

**Representation of Gender in English Language Textbooks at the Primary
Level of Education in Bangladesh**

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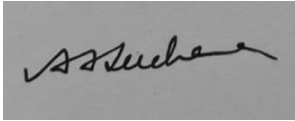
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August, 2023

Statement of Authorship

I declare that this thesis is my original work. All the sources that I have used and quoted have been acknowledged by complete references.

I confirm that I am the sole author of this work. I have done the research for my PhD degree at the University of Dhaka. This thesis has not been previously submitted at any other institution.



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Declaration

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Abstract

The importance of enhancing gender equality in education has been persistently emphasized by the global community for a considerable period. Hence, various countries across the globe have adopted policies to eradicate gender bias at every level of education. In this regard, textbook researchers have found that textbooks are one of the significant ways to help establish gender equality. Bangladeshi researchers are also concerned regarding the use of gender-equitable textbooks in classrooms. They explored the necessity of eliminating gender bias in the textbooks of Bangladesh. Besides, the National Education Policy 2010 of Bangladesh also emphasized the elimination of gender bias from educational materials.

Gender hierarchy is socially and culturally constructed. A review of the existing literature shows that materials developers or textbook writers very often demonstrate gender-biased messages in the textbooks in the name of representing social reality. Consequently, teachers convey those biased messages to the learners, and thus, gender disparity spreads in society. However, research from around the world shows recommendations for reinforcing gender equality through textbooks, especially the textbooks of the primary level of education as young learners gain various pieces of knowledge and ideas through textbooks at an early age. Besides, textbooks play vital roles in developing ideologies and transmitting moral values and truth to the learners. The current study, therefore, investigates gender representation in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

Drawing on insights from the core concepts of critical theory, Foucault's theory of power and the feminist linguistic approach, the current study has drawn a conceptual framework to investigate gender representation in textbooks. Using a mixed-method

approach, it analyzed the *English for Today (Eft)* textbooks for Classes I, II, III, IV, and V.

Using the content analysis method, the current study first analyzed the linguistic usage in textbooks. However, the analysis did not depend solely on the linguistic resources but rather included multi-modal resources, as the blending of languages and multi-modal resources was found crucial for the meaning-making process. Alongside, the study used interviews as a research tool to explore the perceptions of the stakeholders, specifically primary school teachers and textbook writers. Their perceptions are significant, as no substantial studies were found on the perceptions of primary school teachers regarding gender equality in textbooks. Moreover, the voices of the textbook writers are unexplored in Bangladesh.

The findings of the study revealed that female characters, in comparison to male characters, were underrepresented through the use of language. For example, male characters outnumbered females in most of the cases in terms of nouns, pronouns, etc. Biased diction was also used for females. Discrimination was explored in various multi-modal resources, such as how men were more visible in the images. Besides, women were depicted in limited occupational roles, whereas men were depicted in challenging and diverse roles. In addition, men enjoyed leadership qualities and were highlighted in sports and outdoor activities, unlike women. In addition, the stereotypical social construction of gender and patriarchal oppression were explored through language and other resources. Most importantly, the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers) acknowledged the unequal representation of gender in textbooks. They perceived the necessity of promoting gender equality through textbooks and recommended reviewing and updating the existing textbooks for better representation. Although the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) claims to be mindful of gender representation

in textbooks in theory, it seems that the authority did not prioritize promoting gender equality in the instructions provided to the writers. The less prioritization of gender issues may be the reflection of the patriarchal mindsets of the authority and the greater society.

The results of the study, thus, exposed the unfair manifestations of gender and patriarchal oppression through languages and multi-modal resources. The stakeholders also acknowledged the adverse effects of biased textbooks on learners. The study also analyzed the social construction of gender in the context of Bangladesh and explored the idea that any improvement in women's conditions in contemporary society was not properly manifested in the textbooks. Women in Bangladesh are making significant contributions towards reducing poverty in the country and educated middle-class women are privileged in the society, but the textbooks neither represent these privileged women nor highlight their financial contributions. The findings of the study will raise awareness about gender equality amongst textbook writers and help them produce more gender-equitable textbooks. Besides, the findings of the study will enable teachers to convey gender-neutral messages in the classrooms. Finally, this study will contribute towards eliminating disparity and enhancing gender equality through the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

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Acronyms

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EfT	English for Today
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
TPSUA	Teachers of Primary Schools Located in the Urban Areas
TPSRA	Teachers of Primary Schools Located in the Rural Areas
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

School education plays a significant role in raising awareness about gender roles among learners and in their construction of gender-related behavior (Davis & Willis, 2010). However, when school instructional materials deliver the dominant cultural, social and religious beliefs to young learners (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), they may be exposed to those practices that empower certain segments of the society while disempowering others based on language, culture, ethnicity, or gender. For example, Hall (2014) revealed that teaching materials play a vital role in shaping learners' perceptions regarding female and male roles in society. Therefore, school textbooks need to manifest men and women in appropriate ways to demonstrate equal power and participation in, for example, the occupational domestic fields (Suchana, 2021). If men and women are represented by a patriarchal social structure which shows the power of men over women, young learners will be exposed to an oppressive state of social and economic relationship because power is generally exercised by one group to oppress another (Foucault, 1978). Foucault developed his view of power as productive rather than repressive and Foucauldian power is not the domination of one gender, but rather the generation of such knowledge and cultural order that sustains gender inequality. Vu and Pham (2021) also explored the relationship between gender and power to show gender as a social construct that depended on the power of men. Gender norms are imposed from birth and gender roles are practiced without question (Vu & Pham, 2021). Furthermore, as gender is constructed as 'performative effects of power,' women are viewed as less powerful. Such unequal power distribution encourages discrimination in society. Amruthraj (2012), however, recognized the significance of women's involvement in socioeconomic progress and showed that primary textbooks can play a

significant role in supporting this. In his study, Amruthraj pointed out that learners at the primary level are in the formative stage when textual materials could be used as significant stimuli to impress ideas of equality upon their growing minds.

1.1.1 Primary Education in Bangladesh

Primary education plays a vital role in a country's education system and is considered to be the building block for a child's education. The government of Bangladesh has made primary education a top priority and implemented several programs to ensure that all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, have access to quality education.

In Bangladesh, primary education begins at Class I and continues till Class V. There are 65,620 government primary schools in Bangladesh with a total number of 16,336,096 enrolled students (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2019). Students receive their textbooks free of cost from the government, which means that the same textbooks are used in all schools throughout the country. So, whatever messages are carried through the textbooks is pervasive across the board, which gives these textbooks the potential to be powerful tools that can be used to teach lessons of equality when constructed appropriately.

The government primary school curriculum includes subjects such as Bangla, English, mathematics, science, social studies, religion and moral education, and physical education. The medium of instruction for all subjects, except English, is Bangla, and English is taught as a foreign language. The textbooks used for the English classes is *English for Today (EfT)*, approved by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) for classes I to V. These are the textbooks under examination in this

thesis. These textbooks are used in Bangla medium and English version schools in Bangladesh.

1.2 Role of Textbooks

Textbooks are considered the core accessible resource for learning for young learners, and, as textbooks occupy about 80% of classroom time (Blumberg, 2008), they become important tools to shape the personality of young learners (Suchana, 2021). Students internalize various concepts from textbooks because they are regarded as trusted resources for learners (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). These textbooks are viewed as the agents of enlightenment for children who are, in turn, the agents of social change. Most Children learn about moral values, ethics, power, human rights, peace, and non-violence as well as the meaning of life from textbooks. Thus, textbooks play a fundamental role in socialization or transmission of knowledge or values (Curaming & Curaming, 2020). With such a pervasive role, it is anticipated that textbooks will ensure equal representation of men and women so that children may understand the significance of gender equality from a young age. Lu and Lin (2014) mentioned that learning activities at school need to pay attention to gender bias, either in a recognizable or a concealed way. Thus, textbooks are an important factor in the building up of perceptions in children. Lee (2011) also argued for gender equality in instructional materials as they have been viewed as the main apparatuses of socialization from which young people learn values and attitudes towards different gender roles as they are presented in the textbooks.

Along with developing values and communal norms, textbooks also play a central role in developing the characters of learners (Blangsinga et al., 2021). Textbooks act as one of the prime sources of knowledge and ideology (Blangsinga et al., 2021;

Mihira et al., 2021). As ideologies are challenged through discourses, “textbooks can be a fertile ground for implanting the prevalence of women’s marginalization in society” (Mihira et al., 2021, p. 576). Textbooks noticeably affect young learners’ enhancement of knowledge and their perceptions and views of themselves and other people through transmitting societal values (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). However, if textbooks present men and women equally, the learners will perceive the equal role of both genders and develop the values to respect both women and men. In contrast, if textbooks represent gender from partial perspectives, detrimental impacts may be found on young learners (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020).

Although textbooks have crucial roles in developing a sense of gender equality, values and knowledge, numerous research studies explored that gender disparity is still prevalent in school textbooks. Blangsinga et al. (2021) revealed that textbooks still depict patriarchal gender binary opposition. The term binary opposition refers to a pair of opposing qualities of a particular trait for men and women (Blangsinga et al., 2021). For example, rational/emotional, strong/weak, dependent/independent, etc. In binary pairs one quality is described as more important than the other. In their study, Blangsinga et al. stated that patriarchal binary oppositions place men and women in dichotomies that marginalize women in society and such marginalization can be reproduced in the textbooks. Thus, Chowdhury (2018a) stated that in the process of designing a textbook, it is essential to make a balance between content and context, ensuring that gender, class, and profession are given equal consideration.

1.2.1 Role of English Language Textbooks

Though all types of textbooks should contain gender-neutral materials, numerous research studies emphasized gender equality in English language textbooks. As the English language has universal access, it is associated with linguistic power. Being the lingua franca for global communication, English dominates today's world (Master, 1998). Hamid and Ali (2022) explored that language in education planning (LEP) in Asian countries has prioritized English along with their national languages. They also exposed the continued dominance of English in school education as well as higher education in Asia. Thus, students with good command of the English language enjoy an advantage over others. In the context of Bangladesh, English language learning is becoming popular to attain prestige and upward social mobility (Rahman, 2021; Sultana, 2021). Proficiency in the English language is regarded as one of the key determiners of upward and outward social and economic mobility and prestige (Nur et al., 2021) and thus, English language textbooks play a vital role in Bangladeshi schools as well as other Asian countries. Hence, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks have been chosen by various researchers to investigate gender representations as English features prominently in the school curriculum. EFL textbooks are considered tools for learners to make connections to the whole world and are considered as markers of social and educational achievements (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020).

While learning English (the target language), learners also learn about culture and social practices from EFL textbooks. According to Khalid and Ghania (2019), "Although the principal purpose of the textbook in the EFL classroom is to provide opportunities for language learning and skills practice, it can serve as an ideal vehicle for the embodiment and transmission of moral values" (p. 774). However, Khalid and

Ghania (2019) also discovered widespread discrimination in favor of males in the EFL textbooks in Algeria. Such discriminatory gender roles in the EFL textbooks can be an invisible barrier to learning moral values and social practices (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Mihira et al., 2021). Therefore, to eliminate such biased representations of gender, necessary changes are needed in the English language textbooks (Khalid & Ghania, 2019; Mihira et al., 2021). Thus, various research studies suggested developing textbooks that had more gender equitable and comprehensive content as learners need to be aware of their potential and skills regardless of gender.

Materials developers also indicated the necessity of evaluating and adapting materials to meet the needs of learners (Brown, 2000; Tomlinson, 2012). Besides, evaluating English language teaching materials is crucial because it helps ensure that the materials are effective, relevant and meet learners' needs (Brown, 2000). Tomlinson (2012) provided an overview of the importance of evaluating materials in language learning and teaching, and revealed the significant impact of materials on both learners and teachers. He suggested using authentic materials and real-life language in education. Besides, Tomlinson (2013) considered both external and internal factors as significant criteria for materials evaluation. While external factors include cultural appropriateness, availability, and affordability, internal factors include content, design and methodology. The current study considers Tomlinson's materials evaluation theory highly relevant to evaluate textbooks through a gender lens as gender is a socio-cultural phenomenon and textbooks are expected to represent cultural issues along with linguistic content. Harmer (2007) also focused on the importance of selecting materials that are linguistically and culturally relevant to the learners. Hence, these materials development theories provided a rationale for the current study to investigate gender representation in English language textbooks.

1.3 Possible Impact on Young Children of Gender Stereotypes in Textbooks

The issue of gender bias in textbooks has been a concern for textbook researchers due to their adverse effects on learners. As teachers and learners use textbooks as the core resource material in classroom learning activities, unequal representation of females in the textbooks will signal their invisibility and inferiority in society to the learners. According to Mihira et al. (2021), men are naturally privileged in traditional patriarchal societies. Thus, the stereotyped characterization of women in the textbooks may transmit negative perceptions to the learners regarding femininity and masculinity. Further, the stereotyped representation may demonstrate the foregrounding of women's subordination and marginalization in society (Blangsinga et al., 2021). Hence, if textbooks contain gender biased attitudes, this may create a negative impact on young learners of primary schools. The age range of primary level students in Bangladesh is 6 to 10 years. This age is significant as children develop emotional competence, language skills and analytical ability then. Hall (2014) mentioned that in this early adolescence period, children become uncertain about who they are and what they want to become in the future. She found that in this period children receive their earliest exposure to norms, culture, and the world around them. Amruthraj (2012) added that at this age youngsters formulate an idea of maleness and femaleness. Therefore, stereotypical gender roles in textbooks may lower schoolgirls' expectations of themselves and limit their full potential (Yasin et al., 2012). Both young boys and girls learn about moral values from textbooks and they might follow the textual materials and turn sexist behaviors and attitudes into practice. Conversely, textbooks without gender disparity can be a great source of learning for them (Lu & Lin, 2014).

Though gender-neutral textbooks may motivate both boys and girls, Mihira et al. (2021) observed that many EFL textbooks presented women with passive, weak, dependent, powerless and submissive traits and men with strong, bold, hard-working and active traits. Such passivity, powerlessness and submissiveness of women can silence their voices in society (Mihira et al., 2021). Blangsinga et al. (2021) argued that hierarchical behaviors may limit girls from achieving a certain set of qualities to qualify for standard positions in society. Thus, gender biased textbooks may lower girls' success rates and achievements, especially in the schools of underprivileged countries (Blumberg, 2008).

Thus, textbooks should deconstruct the stereotypical feminine traits in order to eliminate the negative impact upon learners (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira et al., 2021). Blumberg (2008) argued that gender disparity in textbooks work as an important and near-universal invisible obstacle to educational equality.

1.4 Objective of the Study

Equal treatment of men and women is intrinsically connected to the development of society. If textbooks show the same opportunities and obligations for women and men, young learners will be conscious about their own power, rights and responsibilities. Therefore, in the overall teaching and learning process there cannot be any existence of gender bias. To eliminate discrimination textbooks must contain gender equitable materials. Further, girls' willpower, rights, strengths, potentials, and skills should be highlighted in the textual materials in order to motivate them. Moreover, stakeholders such as teachers and textbook writers need to be aware about delivering gender-neutral messages to the learners. Thus, this study has the following objectives –

- to investigate gender representation in primary school textbooks through content analysis using categorization
- to expose, through stories and exercises, any linguistic discrimination
- to analyze multi-modal representations of gender such as visibility, representation of men and women in domestic and occupational roles, characterization and contributions, and success of women in the textbooks
- to examine the images in the primary level textbooks
- to explore the perceptions of the teachers regarding gender equality in textbooks
- to explore the perceptions of the textbook writers regarding gender equality in textbooks
- to raise awareness among the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers) regarding the equal representation of gender.

In short, the objective of the study is to explore whether there is any gender-based inequality in treatment, attitude, or behavior in the contents of primary school textbooks that are based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles which may establish or perpetuate oppressive social relationships. Thus, this research study analyzed the contents of the *English for Today (EfT)* textbooks for Class I to Class V – prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) – and explored whether gender bias exists in these books. The study aimed to also explore teachers and textbook writers’ perceptions and recommendations regarding ensuring gender equality in the textbooks.

1.5 Research Questions

To investigate gender representation in the contents of the textbooks of primary level of education in Bangladesh and to explore the perceptions of the teachers and textbook writers, the following research questions have been constructed:

1. In what ways is gender represented in the NCTB prescribed textbooks of Classes I to V in Bangladeshi primary schools?
2. How is gender representation perceived by the stakeholders, specifically by teachers and textbook writers?
3. What do the stakeholders think about enhancing equality in gender representations in the textbooks?

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Despite the significance of gender equitable textbooks, research studies done so far in the area show gender discrimination and inequality in textbooks throughout the world. Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that while several studies have already outlined the steps to deconstruct gender stereotypes and raise gender awareness through English textbooks, a number of studies exposed gender bias in the EFL textbooks. While reviewing the existing literature, Khalid and Ghania (2019) showed that numerous English language textbooks represented men as dominant characters in a wide variety of social as well as occupational roles. They also revealed that men were described as strong, both physically and emotionally, in the EFL textbooks. In contrast, women were often excluded from prestigious occupational roles and described according to common

traditional stereotypes. Moreover, women were also viewed as inferior and weak in English language textbooks across the world (Khalid & Ghania, 2019).

In the context of Bangladesh, Kabir (2015) analyzed several units from the textbook *English for Today* (2012) for classes IX and X. He noticed that female characters were presented stereotypically. He also found that women were helped by men in the kitchen but they were not seen in the diverse roles of a village chief, driver, vendor or security guard. In his conclusion, Kabir (2015) commented that women were not appropriately projected in secondary textbooks. The research done by Kabir (2015) was holistic in nature and gave a general idea of gender discrimination in the textbooks. However, this also indicated the inevitability of a more in-depth study regarding gender equality in textbooks.

The perceptions of the teachers and the textbook writers are significant for ensuring equal representation of men and women in the textbooks. Textbook writers produce the textbooks while teachers directly convey the messages of the textbooks to the learners. However, a significant gap is found in this area. The perceptions of the textbook writers have been overlooked in Bangladesh like many other countries of the world. Hossain (2018) explored teachers' perceptions regarding gender representation at the secondary level of education in Bangladesh. However, no substantial research studies have been found on the perceptions of primary school teachers.

Hence, the current study has chosen the prescribed textbook for the primary level of education in Bangladesh to investigate gender representation. Numerous research studies indicated the possibility of the adverse effect of gender biased teaching materials on learners' attitudes and beliefs. Besides, biased materials may limit the

opportunities for the learners. Therefore, the study traced the existence of inequality and stereotypes in the primary textbooks through an exploration of the perceptions of the stakeholders, specifically by teachers and textbook writers. The study also included recommendations for enhancing gender equality in textbooks.

1.7 National Education Policy of Bangladesh

Policies are important in education as they set rules and processes to make standards of excellence for learning, as well as opportunities and liability. An education policy comprises the ideologies and policy judgments that influence education and the collection of rules and regulations that govern the process of education systems. Bangladesh developed its first education policy in 2010. The policy was made public to obtain constructive opinions as well as corrections before the final publication, thereby making the National Education Policy 2010 the epitome of the nation's ethics, principles and desires.

1.7.1 Aims and Objectives of the National Education Policy

The National Education Policy 2010 aims at cultivating human values and grooming citizens to become leaders in pro-people development programs. The education system is designed to promote rational and ethical perceptions, respect for one's own religion and gender, and to help individuals grow up as non-communal, patriotic, and efficient individuals free from superstitions. One of the main objectives of education in Bangladesh is to eradicate socio-economic discrimination regardless of race, creed, and religion and to eliminate gender discrepancy (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Other objectives also focused on establishing a sense of equal status among all the people of the country. For example, one of the objectives emphasized creating equal opportunities in education and establishing a society free from discrimination. Further, the policy focused on promoting the national history of the country. Besides, the education policy concentrated on the socio-economic development of the country. The socio-political and historical context of a country was found crucial for developing an education policy by Nur et al. (2021).

In contemporary Bangladesh, women are playing a role in the socio-economic development of the nation. All classes of women are now contributing to poverty reduction: while less educated and lower-class women are working in the agricultural and readymade garments (RMG) sector, educated women are employed in the service sectors (Hussein, 2022). In addition, the history of the leadership of Bangladeshi women over time and their involvement in various political movements were explored by Falgunee (2018).

Keeping these aims and objectives of the National Education Policy in mind, this study, therefore, explored whether women's participation and involvement in various sectors were focused on in the textbooks of the primary level of education. If not, the goal of the Education Policy regarding ensuring equal opportunities in education would remain unfulfilled if biased representations persist in the textbooks.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The necessity of promoting and achieving gender equality in education has been recognized and emphasized by educators around the world for a long period. The UN organizations such as UNESCO and UNDP have been working on eliminating

gender disparity at all levels of education (Curaming & Curaming, 2020). Hence, several UNESCO documents focused on women's education for participating in social activities. For instance, a UNESCO document claimed that promoting gender equality is a strategy to fight against underdevelopment and to ensure the education of girls and women as well as the welfare of communities (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2007). Thus, the UN organizations urged to uphold equal treatment of both girls and boys in education.

Unfortunately, though textbooks play a crucial role in promoting gender equality, gender disparity still exists in the textbooks. However, textbook writers or materials developers do not always produce these stereotypical representations of gender intentionally. Various researchers expressed their apprehensions that teachers very often unintentionally deliver gender-biased messages in the classroom (Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Mihira et al., 2021). In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that teachers may lack both time and awareness about transmitting gender-biased messages in the classroom. Yasin et al. (2012) mentioned that gender bias and stereotyping may be unconsciously reproduced in textbooks. Whether willingly or unwillingly represented, gender bias may hinder the progress of society as it reflects unfair gender roles which in turn work as an obstacle in the construction of social development (Lu & Lin, 2014). As biased messages may marginalize women, textbooks should act as a ground for teachers to be aware of equal gender representation (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira et al., 2021). As teachers follow the textual materials produced by textbook writers, awareness of the writers may eliminate unfair accounts of gender in the textbooks.

