." (Personal communication #2, 03/03/2022)

While talking about gender roles and identities in the text book, she has mentioned –

"Books now a days has lot of presence of men and women. And women, like reality, have shown with jobs and we talk about these in the classroom. The people who have

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a lot of time can spend time on this, but our main focus is to complete the syllabus."
(Personal communication #2, 03/03/2022)

In the FGD with the students, it came up in a different way, but the theme remained the same. One of the students from the FGD has said –

"We have seen many 'Hijras' in the community, but we don't see them in the books. Adults don't want to see them around us, so the adults who wrote the books probably also don't want us to read about them. We do not have the time to think about it as we and adults around us have other things to worry about." (Focus group discussion #1, 06/03/2022)

In all the scenarios, we can see the issue of gender seems to be someone else's issue to talk about. If you do not have 'more important thing to do' you spend time thinking about issues related to gender role and identities.

4.2.2. Gender roles are biological

The idea of gender role being a biological phenomenon and anything other than fulfilling the gender role is not 'natural' has been a prevalent though in many of these conversations. In one of the classroom observations, the teacher was talking about the poem "Birpurush" where the teacher was mentioning multiple times how the son can and should take care of the mother and how it is a duty of the son. She also has mentioned that boys are braver than the girls in general. Later, when she was asked what does she mean by 'general', she has mentioned 'by birth'/ 'this being biological'. (Classroom observation #1, 07/03/2022). Though she did not say anything particular about girls not being brave, it was implicit in her tone.

The same teacher was interviewed later and while answering different gender roles mentioned in the textbook (question 7), she told –

"The stories and poems selected for the textbooks are representative of our culture and tells us how people from Bangladesh are historically. Though we see some differences in the activities that people from different gender do, this is normal and biologically right. Now a days, we see that people try to do everything regardless their gender, however, that is not always feasible." (Personal communication #1, 02/03/2022)

In a different question, she has also talked about how stories of bravery, especially in the context of the Liberation War in all grade level talk about men being the fighter and women being the victim of physical assault. She mentioned –

"Stories of Liberation War is there in every grade and in most of them, we can see that the men are doing the fight. Even the seven great warriors we teach about are all men whereas the women were only shown as the victim of rape. So, students by default see that, men being the brave ones who took action against the injustice and we teach that proactively." (Personal communication #1, 02/03/2022)

In the FGD also it came up in a different way; it was not in the context of the language book but in terms of the behavior in the classroom. One of the female children participating in the FGD mentioned that –

"No matter what you say, even the way our classmates behave in the classroom and playground is different based on the gender. The boys are more aggressive and play more outdoor game and some of the girls don't even like outdoor games. At home, my mom and dad are also different and prefer to do different things because of their gender." (Focus group discussion #1, 06/03/2022)

4.2.3. Changing gender roles and identities is not natural

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, gender roles are considered as biological, and therefore, it is only natural to show genders with specific and segregated roles which has also come up in multiple interviews and observations during this research. In one interview, it was mentioned that –

"Different gender identities are assigned with different roles for their biological strengths and weaknesses. We talk about comparative advantage and people should work on the areas where they are good at rather trying to do everything." (Personal communication #2, 03/03/2022)

It has come up again in the FGD with the students. One of the students have mentioned during the FDG that –

"Boys are stronger than the girls anyways. They will never win the fight against us, so why should we even ask them to fight? It will be against the nature and we do not need to make girls fight. Any fight related things, boys can take care of and girls can take care of the other things that they are good at. Fighting is not good anyways." (Focus group discussion #1, 06/03/2022)

In the books also, we can see that the stories that has women working in income generating roles, in 73% of the cases (from grade 1 to 5 Bangla language text books) they are involved in conventional roles that women are expected to do such as teachers, caregivers and supporting others (Yellen, 2017).

