Scientific
Research
Publishing

Between Goddess or Homemaker: A Review of the Portrayal of Women in Malaysia ESL Textbooks

Navitha Sanmugam¹, Hanita Hanim Ismail²*, Mazlin Azizan³

¹Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Pengalat, Papar, Sabah, Malaysia
²Centre of Innovations in Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia
³Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam Campus, Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia
Email: p111753@siswa.ukm.edu.my, *hanitaismail@ukm.edu.my, mazlinazizan@uitm.edu.my

Abstract

Despite some cultures worshipping women as goddesses, they are in reality not treated equally as they deserve. This is because of the common stereotypical images as nurturers albeit they are dispersed in different socioeconomic fields. In Malaysia, the content in textbooks is among the factors that lead up to the aforementioned situation. Academics argue that textbooks serve as a staple in teaching and learning since it reflects the formal curriculum which starts at a young age. At the same time, it is also arguable that textbooks also make a useful tool that indoctrinates gender stereotypes. The twenty-first century sees the appropriateness of textbooks as a sustainable resource that caters to cultural transmission namely gender stereotypes and gender roles. Therefore, this paper explored the gender roles bestowed to women in ESL textbooks based on reviews in previous literature and the changes in gender roles of women portrayed in textbooks throughout the years. To achieve the objectives, this study qualitatively analysed 25 journal articles using the Critical Discourse Analysis method to discuss the gender roles of women in ESL textbooks globally from 2017 until 2022. Journal articles were selected using PRISMA's four phases of journal articles selection across two databases: Google Scholar and The Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). This review revealed that in the most part, women were stereotypically portrayed as doing chores and performing domestic roles while being underrepresented in occupational roles and social activities. Along with that, throughout the years, the women's roles in textbooks did not undergo a tremendous transformation despite the development women have actually achieved globally.

1. Introduction

For ages, women have been assigned to specific gender roles despite their advancement in many fields. Schulenberg et al. (2023) uncovered that women, who are from professional level job, noticed men look upon fellow women colleagues as work "mom" despite being in the same field with more years of experience. One reason for portraying women as such is due to deeply rooted social and cultural roles as reported by Komal and Sharma (2023) whereby successful female entrepreneurs too face discrimination. Their major challenge is enduring patriarchy persistently in society and at home as they are told to choose uncomplicated jobs so that more time can be spent taking care of the family. However, this was not the case during the Vedic Period. According to ancient Scriptures or also known as the Vedas, women were conditioned to complement their partners with both having equal partnership in the relationship. An often-cited example is Sita-Rama (Singh, 2019). Women were entitled to higher education and even received Upanayana (Sacred Thread Ceremony), besides having equal rights to obtain knowledge from gurus and teachers as their male counterparts (Jha, 2015). Briefly, Upanayana is performed to mark the beginning of formal education and the child is sent to the guru's house until the completion of education (Betageri, 2022). During this ceremony, three threads are tied together, each thread symbolizing Goddess Gayatri (Goddess of mind), Goddess Saraswati (Goddess of the word), and Goddess Savitri (Goddess of deed). These threads are to be worn for their whole life even after the completion of their studies. As time passed, Upanayana was restricted solely to men of certain higher social classes. Women began living in the shadow of men, constrained inside four walls called home, subsequently retaining the role of women as nurturers. This is notable since the Renaissance until now. However, the roles of women differ according to class (Cossar, 2021). It is women from the lower class who are obligated to serve as housekeepers. Still, those from the middle class and upper class are privileged to get primary education (*Roles of Women in the Victorian Era.*, 2020). Yet, upon marriage, they too grasp the role of a nurturer. During the Victorian Period, Queen Victoria herself propounded that men and women are created differently by God, thus it is best to let them remain in their respective position (Cossar, 2021). Therefore, the role of women evolved around their husbands and eventually their children as their sole duty is to keep their husbands happy and raise their children well. As time changes, the Scriptures, classic literature, and history documentation are still used as substantiation of roles played by women over the centuries.

In this 21st century, textbooks took over the role of the Scriptures and history

documentation in educating the younger generation about the roles played by women, not only in the yesteryears but also in this revolutionized period (Squicciarini, n.d.). These younger generations are pivotal to developing countries like Malaysia as their thinking, morals and ethics reflect the Malaysian education system. Besides that, at the time the younger generation acquires gender identity, gender roles should be also exposed without any biases to inculcate the notion that males and females are equal in this world (Abdul Hamid et al., 2008). It is crucial that students are well informed about the various roles women take hold of because that indirectly affects their perspective about women, about their mothers, about the women around them, and eventually about their wives. Early exposure to unbiased gender roles also informs young women on what to anticipate as they get older and get prepared for it physically and mentally. In Malaysia, ESL textbooks retained the portrayal of women as passive, subservient, and nurturing (e.g. Jean & Yuit, 2012; Mukundan & Nimehchisalem, 2008). This led to inquiry on whether textbooks reveal the true multitude of roles played by women or merely depict women in stereotyped roles. Though many studies researched gender representation in ESL textbooks, they mainly compared the weight of men and women representation which aims to address gender stereotypes or biases in textbooks (Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2023; Khattak & Farooq, 2023; Benlaghrissi, 2023) while the research on gender roles of women in ESL textbooks are relatively low. As such, this review is based on two questions:

1) What are the gender roles of women portrayed in ESL textbooks across the globe?