Hence, the current study will raise awareness among the stakeholders, i.e., textbook writers and teachers, to be more gender-neutral in producing and delivering the contents (both texts and images). The significance of this study is grounded on the

necessity for gender equitable textbooks for young learners. Thus, the study focused on the use of the language by the textbook writers in the contents of the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. Likewise, it focused on exploring representations of male and female characters in domestic and occupational roles. Further, the study focused on highlighting notable female figures and their contributions to society to motivate female learners. Thus, the findings of the study will encourage the textbook writers to produce gender-equitable textbooks. Similarly, teachers need to be aware enough to convey gender-neutral messages in the classroom. The findings of the study will also enable the teachers to critically think about gender issues in the textbooks. Hence, they will be encouraged to convey gender-neutral messages while teaching in the classroom. Eventually, gender awareness among the textbook writers and teachers will help learners grow up to be more conscious individuals. Consequently, the learners will realize that both men and women deserve the same rights, treatment and opportunities in the society. Thus, both girls and boys will be inspired to work for the wellbeing of the society.

The study carried out a systematic and in-depth research on gender representation in the primary level textbooks in Bangladesh to eliminate gender stereotyping in textbooks. The study is significant as no substantial and intensive study has been carried out to explore the level and form of portrayal of gender roles in the current primary level textbooks in Bangladesh. Further, as a remarkable gap was found regarding the perceptions of the stakeholders, the study attempted to minimize the gap by including in-depth interviews of both the teachers and textbook writers. Besides, the study developed a conceptual framework for investigating gender representation in the textbooks.

1.9 Definition of the Key Concepts

In order to comprehend the key concepts used in the current study, the following definitions are an essential component:

1.9.1 Gender Equality

Gender equality has been traced as a buzz word since the 1970s in the field of social science research. The term ‘gender’ is used to identify masculinity and femininity (Diamond, 2002). Gender demonstrates the stereotypical roles for men and women which are socially and culturally constructed (Makama, 2013). Equality refers to the quality of being fair and impartial. It is associated discrimination, which refers to the undue or detrimental treatment of different types of people or things, especially on the grounds of age, race or sex. Thus, gender equality refers to “equal pay, equal access to opportunities to enter an occupation and to advance in it, and freedom from harassment” (Bailyn, 2003, p. 139). Gender is not something we are born with, but something we do (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

1.9.2 Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is the generalization of characteristics, traits and attributes of individuals based on their gender. Stereotyping describes typical variances between men and women and prescribes what their characteristic traits should be. It also describes how men and women should behave and perform in different domains (Ellemers, 2018). Society judges men by their task performance whereas considers or judges women in terms of social relationships. Ellemers (2018) argued that even though men and women exhibit parallel characteristics and perform equally, people place them in different worlds and treat them unequally. Women across diverse countries spend more time on domiciliary activities than men, irrespective of their occupational status. Hence, stereotypical perceptions have been developed in society

generally that household chores are women's work, leading Ellemers (2018) to conclude that "gender stereotypes exaggerate the perceived implications of categorizing people by their gender and offer an oversimplified view of reality" (p. 278). Besides, gender stereotypes create boundaries between men and women. Such boundaries reinforce inequality and affect individuals negatively. Ellemers (2018) added that "gender stereotypes not only influence the perceived potential of men and women when they are being selected for future careers, but also impact how the work actually performed by men and women is rated and valued" (p. 279). Thus, stereotypical expectations manifest inequalities and also influence the way men and women view themselves and are viewed by others (Ellemers, 2018).

However, the perception of gender stereotypes develops in boys and girls from their environment and education. Ellemers (2018) argued that gender stereotypes develop over the life span through the ways boys and girls are raised and educated. Hence, education, especially school education, plays a significant role in developing the perception of equality among young learners. Research shows that in educational frameworks, gender stereotyping presents female learners as less talented than their counterparts (Leslie et al., 2015). Such stereotypical presentations will limit the expectations and potentials of girls. Hence, Ellemers (2018) suggested avoiding gender stereotypes in education. If both men and women are portrayed as taking care of family members and friends, and simultaneously, if women as well as men are shown displaying high levels of performance in an occupation, equality can be established. The current study traces how textbooks can break the stereotypical notions. If children learn that men and women can achieve equal success, stereotypical perceptions can be avoided. Both girls and boys will then be encouraged to equally participate in all public and private domains.

1.9.3 Marginalization of Women

Marginalization refers to the treatment of an individual, group or concepts as trivial or peripheral. Words associated with marginalization include segregation, isolation, deprivation, exclusion, subordination, disadvantage, discrimination, and rejection. The marginalization of women in society has occupied the attention of scholars and feminists as marginalization excludes women from prestigious work (Makama, 2013). Society marginalizes women by making them subordinate to men. According to Sultana (2010), “The feeling of powerlessness, discrimination and experience of limited self-esteem and self-confidence jointly contribute to the subordination of women” (p.7). Patriarchy validates the marginalization of women in teaching and learning, occupation and in domestic patterns (Makama, 2013).

Marginalization of women in textbooks is found if derogatory language is used in referring to them. Further, if women’s accomplishments and contributions are not acknowledged in the textbooks, this might marginalize women. Misrepresentation of women in their professional identities or occupational roles can also reinforce marginalization. Such marginalization of women in textbooks works as an obstacle to developing the perceptions of learners regarding gender equality.

1.9.4 Social Construction of Gender

Gender relations are part of social constructions. Society divides the gender performances for men and women. For instance, in traditional patriarchal societies, men are recognized as the owners of property, wise persons, decision makers and heads of households. Men are shown leadership roles or positions of authority, whereas women are restricted to domestic activities (Makama, 2013). Even, if women are represented in the professional sphere, very often they are found to be dependent on their male counterparts. For example, “The husband is often portrayed as setting up the wife’s

business and performs the ‘male’ duty by buying equipment, setting up the industry and employing workers, while the wife is portrayed as decorating the place and managing” (Iyer, 2009, p. 251). In the discourse of patriarchy, success of women is shown under the leadership of supportive husbands (Mills & Mullany, 2011). Thus, society categorizes gender roles and determines gender relations. Gender relations refer “to the way in which the social categories of men and women, male and female, relate over the whole range of social organization, not just to interactions between individual men and women in the sphere of personal relationships, or in terms of biological reproduction” (Makama, 2013, p. 118). In such gender relations, men enjoy power in the society. Such gender roles make women subordinate and passive.

Besides, traditional gender roles demonstrate that men have a set of potentials and abilities and women have another different set of traits (Mihira et al., 2021; Sultana, 2010). For example, masculine traits are associated with words like strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, competitiveness, bravery, etc. In contrast, feminine traits are associated with words like submissive, caring, nurturing, love, timidity, obedience, etc.

However, if the textbooks represent such traditional social construction of gender female learners will start viewing them inferior. At the same time, male learners will be overconfident and will start undermining women.

1.9.5 Patriarchy

The term ‘patriarchy’ has been defined as “a system of male authority which oppresses women through its social, political and economic institutions” (Makama, 2013, p. 117). The notion of patriarchy includes all sorts of mechanisms to establish male dominance over women both in the public and private sectors (Chowdhury, 2009; Makama, 2013; Sultana, 2010). Thus, feminist theorists refer to patriarchy as an unjust

social system (Makama, 2013). A patriarchal society “gives absolute priority to men and to some extent limits women’s human rights also” (Sultana, 2010, p. 1). In her study, Sultana (2010) added that authority and supremacy within the family, the society, as well as the state, remain entirely with men in a patriarchal society. The family was viewed as the major source of oppression by Azad (1995) and Millet (2016). Society cannot dominate women directly at times, so, patriarchy enforces domination and control over women through the family (Azad, 1995). Azad (1995) further added that, in a patriarchal society, the family works as a ‘state within a state’ where the ruler is always the head of the family, typically a man, and women become the victims of such dominance and control. Therefore, patriarchy forces women to obey the rules and regulations made by the man of the family. Hence, both Azad (1995) and Millet (2016) identified family as an institution for patriarchy.

In short, patriarchy reinforces the powerless position of the female members of a family. Hence, women become marginalized in patriarchal societies and consequently start considering themselves as inferior (Azad, 1995). Thus, patriarchy systematically oppresses women and excludes them from prestigious areas of activity (Narayan, 2004). Narayan further added that a patriarchal society oppresses women by misrepresenting their contribution as secondary or inferior to that of men. Thus, patriarchy disregards women by limiting their participation, presence and visibility (Mihira et al., 2021). Hence, a patriarchal society privileges male interests and supports male dominance over females. In a patriarchal system, men and women think, act and perform differently as they have been taught to enjoy masculine power and feminine subordination. Sultana (2010) argued that patriarchy presupposed the accepted superiority of men over women. In her study, Sultana (2010) further added that patriarchy shamelessly reinforces the

idea that women are reliant on and subordinate to men in every aspect of life. Thus, patriarchy works as a barrier to achieving equality for both men and women.

1.9.5.1 Patriarchy in Bangladesh. The traditional society of Bangladesh is based on patriarchal values. In Bangladesh, patriarchy manifests power of men as they maintain power and hold the control of capitals (Chowdhury, 2009). In her study, Chowdhury (2009) defined patriarchy as “a system in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women through public and private patriarchy in the context of Bangladesh” (p. 605). Sultana (2010) also showed that in Bangladeshi societies, women are subjugated, subversive, and segregated in many aspects. Here, women’s dependence on men is embedded in the social norms. In her study, Sultana added certain examples of patriarchy in Bangladesh, such as, discrimination against girls is found in the public as well as private sectors. In Bangladeshi society, the burden of household work is mostly imposed on women whereas men enjoy the outside activities and financial power too. Moreover, women’s contributions in economics and politics are very often overlooked. Sultana (2010) added that in this patriarchal society, a girl from her childhood does not receive the same opportunities as a boy to nurture her inherent qualities. Lack of autonomy, mobility and flexibility for girls have also been exposed as another core feature of patriarchy in Bangladesh.

Thus, domination of men and subordination of women exist in Bangladeshi society. Domestic violence, oppression, unequal pay, and low wages for women, for instance, are still found as common practices. Though women in Bangladesh are supposed to enjoy gender equality by the general law and constitution of Bangladesh, patriarchal explanations and interpretations of the law paves the way towards practicing patriarchy (Sultana, 2010).

Women in Bangladesh, however, are now educating themselves and entering into the paid labor forces to resist patriarchy (Chowdhury, 2009). Such change in women was viewed as ‘new womanhood’ by Chowdhury (2018b) and Hussein (2022). While exploring the performance of new womanhood, Hussein (2022) found that the educated middle class women in contemporary Bangladesh are reconstructing their identities by overcoming liminality (the peripheral position) and subordination. Hussein revealed that these new women in Bangladesh are the change makers who are exploring new opportunities by entering into education and employment. These new women are crossing the barriers by challenging the patriarchal distribution of power in social life. Hussein added that education as well as income of women had some significant impact on their discriminatory position in society. Thus, Hussein’s new women are privileged and empowered, with the scope to enjoy higher social status. Chowdhury (2018b) viewed this empowerment as a vehicle for the progress and success of new women in Bangladesh. However, Chowdhury (2009) observed that even education and employment failed to liberate women from patriarchal ideologies. She argued that, in many cases, women do not have the control on their income. Rather, men (their husbands) hold control over their wives’ income, directly or indirectly. Mukharjee (2017) also explored the limitation and subordination of the contemporary ‘independent women’. He added that even an independent *bhadramahila* (lady) has to depend on a *bhadralok* (gentleman) in a patriarchal society. Thus, patriarchy works as an obstacle to advancement. However, the changing notion, as suggested by Chowdhury (2018b) and Hussein (2022), can work as the benchmark of progress of Bangladeshi women.

Keeping all these ideas in mind, this study, thus, investigated the representation of men and women in primary level textbooks to understand whether the traditional

male domination continues to be manifested or the changing notion and upliftment of the Bangladeshi woman is highlighted.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

This study looks into only the *English for Today (EfT)* textbooks from Class I to Class V. As mentioned earlier, this age group is highly significant for developing the perception of gender equality and ideas of masculinity and femininity. As various studies have shown, if young children of this age group internalize discriminatory attitudes from their textbooks, they might be negatively impacted in the long run (Amruthraj, 2012; Lu & Lin, 2014), so textual materials in primary schools play a significant role in molding the mindsets of young learners. Given this backdrop, the study limits its investigation to only the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangla medium and English version schools of Bangladesh. Furthermore, the study limits itself to only the English textbooks in order to ensure in-depth analysis of the contents and the perceptions in those textbook writers (from Class I to Class V) and the primary school teachers. Besides, the research explores the gender presentation in English language textbooks in the context of Bangladesh and hence, solely deals with the textbook. The use of supplementary materials, especially guidebooks or notebooks, is strictly prohibited in Bangladeshi classrooms. Teachers teach English using the mandated textbooks. Hence, the research did not have the scope to addressing the function of supplementary materials, guidebooks or notebook in English language classrooms. Alongside, the study traces the equality of two genders: men and women, not the third gender or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities. The study, nevertheless, encourages other researchers to conduct further studies on

inclusive gender representation in the textbooks of other subjects (along with English) and explore the perceptions of the teachers and textbook writers there as well.

1.11 Conclusion

The key objective of the study is to investigate the representation of gender in the primary level of education in Bangla medium and English version schools in Bangladesh. This chapter contextualized the topic with the background, objectives, significance, and research questions of the study. It also emphasized the role of textbooks for promoting gender equality as textbooks are one of the core educational tools that can be used to develop a sense of equality among young learners. Further, the chapter included the aims and objectives of the National Education Policy 2010 of Bangladesh as the government has shown a strong stance against any type of discrimination in education. That is, eradicating gender disparity from education has been focused on in the Education Policy. The chapter also defined and explained the key concepts of the study. The next chapters include the literature review, methodology, findings, discussion and conclusion.

1.11.1 Chapter Division

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter that outlined the background of the study, role of the textbooks, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, impact of gender stereotyped textbooks in primary education, National Education Policy 2010 of Bangladesh, significance of the study, definition of the key concepts, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the existing literature on gender representation in textbooks across the world. It analyzes the findings of the linguistic and multi-modal

representations of gender. It also reviews the literature on both teachers' and textbook writers' perceptions regarding gender representation in textbooks. Further, this chapter includes the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 3 outlines the research method and research tools. Justification for using the mixed-methods approach has been explained here. Further, content analysis and interviews are evaluated as research tools in this chapter. The ethical issues for conducting interviews have also been discussed. The data collection and data analysis procedure have also been explained at length along with the population size.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. The findings have been presented through tables and figures. The results from the quantitative data have been analyzed through percentages. Besides, images of the textbooks have been analyzed in order to explore whether gender bias exists in the textbooks. The results from the qualitative analysis of the data have also been presented in this chapter. Further, this chapter explores the perceptions of the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers). The interview data has been transcribed and thematically analyzed in this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the interpretation of the data found from the content analysis and the interviews of the teachers and textbook writers. Then the data were triangulated in the light of the conceptual framework.

Chapter 6 provides a summary of the whole study. It also adds recommendations on how gender bias can be eliminated from textbooks. The recommendations would work as a source of insights for further research.

Thus, this study addresses the existing problems regarding gender representation in the primary level textbooks of Bangladesh. The findings of the study

will raise awareness among the stakeholders. Hence, the study will help to produce gender equitable textbooks and convey messages of gender equality in the classroom.

Chapter 2 Gender Representation in Textbooks and Perceptions of the Stakeholders

2.1 Introduction

The chapter reviewed the existing literature on gender representation in textbooks and developed a conceptual framework for the study. To explore gender representation in textbooks, firstly, the chapter presented a review of the existing literature on gender representation in school textbooks across the world. Then, it explored the perceptions of teachers and textbook writers throughout the world regarding gender representation and the ways of enhancing gender equality in textbooks. Further, the chapter included the conceptual framework of the study to investigate gender representation in the textbooks of the primary level of Education in Bangladesh.

2.2 Gender Representation in Textbooks

Equal representation of gender in textbooks is viewed as crucial in the educational domain by textbook researchers. The ideology of a nation can be conveyed through the language, content, and discourse presented in the textbooks (Chowdhury, 2018a). Thus, numerous attempts were made to analyze gender equality in textbooks throughout the world. Recent research studies over the span of 10 years conducted in various contexts such as India, Egypt, Indonesia, Vietnam, Turkey, Sweden, Philippines, England, Iran, Algeria, China, Finland and Pakistan (Amruthraj, 2012; Elkholy, 2012; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira et al., 2021; Vu & Pham, 2021; Carlson

& Kanci, 2017; Curaming & Curaming, 2020; Goyal & Rose, 2020; Lee & Gahrouei, 2020; Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Khalid & Ghania, 2019; Kollberg, 2016; Xiangme, 2016; Musty, 2015; Tainio & Karvonen, 2015; Lu & Lin, 2014; Ullah & Skelton, 2013) revealed gender equality in school textbooks. Earlier studies also explored gender imbalance in textbooks throughout the world (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010; Fahim, 2010; Hartman & Judd, 1978; Mills, 1995). Like other countries of the world, some studies also exposed gender bias in the textbooks for school children in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2018; Kabir, 2015).

Researchers found inequality in gender in the use of language and visuals of the textbook writers which may create an oppressive social state. Language is not simply an instrument of communication; rather linguistic competence is related to social origin (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Similarly, visual discourses also act as a powerful tool for conveying messages (Giaschi, 2000). Gender stereotypes in educational and language textbooks can significantly shape the perceptions of gender roles held by teachers and learners (Tyarakanita et al., 2021).

Considering the universal dominance of English, textbook researchers expressed their concern to investigate gender bias in English Language Teaching (ELT) materials. ELT resources, such as textbooks often convey both implicit and explicit cultural and moral values (Tyarakanita et al., 2021). However, the prevalent marginalization of women was revealed globally in the English Language textbooks by Mihira et al. (2021) and Tyarakanita et al. (2021). In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) chose thirty articles published in 2010-2021 to conduct secondary research on gender inequality in textbooks. They used the results of the previous studies to answer their research questions. Findings revealed the depiction of women as less dominant, and inferior than men, mostly domestic, usually weak, powerless, voiceless, and passive in

the English language textbooks. In their study, Mihira et al. analyzed the linguistic features such as the use of nouns, pronouns, titles, omission of female characters and other multi-modal features such as the marginalization of women in domestic and occupational roles. Tyarakanita et al. (2021) also revealed restricted social roles of women compared to men in two English language Indonesian textbooks of junior high school level. They analyzed both the written discourses and visualizations in the textbooks.

Hence, the current study analyzed both the linguistic and multi-modal features to investigate gender representation in the English language textbooks of primary-level education in Bangladesh. It examined the social construction of gender in textbooks. The study also looked for whether unequal power relationships and patriarchal oppression were presented through the use of language, visuals, and other multi-modal features such as activities and characterization of men and women. Therefore, existing research studies on the linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender in textbooks throughout the world have been analyzed in the following sections.

2.2.1 Linguistic Representation of Gender in Textbooks

Language can serve as a medium of conveying societal structures including gender which can impact perception and cognition (Tyarakanita et al., 2021). ‘Linguistic representations’ refer to examples of representing gender through any level of language, such as – lexical items, grammatical structures, turn-taking, etc. (Musty, 2015). Numerous textbook researchers conducted their investigation on gender equality from different perspectives, which included linguistic features such as - the use of nouns, pronouns, firstness, and choice of words. The linguistic choices of the authors

can considerably affect learners' attitudes and dispositions toward themselves and others (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). In their study, Lee and Gahrouei stated that gender inequality can be manifested in the form of linguistic sexism. Linguistic sexism "refers to the use of words or expressions in a way that intentionally or unintentionally excludes a gender, usually females" (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020, p. 1110). Similarly, Khalid and Ghania (2019) also suggested that fairness and equality between the two sexes can be maintained through language. When language is used in a way which perpetuates sexism, it can influence the cognitive and emotional aspects of its users (Sunderland, 2006). Thus, gender discrimination can be minimized through the use of equal language.

2.2.1.1 Inequality in the Use of Nouns and Pronouns. Prevalent usage of masculine nouns and pronouns was identified in the previous research studies (from 2010 to 2021) by Mihira et al. (2021). They traced that discrimination in the use of nouns and pronouns can manifest the indiscernibility of the female characters. The use of masculine generics such as he/him/his, man/men is one of the common examples of linguistic sexism. Besides, compound words ending with 'man or men' for unknown genders also represent sexist language (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). Inequality in the use of nouns and pronouns in textbooks was found by Bahman and Rahimi (2010). In their study on gender representation in the three volumes of Iranian English textbooks, Bahman and Rahimi employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine the number of female and male referring terms, and the frequency of first-place occurrences of words attributed to males and females. Their study exposed unfair manifestations of women and men. The appearance of men was more emphasized than that of women in terms of names, nouns, pronouns, and adjectives attributed to them.

They found that the percentages of nouns, pronouns, and adjectives of men were 79%, 78.8%, and 71.5% but those of women were 21%, 21.2%, and 28.5% in the volumes respectively.

Besides, numerical discrepancies between male and female referring nouns were also found in Pakistani textbooks by Ullah and Skelton (2013). In their study, Ullah and Skelton exposed that Pakistani school textbooks carried more male names and nouns than female names and nouns. They examined gender representation in 24 textbooks from class 1 to Class 8 (English, Urdu, and Social Studies) by using a qualitative content analysis approach. In their study, they found that there were 302 male-referring nouns and pronouns in the textbooks whereas the number of female-referring nouns and pronouns was only 190. They mentioned that he/him occurred considerably more often than she/her.

Similar findings were referred to by Elkholy (2012) in Egyptian primary school textbooks. He analyzed six English language textbooks from Egyptian primary schools and found inequality in the use of male-female referring nouns. Elkholy's study employed content analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine gender representation in English language textbooks published by the Egyptian Ministry of Education. The study found 55% male names and 45% female names. Thus, the male-female gap in textbooks is found across different societies and cultures.

Though Iran, Pakistan, and Egypt are known to be more "conservative" countries, they traced the necessity of gender equality in textbooks to reduce inequality in society. Besides, the gender imbalance was also explored in the textbooks of the

Philippines by Curaming and Curaming (2020). Using critical discourse analysis, Curaming and Curaming (2020) examined the representation of gender performances in a popular English textbook series used in primary schools in the Philippines. In their study, Curaming and Curaming found that males were the majority in numerical terms in about 60% of the stories whereas females were majority only in 20.3% of stories. Males and females appeared equally in other 20.3% of stories. Thus, they concluded that textbooks depicted gender hierarchy in favor of males. Nevertheless, Curaming and Curaming (2020) stated that though the Philippines is a highly-graded country in worldwide gender equality indices, the findings of their study indicated overall gender inequality in favor of males. Further, Curaming and Curaming (2020) expressed their concern for the lower-ranked countries as gender equality remains a challenge for higher-ranked countries like the Philippines.