4.2.4. Connection between gender roles and religion

While talking about gender roles and identities, the relationship of this with religion also has come up multiple times. In different conversation, the participants have talked about how gender roles and identities are determined in religion (Islam). One participant has mentioned that –

"Changing gender role is also against our religious view. The language textbooks are written in the context of Bangladesh where the predominant religion is Islam and such a young age, students don't even need to get introduced with such conflicting ideas." (Personal communication #2, 03/03/2022)

In another interview, the participant has mentioned that –

"It definitely is important to have the access to the language for the kids, however, some issues are very contradictory from what we want our students to learn both culturally and religiously. When the students grow up, they can learn these issues by themselves. I think such issues should not be introduced at such young age." (Personal communication #1, 02/03/2022)

After probing more about what she means by this, she said –

"Religion is not only a sensitive topic, but also students go back to home and talk to their parents what they have learned in classroom. Why to bring such controversial issues in the classroom. Not all the parents will understand what we are trying to teach and then we will also have to explain things to parents. It is not easy to explain such issues with conservative parents." (Personal communication #1, 02/03/2022)

This means not only the relation among gender role and identities, and religion is important here, the fear of certain backlash also reduce the autonomy of the teachers to talk about these issues in the classroom. Also, as the books don't incorporate the language, it becomes difficult for the teachers to bring it up in a classroom setting.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Discussion

This segment of the paper will explain the researcher's learning throughout the research process. The intention of this study was to identify how gender roles and identities are mentioned in the primary grade textbooks, how classroom practices depict the gender representation in the books, and how that impacts the understanding of gender roles in the students. Throughout the research, the researcher looked into the Bangla language text-books at the primary level, had multiple in-depth interviews with the teachers in the classroom, observed the classroom to understand the practices of the teachers, and then conducted an FGD with the students from grade 5 to understand their interpretation of the learning that they are having in the classroom.

While collecting and analyzing the data, both quantitative and qualitative data were looked into to have a holistic view of the books, the practices in the classroom, and its impact. While analyzing the book, the quantitative approach was mainly used whereas while looking into the classroom practices and mindset of different stakeholders, the qualitative approach was focused on. The intention here was to understand how the language text-books talk about gender roles and identities and how the stakeholders interpret it; and align it with their personal life. Before digging deep into the reflection and the analysis, two disclaimers need to be made.

Firstly, there are many things that come into play while constructing the understanding of gender role and gender identity. This study does not look into all the parameters rather focus on the government provided national level language textbook that all school going students have access to. There are other things such as family background,

parents' occupation, social orientation and many more that has impact in here; however, as these books are the most available single resource that all the school going students have access to, this study focuses on them.

Secondly, during this research, the national textbooks have had few editions and this research is based on the most recent books. Every year when the books were reviewed, it has the trend of becoming more and more gender sensitive which is a very positive sign.

In the conceptual framework, the learning theory of constructivism was looked into while thinking about the understanding of gender roles and identities in students. If elaborated, the understanding of gender roles and identities are social constructs and a taught behavior. If students in the early age get exposed to different gender roles and identities which are not traditional, they are more likely to have a broader world view (Hartman and Judd, 1978 cited in Dominguez, 2003). However, along with different social setting, if the print materials also depict similar gender roles and identities, students are most likely to believe that what they see and read are natural and therefore the 'truth'. In this way, they would stop questioning other possibilities as they have limited exposure.

The book analysis segment of the result portion was crucial for this research because it helped to understand how the gender identities and roles are portrayed in the NCTB text books and how it has a direct impact on developing mindset of students. In the textbook, in several occasions and in different grades, there are trends of depicting similar gender roles for one gender identity. For example, in every grade level book from 1 to 5, there are stories on liberation war where the main focus was on the fearlessness of the freedom fighters which is great for students to learn. However, then if you look closely, the representation of different gender identities and roles are missing. While writing the stories, the gender lens was not used which in the long run impact the development of understanding in the students.

In addition to that, if we look at the writers who have written different stories and poems, there are representation of women, however, for every grade, there is only one piece of writing from women which also means that minimal effort was made, but the sensitivity was not present. While talking to the students and the teachers also, this came up multiple time that it is an issue that someone else needs to think about and it is not their problem. There is a tendency that gender issues are someone else's problem as it does not seem to directly impact on their day-to-day life. Also, in the social structure, it is only prevalent that what they see in the book are in alignment of what they practice and experience in the real life. So, there is a confirmation bias and it seems as everything is in alignment, this is the way it is or should be.