2) How has the portrayal of women changed in terms of gender roles in ESL textbooks over the years and to what extent can the changes be seen in gender roles of women in ESL textbooks?

2. Methods

The initial stage of this paper is to identify journal articles that are related to the gender roles of women in ESL textbooks. Journal articles were selected using PRISMA 2020 across two databases: Google Scholar and ERIC. The purpose of using this method is to obtain a complete and thorough data which can help in improving the quality of review and findings. PRISMA 2020 consists of 4 phases; 1) identification, 2) screening, 3) eligibility, and 4) inclusion. As this paper aims to review the gender roles bestowed on women in ESL textbooks, these four phases serve as a systemized endeavor to identify journal articles that are fit to be reviewed which can then address the research questions of this paper.

2.1. Identification Phase

In the identification phase, the researchers identified search keywords that will be used to filter the thousands of journal articles from the database and sort out suitable journal articles that befitted this research (Table 1). Besides that, the inclusion and exclusion criteria are also identified (Table 2).

Table 1. The search keywords used in the first and second phase of journal articles selection.

	First phase	Second phase
Gender	Gender roles	Gender representation
English Textbook	ESL textbooks	English textbooks

Table 2. The inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Type of article	Journal articles	Book, book chapter, systematic review, proceedings
Language	English	Non-English
Year	2016-2022	<2016
Region	Global	-

2.2. Screening Phase

The two databases used for the journal article selection were Google Scholar and The Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC). The first phase of screening used the search terms "gender roles" and "ESL textbook" and subsequently "gender representation" and "English textbook" for the second phase of screening. While searching for the journal articles, the researchers filtered the search by specifying the inclusion criteria, which include only globally written English language journal articles published between 2016 to 2022. The first part of the screening yielded 30 journal articles from both databases. The second part of the screening process includes eliminating duplicates as some journal articles from Google Scholar were also published in ERIC. In such an instance, the journal article is selected as published in Google Scholar and eliminated from ERIC.

2.3. Eligibility Phase

In the third phase, the gathered articles were double-checked for their eligibility, where they would have to meet the criteria as stated in the inclusion section of Table 2. Journal articles selected must also be from the Social Science and Education section.

2.4. Inclusion Phase

After closely scrutinizing the journal articles in the eligibility phase, the articles that do not fulfill the inclusion criteria are excluded. The excluded journal articles include those that are under the categories of books, book chapters, systematic reviews, or proceedings. Besides that, non-English journal articles and those published before the year 2017 are also excluded. At the end of the four phases, a total of 25 journal articles were found to be the most suitable to be analyzed in answering the research questions.

In reviewing the journal articles, two categories were the focus in analyzing each journal article; 1) gender roles of women and 2) changes in gender roles of women. The first category is divided into three; 1) women and domestic roles, 2) women and professional roles, and 3) women and social roles.

3. Discussion

3.1. Women, Gender Roles, and ESL Textbooks

In answering Research Question 1, this subsection will discuss previous studies in-depth while focusing on the gender roles of women portrayed in international ESL textbooks.

According to the Cambridge University Press (n.d.), the term "women" is defined as an adult female human being and it is correlated to the word "sex". While "sex" and "gender" are often used synonymously, these two terms are rather disparate. Sex is a basic individual biological characteristic, while gender, on the contrary, pertains to the values and characteristics that people assign to different sexes (Blackstone, 2003). Therefore, gender is not inherited but rather constructed, instilled, and grasped throughout life. Al Abiky (2019) attests that gender roles are often concocted by many alleged social and cultural connoisseurs speculating the roles both females and males should undertake. Gender roles vary among different social groups and cultures but the qualities remain congruent, which includes action, roles in relations, social disposition, personal identity, and behaviors (Shah, 2019). Therefore, it is conceded that textbooks serve as the best launch pad to set down values, hidden curricula, and ideologies, which also include inexplicit exposure to gender roles (Fahriany et al., 2018). However, the values and ideologies that are incorporated in ESL textbooks in Malaysian secondary schools refute the main purpose of introducing Malaysian values and cultures, especially the exposure of gender roles because the textbook, which is published in England, is western culture-oriented (Johar & Abdul Aziz, 2019). This can be regarded as bringing an advantage to the Malaysian education system. However, research by Qing et al. (2022) points out that the current ESL textbook used in Malaysia, particularly *English Download B1 + Student's Book* used by Form 5 students, does not only contain foreign culture but also demonstrates the traditional gender roles of women. Based on similar discussions, researchers recognize that women have generally associated with three main gender roles namely: 1) domestic roles, 2) occupational roles, and 3) social roles (Arfiandhani, 2019; Qing et al., 2022; Benattabou, 2020; Putra & Angela, 2021; Bujupaj & Gashi-Berisha, 2020). Domestic roles are customarily associated with chores and household responsibilities whilst occupational roles are related to ambition, career, and profession. Social roles as elucidated by Qing et al. (2022) denote sports, leisure activities, and also a hobby.