Hence, textbook researchers suggested eliminating gender equality in textbooks as a biased representation of gender demonstrates patriarchal domination (Curaming and Curaming, 2020; Elkholy, 2012; Ullah & Skelton, 2013). Patriarchal ideology can be reproduced in discourses, including day-to-day activities and written and spoken discourses (Mihira et al., 2021). In their study, Mihira et al. suggested that such dominance of male characters may marginalize women by restraining their participation which reproduces patriarchal ideology. Thus, the current study found the necessity of gender equitable textbooks in Bangladesh because without ensuring equal opportunity various development goals of the government cannot be achieved (Ferdaush & Rahman, 2011).

2.2.1.2 Inequality in Firstness in Textbooks. Firstness in the text means enlisting male terms before female (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010). This is one kind of linguistic discrimination. The sequence of the male terms before the terms referring to females is another trait of the unequal and unfair treatment of women and men and this certainly prioritizes men (Mills, 1995). Equality was not maintained with regard to firstness in numerous textbooks across the globe. Bahman and Rahimi (2010) found that when both female and male referring terms came in a text, they were almost always the male term that exceeded the female term. Such discrimination in ordering represents the social construction of gender in patriarchal societies which prioritizes men.

2.2.1.3 Discrimination in the Titles and Dictions in Textbooks. Inequality was also found in the titles of the English language and the dictions used by the textbook writers. Islam and Asadullah (2018) found the use of “Mrs.” or “Miss/Ms.” a significant category in linguistic sexism. The term “Mrs.” identifies a married female in terms of her male counterpart. Such discrimination in titles in the textbooks manifested male dominance (Mihira et al., 2021). In their study, Mihira et al. mentioned that the titles Mr. and Ms. showed signs of gender inequality and unfairness in the textbooks. Tyarakanita et al. (2021) referred to the use of ‘Mrs.’ as a form of marginalized representation of gender which distinguishes women based on their marital position. By using such discriminatory words, textbook writers present discriminatory personality traits of male and female characters. Therefore, Sunderland (2006) suggested using ‘Ms.’ to indicate both married and unmarried women to elude linguistic sexism.

2.2.1.4 Discrimination in Dialogues. Further, gender inequality can also be manifested through dialogues; if textbooks represent gender-imbalanced dialogues, female students may be affected (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). Islam and Asadullah (2018) pointed out that women were often found weak, victimized, passive, and subordinate in their interactions in textbooks. On the other hand, the representation of male characters reflected quite the opposite personality; they were portrayed as bold, courageous, and dynamic agents in society. Mihira et al. (2021) reported from their findings of the previous studies that female characters were depicted as less dominant in English textbooks. They also revealed that English textbooks gave their male characters more engagement in various activities, sometimes with vital roles. They argued that such discrimination might create an implication for women's marginalization. Moreover, as the English language is dominating the whole world and is given special priority in Asian countries (Hamid & Ali, 2022; Master, 1998), discrimination of gender through the English language may spread a sense of inequality among the learners.

2.2.2 Multi-modal Representation of Gender

Inequality between men and women is not limited by the use of language, rather inequality may also be found in various multi-modal aspects. Multi-modal resources (such as - images and photographs) along with languages, play a significant role in the process of meaning-making (Sultana, 2019). A Multi-modal discourse analysis connects language with other resources, such as – images, symbols, gestures and actions etc. (O'Halloran, 2013). Thus, the multi-modal analysis allows textbook researchers to analyze both texts and images to reveal the meaning and expose the foregrounded or backgrounded values and ideas as it (multi-modal analysis) is concerned with semantic

expansions (O'Halloran, 2013). Ghouschi et al. (2021) revealed a close nexus between texts and images. They argued that pictures can convey information and meaning more competently and effectively, especially to EFL learners. For example, Mihira et al. (2021) exposed that women were pictured in fashionable clothes, neat dresses, long-hair, and soft or bright-colored outfits whereas, men were pictured in formal, casual outfits, short-hair, and dark-colored outfits in various EFL textbooks. Such semiotic representations may manifest the stereotypical appearance of men and women. Besides, discrepancies in symbols, gestures, and actions may convey biased messages to the learners regarding gender roles in society. Therefore, Vu and Pham (2021) advocated for using the multi-modal approach to investigating the social construction of gender. Besides, Ghouschi et al. (2021) suggested English language textbook designers consider using multi-modal resources to create meanings. The primary area of investigation in ELT materials has been the portrayal of language through written texts, which has now been expanded by the addition of the multi-modal approach, providing a more comprehensive understanding (Xiong et al., 2022). Hence, the study investigated the primary textbooks through a multi-modality view along with languages. The following sections reviewed the literature on the multi-modal representation of gender in textbooks.

2.2.2.1 Professional Roles of Men and Women in Textbooks. Male and female characters are often portrayed in distinct professional roles in textbooks. Existing literature across the world revealed stereotypical occupational roles for women whereas textbooks should promote gender equality in terms of occupations (Amruthraj, 2012; Goyal & Rose, 2020; Kabir, 2015; Lee & Gahrouei, 2020; Mihira et al., 2021; Suchana, 2020; Ullah & Skelton, 2013).

While reviewing thirty articles from 2010 to 2021 on gender inequality in English Language textbooks, Mihira et al. (2021) observed that women had fewer occupational choices than men. They identified a limited range of occupations for women. Moreover, women were presented in gender-stereotyped occupational roles. Men were assigned more wide-ranging occupations than women. Besides, the types of jobs assigned to men were explored as more masculine whereas stereotypical feminine types of jobs were assigned to women (Mihira et al., 2021). In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) explored that women were represented mostly as teachers, salesgirls, mothers, wives, nurses, drivers, waitresses, and housemakers whereas men were represented as reporters, police, doctors, photographers, judges, managers, leaders, CEOs, engineers, lawyers, scientists, politicians, and soldiers.

A similar discrepancy in the occupational role was traced by Ullah and Skelton (2013) in the Pakistani textbooks. They mentioned that whereas men were represented in powerful positions with command, authority and dominance, such as judiciaries, army and police officers, entrepreneurs or independent farmers, far fewer and comparatively less admired occupations were populated by women. They added that while men were referred to as university professors, none of the texts or pictures represented women as professors of colleges or universities. However, in their study, Ullah and Skelton (2013) revealed two women in non-stereotypical jobs – a pilot and an employee of a bank; these jobs are typically perceived as ‘masculine’ professions in patriarchal societies. Nevertheless, the woman banker’s name was hidden; she was introduced as ‘Salma’s mother’ which was viewed as an underrepresentation of gender as the female banker’s independent identity was denied.

The clichéd dichotomy between masculine and feminine occupational and social roles was also found by Lee and Gahrouei (2020) in the Iranian textbooks. In their study, Lee and Gahrouei found that women were exposed to a more limited choice of occupational roles than men which shows the practice of gender segregation in Iran. In their study, Lee and Gahrouei (2020) analyzed the Iranian English textbooks named “English for School Series, Prospect” for Grades 7, 8 and 9. By integrating both manual and computational analyses, Lee and Gahrouei (2020) revealed unequal gender representation in textbooks and felt the robust necessity for textbook changes to pursue gender equality.

In the context of Bangladesh, Kabir (2015) explored gender discrimination in occupation. He analyzed some units from *English for Today* (2012) for Class IX and X. In his study, Kabir (2015) noticed that female characters were presented stereotypically. He found that women were helped by men in the kitchen, but they were not seen in the diverse roles of a village chief, driver, vendor, or security guard. In his conclusion, Kabir (2015) commented that women were not appropriately projected in school textbooks.

Discrimination in occupations was also traced by Amruthraj (2012). He worked on gender bias in English language textbooks for the learners of the government primary schools in Tamil Nadu, India. He analyzed those textbooks from a gender-sensitive perspective. By using the content analysis method, Amruthraj (2012) examined gender representation and observed the jobs of men and women in textbooks. He found 31 occupations in those books where nurses and teachers were constantly

women, whereas police officers, doctors, postal service persons, airline pilots, chauffeurs, soldiers, and carpenters were all men. He found those textbooks reinforced the stereotypical images that men govern the public domains and women the private ones. In addition, the substantial contribution that women make to the economy and the welfare of their families was all too often ignored.

Such exclusion of women from prestigious activities in the discourses will misrepresent their knowledge and contribution (Narayan, 2004). Representing men in prestigious and challenging professions and women in less prestigious and less challenging professions were viewed as a ‘prejudiced representation’ of the people in textbooks by Goyal and Rose (2020). Besides, the portrayal of men in higher-ranked and challenging occupations and women in less challenging occupations revealed the subordinate position of women (Suchana, 2020). Such misrepresentation might constrain male-female students’ connections with individuals of the other gender and restrict the conceptualization of their current and forthcoming identities (Goyal & Rose, 2020). Thus, in their study, Goyal and Rose (2020) suggested that females should be more frequently presented as experts giving opinions and as professionals at senior executive and policymaking levels.

2.2.2.2 Visibility of Male and Female Characters in Textbooks. In terms of visibility, equality was not maintained in many cases. While less visibility of women was noticed in the textbooks in 1978 by Hartman and Judd, in 2019 similar findings were explored by Khalid and Ghania. Discrimination in male-female visibility was considered one of the extensively examined demonstrations of gender discrepancy by Xiangmei (2016). In her study, Xiangmei revealed male dominance in visual discourses

and stated that “images in different illustrations can be regarded as examples of segregation” (Xinagmei, 2016, p. 483). She directed a visual content analysis of 1800 characters in two sets of elementary language textbooks in her study. The textbooks were used during the 1980s and the 2000s in China. She advocated for gender-balanced illustrations in textbooks developing the mindset of young learners.

Earlier, Hartman and Judd (1978) also exposed that in several texts women suffered from low visibility. They analyzed the ESL textbooks and found that in maximum cases male referents profoundly outnumbered females. The ratio of male to female referents was found to be 63%–37% in the study of Hartman and Judd. They also revealed a scarcity of women characters in reading texts. In reading passages, male characters became visible more frequently than female characters.

The visual discrepancy was also traced in Pakistani textbooks by Ullah and Skelton (2013). In their study, Ullah and Skelton pointed out that the number of boys or men in the images and illustrations was higher than that of girls or women. For instance, they found 1220 male characters and only 632 female characters in the illustrations of the Pakistani school textbooks. Besides, males were also depicted in a wider range of sports activities in those textbooks. The analysis of the images and texts of those books showed male dominance in sports. Ullah and Skelton explored that in terms of frequency, male characters were overrepresented in sports (in 85 items) whereas female characters were observed only in 17 items in a very narrow range of sports. For example, boys were portrayed in a wide range of sports such as badminton, basketball, football, cricket, hockey, horse riding, volleyball, and swimming. In

contrast, girls were portrayed in a narrow range such as swinging, skipping, and playing with dolls.

Besides, less visibility of women was also explored by Khalid and Ghania (2019). In their study, Khalid and Ghania revisited the gender positioning issues within the visual discourse of three Algerian English textbooks. They applied a qualitative approach to analyze the gender representation and performativity in the visual discourses of those books. A content analysis was conducted by Khalid and Ghania (2019) following three key categories. Firstly, they analyzed productive versus reproductive professions, secondly, sports and other activities and thirdly, frequency of appearances to trace gender representation in textbooks. The findings of their research exposed the prejudicial and partial depiction of female characters in the illustrations in the units they examined. Khalid and Ghania (2019) adopted Giaschi's (2000) analytical framework – critical image analysis which comprised the following questions-

- What is the activity of the image(s)?
- Who is active (the “protagonist”) in the image?
- Who is the passive (the receiver) in the image(s)?
- Who has status in the image(s)?
- What does body language communicate?
- What does the clothing communicate?
- Where are the eyes directed?

(Khalid & Ghania, 2019, p. 778)

In their study, Khalid and Ghania looked for the answers to the above questions by making a critical assessment of gender depiction in the images of the books. Their findings revealed that males were found as the dynamic protagonists in those images. Such dominance of grownup males in adopting active roles asserts men's authority in society (Khalid & Ghania, 2019). In contrast, inactive and submissive roles were largely associated with the female characters in their study. Moreover, the status of females in the images was found relatively lower than that of males. Besides, the study of Khalid and Ghania (2019) focused on body posture and facial expressions as body language indicates the potential meaning created by the non-verbal behavior of the individuals. Findings revealed that though in many cases both men and women were depicted with self-confidence in the images, men were visualized as courageous in the face of calamities whereas women exhibited with excessive emotion who cannot control their sentiments and reactions in disasters. Nevertheless, in terms of clothing, equality was found in the study of Khalid and Ghania. They exposed that both male and female characters were presented in various garments such as head covers and suits, uniforms, and formal and ritualistic gowns. Further, Khalid and Ghania (2019) examined the gaze direction of men and women in the visuals and exposed some inconsistencies in the straight look of the two genders. They mentioned that while all men expressed self-assurance and affirmation, some women in their study articulated fearful and distressed looks. Thus, Khalid and Ghania (2019) exposed that a large number of images displayed strong symbols of disparity against female characters. Besides, they also noticed that women were portrayed in traditional jobs through visual discourses in the Algerian EFL textbooks. Further, they noticed that women were not projected in outdoor works and activities like their counterparts. Hence, Khalid and Ghania exposed that men were found dynamic and more visible than women in the Algerian textbooks. Besides, men

also enjoyed the privileged rank and prominence in every sphere. In conclusion, Khalid and Ghania (2019) stated that such unfair manifestations may create negative influences on learners, especially female learners as their identities will be questioned. Consequently, biased educational materials may keep girls away from their achievements.

Nevertheless, these findings are significantly important as visual images are significantly important to comprehend the meanings of textbooks for young learners (Ghouschi et al., 2021). In their study, Ghouschi et al. (2021) revealed that pictures can convey meanings more than words. They added that detailed information can be conveyed easily and quickly through visuals. Ghouschi et al. (2021) further mentioned that “using visuals in teaching results in a greater degree of learning” (p. 624). Moreover, equal visibility of both genders is crucial as an uneven representation of gender can spread in society through textbooks (Bahman & Rahimi, 2010).

2.2.2.3 Characterization in Textbooks. In gender-stereotyped textbooks, women were mostly characterized as passive and subordinate and lack leadership qualities. Female characters were assigned stereotypical female traits which exposed the submissiveness of women whereas male characters were given masculine traits which demonstrated control and domination in the EFL textbooks around the world which reinforce the patriarchal binary oppositions (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira et al., 2021). For example, Mihira et al. (2021) pointed out that certain traits were commonly associated with femininity, including shyness, gentleness, passivity, empathy, emotional expressiveness, compassion, obedience, submissiveness, and a tendency to conform to traditional gender roles. On the other hand, masculinity is often

linked with traits such as bravery, strength, assertiveness, intelligence, independence, ambition, control, influence, rationality, fearlessness, outspokenness, and a tendency to embrace progress and change. Similar discriminatory masculine and feminine traits were explored by Blangsinga (2021). Such opposite pairings, which place men and women in dichotomies, marginalize women (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira et al., 2021).

Marginalization of women and patriarchal gender hierarchy were also exposed in the Turkish and Swedish textbooks by Carlson and Kanci (2017). In their study, Carlson and Kanci analyzed Turkish school textbooks in use in 2012 and used secondary sources that analyzed Turkish textbooks and syllabi used in the period from 1928 to 2012. They also used a large content of secondary data from a study of 52 Swedish history textbooks published between 1931 and 2009. Carlson and Kanci (2017) analyzed the pattern of power relations in the textbooks and revealed the implicit theme that men were viewed as the guardians of women in Turkish textbooks. They mentioned that women were shown protection so that they can execute their duties to the state, such as the reproduction of men, culture and nation. They further added that the term masculinity was formed to consider men as the ‘warrior-protector’ whereas the role of women was restricted only to motherhood. Women were also assumed to fight, struggle, and sacrifice for the sake of their families. Thus, Turkish textbooks reinforced patriarchal gender hierarchy (Carlson & Kanci, 2017). Besides, inequality in gender was also noticed in the textbooks of Sweden by Carlson and Kanci. Though Sweden was concerned regarding enhancing gender equality for a long period, it seemed surprising to Carlson and Kanci (2017) that the history textbooks gave little

emphasis on women and gender issues. Moreover, women did not appear to be very active in those textbooks.

Besides, the submissive and passive roles of women were traced by Fahim (2010) in Pashto textbooks in Afghanistan. He investigated gender representation in those textbooks by employing both qualitative and quantitative approaches and explored bias in characterization. For example, a woman wishing to participate in social activities had to take permission from her husband or elder men in her family. Though Bangladesh has a more progressive picture, it is needed to investigate whether passive and derogatory roles of women exist in Bangladeshi textbooks as Fahim (2010) indicated that the underrepresentation of females does not only exist in Afghan textbooks rather it is quite common in other developing countries.

2.2.2.4 Domestic Roles in Textbooks. Demonstrating more female characters in household chores and domestic roles reflects the cultural values of societies (Mihira et al., 2021). While reviewing the existing literature on gender inequality in textbooks, Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that English language textbooks assigned women mostly to domestic activities and passive roles that represent stereotypical patriarchal societies. In contrast, men were given more active roles and outdoor settings (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Lee & Gahrouei, 2020; Mihira et al., 2021; Ullah & Skelton, 2013).

Portraying female characters in more fragile and passive roles and household activities was found to be one of the key features of gender inequality in textbooks by Lee and Gahrouei (2020) and Ullah and Skelton (2013). In their study, Ullah and Skelton (2013) revealed that whereas 48 women/girls were shown carrying out

domestic chores, only 5 men/boys were involved in such roles. They argued that portraying only women in traditional gender roles such as caring, nurturing, and mothering demonstrates patriarchal domination.

Besides, the high percentage of women in indoor activities was also found one of the typical features of gender-biased representation in textbooks by Islam and Asadullah (2018). In their study, Islam and Asadullah investigated secondary-level textbooks of four countries – Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Indonesia. They used a quantitative content analysis to trace gender bias in school education. Their findings also revealed that females were projected in domestic chores four times more than males. The four-country average female representation was 31.2 % in various social roles. Moreover, a high female representation was found in the domestic roles category (with a share of 85%) by Islam and Asadullah (2018). Though the four countries vary remarkably in terms of social progress, these countries possess the same patriarchal social structures. Islam and Asadullah (2018) revealed that women in these countries are socially marginalized and underrepresented, especially in Pakistan. In Pakistan, women are socially and culturally disadvantaged. Women's participation in the labor market is very low. Therefore, gender discrimination in Pakistani textbooks is not surprising. In contrast, Bangladeshi women are involved in diversified occupations, but Islam and Asadullah (2018) noticed that the contribution of women is disregarded in the textbook of Bangladesh. They found high female exclusion in the Bangladeshi textbook. They also noticed some discriminatory attributes used for females and males. For males the attributes included disciplined, responsible, sensible, visionary, legendary, and so on. They provided some examples like “Tisha's room is always messy” and “Jamil, a sensible character who is lauded for avoiding an overcrowded

boat and saving his life” (Islam & Asadullah, 2018, p. 23). Moreover, they found the absence of male characters in domestic roles.

Nevertheless, unpaid domestic responsibilities are regarded everywhere as women’s work. Moreover, women are usually devalued and unacknowledged even they are involved in important roles and jobs (Amruthraj, 2012). The study of Amruthraj (2012) on an English language textbook in Tamil Nadu found that women are often portrayed in unpaid works, such as - sweeping, washing, making tea, cooking, cleaning, fetching water, and looking after children. However, a boy was found cleaning a vessel and helping his mother with the household chores along with his sister in an image which was traced as the only gender-neutral visual in that book. Besides, Indonesian textbooks also showed inequality of gender through English textbooks (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira et al., 2021). In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that Indonesian ELT textbooks tended to depict male characters as superior and influential to female characters. They also revealed that power and leadership were referred to as masculine traits whereas cooking, nurturing, cleaning, and preparing foods were categorized as feminine traits in the textbooks. Depicting women in traditional feminine roles such as cooking, babysitting, and cleaning and social roles such as fashion designer and teacher underrepresent women and demonstrate patriarchy (Blangsinga et al., 2021)

Thus, the underrepresentation of women was found in Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia, and India. Passive and derogatory roles of women in the secondary level textbooks of Bangladesh were exposed by Islam and

Asadullah (2018). Hence, the current study investigated whether such discriminatory roles are manifested in the primary textbooks of Bangladesh.

2.2.2.5 Minimal Representation of Female Characters in Textbooks.

Another common form of gender stereotypical representation is negligence or omission of female characters. Negligence is found in the textbook when one gender is ignored or underrepresented in a textbook. Underrepresentation or omission of female characters has been referred to as one of the common forms of gender discrimination by Lee and Gahrouei (2020). Kabir (2015) found negligence of female characters in the *EfT* textbooks for Class IX and Class X in Bangladesh. He analyzed the content of the textbook by using a qualitative approach. In unit 7 of the book, he found four successful and famous people from the world were included. Among them, three were men and only one was a woman. Besides, he found the omission of female names. For example, in the textbook, Rony's mother and Mouli's mother were known by their son's and daughter's names respectively. They did not have their names (Kabir, 2015). Thus, women's identity was denied. Moreover, the absence of examples of successful female characters in English textbooks may manifest the unwillingness to depict female bodies (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012). In their study, Gharbavi and Mousavi also suggested that the lack of female representation in the textbooks reflects the disinclination to focus on and value women's potential. Such discrimination shows the dominance of men over women. Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that the authority of male characters in textbooks reflects a dual implication. The first one is that the supremacy of men's interests privileges men's interests, and the second implication is that the dominance of male characters reproduces women's marginalization among schoolchildren (Mihira et al., 2021).

2.2.3 Summary

To sum up, it is beyond doubt that unequal treatment of gender in textbooks can be an obstacle to gaining gender-balanced knowledge. Blumberg (2008) studied gender equality in school textbooks. His case studies from Syria, India, Romania, China, and the United States found unfair treatment between men and women in the textbooks and he mentioned this discrimination as virtually an obscure obstacle on the way to gender parity in education.

Thus, a review of the existing literature spanning from 1978 to 2021 in diversified socio-cultural contexts shows gender stereotypes. Various researchers shared their concerns regarding gender disparity in the educational materials, especially addressing gender stereotypes in EFL textbooks was viewed as a significant issue that requires attention (Setyono, 2018). Tyarakanita et al. (2021) indicated the necessity of critical analysis of educational materials to ensure equal representation of gender. These research studies justified the current study. The present study traced whether the discriminatory representation of women exists in Bangladeshi primary textbooks as the sense of gender equality needs to be addressed at the earliest stage that shapes up the mindsets of the young learners.

