Verbs and Gender: The Hidden Agenda of a Multicultural Society

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the issue of gender inequality displayed in action verbs found in English language secondary school textbooks using the Hidden Curriculum Theory. The two aspects of hidden curriculum are the frequency imbalance, i.e., male occurrences are more than female, and gender stereotyping based on roles, i.e., masculine against feminine activities. This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting data. Wordsmith Tools 4.0 (WST) was used to analyse five categories of action verbs: activity verbs, process verbs, verbs of bodily sensation, transitional event verbs, and momentary verbs. The concordance tool from the WST was used to tabulate occurrences based on gender portrayals. School teachers who taught English at secondary schools were also interviewed to validate the findings and link them to the theoretical framework used. The findings reveal gender inequality is evident in these textbooks.

Keywords: linguistic sexism; gender stereotyping; corpus analysis; gender; textbooks

INTRODUCTION

Brugeilles and Cromer (2009) state that the word 'gender' differs from 'sex'. While 'sex' refers to the biological differences between males and females, 'gender' relates to culture and the social division into masculine and feminine. The latter is related to the qualities, tastes, aptitudes, roles and responsibilities associated with men and women in a society. Being an imperfect society, no matter where we are, we do tend to generalize things and actions based on gender. For example, boys are usually associated with physical activities like boxing or wrestling whereas girls are associated with mental or thinking activities like reminiscing and scheming. It will be hard to disassociate from making such generalizations. This situation is called gender inequality and it refers to a situation that disadvantages a particular gender.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), a world body, has been promoting gender equality in fields such as education, natural sciences, social and human sciences, culture and communication, and information. Gender equality means that males and females have equal opportunities to realize their full human potential and can contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political development (USAID, 2008:5). This research focuses on action verbs found in selected Form 4 and Form 5 English language textbooks and will address gender inequality based on the Hidden Curriculum Theory.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Access to education is a basic fundamental human right. It is essential for every human being to be educated so that they can prepare themselves for the real world. Holdsworth (2007) exerts that education plays a vital role in shaping, questioning and reinforcing the identities of boys and girls, in addition to helping shape perceptions about gender relations and equality in society outside the classroom. Most Malaysians start their education in pre-school before continuing their study in primary school, in secondary school and to the tertiary level. Textbooks play a vital role in the educational system. It is one of the tools used to educate the students in schools. Since this is the case, school textbooks as a medium of knowledge should be free from biasness.

Whitcomb (1999,p.1) notes that "the most common forms of gender bias come from unintentional acts by teachers, teaching methods and textbooks/ resources. The bias can be against males or females, but most frequently it is against females." In Malaysia, textbooks are written and designed by the Textbook Division of the Ministry of Education.

The portrayal of gender in textbooks produced in Malaysia has been studied by a number of local scholars. Researchers like Saedah (1990) and Jariah (2002) found in their studies that there are various occurrences of sexism and sex-role stereotyping in Malay as well as English language texts in Malaysian schools. Similarly, Bahiyah, Mohamad Subakir Mohd Yasin, Yuen, Zarina Othman, Azhar Jaludin & Kesumawati Abu Bakar (2009, p.64) point out that "despite efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination, there are occurrences of sexism, i.e., prejudice or discrimination based on gender in school textbooks." Also, both genders are treated and represented unequally through language which can be termed linguistic sexism and there are occurrences of sex-role stereotyping, i.e., standardized mental pictures commonly held by members of a group that represents an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude or critical judgement because that person is male or female in school textbooks

None of the previous research involving gender equality in the textbooks focused on action verbs. Recognizing this gap and the lack of research on gender equality in Malaysia, this research examined action verbs used in Forms 4 and 5 English language textbooks. The present study answers the following research questions:

1. How many and what types of action verbs are found in the textbooks?
2. Is there a significant difference between the number of male and female characters associated with the action verbs?
3. What is the portrayal of gender based on the action verbs used in KBSM texts?

HIDDEN CURRICULUM THEORY: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept 'hidden curriculum' implies the implicit demands (as opposed to the explicit obligations of the 'visible curriculum') found in every learning institution that students have to discover and respond to, in order to survive within it. Sydney (2004) explains that the hidden curriculum refers to the inadvertent side effects or outcomes of the official curriculum that are communicated to the pupils or students within an educational institution. The hidden curriculum includes those aspects of learning in schools that are unofficial and/or unintentional. A curriculum therefore, goes beyond official statements of intention whether these are stipulated

in the syllabuses or teachers' guides. Pupils, therefore, can learn other things in school besides the intended curriculum. These aspects are described as the hidden curriculum.