3.1.1. Homemakers without Pay: Women and Domestic Roles
A vast amount of textbooks predominantly affiliate women with cooking family meals, making tea or coffee, doing laundry, cleaning the house, helping kids with

their homework, and nursing the kids when they are sick (Ahmad et al., 2021). This quantitative investigation was carried out using a content analysis approach and gender representation in two ESL textbooks that are used in Punjab secondary schools was observed. This study elucidates the depiction of women in typical womanistic roles that ally with nurturing, dependant, pious, caring, and ultimately powerless. Ali and Hussain (2019) equally concede the conclusion of Muhammad Ahmad et al. (2021) after analyzing purposively selected textbooks from three public and private publishers that are used in primary schools in Pakistan. They also adopted a content analysis method to analyze the text and images and scrutinize the representation of males and females in the three primary English textbooks in Pakistan. The findings of this study have been found to correspond with the findings of Muhammad Ahmad et al. (2021) whereby women were discovered to be immensely integrated with housework and chores, besides participating in family activities. However, studies on endorsed domestic roles upon women are not limited to these two. Many homogeneous studies (e.g. Bujupaj & Gashi-Berisha, 2020; Ekowati et al., 2021; Qasim, 2018; Emaliana & Tusita, 2019) highlight women as characters who can conquer the domestic role in textbooks.

On the other hand, Bujupaj and Gashi-Berisha (2020) carried out mixed-method research to uncover the gender representation of women and men in four EFL course books used by secondary school students in Kosovo. The analysis was administered from a grammatical viewpoint, hence, a free concordance tool, AntConc, was used to retrieve the numerical data, and then the collected data was further analyzed and scrutinized qualitatively. The research conclusion points out that women are greatly correlated with feminine action verbs such as *cook*, *buy*, *make* and *teach*, hence concluding that women are still heavily represented in domestic roles. On the same note, Ekowati et al. (2021) also explored gender representation in different EFL textbooks used in Cambridge Checkpoint English Coursebook, in Makassar, Indonesia. The researchers carried out a critical discourse analysis of visuals from a feminist perspective using Barthe's theory and textual discourse using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework. This study reiterates that in the EFL textbooks, women are not only stereotyped into domestic roles but are also portrayed in one of the pictures as emotionally unstable individuals who are short-tempered when teaching their daughter. Besides that, the researchers also discovered that women were expected to be married upon reaching a certain age and carry the burden of the household because it is women's identity.

Reiterating the findings of Bujupaj and Gashi-Berisha (2020) and Ekowati et al. (2021), Qasim (2018) correspondingly researches the gender representation in two English textbooks utilized by 9th and 10th-grade students in Punjab. The procedure of analysis begins with a quantitative analysis by perusing the texts, images, dialogues and exercises in the textbooks to calculate the visibility of gender and further continued with qualitative analysis. The categories involved in the qualitative analysis are occupational roles, gender marked language, gender

marked distribution of activities, generic marked titles, generic man, generic he and generic fitness. Based on the findings, the researcher points out that women are delineated as passive characters and mostly stay indoors while being restricted to performing chores such as cooking, taking lunch, listening to news, reading and scolding. Emaliana and Tusita (2019) also affirm the previous studies through their research on the Indonesian government's venture to promote gender equality and to boost gender awareness by reflecting on gender representation in four EFL textbooks at secondary level. The researchers utilised content analysis methods to analyse pronouns, occupations, amount of talk and the gender representation in visuals or illustrations. At the end of the research, the researchers assert that women are heavily represented as housewives along with responsibility of primary caregivers to children and family in the four EFL textbooks.