In the classroom observation also, it came up several time that girls are this way and boys are that way. Sometimes it is not an intentional act of the teacher, but more of an involuntary action as subconsciously the teachers are conditioned to see man and woman in different ways and therefore, teaching the students what they believe to be true only makes sense. The issue is, their behavior also is aligned with the social norms and what is expected. This also helps the students to have a stronger confirmation bias and therefore behave according to the social norm. Also, not having any other gender identities rather binary identities also stops students from normalizing the presence of different identities in society.

5.2: Conclusion

This research has looked into the national textbooks and triangulated the content of the book with the teacher and students' understanding of gender roles and identities. There are multiple findings that came through this research such as –

1. Gender roles and identities are mentioned in a traditional format in the textbooks. Though there is significant improvement with time, there is a lot to be done for the books to be truly representative.

2. Gender related issues are considered other's problems to look into and therefore, the day-to-day actions are not prioritized. However, the day-to-day actions usually gather up and cause the overall orientation in the society.

3. From the textbooks, students do not have direct exposure to the language, and different gender roles and identities which is also a common phenomenon that they experience in their surroundings. This means the textbooks are not directly preparing the students for an equitable world where they can share their ideas and learn from constructive conversations if they do not proactively try to learn about it on their own.

4. Both consciously and subconsciously the adults around the students, especially the teachers are reiterating the popular and traditional norms which are stopping the students to get different perspectives.

Overall, the understanding of gender roles and identities is not prioritized at the classroom level and is considered an extra and mostly unimportant/problematic issue to talk about. The traditional notion is also prevalent in almost all the sources where students are not exposed to different gender roles and identities.

It is hoped that the readers of this paper will look into this research as an initial step towards making the language text-book to be a source of supporting students' understanding of gender roles and identities. Language is a vast research area and a lot can be learned and unlearned about the understanding of how gender roles and identities are developed in students. With more research and exploration, it can be used as a milestone to help students build their mindset about gender roles and identities.

5.3: Recommendations

Based on the findings and the insights I have gained from this study, here are some recommendations for the educators to use in the classroom to help students to have a clear understanding of gender roles and identities –

1. Teachers and educators need to identify their own biases first. Self-reflection is a fundamental quality that educators need to have and they should practice it often. Sometimes it becomes hard for the teachers and educators to act on their own and identify their own biases. The government need to provide adequate support and training for the teachers so that they can get out of the traditional mindset and get ready to think out of the box.

2. There are frameworks like gender transformative education recommended by different development agencies (Unicef, 2021) which can be used by educators from all sector to increase sensitivity and to create just and inclusive teaching materials and classroom practices.

3. The role of the educator is not only to educate the students, but also bring positive social changes. If they think that their actions can cause social resistance, they should help the parents as well and on-board them in the whole process.

4. If the government really want to see changes, gender sensitivity in every sector is crucial. The government has come a long way to improve the textbooks to make it gender sensitive. However, there are a lot more to do and the government needs to acknowledge it and act accordingly. A serious intervention in the teacher's training courses along with sensitization workshops for supervising officers may be worth consideration in this respect. Mindset appears to be the ultimate challenge still.

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Appendix A: Textbook Analysis Guide

Guidelines followed for Textbook analysis:

The text books and the curriculum are the documents that ensure that gender equality is projected through them. In this segment, I shall attempt to look through the documents and figuring out how gender issues are addressed in the documents following guidelines as stated below:

- ☐ How many male and female characters are there in each language textbook?

- ☐ How many times male and female pronouns are used in the textbook?

- ☐ What is the assigned roles male and female characters have (active vs passive roles)?

- ☐ Is there any difference in the type of the characters?

- ☐ Are there any other gender identities mentioned in the language textbook rather than male and female?

- ☐ Are there any non-binary pronouns used in the language textbooks?