Textbooks play a vital role in the hidden curriculum. Sydney (2004) states that both the pupils and the teacher consider textbooks as an indispensable part of the educational activities. It is a source of authority. Textbooks occupy a unique place in the instruction of young learners. This is because learners are easily influenced since they are highly impressionable. Furthermore, textbooks shape attitudes by transmitting a society's culture. The ways male and female are portrayed in textbooks contribute to the images the students develop of their own roles and that of their gender in the society. Piengpen (2008) adds that textbooks reflect a society's educational priorities and needs and a culture's political and social norms. She argues that textbooks directly affect students' perceptions of gender by the way they portray the individuals in society and the way these people are shown to communicate. The input is acquired by students through the hidden curriculum and it is not part of the official or intended curriculum. Hence, the main issue of a hidden curriculum is how it generally exists at the school level and how textbooks, as the main agent, are responsible in transmitting notions of gender roles.

Textbooks used in schools must present both male and female genders fairly. This is because the images that both boys and girls are exposed to in school shape their self-perception and views of themselves. It also shapes what they grow up to be in society. The frequency of the presentation of male and female characters is important because in the textbooks, gender balance and/or imbalance have different effects on the readers if it is not taken into consideration. Students will feel that the textbooks do not acknowledge their existence if a particular group is ignored or sidelined. Furthermore, the lack of role models for either gender, as depicted in the textbooks, can affect them (the readers) in terms of their achievement later.

Abot and Wallace (1997) state that there are four major areas of hidden curriculum within the schooling process that disadvantage girls. The first area is gender-biased textbooks where males appear more frequently when compared to females, and at times women fail to be featured at all in textbooks. The males are likely to be shown to be engaged in active rather than passive behaviours. Clear stereotypes about how males and females should behave and the language used for male generally favours a more masculine form of expressions and women are usually portrayed holding subordinate roles. The second area, stereotyped attitudes in a hidden curriculum, portrays girls' academic intelligence as being deficient. Teachers tend to see girls' future in terms of marriage, child rearing and domestic chores. Girls' future careers are feminine stereotypes and the classroom interaction between teachers and pupils favours boys. The third area is that the subject's choice and activities remain gender-skewed. The last area is an academic hierarchy where men occupy the higher positions in the school administrative structure. Here, children tend to see role models that suggest that men occupy positions of higher status and power.

The two aspects of hidden curriculum based on Abot and Wallace (1997) and Sydney (2004) that we focused on as the theoretical framework for this research are the frequency imbalance, i.e., male occurrences are more than female and gender stereotyping based on roles, i.e., masculine against feminine activities. It is crucial to examine KBSM (Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools) English language school textbooks from the hidden curriculum perspective because students, both males and females learn about what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviours from the books. They learn about the options that are open for them in society and to which gender more opportunities are open.

The National Report of Malaysia (2004) clearly states that the curriculum should be bias-free and also free from gender stereotyping. This study will explore to what extent the examples given in the textbooks are adequate to create an awareness and understanding among students about what they can achieve regardless of their gender. This study will also determine whether gender equality based on the hidden curriculum perspective exists in the KBSM texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are numerous studies conducted internationally on the issue of gender inequality in textbooks. These studies indicated that there is strong biasness towards a particular gender. Saedah Siraj (1990) claims that the existence of gender stereotypes in society is reflected in its education curricula and textbooks. Many reading texts have implied that being a girl is inferior.

Cooke-Sawyer (1998) examined gender bias and sex role stereotyping that is found in grade seven history textbooks. Three textbooks that were used in a large South Western Ontario Board of Education were analyzed. All aspects of the content were examined including illustrations, language, type of history and suggested activities and exercises. The findings revealed that gender bias and sex role stereotyping are evident in history textbooks used in classrooms. Males appear more frequently in illustrations than females; fewer references are made to females than are made to males. Sex role stereotyping is present even though females and males are occasionally depicted in non-traditional roles. The researcher suggested that in order to provide an accurate picture of Canadian history to students, and to give them the opportunity to learn the many contributions made by women in the development of Canada, changes needed to be made in the content of history textbooks used in schools.