Similarly, the situation in Malaysia is no different than most other countries with a patriarchal system in place. Women are forced to focus on family and household issues simply to maintain the "traditional" Malaysian women image while expected to be a strong mother and a soft spoken wife (Suleman et al., 2021). Although the empowerment of women has been embraced in Malaysia, women who have full time jobs are nonetheless obliged to an extra role at home as a result of a long standing belief that domestic roles solely belong to women (Alazzani et al., 2017). It is also untenable that simple domestic roles such as running errands land on the shoulders of women because some consider buying chicken, vegetables and other grocery items is the women's domain (Endut, 2020). The prominence of women's domestic role became even more absurd during the Movement Control Order (MCO) period when everyone was forced to stay at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic and women felt the burden of juggling both work and household responsibilities all at once. To make matters worse, at the time, Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin ignorantly suggested mothers try all sorts of recipes for their family due to the fact that they have more time in their hands (Endut, 2020). This deep-rooted frame of mind that women are the primary caregiver in the family has caused millennial women to be doing more unpaid work which in return has given rise to challenges at home (Mohd Noor et al., 2022). This topic as to why women are inevitably assigned to domestic roles would be engrossing to be further researched.

3.1.2. Boss Lady: Women and Professional Roles

"If the books do not portray the achievements of women like Kalpana Chawla, the Indian woman Astronaut; Aruna Roy, Political and Social Activist; Bachendri Pal, first Indian woman to summit Everest; Indra Gandhi, the first female Prime Minister of India etc. Our children will remain uninformed about the tremendous accomplishment achieved by women in the development of our nation" (Shah, 2019: p. 677). This emphasizes the importance of enlightening students about professional roles succeeded by women using textbooks as a rightful medium. In his study, Shah (2019) analyses the content of the ESL textbook of

Jammu and Kashmir State Board of School Education for 8th Class from the perspective of gender and uses descriptive and statistical Content Analysis methods to explore the number of pictures, references, stereotyped activities, non-stereotyped activities and the number of occupational roles in the textbook mentioned. The result of the finding confirms that the textbook scarcely exhibited only two occupational women; a doctor and a police officer. Female doctors are quite a common sight in hospitals nowadays as the number of female doctors graduates are increasing proportionally (O'Sullivan et al., 2021) as opposed to female police officers which is relatively low (Eikenberg, 2022). Though both occupations are well respected and acknowledged by the society, young girls do not prefer to be a police officer due to the fact that they feel women are less welcomed in the law institution and as a consequence, they need to put twice the effort to be respected by their peers (Clinkinbeard & Rief, 2022). Hence, Shah (2009) concurs that depicting women as carrying professional roles in textbooks proffers awareness and encourages students to achieve the same if not better.

Another interesting study by Aguilar (2021) examines the representation of male and female in three EFL textbooks that is utilised in public elementary schools in Mexico. The study analysed illustrations and pictures to perceive whether there is an equal distribution of male and female occupational roles in the three textbooks. The analysis showed that there was unequal representation of occupational roles among men and women, and women were assigned with more feminine occupations: teacher, nurse, actress, cook, sales clerk and dentist. Aguilar (2021) argued that though women are portrayed as career women, the occupations that were designated to women are less challenging and less associated with leadership. On a similar note, Ruiz-Cecelia et al. (2020), by analysing two sets of EFL textbooks in Spain, have found that women are largely represented as teachers, receptionists and assistants. As emphasised by Aguilar (2021), Ruiz-Cecelia et al. (2020) also synonymously avow that these occupations are less prestigious jobs as well as lower in ranks. Similar scenarios can be seen in Malaysia whereby a study conducted by Moorthy et al. (2022) illustrates the reason for marginalisation among women is closely related to patriarchal system whereby it hinders women's career advancement in view of the fact that women are unfit to be leaders. Their discussion also points out an unsettling discovery that allowing women to work and being promoted is a threat to a patriarchal institution. Therefore, this is where textbooks become an appropriate avenue to educate the younger generation considering the need to prioritise cultivating them that women are up to scratch and providing equal opportunity could contribute to Malaysian advancement, especially in a patriarchal society such as Malaysia (Selamat & Endut, 2020).

3.1.3. Modernised Women: Women and Social Roles

In 2018, Rachmijati and Cahyati (2018) from Indonesia examine the gender representation in the *Bahasa Inggris* Grade X textbook and carried out their re-

search using a content analysis method focusing on texts and visuals. The analysis of the text is classified into four categories; 1) visual characters, 2) characters mentioned, 3) social activities, and 4) domestic activities while visuals of men and women are analyzed in two categories; 1) social role and 2) domestic role. The research confirms that women are portrayed in social settings that are related to school and office. Qing et al. (2022) also investigate the representation of gender in English Download B1 + student's textbook used by Form 5 students in Malaysia secondary schools. This mixed method research was conducted by utilizing the content analysis approach to get the frequency of gender representation in the textbook and Critical Discourse Analysis to conduct text analysis, process analysis, and social analysis. The findings of this study show that women are more likely to be engaged in social and lifestyle roles such as window shopping but lack in sports sections. They further explain that the representation of women as shopaholics implies that women are more concerned about their appearance rather than their fitness level.