2.3 Perceptions of the Stakeholders

Stakeholders in the context of textbook development refer to the entities or individuals who are involved in or affected by the production and utilization of these educational materials (Xiong et al., 2022). In their study, Xiong et al. (2022) stated that

stakeholders can be unseen or visible persons including teachers and materials writers. Teachers deal with young learners in the classrooms and can easily convey gender-neutral messages. On the other hand, the role of textbook writers is highly significant to promote gender equality in textbooks as teachers follow the contents produced by the writers. Thus, the study explored the perceptions of both teachers and textbook writers from the existing literature.

2.3.1 Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Gender Representation in Textbooks

The connection between teachers' language and students' understanding was explored by numerous research studies. Teachers' linguistic usage may have an impact on learners' understanding of their surroundings (Kollberg, 2016). Existing research studies exposed that teachers found gender disparity in the textbooks which may lower girls' expectations and motivations. Teachers perceived that students consider the portrayed roles in the textbooks as their models, but they (learners) find a lack of female success stories and role models in the textbooks. For instance, Pakistani school teachers perceive that gender inequality lies in society and that social discrimination of gender is delivered and promoted through clichéd roles projected in the textbooks (Munawar, 2004). Munawar's study included the perceptions of the Headteachers, teachers and also parents of 24 selected Pakistani schools. Munawar (2004) made a content analysis of Pakistani school textbooks to determine the different gender portrayals and conducted interviews with the Headteachers, teachers, and parents to comprehend their perceptions regarding gender bias. The Headteachers found gender inequality in the textbooks. 62.5% of the Headteachers agreed and 33% of them strongly agreed that textbooks portrayed stereotyped gender roles (Munawar, 2004). 46% of the

Headteachers agreed and 42% strongly agreed that female education is badly affected by biased teaching materials. Headteachers also traced the connection between female students' dropout and the underrepresentation of women. Munawar (2004) exposed the Head teachers' perception of the reasons for female school dropouts. They (the Headteachers) blamed the early marriages of girls as one of the key reasons for dropout. Besides, they added that girls are not motivated to choose prestigious jobs and make their career plans and therefore, leave school. The Headteachers perceived that as women are not depicted in challenging professional roles such as pilot, engineer, and lawyer; female school learners do not get their role models in the textbooks and thus, visualize them as typical members of patriarchal societies. 180 other teachers from those 24 schools were also interviewed. They found the stereotypical representation of gender too. A majority (78%) of the teachers found gender disparity in the textbooks. They also found a lack of female characters in non-traditional jobs such as pilots, lawyers, engineers etc. The study also exposed that 28.3% of girls aspired to be doctors, 28% wanted to be teachers and 13.9% of girls wanted to become a nurse (Munawar, 2004). The findings of Munawar's study exposed the conventional professional roles and performances of women. Nevertheless, the teachers stated the crucial role of textbooks in accepting unconventional and challenging professions for learners. Hence, textbooks may encourage girls to disrupt the norms and persuade them to choose non-traditional and challenging jobs.

Therefore, teachers perceive that gender-equitable language and examples in textbooks may inspire girls to determine their professional and societal roles. On the contrary, the segregation of gender may subjugate women. Swedish teachers also traced linguistic discrimination of gender in textbooks. Kollberg's qualitative study (2016) on

gender equality explored how English teachers at upper secondary schools in Stockholm, Sweden reflected on gender equality issues in their teaching processes. The study included interviews with six school teachers of English. Kollberg (2016) referred to the teachers using pseudonyms like teacher A-F for confidentiality reasons. Interviewed teachers acknowledged troubles in offering gender-neutral words while teaching. One of the most prominent linguistic features mentioned by a teacher is that the generic default marker in English is usually masculine. Kollberg's study noted teacher C's observation which showed that to describe general things, masculine terms were used instead of neutral words. For example, "a text says man for human" (Kollberg, 2016, p. 9), which the teacher posed as a problem in teaching. Further, Kollberg added that "Teacher D also mentioned words such as mankind, and said that in these ways English could be seen as a male dominated language" (Kollberg, 2016, p. 9). Teacher E also provided some instances of gender equality in English. She noted the word endings such as waiter, waitress, steward, stewardess etc. and mentioned that while women have to alter their titles based on marital status, men need not change. Kollberg (2016) analyzed the collected data from the interviews of the teachers by using an inductive content analysis method. Findings revealed that all of the interviewed teachers acknowledged difficulties in teaching if the materials contain gender-biased language. However, those teachers were motivated to teach gender equality to their students as they believe that in the end, teachers meet the students in person and they (teachers) introduce the students to various social constraints and help them approach the difficulties (Kollberg, 2016). The teachers felt that it was their responsibility to share with the students that a larger world exists. Therefore, sometimes the teachers added more stories beyond the textbooks in the classrooms to teach equity and create a much more interesting worldview. However, Kollberg's study dealt with secondary-

level learners who were more mature than primary school learners. Matured learners might connect the outer world from various stories whereas young learners mostly depend on the textual materials. As teachers and learners of primary schools in Bangladesh usually use textbooks as core teaching materials, stories and exercises should represent gender equality.

Besides, Finnish teachers also found gender stereotypes in the school textbooks of Pakistani and Swedish teachers. Tainio and Karvonen (2015) investigated Finnish textbooks to trace whether any gender preference remained in the school textbooks (English, Mathematics, Educational and vocational guidance) and Finnish teachers' views and approaches towards gender beliefs presented in the textbooks. The teachers seemed to notice the prevailing gender stereotypes. To bring out teachers' perceptions regarding gender bias, the study analyzed the English language and literature textbooks of grade 3 (students about 9 years of age), grade 6 (students about 12 years of age) and grade 9 (students about 15 years of age) along with mathematics and vocational education textbooks. It applied the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which considers the use of language as a socio-cultural practice. The study applied a quantitative method to analyze the content and visuals of the textbooks. To trace teachers' attitudes, Tainio and Karvonen (2015) analyzed discussions among teachers by using conversation analysis regarding gender representation in the English language and literature textbooks. The data from the conversation consisted of a discussion between two teachers of the primary level (grades 1-6) and another between two subject teachers of the upper grades (grades 7-9). Data were collected through video-recorded discussions among teachers. To analyze the video-recorded data, Tainio and Karvonen (2015) applied conversation analysis. The teachers had their mother tongue (English)

and literature textbooks along with others. They were requested to concentrate on the representation of gender and whether it stimulated gender equality. At first, the teachers rarely talked about gender issues. However, later on, they focused on three key aspects of gender in textbooks. Firstly, they commented on the design of the book (9th-grade language and literature book) including visuals and layouts. Secondly, they commented on the orientations and contents of the literature and finally on the images of the textbooks. The teachers noticed gender discrepancies in the visuals and the representations of the boys and girls. The teachers also found discrimination in the number of images representing female and male characters. A total of 59 textbooks were analyzed (English language and literature, Mathematics and Vocational textbooks). In all textbooks, most of the pictures as well as the majority of references were found to be of males. Thus, the results of the analyses of both the textual contents and illustrations revealed a gender bias even in the most recent textbooks of Finnish schools.

Though the teachers of Sweden, Pakistan and Finland acknowledged the existence of gender bias in teaching materials, Algerian teachers had different opinions regarding gender representation in textbooks. While addressing the perceptions and insights of the EFL teachers regarding gender positioning in illustrations and visual discourses in the textbooks, Khalid and Ghania (2019) exposed that most of the teachers did not find any imbalance in the portrayal of the two genders in the case of visual exemplifications in the Algerian textbooks. Surprisingly, the content analysis revealed the opposite findings. Khalid and Ghania exposed that the majority of the images in the textbooks contained signs of discrimination against females. 25 teachers took part in the investigation of Khalid and Ghania (2019). Though most of the teachers reflected

positive views about the semiotic representation of male and female characters in the textbooks, they acknowledged that they were not aware of gender equality. The teachers were asked to comment on their perceptions regarding gender bias at the end of the questionnaire. Khalid and Ghania examined the comments of the teachers and revealed that gender positioning had little relevance to their (teachers') actual teaching concerns. Therefore, they were not aware of gender equality. However, the mismatch between the findings from content analysis and teachers' perceptions was viewed as a serious matter of concern by Khalid and Ghania (2019). They mentioned that such a "mismatch seems arguably related to the fact that gender bias is still considered a peripheral area of interest by the majority of EFL language practitioners" (Khalid & Ghania, 2019, p. 773).

Discrimination of gender was also explored by Bangladeshi school teachers. Hossain (2018) exposed teachers' perceptions regarding gender stereotyping in ELT textbooks. She collected data from eight teachers of some prominent English Medium schools in Dhaka city by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Hossain (2018) provided the teachers with a questionnaire which had two parts – The Likert scale and a comment section. Analysis of the collected data showed all the teachers found that the central characters of the stories in ELT textbooks were usually males. One respondent mentioned that surprisingly most of the leading characters were males which might indicate the impact of the long-practiced gender-stereotyped strategy. Hossain (2018) tried to explore the teachers' perceptions regarding the descriptions of male characters in ELT textbooks. There was a question for the teachers, "How are males usually described in ELT textbooks?" (Hossain, 2018. p.36). Out of 8, all the participants shared their ideas and comments regarding the male representation in ELT

textbooks. The first respondent perceived that males were not described in terms of biological sex, rather they were described based on social construction. The respondent teacher also noticed that positive as well as hyperbolic adjectives were used to describe men. Hossain (2018) asked them to provide examples. The first respondent teacher found that the male characters were shown as superior; such as they were presented as superheroes. The second respondent also found the prominence of male characters. This respondent noted down that all types of glorifying adjectives were used to describe the male characters. The third respondent also found the superiority of males; strong personal qualities and characteristics of males were demonstrated. The fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth respondents also found similar glorifying adjectives for the male characters such as – risk taker, decision maker, brave, tall, handsome, strong, and heroic etc. Hossain’s next question to the teachers was - how are females usually described in ELT textbooks? Out of eight, seven teachers answered. They (teachers) mentioned that the stories were mostly classics where the primitive idea of male and female was presented. Females were seen in house-making and rarely in teaching. “Pretty and fair” – these adjectives were used to denote women. The respondent teachers perceived that women were undermined in the ELT textbooks. Besides these, Hossain (2018) asked the teachers about the common occupations of males and females that they (teachers) found in the ELT textbooks. The respondents mentioned doctor, police, player, pilot, and engineer, mechanic as men’s occupations whereas they found women’s occupations were limited, such as - teacher, housewife, doctor and actress. Moreover, the teachers noticed basketball, playing, and cycling as men’s activities and aerobics, running and volleyball as women’s activities. The teachers also noticed that females were not portrayed as adventurous characters. Male characters were often portrayed as scholars whereas women’s achievements were not highlighted, even if the

females achieved something they are considered exceptional examples. Hence, Hossain (2018) asked the opinions of the teachers by using the Likert scale whether teaching materials needed to be updated to make them more neutral. In response, four teachers (50%) strongly agreed and four others (50%) agreed that the materials should be more neutral.

Thus, teachers in Pakistan, Sweden, Finland, and Bangladesh noticed the detrimental outcomes of gender inequality in the textbooks on female learners. Though women in Pakistan are socially marginalized, still teachers believe that textbooks may inspire female students to develop. Sweden and Finland consist of different societies where women are comparatively advantaged than Bangladeshi or Pakistani societies. However, research studies exposed gender discrimination in Swedish and Finnish textbooks. Bangladeshi teachers also perceived that women are understated in textbooks. Therefore, teachers from all of these countries (Pakistan, Sweden, Finland, and Bangladesh) felt the necessity of gender-equitable textbooks for the development of women as well as for the development of societies.

2.3.2 Textbook Writers' Perceptions Regarding Gender Representation in Textbooks

Research studies exposed the vital role of the writers' intentions and strategies in the process of textbook development. Hall (2014) pointed out that teaching materials or textbooks may play a vital role in determining learners' perceptions of gender roles in society. If the patriarchal social structure is demonstrated in the textbooks, an oppressive state of social and economic relationships will be exposed to the students.

Therefore, Lee and Catling (2016) emphasized the significance of pedagogical knowledge of the textbook authors for content development. On one hand, Lee and Catling (2016) explored the significance of the skills of the textbook authors on the structure, format and design of the textbooks, on the other hand, they focused on authors' up-to-date and timely knowledge of the subject, curriculum and pedagogical insights. Besides, Ullah and Skelton (2013) suggested that textbook writers need to be sensitized to the significance of gender messages as textbook writers and illustrators very often insert contents that reflect their attitude and beliefs in the visuals and texts, even if their goal is to be impartial and objective (Oteiza & Pinto, 2008). Therefore, perceptions of the textbook writers are very important as "perception is the reaction elicited when an important impression is perceived from without after making a connection with other materials in the consciousness (memory)" (Adediwura & Tayo, 2007, p. 165-166). Oteiza and Pinto (2008) mentioned that textbook writers insert ideological stances for the readers. Hence, writers' perceptions may transmit to the learners.

Despite having much significance, textbook writers' perceptions were overlooked in the existing literature. While examining the literature, Lee and Catling (2016) traced the negligible research into authors' purposes, influences and choices in their write-ups. However, a recent study conducted by Vu and Pham (2021) explored the perceptions of textbook writers regarding gender disparity in the existing English textbooks used in Vietnam. Earlier, Lee and Catling (2016) explored geography textbook writers' perceptions of writing textbooks in England.

Vietnamese textbook writers acknowledged the existence of gender bias in English language textbooks. They perceived that they demonstrated gender bias sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously (Vu & Pham, 2021). To explore the perceptions of the writers, Vu and Pham (2021) included a group interview with three textbook writers of four English textbooks of four levels of grades – 6, 7, 8 and 9 in Vietnam. However, the interview was not conducted formally; rather Vu and Pham (2021) led an informal conversation. However, they informed the authors regarding the purpose of the research and mentioned that their (authors') consent was required (Vu & Pham, 2021). Among three respondents, two of the writers were female and one male. All of the respondents had substantial experience as language specialists, educational experts and/or researchers. Besides, the respondents had also been occupied extensively with textbook writing and production. During the interview sessions, the textbook writers were asked about their perceptions regarding gender issues in writing the textbooks. They were also asked about the definition of gender equality from their perspectives. Throughout their study, Vu and Pham dealt with the data with fairness and research ethics. They referred to the interviewed writers as authors 1, 2 and 3.

The interviewed textbook writers in the study of Vu and Pham (2021) acknowledged that gender was not a focus to them while writing. During the conversation, author 2 mentioned that she rarely paid attention to gender issues at first. However, gender concern came to her naturally when she designed an exercise which contained 5 sentences; she used the subject 'he' four times and 'she' only once in those sentences. Vu and Pham (2021) noted that author 3 in their study said that she was somewhat aware of how 'he' and 'she' was decided. However, author 3 also mentioned that the use of the pronouns 'he' and 'she' was a habitual fact, a natural practice. For

example, while writing about cooking, the author chose the pronoun ‘she’ to refer to the cook; in contrast, while discussing sports, the author chose the pronoun ‘he’ to refer to the athlete. Author 3 further added that she often used ‘he’ rather than ‘she’ as the subject who did strong action. Thus, the author associated masculine pronouns with a lot of strength and energy. Vu and Pham stated that “authors attributed this unconscious habit to being rooted in Vietnamese culture, which always sees females as the weaker sex and one of their main responsibilities is cooking for the family” (Vu & Pham, 2021, p. 16).

However, the Vietnamese English textbook writers stated that although gender bias was a social and natural practice for them, they increased awareness during their writing time. Consequently, in the next phase, as the team observed some occurrences in certain units of the textbooks, the authors thought about substituting the images of a few famous men with those of eminent women. Further, author 2 mentioned that she started considering gender issues and tried to use equal numbers of the pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’ and the same numbers of male and female characters. The study of Vu and Pham (2021) noted that both author 2 and author 3 became more self-critic and observant to include more female characters in sports and other activities which were traditionally performed only by male characters.

Then, the interviewed textbook authors were asked about their definitions of gender equality. In response, author 2 said that “it means equal opportunities for everyone in the society, but how each person makes use of those opportunities greatly depends on their characteristics, preferences, and their living and learning environment” (Vu & Pham, 2021, p. 16). Author 2 agreed with the definition of gender

equality with author 3. She (author 2) mentioned that gender equality refers to the same rights and responsibilities of both sexes. Author 2 further added that “if there are certain jobs, fields, in certain times and places, they should be given to those of more capability or those who will thrive in those conditions, regardless they are male or female” (Vu & Pham, 2021, p. 16).

Hence, the interviewed textbook authors (authors 2 and 3) in Vu and Pham’s study were found to develop a sense of gender equality in the second phase while reviewing the textbooks. Earlier, they were not conscious of gender issues. However, author 1 focused on another issue the biased representation of gender in the English language textbooks. He (author 1) mentioned that textbook writers had to prioritize the content, terminology, lexical and grammatical items along with the culture in the textbooks rather than gender related issues. Thus, gender equality was not given priority in the textbooks.

Further, Vu and Pham (2021) mentioned that though the interviews indicated that gender parity was not considered the main concern during the process of textbook writing, all three interviewed authors acknowledged the need for incorporating gender-equitable content in English textbooks. However, in their study, Vu and Pham traced both external and internal factors for the lack of equal gender indexes in the textbooks. External factors included the priorities of other elements such as topics of the stories, vocabulary and dictions, grammar and even culture, as gender equality was mostly viewed as an area distinct from those elements. Internal factors included the authors’ own conscious and subconscious gender beliefs. Vu and Pham (2021) also mentioned

that the interviews of the authors also revealed the exhibitions of patriarchal ideologies in the contemporary societies of Vietnam which were reflected in the textbooks.

Besides, the necessity of consciousness and motivation among the textbook writers was traced by Kollberg (2016) and Lee and Catling (2016). Lee and Catling investigated geography textbook writers' perceptions in their study and found a lack of literature regarding this. Though Lee and Catling's study did not focus on gender issues, it emphasized the importance of authors' updated subject knowledge and pedagogical perceptions along with the structure of a textbook. The study also focused on the motivations of textbook writers for producing textbooks. The present study also focused on the motivations, purposes and consciousness of the textbook writers to ensure gender equality in the textbooks as Lee and Catling mentioned that "an informative way to understand the pedagogy that underpins a textbook is to investigate the author's underlying purpose and philosophy" (Lee & Catling, 2016, p. 52). While conducting their study, Lee and Catling (2016) investigated the perspectives of seven writers of English primary and secondary Geography textbooks of England. The study enquired into textbook writers' motivations and enthusiasms for geographic learning as well as expertise and skills in textbook writing, and influences on and challenges they faced in textbook development. In their study, Lee and Catling (2016) focused on both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of the authors. One of the intrinsic motivations was mentioned as 'to enable pupils to become more interested in the world in which they live'. Besides this, one of the extrinsic motivations is mentioned as to inspire pupils' environment and critical awareness'. These perceptions of the textbook writers emphasize encouraging learners and at the same time building critical awareness among them (students). To build awareness among learners, textbook writers should be

conscious of the gender issues and environment and as the language used in the textbooks may impact how students realize their environments (Kollberg, 2016). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) found that schools may directly administer the culture to the students. Hall (2014) viewed materials the textbooks as influential tools to deliver gender-stereotyped language. Therefore, conscious choice of content by textbook writers is needed to eliminate the unfair account of gender.

Like many other countries of the world, textbook writers' voices are unheard in Bangladesh. In examining the literature regarding gender representations in textbooks, it is found that writers' perceptions have been disregarded. However, both textbook researchers and teachers in Bangladesh mentioned the importance of the stance of textbook writers to eliminate gender bias from textbooks. Kabir (2015) suggested creating awareness among textbook writers. He recommended replacing gender-biased elements from the textbooks 'to create a nation, not corrupted by the politics of gender, linguistically, socially and culturally'. Hossain (2018) worked on teachers' perceptions regarding gender bias in school textbooks and suggested the role of the writers and editors. In her study, Hossain mentioned that teachers acclaimed that the editors of the ELT textbooks should represent both female and male characters equally to make the learners conscious. Against this backdrop, this research study aims at unveiling textbook writers' perceptions regarding gender bias in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

2.4 Perceptions of the Stakeholders Regarding the Ways of Enhancing Gender Equality in Textbooks

As mentioned earlier, in this study, stakeholders include the teachers and textbook writers. Hence, the perceptions of both the teachers and textbook writers regarding the ways of enhancing gender parity in textbooks have been discussed in the following sections:

2.4.1 Recommendations of the Teachers

Teachers from different countries raised their voices to eradicate unequal representation of gender from textbooks. Pakistani teachers suggested including more female characters in the textbooks. They also recommended to - have equal representation of male/female roles, including more renowned and successful female characters as the idols of the learners, increasing the number of female references, enhance the female professionals, increase the number of female writers, etc. (Munawar, 2004).

Teachers of Stockholm (Kollberg, 2016) adopted a few strategies to reduce gender disparity. Firstly and most importantly, they tried to raise awareness about gender equality. They encouraged the students to analyze the texts from different perspectives. They emphasized feminist perspectives while discussing and interpreting textual materials. Secondly, they incorporated discussions on day-to-day life works with the learners and included discussion on ‘power’ in the classroom lectures. Thirdly, the teachers attempted to contextualize the reading materials. They generated discussions to increase students’ awareness.

Though Finland has a reputation for establishing gender equality in society, Tainio and Karvonen (2015) exposed gender bias in school textbooks. Teachers in Finland were able to notice a biased representation of gender in the textual materials. The Finnish teachers recommended making neutral conceptions of gender and sexuality in the textbooks.

The necessity of gender-neutral textbooks was emphasized by teachers in Bangladesh. Hossain (2018) brought out Bangladeshi teachers' opinions regarding enhancing gender equality in ELT materials. Eight teachers participated in Hossain's study and they suggested updating the textbooks to enhance gender equality as they found a disparity in the existing books. One of the respondents explicitly emphasized that the editors and the writers of English language textbooks should reconsider gender related issues while choosing the stories. The respondent also suggested picking stories from both male and female writers. The teacher also added that in formative age, young learners will judge and view the world from different perspectives. Otherwise, they (learners) might be affected intuitively and consequently, they will develop pejorative and judgmental abilities (Hossain, 2018).