Similarly, Whitcomb (1999) conducted a study about the presentation of gender in textbooks. The focus of the study was core subject textbooks at the late elementary level because of the tremendous influence textbooks could have on the formulation of social assumptions, and the impressionability of youth at that age. Content analysis was used to determine if gender bias is still prevalent by assessing language, content focus, verbal content and pictorial content. Regardless of the recommendations and guidelines that were available for gender-fair writing, the analysis indicated that bias against girls and women was still present in the textbooks.

Ozdogru, Cetinkaya and Dogan (2002) studied the presentation of gender roles in Turkish elementary school textbooks. Turkey, like other patriarchal societies, has values that place emphasis on male dominance. In the study, the way that gender roles were presented showed that members of the two genders depicted in two Turkish elementary school textbooks were investigated by utilizing content analysis method. Content analyses of Turkish and Life Studies textbooks for 3rd grades showed that there are important differences for two genders in terms of social values, roles, and relations both in the school atmosphere and family environment. The results implied important directions for educational administrators and policy makers in the preparation and use of educational content.

Sydney (2004) examined how gender roles are portrayed in 40 textbooks of six subjects taught in Tanzanian government primary schools. The findings of the study are that females compared to male characters are under represented in frequency of appearances and power related aspects such as leadership, ownership of property and association with technology, leisure and sport activities. The depiction of reproductive and productive roles was based on

the traditional notion of femininity and masculinity. Gender biased language was minimal and personality traits were differentiated between traditional masculinity and femininity groupings. The mechanisms to eliminate gender stereotyping in producing textbooks were inadequate as the emphasis was on producing textbooks that matched the official curriculum.

Piengpen (2008) conducted a study to identify the types of sexist language that appear in ESL textbooks by Thai authors. The study analyzed the ESL textbooks by Thai authors sold at the Chulalongkorn University bookstore in 2007. The researcher carried out a qualitative case analysis of fifteen ESL textbooks covering the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of ESL instruction. The study used feminist criticism to determine what gender roles are regarded as appropriate in ESL textbooks and sanctioned by Thai authors and if the language used supports or challenges patriarchy. The results of the study show that sexist language is present in the textbooks and that the textbooks contain content that promotes sexist assumptions concerning gender roles. As a whole, the language and examples used in ESL textbooks by Thai authors support patriarchy.

In conclusion, international studies on gender inequality in school textbooks show that females were treated significantly different from males. Most of the studies found that males are portrayed positively while females are portrayed negatively. The studies also found that school textbooks displayed sexism by featuring males more often in written texts and illustrations.

METHODOLOGY

With a focus on lexical items, this study aims to identify the action verbs in the KBSM texts and categorize them according to Bahiyah & Basil's (1998) categorization of action verbs. Action verbs are verbs that express action, something that a person, animal, force of nature or thing can *do*. For example in a sentence like "*In the library, Aminah giggles inappropriately*", *giggling* is an action verb because it is something that Aminah can *do*. In this study, examples of action verbs in six KBSM textbooks, three Form 4 and three Form 5 English language textbooks were identified and analysed.

The methodology for this study was divided into two parts: the first involved a quantitative analysis of the textbooks using Wordsmith Tools 4.0 software and the second was a qualitative analysis in which interpretation of the quantitative findings was made. The researchers took the top ten words from each category and explained them using the framework of Hidden Curriculum Theory to look at the relation of the texts and gender equality from the perspective of a hidden curriculum.

To aid in the analysis of data, the use of computer software helped the researchers to understand the corpus, the secondary school textbooks. Wordsmith Tools 4.0 was used to: a) generate a frequency list of words and b) assist in finding the collocation of words from the data. Through Wordsmith Tools 4.0, an observation of how words were used and what words were frequently utilized in the corpus of school textbooks was achieved. The Wordsmith Tools 4.0 software was able to generate word lists in alphabetical and frequency orders which enabled the researchers to compare the school texts lexically. The concord tool in the software also created concordances (list of words in context and showed the environment in which the words occur), located collocates of the word, identified common phrases, and displayed a graphical map showing where the word occurs in the corpus. The data processed using Wordsmith Tools 4.0 allowed the researchers to generate a wordlist of frequency of words and   tabulate

into figures and percentages. The identified items were then classified into categories and frequencies. Finally, the frequencies were converted into percentages and compared across genders as similarly conducted by Yuen, Mohd Subakir Mohd Yasin, Kesumawati Abu Bakar, Azhar Jaludin and Bahiyah (2007).