On a similar note, a study by Ruiz-Cecelia et al. (2020) also gives an insight into women and social activities. The research aimed to investigate the representation of gender roles and heteronormativity in two EFL textbooks from Spain. They carried out qualitative research by analyzing the contribution of textbooks in illustrating gender roles under two variables; 1) heteronormativity and 2) gender. The results prove that the textbook permeates the cliche roles of men and women and exclusively associates women with shopping and fashion-related activities. Consequently, the textbook also failed to give more prominent roles to women concerning the role that they endeavor in today's society. The researchers explain that the failure of illustrating strong women role models in textbooks is a setback to the younger generation considering the importance of apprising such role models starts from textbooks. Another research that also supports the claim is by Aini et al. (2021) which was carried out in Indonesia. The researchers examined how gender is represented in three 8th-grade English textbooks to fulfill their aim of investigating the differences in gender representation in the textbook. They carried out a qualitative study using a Critical Discourse Analysis method, specifically Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, to get the formal characteristics of linguistic description and the elucidation of the connection between text and utterance with a focus on content or textual analysis of gender. The finding of this paper highlights that women are attributed to stereotyped duties and social roles. Activities such as being caring, loving and even some negative attributes such as warning, being egoist and nervousness are directed upon women in the textbooks. The women were also seen portrayed negatively for instance as charmers, witches, and as desirable objects.

After reviewing these journal articles, it is evident that women and stereotyped social roles are inseparable. In Malaysia, women in society are pressured to satisfy traditional life values despite many having strong characters and being highly literate (Mohd Noor et al., 2022). Many women disclosed that husbands

and in-laws are the reasons that are stopping them from progressing and fulfilling their desires (Abdullah et al., 2008). Besides that, the lack of portrayal in sports has negatively impacted women when in fact many women have given abundant accomplishments in sports by representing Malaysia, for example, Datuk Nicol David, Dato' Pandelela Rinong, Shalin Zulkifli, and Farah Ann Abdul Hadi among others (Qing et al., 2022). Adversely, the gruesome focus on women and shopping habits indirectly stereotypes women as merely ornamental objects that need to be beautiful around the clock. This also consequently implies that being nice and pretty has been the image for women to uphold and that only beautiful women can succeed in this world.

For society to make the world a better place for women in the future, reformation has to be done but it needs to be carried out from the very basics. The younger generation needs to be informed, to be exposed to, and to be aware of women and their actual and diverse roles, not only at home but also in society. Hence, textbooks need to include correct information on women in various roles and proper gender representation must be made one of the important elements to be scrutinized before allowing a textbook to hit the classrooms. As a kick start, the latest Year One English textbook has portrayed a mother as an individual who carries out numerous roles which include domestic roles and also occupational roles (Lee & Faisal, 2020), hopefully with challenging and leadership qualities. Besides that, a further study on assigning women to certain roles would help researchers to understand the motive behind it.

3.2. The Changes in Gender Roles of Women in ESL Textbooks

The moment children enter school, they start to cultivate an understanding of gender roles and the representation of gender in a particular context. The interaction with parents and family is just the first checkpoint for them to be exposed to gender roles and it is the school that helps direct them to veridical gender roles with little guidance from teachers (Al Abiky, 2019). Ergo, that is where the role of the textbooks comes in, being the connecting bridge between students and teachers (Al Raqqad & Ismail, 2018). On another note, it is pivotal to perceive the gender roles that are assigned to women in textbooks and to what extent it has changed because children avail of the gender roles as an exemplar to deal with gender issues. Textbooks, as reviewed, are heavily biased towards the portrayal of women but it is undeniable that some textbooks do depict women in non-stereotyped roles on a small scale.

Amongst the 25 journal articles reviewed, only two studies discussed the small-scale changes in the gender roles of women in ESL textbooks. Firstly, Fahriany et al. (2018) analyzed two textbooks qualitatively using the content analysis method and the findings conclude that the EFL textbooks Grade VIII for Junior High School students exhibit a better representation of women as the authors were aware of the imbalanced elements in women's representation in the previous textbook entitled English in Focus. Similarly, after conducting a mixed method study on one English textbook used by Senior High School students,

Abidah and Sutama (2019) illustrate in their findings that the author appeared to compensate for the lack of women representation by assigning atypical activities such as scuba-diving, playing basketball and exercising at the gym to women in the textbook. This indirectly gives awareness to female students that they are "allowed" to carry out these activities because there are women who, in reality, do these as hobbies.