2.4.2 Recommendations of the Textbook Writers

As there is a lack of literature regarding the perceptions of textbook writers, their recommendations for eliminating gender bias are also unexplored. However, as the very recent study of Vu and Pham (2021) explored the perceptions of the Vietnamese textbook writers, their (writers') recommendations have been discussed below:

The interviewed textbook authors in Vu and Pham's study recommended raising awareness among the students and the teachers regarding gender equality in the textbooks. Alongside, they suggested that textbook writers can promote gender equality through the contents (both pictures and the texts) of the textbooks. As an example, author 3 in Vu and Pham's study mentioned that if the textbook authors show both male and female football teams side by side in the textbooks, learners will perceive equality subtly. She further added that children might not be able to understand gender equality from the texts or pictures instantly, but subconsciously they will develop a sense of gender equality. Further, author 3 recommended that if female characters are positioned in important prestigious social roles in the texts, they will gradually develop confidence. Consequently, they will realize that if they have talents and willpower, they can reach higher-ranked positions, irrespective of gender. In their study, Vu and Pham mentioned that such gender-neutral content can convey the gender notion of gender equality to the learners. Author 3 stated that through such gender-balanced texts, young children in primary and secondary schools can be made conscious of gender equality in an implicit way (Vu & Pham, 2021).

The perceptions of author 2 in Vu and Pham's study echoed the perceptions of author 3. She (author 2) also focused on breaking the gender norms in the textbooks, but indirectly and gradually. Author 2 added that if the textbooks bring the change gradually, students will not be shocked to come out from the traditional patriarchal conventions and practices.

Finally, awareness of the teachers regarding gender equality was highlighted by Vu and Pham. All three interviewed writers in their study recommended raising awareness through proper instructions and clear guidelines in the teacher books. They also suggested arranging training and workshops for teachers to demonstrate the

significance of gender equality. Author 3 talked about teachers' role and suggested that teachers should not only focus on the textual contents, rather they should also notice and highlight other contents such as gender equality. Thus, Vu and Pham (2021) suggested that if the textbook authors give much attention to gender parity while preparing the contents and both the teachers and learners are aware of gender issues, the traditional gender norms can be broken and equality can be ensured.

2.4.3 Summary

Thus, the literature on the perceptions of both teachers and textbook writers across the world exposed that they (teachers and writers) felt the necessity of ensuring gender equality in textbooks. However, they acknowledged their limitations in promoting equality. The stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers) mentioned that consciously or subconsciously they are biased as they belong to traditional patriarchal societies. Nevertheless, the findings from the existing literature revealed that both the teachers and textbook writers emphasized raising awareness to promote gender equality in the textbooks.

Hence, a review of the existing literature exposed that gender issues are meticulously related to the socio-cultural context of a country and the power and authority of individuals. "An understanding of gender perception, gender role assignment, and gender subversion can be achieved only within a given socio-cultural context" (Sadiqi 2017, p.1). Thus, to investigate gender representation in the textbooks, it is essential to understand the socio-cultural, political and historical context of Bangladesh along with the use of language by the textbook writers. The blending of language and culture was viewed as an integral part of the meaning-making process by Sultana (2019). Therefore, a conceptual framework has been drawn in the current

doctoral study to understand the gendered discourses in the textbooks and the social construction of gender in Bangladeshi society.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

Social stratification and power were considered important variables of gender by various researchers. Mills and Mullany (2011) revealed that a patriarchal society shows the complete powerlessness of women. Sadiqi (2017) also traced the close link between gender studies and sources of power and authority. In her study on the theoretical framework for research on gender/women issues, Sadiqi (2017) stated that theories cannot be detached from specific sociocultural contexts that create and maintain power and authority. As a consequence, gender representation in textbooks was explored through various theoretical lenses by different researchers that focus on social relations, unequal power and domination. Thus, the current study drew a conceptual framework based on the three theoretical frames. The three theoretical frameworks are - Critical theory, Foucault's concept of power and feminist linguistic approaches. All three of these theories focus on power relations, justice, and social change.

Critical theory, for example, demonstrates that unequal power relationships in society create oppression. Foucauldian theory specifically makes the connection between language and power. Foucault's concept of power has been recognized by feminists as well. Mills and Mullany (2011) surveyed several theoretical approaches that feminist linguists had drawn upon. They developed approaches for the analysis of the interplay between language and gender. Language and gender research focuses on feminism and works on feminist ideologies (Mills & Mullany, 2011). Feminism is

concerned with equality and language plays a significant role to promote equality. “Language works to ‘normalize’ unequal gender roles” (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 26). Feminist linguistic approaches view language as a tool to convey beliefs and social practices and language can raise awareness among people.

Therefore, these theoretical frameworks allowed a better understanding of social reality and power relations in society. At the same time, these theories also helped the researcher identify ways of raising awareness regarding gender discrimination among the stakeholders.

2.5.1 Critical Theory

Critical theory is found one of the predominant schools of thought in social science research. It is a framework used for explaining the hierarchical nature of social relations and examining unequal power relationships and oppressions (Crowley & King, 2018). Critical theory was suggested as one of the key philosophical underpinnings to examine social and contextual realities in school textbooks by Nicholls (2005). The critical theory traces the errors in contemporary social reality. It also considers consciousness as a revolutionary and an emancipating force. Consciousness, truth and justice are found necessary elements for social change by critical theorists (Bohman, 2005).

Thus, unequal social and economic relations were exposed through critical theory by textbook researchers. Apple (1986) connected the relationship between school curriculum, pedagogy, and social inequality. He analyzed the relationship between curriculum, class, gender and teaching. In his study, Apple (1986) traced that teaching became ‘women’s work’ (especially in elementary schools) in several countries. He considered a manifestation of women as an attempt to place managerial

limitations on women's work in various fields and particularly in teaching. Thus, he exposed gender exploitation in teaching as women have been treated markedly unequally. Along with teaching, Apple also explored different dimensions of textbooks. He mentioned two elements as the notion of 'texts'. Firstly, 'text' is the actual textbook itself. Apple's second notion included the influences and decisions of the educators, curriculum developers and policymakers to develop the content of the textbooks. Moreover, Apple (1986) connected textbooks and society. He depicted how textbooks were influenced by capitalist society. Apple developed a critical theory of education and made a critical examination of how teaching and textbook knowledge were controlled in capitalist America. Thus, Apple, one of the proponents of critical theory brought insight regarding gender inequality, power, influence and political economy and social reality in the process of textbook production. Nicholls (2005) also suggested that critical theory examined social and contextual realities in school textbooks.

The construction between social reality, power, authority and textbooks was also focused on by Nicholls (2005). While discussing different theories for analyzing school textbooks, Nicholls focused on critical investigation. Critical theory is underpinned to expose social injustice wherever it happens and it considers the school textbook as one of the arenas where the struggle for impartiality continues (Nicholls, 2005). However, to investigate gender representation in textbooks, a few other theoretical lenses were also mentioned by Nicholls along with critical theory. These are – positivism, postmodernism, hermeneutics and neo-hermeneutics (Nicholls, 2005). Among these, positivist researchers showed a neutral and passive role between a subject and an object. Here, a subject stands for the textbook writer, student or teacher whereas an object stands for school textbooks. However, the limitations of this theory were that positivists only evaluated scientific validity. Therefore, social and contextual realities

were often overlooked. The proponents of postmodernism emphasized the plurality of knowledge. According to this theory, differences and diversities are celebrated in and across the textbooks. Hermeneutic theorists believed that the subject's pre-understanding and prejudices will necessarily affect the interpretations as well as objects i.e. the textbooks. Besides, neo-hermeneutic theory offered something closer to hermeneutics in that subject, knowledge and power (textbook analyst) are regarded in a circular, active and ongoing relationship with an object (textbook). Therefore, material developers' knowledge, perception, attitude, beliefs or values have influences on developing the content of the textbook. Thus, conscious textbook writers will be able to expose the truth and social injustice. Nevertheless, critical theory focused on raising the consciousness of the prejudicial and repressive state of social and economic relations whereas positivism, postmodernism, hermeneutics and neo-hermeneutics did not focus on that.

Thus, critical theory exposes unequal power relationships in society. This is a significant lens for the current study as such power relationships are highly connected to gender and discourses. One of the key components of critical theory is the idea that education is a site of struggle between different power groups. This struggle is reflected in the representation of gender in textbooks, which can reinforce dominant power structures and promote inequality. Feminist-critical and poststructuralist scholars also focused on the impact of power relationships in gender and language education (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004). In their study, Davis and Skilton-Sylvester (2004) stated that "research on power relations can reveal real or perceived strategic appeals to differences and document ways in which gender differences are constructed in interaction" (p. 387). Besides, Foucault (1978) explored the close link between power

relations and discourse which also worked as a significant framework in the current study.

2.5.2 Foucault's View of Power

A close relationship between language, knowledge and power was emphasized by Foucault (1978). Foucauldian theory manifested that discourse i.e. speech and writing are not simply the channels for communication rather discourse is linked to power. Such power is not simply an instrument of oppression or domination, but it is a pervasive and subtle force that permeates all aspects of society, including education (Foucault, 1977). In this sense, power is not something that is wielded by a few individuals, but rather it is a pervasive force that operates throughout society and shapes our understanding of the world.

This idea of power as a pervasive force has significant implications for the analysis of gender representation in textbooks. According to Foucauldian theory, power operates through the production and dissemination of knowledge, which in turn shapes our understanding of the world and reinforces dominant power structures. In the context of teaching materials, this means that the representation of gender is shaped by the power dynamics that are at play in the production and dissemination of these materials.

Foucault's concept of power was used to analyze gender equality in textbooks by Kollberg (2016). Kollberg's study on 'gender equality in the EFL classroom' drew on the concept that discourses can create and manifest power relations in society. Society controls individuals through power. Foucault developed his view of power as productive rather than repressive. He criticized the traditional repressive power which

imposes restrictions. If power is exercised from one source that is viewed as oppression by Foucault (1978). Foucault (1977) also revealed that power and domination may turn an individual into a docile body.

However, Foucault made few references to women or gender related issues in his writings, but his view of the relations between power, body and sexuality stirred widespread feminist interest (Armstrong, 2005). Feminist theorists have drawn some useful conceptual tools from Foucault's treatment of power for analyzing sexuality and the social construction of gender. Armstrong (2005) revealed that Foucault's concept of body, power and sexuality has been applied by feminists to examine existing forms of social dominance over women's bodies as well as minds. Thus, Foucault treated power, body and sexuality as the straight locus of social dominance and control.

Hence, Foucault's concept of power helped the researcher uncover the underlying power structures that shaped textual materials and understand how they reinforce gender norms and stereotypes. Therefore, to analyze power, domination and social control over women in the textbooks, the current study worked on the concept of Foucault's view of power, body and sexuality.

2.5.3 Feminist Linguistic Approaches

Domination of one gender, power and social stratification are treated as important variables in Feminist linguistic approaches. Mills and Mullany (2011) worked on feminist linguistic approaches and stated that 'gendered language' conveys the discourse of patriarchy where women become disempowered. They showed a range of diverse positions that feminist linguists can adopt; these are – sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology and discourse analysis. However, the current study used Mills

and Mullany's discourse analysis tactic. While discussing discourse analysis Mills and Mullany also presented different approaches, such as - feminist discourse analysis, feminist critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis and feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis and pragmatics. The current study traced Mills and Mullany's feminist discourse analysis and feminist critical discourse analysis to understand gender representation in textbooks.

2.5.3.1 Feminist Discourse Analysis. Feminist discourse analysis is a method of analyzing how gender is represented in discourse, including language, texts, and communication practices (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This approach enables the understanding of the social construction of gender. It connects discourse with social context. "Feminist discourse analysis examines the way that discourses can appear to be gendered, leading to particular types of utterance in a particular context" (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p.77). Thus, feminist discourse analysis is used to analyze how language, discourse, and text contribute to the construction of gender identities, roles, and relationships, as well as to examine how these constructions are perpetuated and challenged (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Discourse has a variety of meanings and the actual meanings can be comprehended through the uses of language and social context (Sunderland, 2004). Mills and Mullany (2011) also referred to Sunderland's concepts of 'gendered discourses' in their work. Sunderland (2004) preferred the term 'gendered' to 'gender-related'. She pointed out that 'gendered' is stronger as it describes that 'gender is already a part of the thing'. Sunderland (2004) referred to the 'discourse of gender difference' as a significant lens to view social reality.

Thus, feminist discourse analysis in analyzing gender representation in textbooks is a valuable lens that offers insights into how gender is depicted in these materials. Hence, this approach provided a comprehensive framework in the current study for examining how gender is manifested in textbooks through the use of language and other multi-modal resources.

2.5.3.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis. Power and social stratification are considered the key concepts to critical understandings of discourse. “Power interferes both gender and discourse” (Sunderland, 2006, p.30). Feminism which has inspired gender and language studies deals with the notion of power and looks for a balance of power through mitigating domination (Sunderland, 2006; Shrewsbury, 1987). Gender and power are also connected to social context. The traditional concept of ‘power’ systematically oppresses women (Narayan, 2004). Thus, women’s contributions and knowledge are ignored in a patriarchal society. In her study on feminist epistemology, Narayan (2004) mentioned that the contribution of women has been distorted as inferior and secondary to that of men. Such a biased notion is often represented in discourses. Thus, feminist critical discourse analysis examines how male power is manifested in discourses. Gender neutral discourse may highlight the potential and contributions of both women and men. Beliefs, identities and critical thinking of human beings are conveyed through languages as “our identities and our ways of looking at the world are formed through language, it is through the analysis of language that we can describe and challenge conventional beliefs and representations” (Mills and Mullany, 2011, p. 78).

Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been widely applied by feminist linguists to do a critical examination of gender. Moreover, CDA enables exploring the relationship between social practice and discourse, this approach also enables the

examination of social processes and elements of discourse (Fairclough, 1995). CDA theorists often analyze texts and dialogues meticulously. This also focuses on linguistic elements such as the use of nouns, pronouns, verbs, and adjectives and finds gender discrimination through diction. Mills and Mullany (2011) provided some examples, such as – “If a text consistently describes women using a particular transitivity choice, for example, as the recipient of an action, ‘He looked at her, ‘They admired her’, rather than as the actor, ‘She travelled’, then this begins to build up an overall image of passiveness and inaction.” (Mills & Mullany, 2011, p. 78).

Besides, patriarchy is another significant concern for CDA theorists. Gendered language conveys discourse of patriarchy where the success of women is shown under the leadership of a supportive husband. The discourses of patriarchy even portray empowered women as powerless. In her study, Iyer (2009) noticed that the feminine attributes of women entrepreneurs were focused on instead of their entrepreneurial capacity in Indian media. She worked on a sample of 46 written media texts on female entrepreneurs in Indian print magazines and newspapers. Iyer (2009) found a sign of prevalent discourses of patriarchy and femininity in her sample. She mentioned that “Indian women entrepreneurs are depicted as operating within a cohesive patriarchal structure, often through a successful marriage with a supportive husband who is doing well, and businesses are represented as with no financial or start-up problems” (Iyer, 2009, p. 251). She also mentioned that ‘the marital relationship is delineated along the binaries of power and powerlessness’ (p. 251). Moreover, it was found that the husband arranges and fixes the wife’s business and buys equipment, sets up the industry and employs workers. Iyer mentioned the role of the husband as a ‘male duty’ which demonstrates power. On the other hand, the wife is depicted as ‘decorating the place and managing’ (Iyer, 2009). Similar stereotypical roles of Indian women were also

exposed by Narayan (2004). She stated that “women are seen as the cornerstones of the spiritual well-being of their husbands and children, admired for their supposedly higher moral, religious, and spiritual qualities, and so on” (Narayan, 2004, p.215). Furthermore, Narayan added that feminism has a much slighter base in most non-western countries. Nonwestern feminists consider and perform within the context of influential tradition and view distinct functions of men and women. She mentioned that in non-western countries if men are shown sharing household chores and child-rearing roles with women, they (men) will be misunderstood. Such patriarchal social order represents the inferior and powerless position of women.

Thus, patriarchy marginalizes women. Shrewsbury (1987) criticized the traditional patriarchal social structure. Shrewsbury’s theory of community viewed male domination as a tragedy as such domination marginalizes others (females). He also focused on the empowerment and leadership of both women and men. Empowerment is meant to ensure equal opportunities for all people in the community. The goal of empowerment is to “increase the power of all actors, not to limit the power of some” (Shrewsbury, 1987, p. 8). Leadership is a special form of empowerment that enables the authority of both men and women. Shrewsbury’s theory of leadership seemed to change the traditional roles of women and strives for fairness of civil rights and responsibilities for both men and women as empowerment is only possible when there is a sense of mutuality and equality. Thus, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) has been applied by feminist linguists for examining gender parity.

Discourse analysis exposes the connection between language and social contexts, whereas, CDA relates to power and discourse in an explicit way along with social relations. Critical Discourse Analysis views the relationship between power and discourse as one of the crucial factors (Van Dijk, 1993; Habibie, 2016; Mills &

Mullany, 2011). CDA studies the relationship between discourse and social aspects like ideologies, identities and implicit power (Fairclough, 2013). Moreover, CDA is concerned with inequality. Therefore, this study used Mills and Mullany's concepts of discourse analysis and feminist critical discourse analysis to explore social practices and unequal power relationships in the primary textbooks.

Hence, it has been noticed that all the above theories/approaches – Critical theory, Foucauldian theory and the feminist linguistic approaches criticized unequal power relations, oppression, and marginalization of one gender in the patriarchal society and seek to create a balanced, gender-neutral society to empower women, reveal the truth and ensure the same rights and choices for both women and men. Critical theory viewed consciousness as a liberating force which can eliminate domination and oppression. The traditional concept of power was criticized by both Foucault and feminist linguists. Foucault (1978) viewed that power is not repressive, rather than it is productive which promotes equality for both males and females. Similarly, feminist linguists advocated for the 'equal opportunities discourse' where the success of a woman is not shown under the leadership of her powerful and supportive husband (Mills and Mullany, 2011). Thus, the above theories will be helpful for the researchers to observe the construction of language and the social construction of gender in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, the framework for the current study has been drawn from the key concepts of the critical theory, Foucauldian theory and feminist linguistic approaches.

2.5.4 Framework of the Current Study

Gender inequality is deeply rooted in Bangladeshi societies where women are supposed to be pressurized at the hands of patriarchal norms (Azad, 1995; Chowdhury, 2009; Chowdhury, 2018b). Hussein (2022) worked on the social construction of gender

in Bangladesh. She explored that the social constructionist approach prescribed certain behaviors and practices of femininity of women. Women are oppressed, exploited and dominated by men through private and public patriarchy in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2009). In her study, Chowdhury (2009) explained that private patriarchy is based on household production where men show dominance over women individually and “public patriarchy is a form whereby the expropriation of women is performed collectively” (p. 602).

Nevertheless, the historical literature revealed that matriarchy existed in ancient Bengal from 1200-900 B.C. Later on, patriarchy emerged. In fact, men created patriarchy to demonstrate their power and oppress women (Azad, 1995). Men perceive power as their right. Azad (1995) added that in patriarchal societies, men do not consider women as human beings; men are proud of manhood and consider themselves lords of the families and enjoy the subjugation of women (Azad, 1995). Besides, Azad (1995) also talked about linguistic patriarchy, i.e., men are associated with positive attributes such as – intelligence, wisdom, strengths, and activeness in discourses. On the other hand, women are attributed as simple, passive, and weak in society. Patriarchy also excludes women from challenging activities and occupations. Further, a patriarchal society enforces women to abide by the rules and regulations made by men. Such rules were made thoughtfully to oppress women (Azad, 1995). Thus, patriarchy emerged to make women dependent and oppressed. Participation of women became limited in the social, economic, political and religious institutions after the emergence of patriarchy (Falgunee, 2018); even women’s achievements are measured under the leadership of their husbands (Mills & Mullany, 2011). As stated in section 1.9 of chapter 1, society classifies gender roles and distinguishes male-female activities and performances. However, despite having restrictions and oppression, Bengali women took part in

various movements; for instance, a large number of Bengali women actively participated in the anti-British movement. Consequently, female leadership emerged in Bangladesh. At present, the prime minister, the education minister and the leader of the opposition are women in this country. Along with politics, women's contribution is remarkable to the economy of Bangladesh. Though women are discriminated against by men in the patriarchal society, the 'new women' in contemporary Bangladesh are enjoying self-empowerment in many cases. Both Chowdhury (2018b) and Hussein (2022) exposed 'new womanhood' in Bangladesh in their studies.

Hussein's (2022) 'new women' belong to the middle class and they are part of a new and powerful and influential social group in urban areas. They construct their class identity and occupy a privileged status in the society they live in. "Gender roles within this class are also changing as more women enter public arenas through education and paid employment, affecting women's status, opportunities and the domestic division of labour" (Hussein, 2022, p.1). However, Hussein noticed that the transition of Bangladeshi women is not focused on in many cases. She explored that women of Bangladesh primarily exist in global literature as a victim of patriarchy who needs rescue. Such "dichotomous representations of womanhood are discernable in the social and cultural discourses of women's emancipation in Bangladesh" (Chowdhury, 2018b, p. 48). On the one hand, women are subjugated and on the other hand, they are significantly contributing to the socio-economic transformations of the country.