Appendix B. Consent Letter

Letter of Consent

March, 2022

Head Teacher

Government Primary School,

Dhaka.

Subject: Request for consent to collect data in your school.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am Afsana Sadiq Atuly, a student in the Master's program, at the Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University. As part of my degree requirement, I am writing my thesis paper, titled, "The Manifestation of Gender Identities in the Primary Level Language Learning in Bangladesh: A Twenty-first Century Update." For this, I need to collect four sets of data from a Government Primary School in Dhaka.

Therefore, I would like to request you to grant me permission to collect these data from your reputed school. I will be conducting an interview with you, the Assistant Teacher of language (both Bangla and English) classes, and observe a few language classes. I assure you that all the data collected will be only for the intention of writing my thesis, and not for any external purposes. The name of the school and those of all participants will remain confidential. The dates for the school visit for data collection is set to March.

If you have any concerns regarding this, please feel free to contact me directly. It would be very beneficial if you could grant me to conduct my research in your school.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Yours Sincerely,

Afsana Sadiq Atuly

For the Head Teacher:

Yes, I give my consent for carrying out the data collection in my school.

_____

Signature and Date

Appendix - C: Guidelines for Interviews

There will two interviews conducted during this research. At first, to understand and analyze the content of the Language book, an interview will be conducted with a specialist who can explain the thought behind the creating the book and how did they ensure gender equality. Another interview will be conducted with the teachers responsible to ensuring a gender equal classroom and incorporate gender equal perspective in teaching learning practices.

Enquiries during interviews of the Had Teacher/assistant teacher were:

- What do you understand by *Gender role* and *Gender identities*?

- How do you address different *Gender role* and *Gender identities* related issues in the classroom?

- How do you support your teachers to address different *Gender role* and *Gender identities* related issues in the classroom?

- Does the language curriculum address anything related to *Gender role* and *Gender identities* Please elaborate?

- Does the teacher's guide has given any particular guideline on teaching about *Gender role* and *Gender identities?* Please explain.

- How do you find different gender roles mentioned in the language text books?

- Do you see any difference between the male and female characters in the text books? If yes, what are those differences?

- Is there any specific training and support for the teachers to address different gender roles and identities in the classrooms? Please explain.

- If a student comes up to you about any *Gender role* and *Gender identities* related question, how will you address that (probe to role play)?

- How comfortable are you to talk about *Gender role* and *Gender identities* related issues? Why?

Appendix-D: Classroom Observation Guidelines

No matter how much equality the books depict, children learn from their experience. They imitate what they have in front of them and do similar activities. Now, if the classroom environment is not projecting gender equal practices, the students are not supposed to be able to gain awareness about gender equal society and they will be victim of gender imbalance. Therefore, to understand the classroom practices, a classroom observation will be done.

The intention behind the classroom observation is to identify how the teacher share different gender roles with the students and if there are any particular biases present while talking about gender roles and identities. Teacher's action in the classroom will be the main focus during this observation. Following are the questions/prompts for classroom observation:

- ☐ How are different characters portrayed in the language textbooks?
- ☐ What is the different occupation/role that the teacher is talking about while addressing male and female characters?
- ☐ Is there any difference in talking about male and female characters by the teachers?
- ☐ How is the teacher addressing male and female students in the classroom?
- ☐ Can we see any difference in aspiration for male and female students by the teacher?
- ☐ Is the teacher addressing any other gender identities in the classroom? If yes, how?
- ☐ Is the teacher using any non-binary pronouns in the classroom?

Appendix-E: Guidelines for Focus Group Discussions (FGD) With the Students

At the beginning of the FDG, understanding about gender roles and identities will be listened and then the students will be explaining what different gender roles and identities mean so that there is alignment in the room. Following are the questions/prompts used while conducting the FGD with the students:

☐ What is your understanding about gender roles?

☐ What is your understanding about gender identities?

☐ In the books, how are different gender roles mentioned? Is there any particular way how men and women should behave? If yes, what are those? Can you give some examples?

☐ In the language books, is there anything that indicates what men and women are meant to do in the society?