The lack of review on the changes in gender roles of women simply indicates that women are still being designated to stereotyped gender roles despite the effort of many countries in advocating gender equality (Qing et al., 2022). In addition, the education level and the involvement of women in the economic sector have shown improvement over the years, however, the educational resources do not seem to be updated accordingly which in turn betray women by perpetuating unrealistic and old ideology (Baqutayan, 2021).

4. Conclusion

For ages, women have been undergoing biased representations and forced stereotyped gender roles, not only in reality but also in textbooks. There are unavoidable ties between women and domestic roles, professional roles, and social roles. However, this research has led to the discovery that two ESL textbooks in recent years have updated gender roles assigned to women by not concentrating solely on domestic roles. Therefore, this study could be an eye-opening opportunity for policymakers to re-evaluate textbook contents in recent years. To do so, the researchers have analyzed the portrayal of gender roles to women in ESL textbooks in 25 journal articles that discuss the issue of gender roles of women. The gender roles of women that are commonly portrayed in ESL textbooks across the globe are narrowed down to three; 1) domestic roles, 2) professional roles, and 3) social roles. The gender roles, however, do not reflect the position of women in today's society. Even with promising efforts taking place, textbooks still lack realistic gender roles that mirror the actual achievements, sacrifices, and hardships women go through every day.

It is upsetting to observe that even to this day, the changes in the gender roles of women portrayed in ESL textbooks are very minimal. There were only 2 out of 25 journal articles that discussed the non-stereotyped gender roles illustrated by the authors of the textbooks. Failure to update the textbooks following the developing gender roles of women can diminish the objectives of promoting gender equality. However, the limitation of this study can be directed to the journal articles as only 25 were chosen after going through a series of selection processes. A limited number of journal articles have bound the discussion, hence for future research, more databases should be explored to select a great deal of relevant journal articles in order to discover more faultless portrayal of women in ESL textbooks around the world. Besides that, further research on gender representation in a society or workplace should be carried out as it is important to understand the reasons women are assigned certain roles even when women have proved that they should be assigned more deserving roles.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

Abdul Hamid, B., Mohd Yasin, M. S., Abu Bakar, K., Chee Keong, Y., & Jalaluddin, A. (2008). Linguistic Sexism and Gender Role Stereotyping in Malaysian English Language Textbooks. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies, 8,* 45-78. http://journalarticle.ukm.my/2272/1/page1_21.pdf

Abdullah, K., M.Noor, N., & Wok, S. (2008). The Perceptions of Women's Roles and Progress: A Study of Malay Women. *Social Indicators Research, 89,* 439-455. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-008-9242-7

Abidah, S., & Sutama, P. (2019). Gender Representation in English Textbook Used in Grade x of Senior High School. *Linguistic, 26,* 99-109. https://doi.org/10.24843/ling.2019.v26.i02.p02

Aguilar, J. S. (2021). Gender Representation in EFL Textbooks in Basic Education in Mexico. *Mextesol Journal, 45,* 1-9. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1288543

Ahmad, M., Mahmood, M. A., Siddique, A. R., & Ali Asghar, S. (2021). ESL Materials and Gender Representation: A Corpus-Based Study of Secondary School Textbooks in Punjab, Pakist*an. Asian Women, 37,* 143-166. https://doi.org/10.14431/aw.2021.3.37.1.143

Aini, W., Yanto, E. S., & Fitriyana, W. (2021). Gender Representation in the English Textbook for Grade Ninth in Indonesia. *INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa, 8,* 208-219. https://doi.org/10.36232/jurnalpendidikanbahasa.v8i2.1334

Al Abiky, W. B. (2019). Gender Role in Saudi Arabian Female High School English Textbooks. *Canadian Center of Science and Education, 12,* 96-104. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v12n4p96

Al Raqqad, Y. M., & Ismail, H. H. (2018). Analyzing the Reading Questions of Ap12 Textbook According to Bloom's Taxonomy. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counseling, 3,* 84-94. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hanita-Ismail/publication/329998946_Analyzing_the_Reading_Questions_of_ap12_Textbook_According_to_Bloom's_Taxonomy/Links/5c28253b92851c22a34e8175/Analyzing-The-Reading-Questions-Of-Ap12-Textbook-According-To-Blooms-Taxo

Alazzani, A. S., Hassanein, A., & Aljanadi, Y. (2017). Impact of Gender Diversity on Social and Environmental Performance: Evidence from Malaysia. *Corporate Governance, 17,* 266-283. https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-12-2015-0161

Ali, R., & Hussain, L. (2019). Gender Representation in Primary Level English and Urdu Textbooks in Pakistan. *Pakistan Journal of Applied Social Sciences, 10,* 83-100. https://doi.org/10.46568/pjass.v10i1.102

Arfiandhani, P. (2019). Gender Representation in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks for Senior High School in Indonesia. *Prominent Journal, 2,* 124-134. https://doi.org/10.24176/pro.v2i1.2989