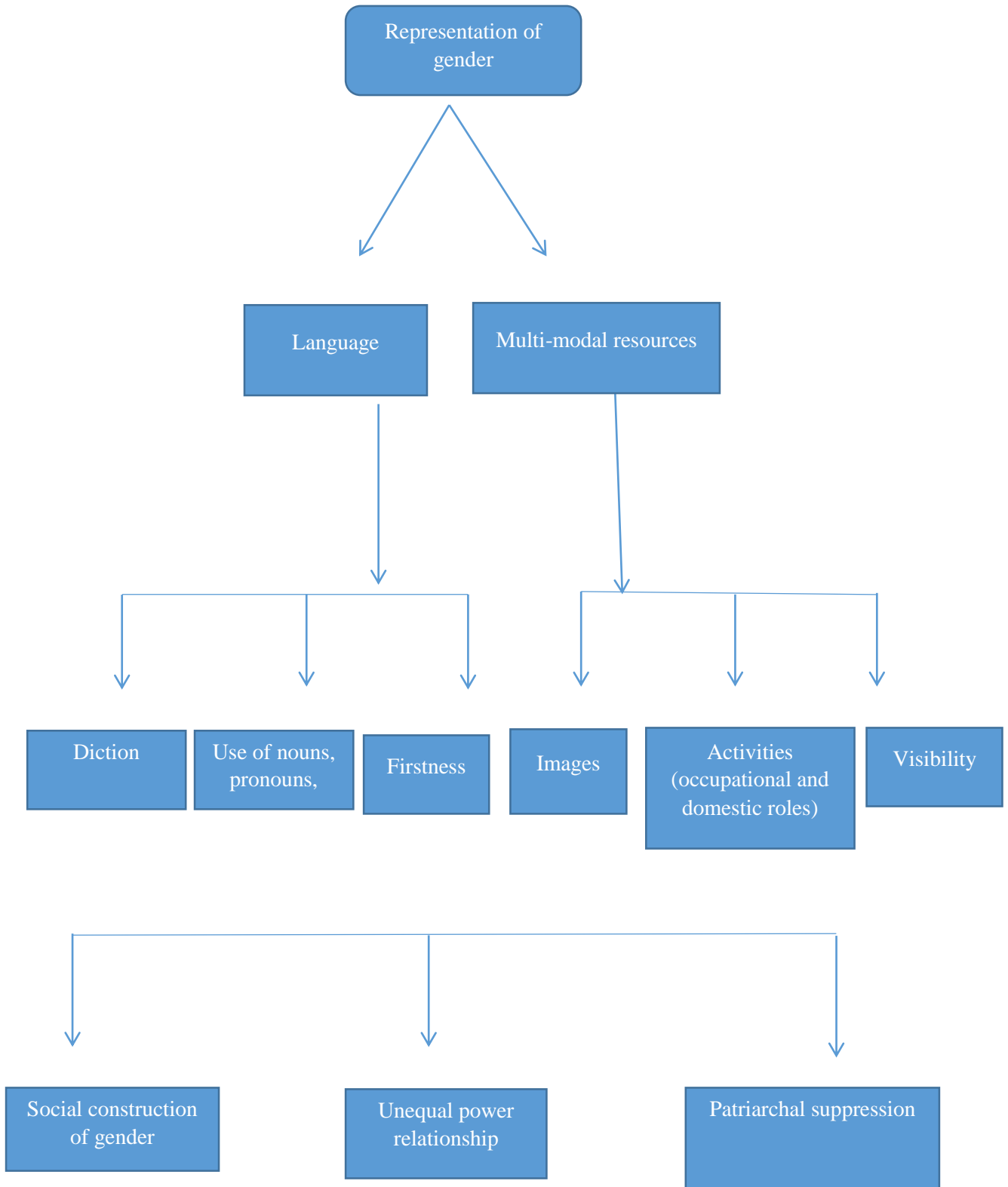
Hussein (2022) identified 'new womanhood' as a symbol of transformation, change and endurance. She also viewed "new women as agents who negotiate with various gender, culture and religious norms that surround them within the changing society of South Asia, particularly Bangladesh" (Hussein, 2022, p. 3). However, this is not the scenario for the whole country; poor women (especially from rural areas) are

still suffering from poverty, and conventional and repressive patriarchal social structures (Hussein, 2022). Nonetheless, the rapid growth of the readymade garment industry (RMG) sector is transforming poor women's roles and status in Bangladesh. The majority of the employees in the RMG sectors are poor rural-urban migrant women. Besides, the greatest proportion of Bangladeshi women is working in the agricultural sector. Thus, Bangladeshi women are contributing to three sectors: the agricultural sector, the RMG sector and the service sector. While poor and less educated or illiterate women are working in the agricultural and RMG sector, middle-class educated women are working in the service sector. Thus, all classes of women in Bangladesh are contributing to economic growth and poverty reduction. The current study found it necessary to highlight such contributions of women in textbooks as ignoring their accomplishments might marginalize women and convey the wrong message to young learners.

Thus, the socio-cultural background and history of Bangladeshi women enabled the researcher to understand the social construction of gender in Bangladesh. At the same time, reviewing the existing literature exposed the presence of gender disparity in school textbooks across the globe. Textbook researchers revealed gender inequality in textbooks through the use of language and different multi-modal resources used by textbook writers. Consequently, teachers convey biased messages to the learners and inequality spreads. The current doctoral study developed the following conceptual framework to investigate how the social construction, as well as the linguistic construction of gender, is reflected in *EfT* the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh:

Figure: 2.1

The Conceptual Framework of the Study



The framework first focused on the use of language. Though Lakoff's (1973) deficit theory viewed men's language as standard and women's language as deficient, feminist critical discourse analysis viewed such discriminatory languages as patriarchal discourses. Thus, the diction used by the writers in the textbooks should manifest equality with regard to the frequency of male referring nouns, pronouns, male-female appearances etc. as unequal languages demonstrate the power of one gender. Therefore, linguistic features are very significant for textbook researchers; however, analyzing other multi-modal resources as well as the use of language is significant too. Integration of language along with other resources (such as images, actions and social roles of genders) was emphasized by O'Halloran (2013) to achieve meaning as meaning is achieved from multiple resources. Besides, language is connected to an individual's identity and identity can be understood from the social context. Language learning, in fact, serves a dual purpose: it enables individuals to not only acquire linguistic knowledge and skills, but also to develop the capacity to express and shape their social and cultural identities through the cultivation of critical cultural awareness (Xiong et al., 2022). Sultana (2014) stated that individuals are socially constructed and thus, language is related to the construction of society. Further, Sultana (2018) revealed that language and identity are focused on applied linguistics, unlike the structuralist approach. She added that in the structuralist approach linguistic features and cultural features were referred to separately which hinders the meaning-making process. In contrast, post-structuralist theory conceptualizes the mutual relationship between language and identity (Hall, 1996). Sultana (2018) further argued that meaning in any language is achieved from the social context and practices. Thus, language cannot be separated from an individual's identity and socio-cultural context. Davis and Skilton-Sylvester (2004) also argued that gender behavior is not universal rather it depends on

the social construction of gender. Tyarakanita et al. (2021) explored the connection between the post-structuralist view of language and gender and textbooks. They stated that “from a critical post-structuralist perspective, gender representation socially shapes how people perceive gender roles, and textbooks can play an agentic role in shaping this perception” (Tyarakanita et al., 2021, p.1141). Thus, Xiong et al. (2022) viewed textbooks as vehicles to transmit values and cultural knowledge. Furthermore, materials developers also emphasized the significant role of combining real-life language and cultural context and social issues in the teaching materials (Harmer, 2007; Tomlinson, 2012). Thus, the framework of the study included both linguistic analyses as well as the social construction of gender in the context of Bangladesh.

Therefore, this conceptual lens allowed the researcher a finer understanding of how the social constructions of gender, unequal power relationships and patriarchal oppression have been represented in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh through language and multi-modal resources. Critical analysis of language based on power relations enabled the researcher to get a deeper understanding of everyday experiences, strains, contradictions or struggles that otherwise might go unobserved to reveal how power relations function (Vu & Pham, 2021). On the other hand, analyzing both texts and images through a multimodality view was considered a form of communication that carries social meaning (Vu & Pham, 2021). Thus, the study investigated gender representation by analyzing language and multi-modal resources to explore the social construction of gender, and patriarchal power relations in the context of Bangladesh. Though Chowdhury (2018b) and Hussein (2022) traced the ‘new womanhood’ in contemporary Bangladesh, they could not deny the existence of patriarchal oppression in various forms. For example, both Chowdhury (2018b) and

Hussein (2022) explored that even working women in Bangladesh are the victim of patriarchy in many cases.

Though all classes of women (poor, middle class, less educated and educated) are contributing to Bangladeshi economy, Hussein (2022) revealed the control of men on the wages of women and working women's absence of time for relaxation in Bangladesh. Women's lower wages were viewed as one of the significant features of patriarchy by Chowdhury (2009). Patriarchy was conceptualized as another form of capitalism by Chowdhury (2009) and she added that the capitalist society imposes lower wages for women in the labor market. Chowdhury further added that due to lower wages, women remain dependent on men and they have to carry out all sorts of domestic responsibilities. Besides, marriage is considered to ensure security to many women in Bangladesh and they (women) occupy much time in unpaid domestic work. Such unpaid works remain disregarded and hidden as society perceives these works as a wifely duty. Thus, the family becomes the institution of patriarchy where men dominate over women (Azad, 1995; Chowdhury, 2009; Sultana, 2010). However, in her study, Chowdhury (2009) pointed out that to resist patriarchy, many Bangladeshi women are now educating themselves and entering into the paid labor force. Nevertheless, Chowdhury argued that education and even paid jobs could not liberate women as patriarchy exists in society in different forms. She revealed that in contemporary societies, though parents are getting concerned in educating their daughters, their goal is to search for a better bridegroom for their daughters. In many cases, husbands spend and control their wives' earnings directly or indirectly. Such control enables men to dominate women and reinforces patriarchy (Cain et al., 1979). In their study, Cain et al. added that patriarchy describes an unequal power practice and resources in the families in Bangladesh where men uphold power and capital and women remain

powerless and dependent on men. Men's control of assets, women's labor and income are mentioned as the material base of patriarchy by Cain et al. (1979).

Nevertheless, observing the recent successes and achievements of Bangladeshi women, Hussein (2022) urged to reconstruct Bangladeshi women's position as womanhood is no longer a space of 'liminality and subordination' for all Bangladeshi women. The social construction of the identity of those 'new women' in colonial and post-colonial Bengal represents women's growth and progress and indicates the benchmark of success (Chowdhury, 2018b).

Thus, the current study explored how female participation in the labor market has been represented in the textbooks along with men. Moreover, the conceptual lens enabled the researcher to what extent the identity of 'new women' i.e., women's participation in various public and private sectors and contribution to the economy have been focused on in the textbooks. The lens also allowed the researcher to have a finer understanding of how gender roles (equal representations of men and women) have been represented in the textbooks through the use of language, activities and images. The study traced whether the textual contents demonstrated the traditional patriarchal society or highlighted the progress of women in the contemporary Bangladesh. Furthermore, the framework helped identify the ways of minimizing inequality and raising awareness among the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers). As the stakeholders are the members of the patriarchal society, it was needed to explore their perceptions regarding gender representation in the textbooks. If all the stakeholders become aware of gender equality, the empowerment of women will be boosted.

2.6 Conclusion

Based on existing research, the chapter explored that gender biases are observable in various domains in developed countries like Finland, Turkey, the Philippines, and Sweden, as well as in conservative countries like Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, and Afghanistan, as well as in Asian countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. The chapter also indicated that teachers across the world also traced gender bias in the textbooks and suggested including gender-equitable textbooks in the school curriculum. However, no substantial research was done regarding gender discrimination in textbooks in Bangladesh, especially for the primary level of education. Primary School teachers' perceptions were also not explored. Moreover, a remarkable gap was found in the existing literature that textbook writers' perceptions were neglected, when they were the key people to develop the English language teaching materials. The conceptual framework of the study enabled the researcher to observe the social construction of gender in the context of Bangladesh. Besides, the framework helped explore how the social construction of gender is reflected through the linguistic and multi-modal resources in the textbooks. Therefore, this research study investigated gender representation in the *English for Today (Eft)* textbooks of Bangladesh and included the perceptions of the stakeholders –teachers and textbook writers. The study also included the recommendations of the stakeholders to enhance gender equality in the textbooks. The methodology opted for the research has been discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3 Methodology of the Study

3.1 Introduction

The current study was driven by three key research questions. Firstly, it looked for gender equality in the English language textbook for Classes I, II, III, IV and V. Secondly, it investigated the perceptions of the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers) regarding gender representation in the primary textbooks and thirdly, the study traced the recommendations of the stakeholders to enhance gender equality. While the previous chapter included a review of the existing literature and the conceptual framework of the study, this chapter outlined the data analysis framework. It included the research design, strategies, research tools, data collection process and methods of data analysis. The research designs helped the researcher plan and execute the research study.

3.2 Mixed-methods Approach

To carry out the current study, a mixed-methods approach was applied, which combines both quantitative and qualitative data collection processes. A quantitative approach to data analysis dealt with numerical values, frequency, percentages, statistics, etc. The proponents of quantitative research found the approach as systematic, rigorous, focused and tightly controlled (Dornyei, 2007). Further, Dornyei added that quantitative inquiry involves precise measurement and produces reliable and replicable data. Quantitative research produces unbiased research and thus helps readers decide on the validity of the findings (Glesne, 2011; Dornyei, 2007). However, there are some shortcomings of the quantitative approach, such as – this approach considers a single reality and exposes the relationship between measured variables. Thus, quantitative methods cannot uncover “the reasons for particular observations or the dynamic

underlying the examined situation or phenomenon” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 35). In contrast, a qualitative approach deals with multiple realities. Data are usually gathered through various sources, such as – observations, interviews, documents studies, open-ended questionnaires, diaries etc. Thus, qualitative research studies help make sense and interpret the materials. Nevertheless, several criticisms of qualitative research were also explored by various researchers. The most frequent criticism “concerns the idiosyncratic nature of small participant samples that most qualitative studies investigate” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 41). Besides, collecting qualitative data is time consuming (Dornyei, 2007). Hence, to reap the benefits of both approaches, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach to conduct the current doctoral research.

Though a mixed-methods research has its origin in the 1960s, “the real breakthrough in combining qualitative and quantitative research occurred in the 1970s with the introduction of the concept of ‘triangulation’ into the social sciences” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 43). Triangulation was viewed as a system of validating propositions and hypotheses by analyzing them through numerous methods by Denzin (1970). Thus, methodological triangulation was used in mixed-methods studies to reduce the weaknesses of individual methods. Thus, Dornyei (2007) found the limitations of using one method. He mentioned that quantitative researchers have seen qualitative research as being context-specific, whereas qualitative researchers usually view quantitative research as overly simplistic, decontextualized, and reductionist in terms of its generalizations. Thus, a mixed-methods approach was suggested by the researchers to gain a better understanding of the complex phenomena (Dornyei 2007; Creswell, 2005; Migiro & Magangi, 2011). In a mixed-methods approach, researchers use the qualitative research paradigm for one phase and at the same time, the quantitative

research paradigm for another phase to understand a research problem more completely (Creswell, 2005). Thus, mixed-methods research enables a researcher to understand complex phenomena comprehensively.

3.2.1 Strengths of Mixed-methods Approach

One of the strengths of the mixed-methods approach is that “by using both QUAL and QUAN approaches researchers can bring out the best of both paradigms” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 45). As mixed-methods research is not confined to a single approach, it can answer a broader and complete range of research questions (Migiro & Magangi, 2011). Further, Migiro and Magangi (2011) argued that mixed-methods research “can add insight and understanding that might be missed when only a single method is used” (p. 3763). Besides, the mixed-methods approach allows the researchers to converge ‘numeric trends’ from quantitative data and ‘specific details’ from qualitative data that can provide stronger evidence for a conclusion (Dornyei, 2007; Migiro & Magangi, 2011). Therefore, the study opted for a mixed-methods approach.

3.2.2 Justification for Using Mixed-methods Approach

The main justification for adopting a mixed-methods approach is its comprehensive ways of interpreting data. Hence, by using a mixed-methods approach, the study included statistical information and at the same time observed whether the textbook portrayed the social prominence and potential of women in different activities and occupations.

To investigate gender equality, the entire contents of the *EfT* textbooks (from Class I to V) were examined focusing on some criteria. At first, this chapter measured the contents of the textbooks in terms of frequency. For example, it

- quantified how frequently male/female referring nouns and pronouns appeared
- analyzed the frequency of firstness, that is how many times females/males come first
- counted the frequency of the images representing female/male characters
- explored the number and types of occupations associated with men/women

By measuring the above aspects, the study investigated the ‘numeric trends’ of the male-female representation in the textbooks. Percentages and ratios were examined and compared to explore the appearances of men and women in the textual materials and images in terms of frequency.

Then the study applied a qualitative content analysis approach. It traced the way how female and male characters were depicted in the texts and the images. Their personality traits were revealed. The choices of words by the textbook writers were identified and then interpreted carefully. How men and women were empowered or discriminated against in professional roles and domestic roles were explored. It also pointed out how female characters were subjugated in some cases. The study also interpreted the underlying messages that young learners may perceive through the

discriminatory representation of gender. Such qualitative data helped the researcher investigate and gain data about the individual as well as the wider social context.

Moreover, the study searched whether repressive or productive power was established between men and women in the textbooks. Both qualitative and quantitative data helped the researcher reveal the status of gender in the textbooks. After multiple readings of *EfT* textbooks, female and male referring terms, titles, and generics throughout the stories and exercises were counted by the researcher to get the statistical information. Such information is an important feature of quantitative research as it is centered on numbers. Dornyei (2007) mentioned numbers as a powerful tool and at the same time, he mentioned it as powerless as it is devoid of context. Hence, the study used a mixed methods approach to analyze the underlying or hidden meaning of texts and illustrations.

Then, the study worked on the perceptions of the teachers and textbook writers. Teachers directly deal with the young learners in the classroom. In the primary level of education, the teachers deliver the textual materials in the classroom. Nevertheless, existing research studies found a link between teachers' presentations and students' understanding. Thus, the study explored how gender representation is perceived by the teachers of primary schools. Apart from the teachers, the perceptions of the textbook writers are highly significant as they (writers) develop the contents. Research studies exposed the substantial role of the writers' intentions and strategies in developing the contents of the textbooks. Thus, the study also explored how gender representation is perceived by textbook writers. Besides, the study also explored the opinions of the

stakeholders, that is, teachers and textbook writers, regarding enhancing gender equality in textbooks.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

To analyze the textbooks for Classes I-V and to explore the perceptions of the stakeholders the following research tools were designed for data collection purposes in this study:

1. Content analysis
2. Questionnaire survey (for teachers)
3. Interviews (for teachers and textbook writers)

The following sections have presented the tools used in the current study. In each research tool, the background, the sampling procedure, the sample, the sample size and the process of data collection, and analysis have been discussed. The discussion has been started with the research method of content analysis, followed by the interview with the teachers of the primary schools in Bangladesh and the textbook writers.

3.3.1 Content Analysis as a Research Tool

Content analysis (CA) is a significant research tool which allows analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data in a systematic order. Though CA has originated from a quantitative approach to count words, phrases, clauses and sentences; a close association between CA and the qualitative approach has been explored recently (Dornyei, 2007). The content analysis offers insights into human thoughts and helps comprehend meanings. “Content denotes what is contained and content analysis is the analysis of what is contained in a message” (Prasad, 2008, p. 2). Thus, content analysis can be viewed as a method which helps understand and interpret the documents and

textual materials. Besides, content analysis was used in various research studies across the globe to investigate gender representation in textbooks (as explored in chapter 2).

A number of definitions of content analysis were found in the research studies. This research instrument was referred to as a technique for generating intuitions systematically and objectively (Holsti, 1968). According to Weber (1990), content analysis is a research methodology that employs a set of measures to form valid inferences from the content. Therefore, “content analysis is all about making valid, replicable, and objective inferences about the message based on explicit rules” (Prasad, 2008, pp. 2-3). Prasad (2008) included diaries, letters, newspaper content, short stories, folk songs and messages from radio, television, document, texts or any codes. Furthermore, Prasad mentioned three principles of content analysis which include – “objectivity, systematic and generalizability” (Prasad, 2008, p.3). By ‘objectivity’ Prasad meant that content analysis is pursued based on explicit rules. Thus, this technique enabled various researchers to acquire the same findings from the same contents. Then, he mentioned that content analysis is a very consistent tool. He also explored that any inclusion or exclusion of content is done according to some consistently applied rules. Finally, Prasad stated generalizability as a principle of the content analysis method as the findings obtained by one researcher in content analysis can be used in another similar situation.

3.3.1.1 Advantages of Using Content Analysis. The content analysis approach offers several advantages to the researchers. Various research studies found that content analysis is most extensively used in mass communication and social science research. It is used largely to comprehend a wide range of themes, such as reality, social change, trends, and different social problems. “One of the most important applications has been to study social phenomena such as prejudice, discrimination or changing cultural

symbols in the communication content” (Prasad, 2008, p. 5). Hence, content analysis is useful for textbook researchers to understand the visible discrimination between men and women and understand the hidden meanings at the same time.

3.3.1.2 Justification for Using Content Analysis. This study chose the content analysis method for collecting both numeric data and for observing and interpreting the stories, images, messages and exercises of the textbooks. Thus, both obvious and implied messages were examined by using quantitative and qualitative data collection tools. On one hand, the study counted the male-female referring nouns, and pronouns, counted firstness, that is, how many times male names appeared first and how many times female names appeared first. It also counted the number of female and male images. On the other hand, the study observed the male-female roles in the stories, dialogues and exercises. The study also interpreted the implicit hidden meanings of the content of the textbooks.

Thus, in this study, content analysis enabled the researcher to gain insights into the socio-economic context of Bangladesh. This also enabled the researcher to identify how the role of gender was portrayed in the textbooks through frequency and domestic and occupational roles. Content analysis also allowed the researcher to statistically analyze the coded forms of the texts and observe the stereotypical representation of women by the textbook writers.

3.3.1.3 Limitations of Using Content Analysis. The content analysis method has several disadvantages apart from the discussed advantages. One of the limitations of this approach is that content analysis offers a subjective interpretation. Prasad (2008) found that the inferences in the content analysis are restricted to the contents of the textbooks only. He also mentioned that symbols are dealt with and coded in terms of

attribution assumed by the researcher or the coder. Thus, there is no assurance whether the receiver and sender share similar attributed meanings (Prasad, 2008). Moreover, content analysis sometimes disregards social context and reality. However, every caution to overcome these weaknesses and ensure validity was taken.

3.3.1.4 Validity Issues in Content Analysis. To validate the content analysis tool, content categorization was developed in this study as various researchers recommended categorization for content analysis to make the research systematic and objective. Content categorization was referred to as “compartments or ‘pigeon holes’ with explicitly stated boundaries into which the units of content are coded for analysis” (Prasad, 2008, p. 11). Hence, a detailed discussion of each category was provided by the researcher to avoid the risk of being subjective. Moreover, the categorization used in the current study was drawn in the light of the research questions and existing literature to ensure validity as Prasad (2008) exposed that content categorization “flow from the research question and should be anchored in a review of relevant literature and related studies” (p. 11). Thus, the current study developed a quantitative expression of data by presenting the statistical information in numbers and percentages to make the research more specific, objective and therefore, valid. Besides, to overcome the weakness of disregarding social context and reality, the study focused on the social construction of gender. The patriarchal social structure was also highlighted in this research. The conceptual framework helped the researcher explore the construction of gender in the patriarchal society of Bangladesh. Furthermore, the study conducted interviews with both the teachers and the textbook writers. Then, the findings from content analysis and interviews were triangulated to ensure validity as triangulation was considered as a research tactic to confirm validity by different researchers. Carter et al.