☐ Do you know any other gender identities apart from male and female? If yes, what do you think about them?

☐ In the language textbooks, have you ever seen any other gender identities?

☐ In the language textbook, is there any mention of any other character or name for any other gender identities beside man and woman? Do you know how to address them?

☐ In your classroom, how are male and female students see their future? What do you want to do when you grow up?

Appendix-E: Sample of Classroom Observation Notes

Date: 07/03/2022   **Place**: AA government primary school
Time: 8:45am   **Duration**: 90 minutes

Observer: Afsana Sadiq Atuly

Overall observation:

I have reached the school early in the morning to have the conversation with the teachers in the school and joined the classroom at 8:45am as the Bangla class was scheduled during that time. I had a prior conversation with the teacher in the classroom and I have requested to teach a particular poem, "Birpurush", which is a mandatory reading for by NCTB and included in the national textbook. Based on my textbook analysis, this poem has a gender dynamic to it and I wanted to observe how the teacher address the gender dynamic of this poem while teaching it to the students.

After entering the classroom, I have seen that the sitting arrangement of the students is segregated based on the gender. The male students have taken in one side of the classroom and the female students are on the other side. On the last row of the female students' bench, there were few male students and after observing for few minutes, I have realized that, that there were more male students present in the classroom on that day, they took that bench.

During the lesson, the teacher has talked about how "khoka" (male child), the main protagonist of the poem, has saved his mother from the robbers. The teacher was not comparing him with anyone, but mentioned multiple times that, the sons are brave by birth and it is natural for the boys to be brave. She has also asked few of the male students in the classroom what they will do if their mother or sister are in trouble as mentioned in the poem, but did not ask any such question to the female students in the classroom.

At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher also has talked about the writer and said that the writer actually see himself as the "khoka" in the poem who is trying to save the mother. She has also mentioned that sometimes it become essential to fight with the bad people in order to

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save your loved ones from danger and boys are most likely to do that as the author mentioned in the poem.

The teacher has asked a lot of question to the students throughout the poem to keep them engaged in with the content and helped them understand the content better. She also has used intonation and changed her voice multiple times to make the poem interesting.

Observation based on the guideline created beforehand:

Sl	Question	Observation
1	How are different characters portrayed in the language textbooks?	The content which was used in this lesson talks about a male child saving his mother from potential danger and therefore, for this poem, the story was gender biased. In this poem, the protagonist (the small male child) was taking his mother to some places, however, there was an attack on the way and the child fought with the robbers. The mother was scared and was thinking if the boy was safe or not, but later she realized that the boy was very brave and he saved her regardless. The researcher intentionally has selected this poem for this lesson to see if the teaching method help the students understand the bias and create a more inclusive lesson.
2	What is the different occupation/role that the teacher is talking about while addressing male and female characters?	The teacher did not bring up any other examples to show any comparison throughout the lesson. She only shared the example that is given in the poem and focused on that throughout the lesson.

3	Is there any difference in talking about male and female characters by the teachers?	As the story was about a child saving his mother from the robber, it came up explicitly multiple time that the boys need to save the family members (more vulnerable ones such as mother and sister). As the mother in the poem was scared and hiding in the vehicle, the teacher talked about her safety and security. She also has mentioned that how the mother wanted her son to be safe and how much she cared about him. However, in all the point, the predominant view was the mother was scared and the child was really brave.
4	How is the teacher addressing male and female students in the classroom?	Throughout the lesson, the teacher did not address the male and female children differently. She was more questions to the male students as the protagonist was male and she was trying her students to see their connection with the character.
5	Can we see any difference in aspiration for male and female students by the teacher?	There was no clear and explicit different in assumption that was observed during this lesson.
6	Is the teacher addressing any other gender identities in the classroom? If yes, how?	No, the teacher did not mention any other gender identity in the classroom. However, the content that was taught in the classroom did not have any relevant content either.
7	Is the teacher using any non-binary pronouns in the classroom?	No, the teacher did not use any non-binary pronoun in the classroom.