DATA ANALYSIS

To answer the first and second research questions, a quantitative method was used to show the frequency count and percentage values for each action verb and the types found in the textbooks. The verbs were then categorized according to the five categories of action verbs defined by Bahiyah and Basil (1998). These categories of action verbs are activity verbs (for example, *take, made, gave,* and *look*), process verbs (for example, *approaching, describe, persuade,* and *adding*), verbs of bodily sensation (for example, *pity, annoyed, admire,* and *forget*), transitional event verbs (for example, *turned, warned, finished,* and *continued*), and momentary verbs (for example, *spent, chose, admitted, joined,* and *arrested*). The ratio between male and female occurrences and the concordance would determine whether there is significant difference between genders.

The third research question, on the other hand, involves answering the question qualitatively, i.e. explaining the gender portrayals based on the hidden curriculum perspective. This is done after the frequencies and percentages were tabulated. Then the top ten action verbs of each category were highlighted according to gender and interpreted qualitatively from the hidden curriculum perspective.

When comparing males and females, it would show that the former appeared more frequently and males were likely to be shown in active rather than passive manner while women were portrayed in a more subordinate role. For example, in Table 1 below the verb *bribe* was categorized as an activity verb by the researchers as it indicates an activity, that is, something that one does. The researchers then counted the male and female occurrences for this particular verb and calculated its frequencies/percentages before explaining the behaviour/concordance of this verb in relation to the hidden curriculum theory.

TABLE 1 - Example of Activity Verb *'bribe'*

Male		Female		Total	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
1	100	0	0	1	100

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were almost half a million tokens/words (447,097) used in the selected texts. The information was gathered from the wordlist created using the Wordsmith Tools 4.0. About 9% or 44,028 words were identified as action verbs from the wordlist since the majority of the corpus was Nouns (like pronouns, kinship terms, salutations, professions and hobbies). All the action verbs were manually categorized based on Bahiyah and Basil's (1998) categories of action verbs. Below is the breakdown of the action verbs found in the data.

TABLE 2 - Total Number of Action Verbs for Entire Corpus

Categories of Action Verbs	Number of words and percentage (%)	
Activity Verbs	35776	81
Process Verbs	6325	15
Verbs of Bodily Sensation	478	1
Transitional Event Verbs	956	2
Momentary Verbs	493	1
Total	44028	100

Of these 44,028 action verbs, activity verbs consisted almost 81% of the words, followed by process verbs at 15%, verbs of bodily sensation 1%, transitional event verbs 2%, and momentary verbs 1%. A detailed analysis of each category using the concordance as its medium is discussed next.

ACTIVITY VERBS

Table 3 shows the frequency of occurrence of activity verbs among males and females. The researchers found that 2215 (64%) of the examples were associated with males and 1263 (36%) with females. These are some examples of activity verbs found to be associated with males: *said, told, know, made, look, wanted, own, wants, came, go* and *tell.* These are examples of activity verbs associated with females*: think, wanted, make, keep, tell, bought, show, care, buy* and *got.*

TABLE 3 - Activity Verbs

Male		Female	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%
2215	64	1263	36

The finding for activity verbs related to males shows that it is twice as many as compared to females. The ratio of frequency for male and female is 2:1. It can be seen that the frequencies of the representation of male and female characters are not balanced. From the hidden curriculum perspective, male students can relate better to activity verbs as there are more examples related to them. In addition, verbs like *told* and *know* are considered as masculine while *think* and *care* are feminine. This is similar to Sydney (2004) who found that frequency of appearance or characters favoured the male in her study of Tanzanian textbooks used in schools.

PROCESS VERBS

The table shows that verbs associated with males constituted the highest frequency of 648 (65%) occurrences. The female related verbs were found only 354 times or 35%. The ten most frequent process verbs associated with males found in the data were *accepting, accommodating, accumulating, accompanying, achieve, acting, adapting, playing,*

training and *meeting*. The ten process verbs associated with females were *talking, discussing, working, driving, giving, walking, learning, waiting, asking* and *cleaning*.

Table 4 - Process Verbs

Male		Female	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%
648	65	354	35

The finding for process verbs shows that there are also twice as many male associated process verbs than females. From the hidden curriculum perspective, male students can relate better to process verbs as there are more examples for them to associate with and because verbs like *training* and *meeting* are considered as masculine verbs. In contrast, verbs like *talking* and *cleaning* are closely concorded to females. This is similar to the research done by Cooke-Sawyer (1998) in which males were shown more frequently than females in Canadian textbooks used in schools.