(2014) stated that data triangulation ensures validity through the convergence of data and information from various sources.

3.3.1.5 Selection of the Textbooks Content Analyzed. The study used the English Language textbook *English for Today (EfT)* for Classes I-V. There are five *EfT* textbooks for these classes. All five textbooks were analyzed for investigating gender representation. These textbooks have been designed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh and are for free distribution by the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. This research analyzed the textbooks which are presently used in the primary level of education throughout the country. These textbooks were printed for the academic year 2021. All five *EfT* textbooks for Classes I-V were selected by the researcher to determine the portrayal of gender roles.

3.3.1.6 Categorization for Collecting and Analyzing Data. Categorization is one of the most important aspects of the content analysis approach. Developing content categorization was referred to as the 'heart of content analysis' by Prasad (2008). Therefore, the contents of the *EfT* textbooks for Classes I-V were examined by focusing on some criteria. This study worked on nine categories. They are-

- i) Frequency of the use of female/male nouns
- ii) Frequency of the use of female/male pronouns
- iii) Equality about firstness
- iv) Choice of words by the textbook writers
- v) Visibility in illustrations
- vi) Occupational roles of men and women
- vii) Domestic roles of men and women
- viii) Characterizations

ix) Minimal representation of famous female characters

The above categories included both linguistic and multi-modal analysis. On one hand, nouns, pronouns and dictions used by the textbook writers were analyzed. On the other hand, multi-modal resources, such as the frequency of the images, captions, visibility and the actions of men and women were analyzed. Quantitative data were counted manually for analysis. Manual counting, percentage, tables and figures were found sufficient for the sample size (five textbooks) for investigating gender representation in the textbooks. Moreover, the active/passive roles of men and women, occupational and domestic roles and whether the contribution or participation of women is neglected in the textbooks – these qualitative features were analyzed. Analyzing data by using the above content categorization enabled the researcher to obtain the answer to research question 1 of the study.

3.3.2 Questionnaire Survey as a Research Tool

Using a questionnaire was suggested as the main data collection method in surveys by various researchers. Such a survey enables a researcher to get answers to questions in a methodical and well-organized manner and thus, it has turned into one of the most popular research tools in social sciences (Dornyei, 2007). Hence, the current study applied a questionnaire survey on the twenty teachers of primary schools located both in urban and rural areas to explore their perceptions regarding gender representation in textbooks. The questionnaire survey was not used for the textbook writers as the sample size was small; five writers took part in the study. As the sample size of the teachers was relatively bigger, such a survey was used for teachers to measure their responses. Questionnaires can yield three types of data about the

respondents. These include factual questions, behavioral questions and attitudinal questions (Dornyei, 2007). The closed-ended attitudinal questionnaire was used in the current study to reveal the attitude, opinions, beliefs and perceptions of the teachers.

Alongside, the Likert scale was used as questionnaire item in the study as this scale was referred to as the most common form of closed-ended items to explore the opinions of the respondents by Dornyei (2007). “Likert scale is a psychometric scale commonly involved in research that employs questionnaires to measure social attitudes” (Roopa & Rani, 2012, p. 274). The Likert scale is generally used to measure the beliefs, perceptions, insights, attitudes, preferences, agreements and disagreements etc. of the respondents (Sullivan & Artino, 2013). 5 points– ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly disagree’ were used in the Likert scale in the current study. Such 5 points Likert scale was recommended by various researchers. Revilla et al. (2014) investigated whether a 5-point Likert scale or more (7-11 points) was better in terms of agree – disagree (AD) rating scale and found no gain in using more than a 5-point scale. Hence, the current study considered a 5-point Likert scale suitable for the questionnaire. The preferences and dis-preferences of the respondents were explored by the points – strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. Alongside, the neutral option was employed as neutral answers (mid-point) of the Likert scale statements were characterized as a valid signal of the absence of beliefs and attitudes by Kent (2015).

3.3.2.1 Justification for Using Questionnaire Survey. A questionnaire survey was used in the current study to obtain objective, systematic and unbiased data. It allowed the researcher to get numeric data regarding the perceptions of the teachers regarding gender representation in the primary textbooks. A questionnaire survey was recommended by Creswell (2009) and Bryman (2008) to infer human beings’

perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in a systematic way. Further, findings from questionnaire data can be generalized. Besides, a questionnaire survey “can make the survey worthwhile, as it may accurately reflect the views and opinions of the participants.” (Roopa & Rani, 2012, p. 273). Thus, the questionnaire survey in the current study enabled the researcher to get accurate views of the participants.

3.3.2.2 Validity Issues in Questionnaire Survey. Two steps were applied by the researcher to validate the questionnaire. Firstly, to ensure content validity, careful qualitative input was given. Besides, the statements of the Likert scale were grounded on the conceptual framework and relevant literature. Secondly, to ensure construct validity, piloting was conducted before leading the main study. The pilot studies helped measure the validity, reliability, practicality and authenticity of the research instruments.

3.3.3 Interview as a Research Tool

The interview is viewed as one of the significant data collection tools in qualitative research. It was stated as a widely used research tool in applied linguistics by Nunan (1992). Though there is a variety of qualitative research instruments available for researchers, the interview is referred to as distinct from other methods by Adhabi and Anozie (2017), and Dornyei (2007). Dornyei (2007) argued that an interview is “a natural and socially acceptable way of collecting information that most people feel comfortable with and which can be used in a variety of situations and focusing on diverse topics to yield in-depth data” (p. 143). Adhabi and Anozie (2017) described interview “as a form of consultation where the researcher seeks to know more of an issue as opinionated by the individual being asked” (p. 3). They also mentioned that interviews carry exclusive features which are (interviews) superior, such as; an interview can be formulated as an interactive procedure where an individual asks

questions to pursue particular information. Hence, the interview has been considered a versatile research instrument and the most suitable for research studies in education (Dornyei, 2007)). Interviews allow a systematic understanding of the participants' opinions and perceptions. There are different types of interviews. The common types of interviews are – structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. This research study chose to use the semi-structured interview to understand the perceptions of the teachers and the textbook writers. However, all three types of interviews are discussed below and then the relevance of choosing a semi-structured interview is explained.

3.3.3.1 Structured Interview. The interviewer has full control over the structured interviews. Thus, such a type of interview allows less flexibility for the interviewees (Stuckey, 2013). Adhabi and Anozie (2017) found that a researcher asks short questions and the respondents are anticipated to respond similarly, with short and direct answers. “Based on the principles of a structured interview, it is evident that the interview environment is very tense and can cause subjects to be uneasy and give baseless responses” (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 89). Moreover, a researcher observes and follows a set of fixed guidelines in a structured interview (Stuckey, 2013). Adhabi and Anozie (2017) exposed that the nature of the structured interview is very rigid where there is no interpretation of the question. Thus, it would be inconvenient for the researcher to get the perceptions of the respondents by using the structured interview technique.

3.3.3.2 Unstructured Interview. Unstructured interviews do not follow a fixed outline or interview guide. However, the researchers usually think of a few opening questions. An unstructured interview intends to create a relaxed atmosphere for the participants (Dornyei, 2007). As the researchers do not have a fixed guideline, they

become part of what they are studying. Thus, this type of research enables the researchers to observe keenly. They (researchers) highlight the central themes and casually enquire different questions to the interviewees. The researchers also take notes during conversations (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Though various research studies traced unstructured interviews as a significant qualitative data collection tool, such a type of interview fosters an informal environment.

3.3.3.3 Semi-structured Interview. The semi-structured interview offers a negotiation between the two extreme types – structured and unstructured. On one hand, there is a set of pre-set guiding questions; on the other hand, the layout is open-ended (Dornyei, 2007). Therefore, – the in-depth opinions of the interviewees can be obtained. Thus, semi-structured interviews were referred to as the most common type of interview in qualitative research (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017; Alshenqeeti, 2014; Stuckey, 2013). Though the semi-structured interview has an outline of topics and questions made by the researcher, this type of interview has no rigid observance. The implementation of the semi-structured interview depends on how the participants respond to the topics, themes and statements set by the researcher (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). Adhabi and Anozie also pointed out that in the semi-structured interview; the researcher enjoys the flexibility of asking enhanced questions than the primarily drafted ones based on the answers of the respondents. Such interviews can either be individual or done in groups. “The advantage of dealing with an individual conforms to the title ‘in-depth interview’, whereby the researcher can go deeper and highlight personal issues” (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 89).

3.3.3.3.1 Justification for Using Semi-structured Interview. Among numerous types of interviews, the semi-structured interview was preferred by the researchers for the in-depth perceptions or opinions of the respondents. “It is significant to

acknowledge semi-structured interviews as the ideal data collection mechanism for qualitative studies” (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017, p. 90). Dornyei (2007) mentioned that the semi-structured interview is appropriate for studies where the researcher has a good observation of the domain or phenomenon in question. He also mentioned that such a type of interview enables the researchers to develop broad questions about the topic. The respondents also feel flexible to answer elaborately. A semi-structured interview was also recommended by Seidman (2006) to explore the opinions and perceptions or experiences of the respondents. Thus, the semi-structured interview allows for gathering data that cannot be successfully obtained by other research approaches.

Therefore, this research study chose semi-structured interviews to get the perceptions of the textbook writers and the teachers. Guiding questions and prompts were prepared, but the format was open-ended. Interviewees were encouraged by the researcher to answer elaborately and share their perceptions regarding gender representation in the *EfT* textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

However, to conduct the semi-structured interview, this research study chose both face-to-face and online interviews as per the convenience of the respondents. The typical interview techniques are face-to-face, telephone, messenger, email interviews etc. Traditionally, the face-to-face interview has been considered the most preferred interview technique. While face-to-face interviews allow direct interaction, email interviews do not give such scope. However, Sullivan, (2013) referred to audio-visual and technological platforms as a usual extension of the face-to-face interview. Hence, online interviews were conducted by using the videoconferencing platform Zoom as a tool in the current study. Zoom is a popular cloud-based videoconferencing service which is used for conducting online meetings and interviews. Thus, both face-to-face and videoconferencing Zoom interviews allowed the researcher direct communication

with the respondents. Nevertheless, as the face-to-face interview lacks the recording option notes were taken by the researcher during the interview sessions. Though telephone and messenger interviews have the option of video calls and recordings, Zoom offers various unique features compared to others. Thus, Zoom as an interview tool for this research has been weighed below:

3.3.3.4 Zoom as an Interview Tool. Developments in communication technologies provide new choices for conducting qualitative research and the virtual platform Zoom is found one of the most convenient and user-friendly tools to carry out interviews. Zoom has a lot of unique features. Archibald et al. (2019) explored the feasibility and suitability of using this platform (Zoom) to collect qualitative interview data. They worked from a health research perspective to a finer understanding of its suitability for both qualitative and mixed-methods researchers. In their research study, Archibald et al. (2019) asked 16 practice nurses who joined in online qualitative interviews and shared their experiences of using Zoom. The researchers and the participants assessed Zoom above substitute interview mediums such as face-to-face, telephone, and other video conferencing services, products, and platforms. However, the virtual platform Zoom has some challenges too. Both the advantages and challenges of using Zoom are mentioned below:

3.3.3.4.1 Advantages of Using Zoom. Some key advantages of digital technologies were traced for researchers by Archibald et al. (2019). For example, at present, Zoom is a convenient platform due to the available electronic devices and easy internet access throughout the world. Another advantage is that the online method is suitable and cost-effective compared to in-person interviews. Besides, Zoom compromises the ability to connect with geographically spread individuals through a computer, tablet or mobile device. Moreover, a significant feature of the Zoom video

conferencing platform is its recording option. “A key advantage of Zoom is its ability to securely record and store sessions without recourse to third-party software” (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 2). Besides, the study of Archibald et al. (2019) revealed that Zoom is useful in forming and maintaining rapport between the researchers and the participants, especially when compared to other “nonvisual” communication platforms such as e-mail or telephone.

3.3.3.4.2 Challenges of Using Zoom. Although Zoom is a very convenient interview tool, there are some challenges too. Technological glitch is one of the difficulties in using Zoom. A majority (88%) of the respondents in the study of Archibald et. al (2019) experienced some difficulties while joining the session. For example, they faced lower internet bandwidth, nonoperational hardware, imperfect webcam functionality and or microphone service made the research participants frustrated. Besides, some participants (25%) of the study of Archibald et.al complained against poor video or audio function during the interview.

3.3.3.4.3 Justification for Using Zoom. Though some challenges of using Zoom were explored, the study of Archibald et al. (2019) mentioned that the advantages of using Zoom for data collection considerably outweighed the challenge encountered. They reported that the researchers and the participants in their study overcame the initial technical difficulties. The study also reported the general satisfaction of the researchers and the participants. The study by Archibald et al. (2019) traced the positive sides of Zoom, such as convenience, accessibility, ease of use, interactivity, security, screen sharing and video recording options. The results of the study suggested that Zoom may act as a better platform for collecting qualitative interview data than other available technologies. Thus, the study by Archibald et al. (2019) recommended Zoom as a promising data collection tool for qualitative researchers. Hence, the current study used

the Zoom videoconferencing platform along with face-to-face sessions to interview the stakeholders at their convenience.

3.3.3.5 Sample Size of the Interview. Twenty teachers of primary schools in Bangladesh were interviewed to explore their perceptions regarding gender representation in primary textbooks. The teachers were selected from the primary schools located both in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh based on the accessibility and convenience of the researcher and respondents. Thus, a convenience sampling process was applied to select the sample of the study. Convenience sampling is the process of selecting participants “who are convenient in their proximity and willingness to participate” (Robinson, 2014, p. 31). Selecting a target population in convenience sampling depends on some practical criteria, such as – geographical proximity, obtainability at a certain time and ease of access (Dornyei, 2007). It can be used both in qualitative and quantitative research. Therefore, the convenience sampling was used in the study to facilitate the inclusion of research participants from both the urban and rural areas. In Dhaka city, a number of schools were contacted and a wide number of teachers were approached for the interview sessions. Notably, three schools were particularly cooperative, with their Head teachers granting permission for their teachers to partake in the research. Thus, ten teachers were interviewed from three primary schools in Dhaka city. Among ten, five male teachers and five female teachers were selected. Further, other ten teachers were selected for interview from two districts of Bangladesh – Faridpur (a southern district) and Joypurhat (a northern district) by using the same strategy (convenience sampling). These ten teachers were teaching in rural areas. Six of them were female and four were male. The selected teachers were teaching English language textbooks in classes I to V. The strategic selection of one district from the southern region and another from the northern region of the country intended to

encompass varying geographical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts. Thus data drawn from varied research contexts allowed a nuanced exploration of how teacher research participants' views about gender representation in primary school textbooks differed across different regions of Bangladesh. Most importantly, the perspectives of research participants from both the southern and a northern districts gave a holistic understanding of how gender representation was perceived by teachers from varied demographical locations.

Teachers of primary schools located in urban areas were referred to as TPSUA and teachers of primary schools in rural areas have been referred to as TPSRA in this research. The number male-female number was chosen based on their availability and interest in the research. All twenty respondents of the study also took part in a survey before the interview sessions.

Besides, five textbook writers were interviewed to explore their perceptions regarding gender representation in the textbooks they produced. Textbook writers were referred to as TW in this research. There were a total of eight textbook writers of the *English for Today* (2021) textbooks of the primary level (from Class I to V). However, one of the writers passed away in 2021. Another textbook writer was found sick and unable to take part in the interview session. Besides, another writer was unreachable. Thus, five textbook writers were interviewed. Among them, one respondent was a female writer and the other four respondents were male writers.

Thus, twenty teachers and five textbook writers took part in the interview sessions. Robinson (2014) recommended a small sample size for interview research to explore a locatable voice and to get an intensive analysis. Hence, interviews with twenty

teachers and five writers enabled the researcher to reveal concrete and unique perceptions of each individual.

3.3.3.6 The Interview Procedure. At first, the interview schedule was taken from the participants by the researcher. Four respondents among five textbook writers preferred the Zoom video Conferencing platform and another respondent preferred a face-to-face interview. All the interview sessions were recorded with the permission of the respondents. Zoom interviews were recorded by clicking the recording option and the face-to-face interview was recorded by using the mobile phone recording option. Besides, all ten teachers of the primary schools in the urban area and four teachers from rural areas preferred face-to-face interview sessions. Thus, by making a prior appointment, interviews were conducted by the researcher. Nevertheless, the teachers did not like to be recorded. Thus, notes were taken by the researcher. The other six teachers from rural areas agreed to take part in the Zoom interview. However, four of them were not comfortable with recording. Thus, notes were taken from their sessions. The interviews of the other two teachers were recorded with their permission. Before conducting the interview sessions, the teachers were requested to fill up a questionnaire. Their responses to the questionnaire were also discussed elaborately during the interview sessions. One-to-one sessions were conducted with all the participants (both teachers and textbook writers). The one-to-one conversation has a format and an objective to obtain accounts of the interviewee's experiences and perspectives related to understanding the significance of the phenomena being described (Kvale, 1994). Thus, by using one-to-one conversations, the researcher was able to gain in-depth perceptions of each respondent. The researcher was aware of the unpredictable technical glitches during the Zoom interview sessions with the textbook writers and

provided instructions to them to reduce the difficulties. The respondents were also requested to ensure a stable internet connection.

3.3.3.7 Issues of Validity and Reliability in Using Interviews. To ensure the validity and reliability of the interview guidelines, the instrument was pilot tested. This pre-test process enabled the researcher to test the recording strategies and check the appropriateness of the research tools, clarity of the open-ended questions, detect the ambiguities or vague questions and observe the weaknesses. Besides, the pilot testing helped the researcher determine to what extent the questions of the interview guide covered the objectives and research questions that were being investigated. Finally, the pilot testing also enabled the researcher to determine the duration conduct the interview.

Further, peer validations of the open-ended interview questions were done. Colleagues/peers of the researcher from the English department of a private university examined the interview questions and guidelines. They (peers) gave their opinions regarding the clarity of the questions. They also opined whether the instructions were clear to obtain the essential data. The colleagues found the open-ended interview questions and guidelines clear enough to gain the data.

3.4 Conducting Pilot Study before the Main Study

Pilot studies on the closed-ended questionnaire and open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher before the main research to validate the research tools. Majid et al. (2017) suggested piloting as a crucial and integral aspect of the interview to test the interview questions and to gain some practice in an interview. A pilot study is a useful procedure for the preparation of a full-scale study as it highlights the improvisation of the main study (Majid et al., 2017). Gorard (2001) stated the necessity of conducting pilot studies and suggested that all types of

research studies need to be piloted. Moreover, a pilot study was found crucial for ensuring the reliability and success of the main study (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, the current study conducted pilot studies on two teachers of primary schools and one textbook writer to assess the questionnaire for the teachers and the interview questions for the teachers and the textbook writers. The participants of the pilot study were different from the participants of the main study. As all the available writers of the primary textbooks (Class I – V) were interviewed, a writer of the textbook of Class VI was selected for the pilot study. To conduct the pilot studies, first, a questionnaire (for teachers) and semi-structured interview questions (for teachers and textbook writers) were set by the researcher. Further, the questions were reviewed by the supervisor. Then, the pilot studies were conducted. The teachers took part in the face-to-face interview sessions and the textbook writer preferred a Zoom video-conferencing interview in the pilot studies. The interview was recorded with the permission of the participant. Besides, the notes were taken for the face-to-face interview sessions.

These pilot studies helped the researcher realize whether the tools were perfect for gathering the data or need to be modified. These also enabled the researcher to assess the instruments. The results of the pilot studies were discussed with the supervisor and found quite satisfactory. Therefore, the pilot studies gave signals that the current doctoral study will function appropriately. Thus, the main study was conducted by the researcher.

3.5 Data Collection Process

At first, a sample survey method was applied to collect data about the perceptions of the teachers as a questionnaire survey is one of the widely used research instruments to collect numerical or quantitative data. All twenty teachers participated in the questionnaire survey.

Hence, questionnaires were handed over to twenty teachers of primary schools located in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. The topics of the questionnaire included – the significance of equal power and opportunities for men and women, the role of linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender, the ratio of male-female referring terms, marginalizing women through underrepresentation, the necessity of representing both male and female scholars, historical figures and leaders etc. Besides, the role of the teachers and the consciousness of the textbook writers were added. Finally, teachers’ opinions were asked regarding updating the textbooks. The Likert scale was used to get the answers to the close-ended questionnaire. There were 10 statements in the questionnaire (Appendix A) of the current study. The participants were requested to select the responses from ‘Strongly Agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Neutral’, ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ options to expose their perceptions towards the statements. Hence, statistical data were found by using the Likert scale in the current study.

Along with the questionnaire survey, semi-structured interview sessions were conducted by using some open-ended questions (Appendix B). The questions were made thematically by the researcher. Section-wise thematic items of the interview questions were as follows –

Table 3.1

Thematic Items of the Interview Questions for the Teachers

SL	Themes	Items
1	Role of the textbooks	2
2	Role of the textbook writers	3

3	Role of the teachers	2
4	Linguistic representation of gender in the textbooks	1
5	Multi-modal representation of gender in the textbooks	7
6	Impact of biased representation of gender in the textbooks	2
7	Recommendations	1

Thus, the teachers were asked two questions on their perceptions about the role of the textbooks, three questions on the role of the textbook writers and the role of the teachers in conveying gender-neutral messages to the learners. Then, the interviewed teachers were asked a question about linguistic representation and 7 questions on the multi-modal representation of gender in the textbooks. Besides, they were also asked 2 questions about their perceptions regarding the impact of the biased depiction of gender in textbooks. Finally, the interviewed teachers were asked for their recommendations to enhance gender equality in the textbooks. Nevertheless, more relevant questions were asked based on their responses to the semi-structured guided questions. Hence, their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding gender representation in primary textbooks were inferred.

Then, semi-structured interview sessions were conducted with the textbook writers. Open-ended questions were asked to the writers to explore their perceptions regarding gender representation in the textbooks (Appendix C). The interview questions for the writers were also thematically designed like the questions for the teachers.