Baqutayan, S. M. S. (2021). Women's Empowerment Is Needed to Boost Gender Equality in Malaysia. *Current Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 3,* 97-109. https://doi.org/10.12944/CRJSSH.3.1.09

Benattabou, D. (2020). Gendered Hegemony in the Visual Discourse of Moroccan EFL

Textbooks: A Quantitative Content Analysis. *International Journal of Linguistics and Translation Studies, 2,* 40-61. https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlts.v2i1.103

Benlaghrissi, H. (2023). Gender Stereotypes in Moroccan EFL Textbooks' Illustrations: Content and Critical Image Analysis. *Arab World English Journal, 14,* 183-198. https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol14no1.12

Betageri, A. (2022). *On the Mythical Origin of Yajñopavīta.* https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/ncek6

Blackstone, A. M. (2003). Gender Roles and Society. In J. R. Miller, R. M. Lerner, & L. B. Schiamberg (Eds.), *Human Ecology: An Encyclopedia of Children, Families, Communities, and Environments* (pp. 335-338). ABC-CLIO. https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=soc_facpub

Bujupaj, G., & Gashi-Berisha, V. (2020). Gender Representation in EFL Course Books Explored through a Corpus-Based Study: A Case Study. *Science for Education Today, 10,* 241-251. https://doi.org/10.15293/2658-6762.2006.13

Cambridge University Press (n.d.). *Women.* Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/woman

Clinkinbeard, S. S., & Rief, R. M. (2022). Police Reform Needs Women: Gender Equity as Cultural Change. In J. A. Schafer, & R. W. Myers (Eds.), *Rethinking and Reforming American Policing* (pp. 143-174). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88896-1_7

Cossar, E. (2021). *The Role of Women in Victorian England.* Oxford Open Learning. https://www.ool.co.uk/blog/the-role-of-women-in-victorian-england/

Eikenberg, K. (2022). *Examining Possible Challenges in the Recruitment and Retention of Female Police Officers in the Southeast Texas Region.* Ph.D. Thesis, Walden University. https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/examining-possible-challenges-recruitment/docview/2642859249/se-2?accountid=27931

Ekowati, D. M., Noni, N., & Atmowardoyo, H. (2021). An Analysis on Gender Representation in Cambridge Checkpoint English Coursebook. *Celebes Journal of Language Studies, 1,* 88-102. https://doi.org/10.51629/cjls.v1i1.40

Emaliana, I., & Tusita, A. (2019). Exploring Gender Representation: Patriarchal Perspective from EFL Secondary School Textbooks in Indonesia. *International Journal of Research-Granthaalayah, 7,* 146-174. https://doi.org/10.29121/granthaalayah.v7.i11.2020.345

Endut, N. (2020). *Malaysia's Lockdown Pays Little Attention to Women's Needs.* Nikkei Asia. https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Malaysia-s-lockdown-pays-little-attention-to-women-s-needs

Fahriany, A., & Wekke, I. S. (2018). Gender Representation in English Textbooks for Islamic Junior High School Students. *Kafa'ah Journal, 8,* 149-168. http://kafaah.org/index.php/kafaah/index https://doi.org/10.15548/jk.v8i2.221

Jean, L. H., & Yuit, C. M. (2012). Gender Representation in THE Malaysian Fifth Form English Language Text Book. In *Proceedings of the 7th Malaysia International Conference on Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.* Universiti Putra Malaysia. https://www.academia.edu/1931051/Gender_Representation_in_the_Malaysian_Fifth_Form_English_Language_Text_Book

Jha, S. (2015). *Vedic Teachings about Womanhood.* Hindu American Foundation. https://www.hinduamerican.org/blog/vedic-teachings-about-womanhood-2/

Johar, N. A., & Abdul Aziz, A. (2019). Teachers' Perceptions on Using the Pulse 2 Textbook. *Journal of Educational Research and Indigenous Studies, 2,* 1-15. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Azlina-Abdul-Aziz/publication/339458225_Teachers'_Perceptions_on_Using_the_Pulse_2_textbook/links/5e53e5b792851c1dcb88dee6/Teachers-Perceptions-on-Using-the-Pulse-2-textbook.pdf

Khattak, M., & Farooq, U. (2023). An Analysis of Gender Representation in Primary-Level Textbooks Published by the Punjab Text Book Board: A Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Study. *Journal of Contemporary Trends and Issues in Education, 2,* 95-109.

Komal, M., & Sharma, A. (2023). Redefining the Challenges Ahead of Women Entrepreneurship in India: A Review Article. *Journal of Pharmaceutical Negative Results, 14,* 423-426.