VERBS OF BODILY SENSATION

The frequency of occurrence for verbs of bodily sensation was higher among males (75 or 87%) compared to 36 or 13% for females (Table 5). The ten verbs of bodily sensation with the most occurrences associated with males were *tense, believe, rage, suffered, volunteered, forget, admire, annoyed, mature* and *pity* while the ten most frequent verbs with associated with females were *suffers, appreciate, confuse, doubt, fail, forgets, hugs, cried, react* and *sensed*.

TABLE 5 - Verbs of Bodily Sensation

Male		Female	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%
75	87	36	13

The ratio of occurrence for males and females is more than 4:1. From the hidden curriculum perspective, not only were there more verbs in this category associated with males than females but the fact that verbs like *rage* and *believe* are closely related to males show that males are portrayed as stronger, adventurous, active and willing to take up new challenges. Female associated verbs like *suffers* and *confuse* found in the data reinforced the views that this particular gender is weak, passive, and invisible. A research conducted by Baraimah (1988) also found the same phenomenon appearing in her data.

TRANSITIONAL EVENT VERBS

Table 6 shows that for this category, male related verbs dominated with 248 examples (65%) compared to only 131 examples (35%) for females. The research finding for transitional events verbs related to males shows that there are twice as many as compared to females. Again this is similar to the research done Liew (2007) which found that males outnumbered females in the

representation of marked references in the textbooks. In this research, the ten most frequent verbs associated with males were *died, asked, failed, tried, dies, moved, continued, finished, warned* and *turned*, while *passed, arrived, lose, noticed, shouted, overcome, discovered, fell, waited* and *changed* were the ten verbs most closely associated with females. From the verbs used by both genders, males were portrayed as brave, optimistic as well as being arrogant and over confident. Saedah Siraj (1990) reports on a similar phenomenon occurring in the Malay textbooks she investigated where males were shown to be superior, having a good personality, and more discipline. In contrast, verbs related to females found in the data showed that they were more patient, punctual and attentive. From the hidden curriculum perspective, these are stereotypical traits associated with certain a gender.

Table 6 - Transitional Event Verbs

Male		Female	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%
248	65	131	35

MOMENTARY VERBS

Table 7 shows that the majority of the momentary verbs were more frequent with males (296 examples or 65%) compared to 161 examples or 35% for females. The frequency of the representation of male and female characters was not well balanced, giving the impression that males were involved in more diverse activities than females.

TABLE 7 - Momentary Verbs

Male		Female	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%
296	65	161	35

The ten most frequent male associated verbs are *found, decided, looked, heard, won, joined, arrested, admitted, chose* and *spent* while *join, married, paid, caught, promised, suggests, win, helped, visited* and *saved* were examples of females associated verbs. Based on the concordance found in the data, males were portrayed as responsible individuals, being more involved in leisure activities, and also more mischievous. Females, on the other hand, were also portrayed both positively and negatively. They were more successful as well as more likely to become victims of accidents or thefts. This is also what the hidden curriculum sees as stereotyping individuals to their respective genders. Ryf (1997), Mazile (1998) and Liew (2007) all concur with this finding.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE AND TYPES OF ACTION VERBS IN CORPUS

The corpus for this study was six KBSM English language textbooks with 447,097 tokens / words, of which 44,028 words (9%) identified as action verbs. The action verbs were manually categorized based on Bahiyah and Basil's (1998) categories of action verbs (activity verbs, process verbs, verbs of bodily sensation, transitional event verbs and momentary verbs). Firstly, for activity verbs, 2215 (64%) of the examples were associated with males and the examples related with females were 1263 (36%). Secondly, it was found that males constituted the highest frequency in the process verbs with 648 (65%) occurrences. As for the female, only 354 (35%) examples were associated with the particular gender. Thirdly, 87% of the overall percentage of verbs of bodily sensation was related to males compared to 36 occurrences or 13% with reference to females. Fourthly, the finding showed that transitional event verbs were mostly dominated by males with 248 examples (65%) in the textbooks. As for the female occurrences, it was presented by 131 examples (35%). Lastly, the majority of the momentary verbs were related to males and this was presented by 296 or 65%. As for the females, 161 examples or 35% of the momentary verbs were found in the corpus (see examples in the previous sections).