Lee, J. L., & Faisal, R. (2020). *Gender in Education: Gender Narratives and How We Can Do Better by Malaysian Youths for Education Reform Medium.* Malaysian Youths for Education Reform. https://myermovement.medium.com/gender-narratives-in-education-the-much-needed-reformation-for-better-equity-f7b253a61c14

Mohd Noor, N., Yew, V. W. C., & Yusoff, N. H. (2022). The Changing World: A Literature Review on the Significant Roles of Millennial Women in Malaysia. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities, 7,* 285-298. https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i1.1217

Moorthy, K., Nik Salleh, N. M. Z., T'ing, L. C., Ling, L. P., & Yeng, D. M. (2022). Gender Inequality Affecting Women's Career Progression in Malaysia. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 23,* 310-332. https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol23/iss1/32

Mukundan, J., & Nimehchisalem, V. (2008). Gender Representation in Malaysian Secondary School English Language Textbooks. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching, 4,* 155-173. https://www.academia.edu/45343693/Gender_representation_in_Malaysian_Secondary_School_English_Language_Textbooks

O'Sullivan, B., McGrail, M., & May, J. (2021). Responsive Policies Needed to Secure Rural Supply From Increasing Female Doctors: A Perspective. *The International Journal of Health Planning and Management, 37,* 40-49. https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3363

Putra, P. P., & Angelia, S. Y. (2021). Gender Representation in an English Textbook Entitled Bahasa Inggris: When English Comes in Handy for Tenth Grade Students. *Linguists: Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching, 7,* 75-86. https://doi.org/10.29300/ling.v7i2.5486

Qasim, Z. (2018). Gender Representation in English Textbooks: A Quantitative and Qualitative Content Analysis. *Journal of Educational Sciences & Research, 5,* 1-19. https://jesar.su.edu.pk/uploads/journals/Volume_No__5,_Issue_No_2,_Article_No_1.pdf

Qing, Y. Q., Akam, J. H., James, J. B., & Gaik Kin, E. N. (2022). Gender Biases in Malaysia English Form 5 Textbook. *International Journal of Education and Pedagogy, 4,* 91-102. http://myjms.mohe.gov.my/index.php/ijeap

Rachmijati, C., & Cahyati, S. S. (2018). Gender Representation in Textbook Bahasa Inggris Grade X. *Journal of English Language Teaching in Indonesia, 6,* 59-69. https://doi.org/10.22460/eltin.v6i2.p59-69

Ruiz-Cecelia, R., Guijarro-Ojeda, J. R., & Marin-Macias, C. (2020). Analysis of Heteronormativity and Gender Roles in EFL Textbooks. *Sustainability, 13,* Article No. 220.

https://doi.org/10.3390/su13010220

Schulenberg, K., Hauptman, A. I., Schelesener, E. A., Watkins, H., & Freeman, G. (2023). "I Felt Like I Wasn't Really Meant to be There": Understanding Women's Perceptions of Gender in Approaching AI Design & Development. In *Proceedings of the 56th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 175-184). University of Hawaii at Manoa. https://hdl.handle.net/10125/102650

Selamat, N. H., & Endut, N. (2020). "Bargaining With Patriarchy" and Entrepreneurship: Narratives of Malay Muslim Women Entrepreneurs in Malaysia. *Kajian Malaysia, 38,* 11-31. https://doi.org/10.21315/km2020.38.s1.2

Shah, M. U. D. (2019). Content Analysis of English Language Textbook of Jammu and Kashmir State Board of School Education for Class 8th from Gender. *Online Journal of Multidisciplinary Subjects, 13,* 664-679. https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1857UhAwuQALWsUiWyD7U5G3z3u3eWTVS

Singh, S. (2019). Portrayal of Women in Literature—Through the Ages. *International Journal of Engineering Development and Research, 7,* 39-40. https://www.ijedr.org/papers/IJEDR1904009.pdf

Squicciarini, M. (n.d.). *The Role of Education and Skills in Bridging the Digital Gender Divide.* Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. https://www.oecd.org/sti/education-and-skills-in-bridging-the-digital-gender-divide-evidence-from-apec.pdf

Suleman, D., Arafah, B., Abbas, H., & Delukman, A. (2021). Women Discrimination in Malaysia: Examining 'The Gender Agenda' from the Viewpoint of Lenore Manderson's Women, Politics, and Change. *Linguistica Antverpiensia, No. 1,* 2204-2222. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3849824

Tabatadze, S., & Gorgadze, N. (2023). Analysis of Language Textbooks in Georgia: Approaches to Gender Equality of Males and Females While Teaching Languages. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 32,* 169-188. https://doi.org/10.1177/10567879221147011

Victorian Era (2020). *Roles of Women in the Victorian Era.* Victorian-Era.org. https://victorian-era.org/roles-of-women-in-the-victorian-era.html