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MALES AND FEMALES ASSOCIATION WITH ACTION VERBS

There is a significant difference between the number of males and females associated with the action verbs. The male-female ratio for all the categories of action or activity verbs, process verbs, verbs of bodily sensation, transitional event verbs and momentary verbs was 2:1.

TABLE 8 - Overall Frequency and Percentage of Action Verbs

Male		Female	
Frequency	%	Frequency	%
3482	64	1945	36

As we can see from Table 8 the occurrences of action verbs associated with males are 3482 or 64%. On the other hand, the instances of action verbs associated with females are only 1945 or 36%. Thus, the ratio for male-female is 2:1. This is similar to the findings of previous researches by Liew (2007), Sydney (2004), and Cooke-Sawyer (1998) who looked at the frequency of males and females. Furthermore, this research finding concurs with Bahiyah et al. (2009)'s findings that the frequency of appearances or invisibility of characters consists of more males than females. When females are more visible, they are usually insignificant in terms of percentages or inconspicuous. However, no textbooks in this study have more occurrences of females than males.

GENDER PORTRAYAL IN ACTION VERBS

Based on the concordances of the top ten action verbs in each category, the portrayal of gender is similar to Bahiyah et al. (2009)'s findings. First, there were differences in behavior and

personality characteristics between both genders. Second, traditional masculine and feminine traits were prevalent in which females were portrayed as being more gentle and compassionate while males were more independent or risk takers. Third, males were more positively portrayed, for example, as problem solvers or independent leaders. On the other hand, females were negatively portrayed as dependant or subservient. Fourth, males were given a wider range of traits whilst females were severely restricted to a narrow range of traits. Fifth, males were depicted as active, involved in the outdoors while females were shown as passives and were nearly always involved in indoor activities. Lastly, males were portrayed as powerful and females powerless. All of these traits involving females unfortunately did not reflect the changing social status of females in the society today.

Among examples of positive portrayals of the males found in the corpus were: asking students to take part in cleanliness program or taking care of the environment, being optimistic, independent, successful, involved in social activities, hardworking, helpful, forgiving, sociable, ambitious, and involved in occupational activities, partake in leisure, recreational or sports activity, supportive, mature, brave, optimistic, concerned about others and responsible. However, there were also negative portrayals of males. They were depicted in the corpus as being irrational, selfish, not confident, having problems, having emotional breakdowns, arrogant, over-confident, and misbehaving.

For females, the positive portrayals found were that they were involved in social activities, ambitious, involved in leisure, recreational or sports activity, taking care of the family, being empathetic towards others, involved in buying, friendly, hardworking, supportive, caring, generous, involved in routine personal activity, polite, grateful, supportive, optimist, accomplishing something, competitive, observant, punctual, solve problems, patient, involved in occupational activity and successful. On the contrary, the more negative portrayals appeared to be in the realm of attention seeking, not keeping fit, not supportive of local products, physically and mentally weak, pessimistic, angry and being victimized.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study show that there is a frequency imbalance of action verbs that are associated with males and females. Furthermore, the examples of action verbs in the corpus clearly consist of gender stereotyping as discussed above. The hidden agenda exists in KBSM school textbooks because females are consistently protrayed as being inferior to males based on the concordance of verbs found in the data.

The under-representation as well as gender-stereotype portrayals of females in textbooks may have negative effects not only on students' knowledge about gender, but also on female students' self-esteem. Besides, portrayals of stereotypical ideals and ideologies about men and women in the English language textbooks can have lasting consequences. Children and adolescenes usually develop their ideas about the world at an early stage and this will last well into their adult lives. The textbooks, by depicting gender bias ideologies, seem to suggest that women have a limited or restricted role to play in a male dominant society and women, by accepting such a perspective, perceive this view as normal. Hence, in the real world when they are marginalized or prevented from applying for certain positions, they accept this and do not feel that they are being discriminated.

The findings in this study could help in the improvement of educational development in this country in addition to being a useful reference for institutions that undertake the development and enhancement of learning materials such as the Curriculum Development Centre, the Textbook Division and the Teacher Training institutions, all institutions under the Ministry of Education.

This study proves that there is gender inequality in the KBSM English language school textbooks. Furthermore, there are biases and perceptions of gender stereotyping in the depiction of male and female characters. In general, language and gender will probably always remain an area open for discussion. The fact that this study's findings differ from what is happening in reality suggests that textbooks should portray real life to students.

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