Table 3.2*Thematic Items of the Interview Questions for the Textbook Writers*

SL	Themes	Items
1	Role of the textbooks and textbook writers	3
2	Linguistic representation of gender in the textbooks	1
3	Multi-modal representation of gender in the textbooks	7
4	Impact of biased representation of gender in the textbooks	2
5	Representation of social and cultural reality in the textbooks	1
6	National Education Policy and the role of NCTB	2
7	Challenges and opportunities	1
8	Strategies and recommendations	2

Based on the responses of the participants, more enhanced questions were asked by the researcher. At first, they were asked about the role of the textbooks and textbook writers. Then, their perceptions were explored regarding the linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender. Further, they were asked about the impact of the biased representation of gender in textbooks. They were also asked whether they represented

social and contextual reality or the idealistic society in the textbooks. Along with these, the textbook writers were asked about the reflection of the National Education Policy in the textbooks. Then, the respondents were asked about the role and guidelines of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). The interviewed textbook writers were further asked whether they faced any challenges while producing the textbooks. Finally, they were requested to share their strategies and recommendations for enhancing gender equality in the textbooks. Thus, in-depth opinions of the textbook writers were obtained by using the semi-structured interview.

3.6 Data Analysis

Firstly, the numeric analyses of data were done from the responses to the survey. The responses of the participants were converted into percentages. Thus, perceptions of the twenty teachers of the primary schools were measured through Likert scale items regarding gender representation in the textbooks. Quantitative findings from the Likert scale allowed the researcher to analyze the data easily, quickly and scientifically. Such quantitative data are “uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily possible” (Dornyei, 2007, p. 101).

However, despite being easily quantifiable, Likert scale data may fail to measure the true beliefs or attitudes of the respondents very often. Hence, qualitative data from the interviews with the teachers and textbook writers were analyzed. The data were transformed into a textual form through transcriptions at first. Dornyei (2007) focused on the significance of transcription as it allows the researchers to know the data thoroughly. Then, the transcripts were read meticulously by the researcher to do the conversation analysis.

The process started with coding. The coding was done manually by the researcher. To ensure the clarity of the meaning, the detailed conversations between the researcher and the interviewees were focused on instead of considering keywords only. Then, the relevant responses were highlighted and labelled thematically. For example, the study explored the perception of the writers regarding the relationship between their use of languages and the representation of the social construction of gender in textbooks. It investigated whether the writers used 'gendered language' as such language expresses the discourse of patriarchy according to the feminist linguistic approach (Mills & Mullany, 2011). Besides, writers were asked how they dealt with the demonstration of power in the textbooks; whether the power of one gender was reflected or both men and women were depicted with equal power as power is considered significant aspect to critical understanding of discourse (Sunderland, 2006). In the case of the discrimination of gender in the textbooks, writers were asked to reflect on whether they consciously represented disparity or whether they themselves were biased by the patriarchal social norms which marginalize women. Nevertheless, critical theory enabled the researcher to understand the reflection and awareness of the stakeholders. This theory was applied procedurally in the analysis of interview data through two primary mechanisms. Firstly, the semi-structured interview questions facilitated participants' reflection on critical gender-related issues, as one of the important dynamics of critical theory is reflection. Secondly, the tenets of critical theory emphasizing raising awareness were operationalized during the interviews. Along with the use of language, the textbook writers were also asked about their perceptions that how far they think that their images and illustrations convey an unequal relationship between men and women and manifest patriarchal oppression. From the conversation with the textbook writers, the major themes were labeled as – the representation of gender through linguistic and multi-

modal analysis; their perceptions regarding the representation of the traditional patriarchal society of Bangladesh or promoting an idealistic gender-neutral society for the betterment of the learners and the impact of unequal power relationship and patriarchal oppression in the textbooks on the young learners of the primary schools. Thus, an explicit description of the codes was presented. In this way, the perceptions of the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers) were explored by analyzing the findings of the interview data.

3.7 Ethical Issues in Administering the Interviews

One of the challenges of conducting an interview is the ethical concern. During the interview session, the communication between the respondents and the researcher can raise moral concerns (Adhabi & Anozie, 2017). In their study, Adhabi and Anozie found that some issues may raise ethical concerns in qualitative studies, such as confidentiality, anonymity, and the prospective impact and potential harm to the participants. This research study tackled each of these issues carefully. Hence, a good rapport between the researcher and the participants was built. The respondents were also ensured of the confidentiality of their information. It was also ensured that the respondents will remain anonymous. As the Zoom interview sessions were recorded by the researcher, this aspect was discussed with the respondents in advance. The face-to-face interview with one textbook writer was also recorded through mobile phones. The consent of the participants was taken regarding recordings. Moreover, it was reassured to the respondents (both teachers and textbook writers) that their information will not create any impact or harm in their professional and personal lives.

3.8 Triangulation of Data

Finally, the current study triangulated the data for developing an inclusive meaning. Triangulation which refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources is

used to obtain a comprehensive understanding (Patton, 1999). There are four different types of triangulation, such as – method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and data source triangulation (Denzin, 1970; Patton, 1999). The current study used method triangulation and data source triangulation to analyze data. Method triangulation uses multiple methods of data collection. This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods for getting convergent findings and interpreting data. Besides, the study employed data source triangulation which entails collecting data from different sources. For instance, the current study collected data from the contents of the textbooks, survey questionnaires and the interviews of the stakeholders. Thus, data were collected from different sources and triangulated to get the complete set of findings and comprehensive meaning.

3.9 Conclusion

To sum up, the chapter justified the data analysis framework - mixed-methods approach for conducting the research. As the mixed methods approach combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches, it enabled the researcher to analyze the data statistically and contextually. For instance, the quantitative data helped the researcher elicit the numerical information – visibility of men and women in terms of frequencies, percentages and ratios. Further, statistical information was also explored regarding the perceptions of the teachers. Thus, the study traced whether both genders were presented equally or one gender outnumbered another as the domination of one gender manifests unequal relationships in society. Further, qualitative analysis of data from the contents of the textbooks enabled the researcher to explore whether patriarchal oppression was manifested in the textbooks. In addition, the interview data from the teachers and textbook writers allowed the researcher to infer the attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and perceptions of the stakeholders. The conceptual framework of the study enabled the

researcher to collect and analyze the data focusing on the social context of Bangladesh. The chapter also elaborately discussed the research tools: content analysis, survey, and interview. Content analysis was chosen to analyze gender representation in the *English for Today (EfT)* textbooks for Classes I to V. Content categorizations were made to analyze both the linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender. Further, the questionnaire survey and interview procedure were discussed in detail in this chapter. By using the above research tools findings of the study have been revealed in the next chapter.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter discussed the methodology of the study, this chapter, revealed gender representation in the primary-level textbooks of Bangladesh and exposed the perceptions of the stakeholders. The mixed-methods approach helped the researcher combine the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative data. The statistical findings such as percentages and ratios enabled the researcher to gain scientific and objective data. Alongside this, the thematic content analysis and interview data assisted the researcher interpret and connect the data with the socio-cultural context of Bangladesh. Besides, the conceptual framework helped reveal the findings by specifying the key variables and generalizing various aspects of the observed phenomena. Therefore, this chapter, first, exposed the findings through content analysis. To trace whether men and women are equally represented in the primary textbooks, linguistic representation such as the use of nouns, pronouns, firstness, and choice of words by the textbook writers were examined. Further, multi-modal representations such as occupation, visibility, characterization, domestic roles, and the representation of famous female characters were analyzed. Secondly, this chapter explored the perceptions of the teachers of primary schools regarding gender representation in textbooks. Finally, it revealed the findings from the interviews of the textbook writers to explore their perceptions regarding the existing biased representation of gender in the textbooks from Class I to Class V. Findings from all sources of data i.e., content analysis, teachers' perceptions and writers' perceptions revealed that textbooks contain evidence of gender bias. Both the teachers and writers recommended reviewing the current textbooks for enhancing gender equality.

4.2 Linguistic Representation

To explore linguistic representation, this section presented the depiction of the frequency of male-female referring nouns and pronouns, frequency of first/second place occurrences and frequency of appearances through tables and figures. Further, the section presented the portrayal of gender roles through qualitative analysis of the stories, exercises, and captions of the images etc.

4.2.1 Use of Nouns and Pronouns

Using more male-referring words than female ones is one of the ways of underrepresenting women. To assess gender parity, a manual count was conducted of the total number of nouns and pronouns used to refer to characters of both genders from the *EfT* textbooks for Classes V, IV, III, II and I.

Table 4.1

Male – Female Referring Nouns

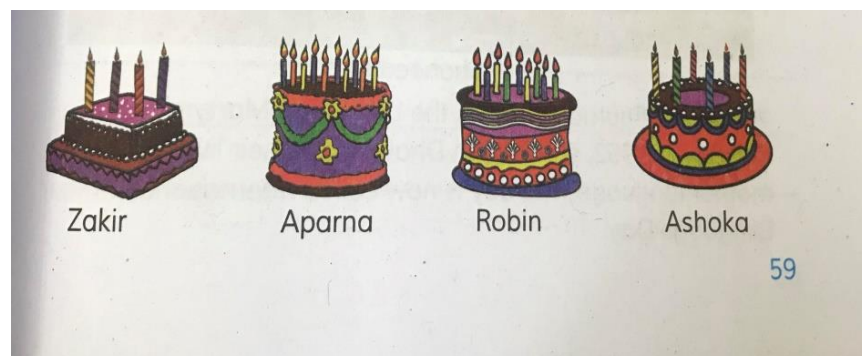
Textbooks	Male Referring Nouns		Female Referring Nouns		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Class V	216	53	188	47	404
Class IV	175	49.7	177	50.3	352
Class III	57	54	48	46	105
Class II	30	49	31	51	61
Class I	7	78	2	22	9

Findings from table 4.1 revealed that among five, male referring nouns outnumbered the female ones in three textbooks. The textbooks of Class V, III and I showed more male referring nouns than females. The percentages of male and female referring nouns were 53% and 47% respectively in the English language textbook of Class V. The *EfT* textbook for Class III also exposed a similar scenario. The male and female referring nouns were 54% and 46% there. Moreover, the textbook of Class I exposed the high percentage of male referring nouns. 78% male referring nouns were found there whereas the percentage of female referring nouns was only 22. The textbook of Class IV showed 49.7% male referring nouns and 50.3% female referring nouns. Similarly, 49% male referring nouns and 51% female referring nouns were found in the textbook of Class II.

Besides, male-referring nouns also dominated in images. The following images showed discrimination in male names and female names.

Figure 4.1

Discrimination in Male and Female Names in Images



(NCTB, 2021, Class V, p. 59)

Figure 4.1 showed that under the four cakes, four names were used where three of these denoted the names of men, “Zakir”, “Robin”, and “Ashoka”, and only one denoted the female referent name “Aparna”. Highlighting one sex means devaluating the other.

Table 4.2

Male – Female Referring Pronouns

Textbooks	Male Referring Pronouns		Female Referring Pronouns		Total
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Class V	101	47	113	53	214
Class IV	102	56	79	44	181
Class III	18	46	21	54	39
Class II	17	35	31	65	48
Class I	0	–	0	–	0

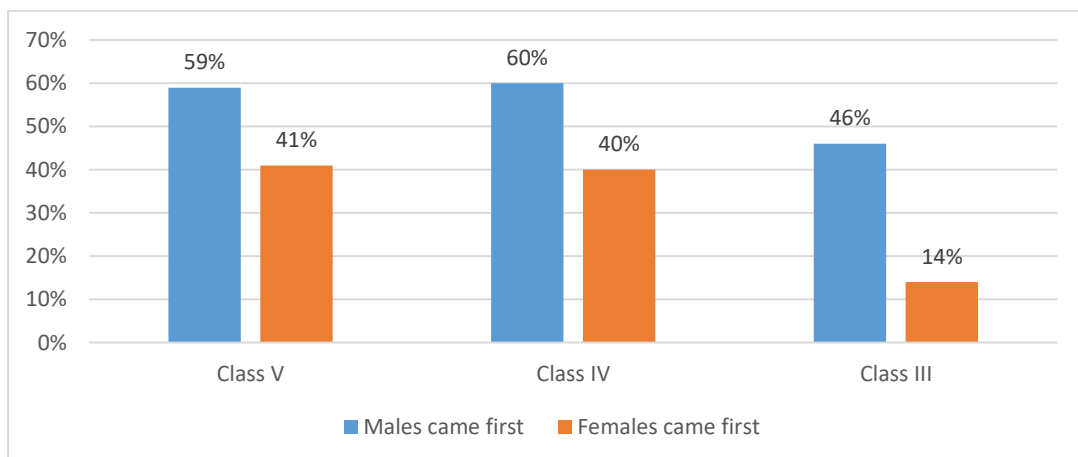
Table 4.2 showed more females referring to pronouns than those of males. The *EfT* textbook of Class V contained 47% and 53% male–female referring pronouns. However, the textbook of Class IV exposed more male referring pronouns than female. The percentages of male and female referring pronouns were 56% and 44% in the *EfT* textbook of Class IV. The textbook of Class III contained 46% and 54% male-female referring pronouns. The percentages of male and female referring pronouns were 35% and 65% in the second grade (Class II) textbook. However, the textbook for Class I did not contain any male-female referring pronoun.

4.2.2 Firstness

The linguistic aspect of representing male and female characters can involve the concept of firstness, which refers to the priority or prominence given to a particular gender. In this study, firstness was recorded by counting how many times females or males were placed first in sentences or dialogues in the textbooks of Classes V, IV and III. However, as there were very few dialogues in the textbooks of Class II and Class I, firstness in the images was counted instead of contents. Thus, firstness was recorded by counting manually how many times females or males were placed first. Then some examples were included and interpretations were added.

Figure 4.2

Firstness in Placing Male or Female in Sentences



The priority of the male characters was noticed in the findings of Figure 4.2. Findings revealed that in the fifth-grade (Class V) textbook, in 41% of cases, female-referring terms came first whereas, in 59% of cases, male-referring terms came first. In

17 sentences, male-female pairs were used where female names came first in 7 sentences and male terms came first in 10 sentences. Similarly, in 40% of cases, females appeared first and in 60% of cases males appeared first in the textbook of Class IV. In this textbook, male-female pairs were found in 20 sentences and in only 8 sentences females appeared first and in 12 sentences males appeared first. The *EfT* textbook of Class III also exposed the priority of male characters. Here, only in 14% of cases, females appeared first (in 1 sentence out of 7, a female came first) and in 86% of cases males appeared first (in 6 out of 7 sentences males came first).

Figure 4.3

Firstness in Placing Male or Female in Images

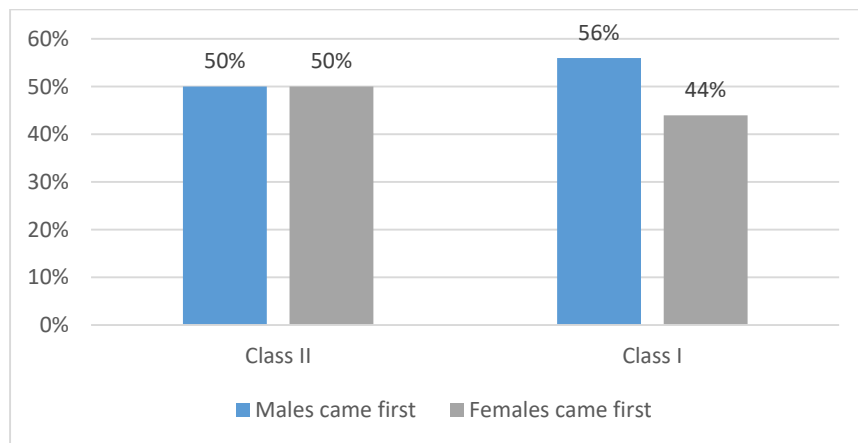


Figure 4.3 has analyzed the images where males and females were presented together. The findings of Figure 4.3 revealed equality in the second grade (Class II) textbook. In this textbook, in 50% of cases (5 out of 10 images) males appeared first and in 50% of cases (5 out of 10 images) females appeared first. However,

discrimination was found in the textbook of Class I. Here, in 44% (4 out of 9 images) of cases, females appeared first, and in 56% (5 out of 9 images) of cases, males appeared first.

Along with the numbers, a few examples were illustrated from the *EfT* textbooks for Classes V, IV, III, II and I below to examine first place occurrences of men and women.

Class V

Men enjoyed the first place occurrence in gender pairs in the story titled ‘Saikat’s family’ in unit 3, Lessons 1 and 2 of the textbook of Class V. There were three characters in the story: Saikat, his father, and his mother. At first, Saikat was introduced, and then his father, and lastly, his mother was introduced. Thus, the patriarchal social structure was reinforced in this story by prioritizing men.

Besides, first place ordering of men was noticed in Unit 9, Lessons 5 and 6, and there were some questions to be answered by the students. The questions were as follows:

1. What is the person’s name?
2. What does he/she do?
3. What does he/she work for?
4. What time does he/she start work?
5. Does he/she like his / her job? Why or why not?
6. What do you think about his / her job?

(NCTB, Class V, p.36)

In the above questions (No. 2–6), the male-referent term “he” came first. Unequal representation was found here as “she” comes later in each question. Besides these, in Unit 20, Lessons 7 and 8, there was a fill-in-the-blanks exercise. “A flies planes. He or she travels around the world.” This example demonstrated the firstness of man.

Class IV

Like the textbook of class V, inequality in firstness was noticed in the *EfT* textbook of Class IV. However, the Class IV textbook revealed equality in firstness lessons 1-2 of unit 3. In the story titled “family’, Jamil and Farzana were siblings. Here, Farzana was introduced first, then Jamil. Moreover, the story also introduced Farzana’s mother first, then her father. This was an encouraging example for the learner. However, in lessons 3-4 of the same unit, Farzana’s grandfather was introduced then her grandmother. Thus, the male character enjoyed firstness.

Besides, equality in firstness was not found in unit 4, lessons 1-2. The section titled ‘Language Focus’ introduced the learners to subjects, pronouns, and verbs in the present simple tense. A few examples have been shown below:

- He / She / It is
- He’s / She’s / It’s
- He’s not / She’s not / It’s not

Male referring pronouns have been placed first in all three examples. Thus, equality was not maintained here.

Class III

Unit 2, lessons 2-3 of the *EfT* textbook for Class III included a grammar activity. In activity 'B', there was an exercise where the learners were asked to complete the sentences and underline 'He or She'. Examples have been given below:

- He / She _____ years old
- He / She is _____.
- He / She works _____.

The above examples showed that in all three exercises, male referring pronouns were placed first. The female referring pronoun 'she' was given the secondary position.

Similarly, inequality in firstness was also found in unit 34, lessons 1-3. In activity 'C', there were some questions for the students, for example –

- Do you have brothers or sisters?
- How old are your brothers and sisters?

In both of the above questions, the male referring noun 'brothers' appeared first and the female referring noun 'sisters' appeared later. Thus, men enjoyed the first-place positions in the above examples.

Class II

Though inequality was observed in the textbooks for Classes V, IV and III, the *EfT* textbook for Class II showed equality regarding firstness. In 50% of cases, male images came first and in 50% of cases, female images came first. However, elusive discrimination was noticed in the textbook for Class II as the following image exposed

that a boy had started the conversation, which demonstrated the communicative skills of boys.

Figure 4.4

First Place Occurrence of Girls, but Communicative Skill of Boys in Conversation

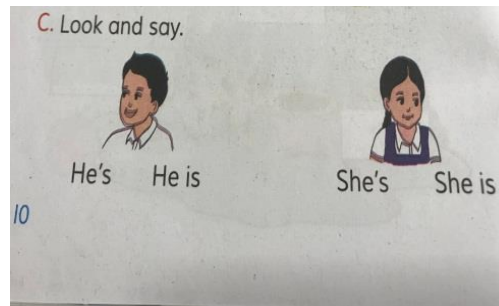


(NCTB, 2021, Class II, p. 10)

Though figure 4.4 showed that girls appeared first, subtle discrimination was noticed here. In this image, one of the boys started the conversation. He introduced his friend here, which showed the active role of boys and the passive role of girls. Besides, the following image revealed the first-place occurrence of boys.

Figure 4.5

Inequality in Firstness



(NCTB, 2021, Class II, p10)

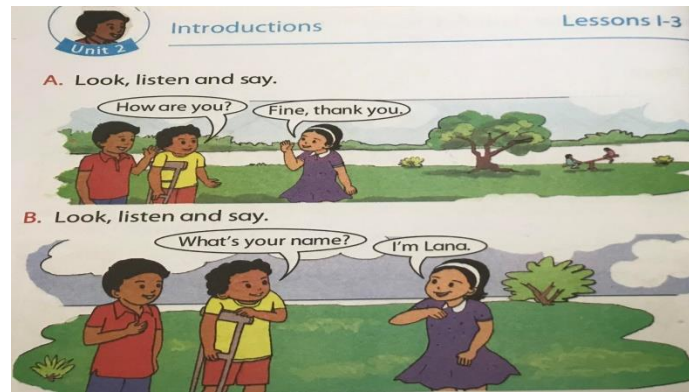
Figure 4.5 exposed discrimination as a boy appeared first, and then a girl appeared. Thus, the boy got firstness in gender pairs. Hence, equality was not properly maintained in the second grade (Class II) textbook.

Class I

The images in the *EfT* textbook for Class I were analyzed to find out equality regarding firstness. Equality was maintained in this textbook in terms of priority. For example, the following image exposed inequality in firstness.

Figure 4.6

Inequality through Images and Dialogues



(NCTB, 2021, Class I, p. 4)

Figure 4.6 included two images. In both of the images, males appeared first. Moreover, like figure 4.4, the captions of figure 4.6 also revealed that boys started talking in both cases which demonstrate the conversation skill of boys.

4.2.3 Diction in Titles and Expressions

In the textbooks, linguistic sexism was found in the diction of the writers. Discriminations were found in titles, vocabulary and expressions in the English language textbooks for Classes V, IV, III and II.

Class V

Discrimination was explored in the title used for men and women in the fifth grade (Class V) textbook. In lessons 3 and 4 of unit 2, two women were introduced as Mrs. Haider and Ms. Smith. Here, one male character was introduced at the same time named Mr. Saha. All of them were working people. In the case of Mr. Saha, the question did

not come whether he was married or unmarried, but when Mrs. Haider was introduced, it showed that she must disclose that she was married. In the case of Ms. Smith, her marital status was not clear. Using the title Mrs. for one lady and Ms. for another one, students might be curious about the marital status of the second one, but for their male counterparts, no such question would arise. The lesson explained the use of the titles in the following ways:

For men, use Mr. With the full name, or just with the last name. For married women, use Mrs. and add the husband's last name. For all women, you can also use Ms. (Pronounced Miz). Ms. does not tell you if a woman is married or not. (NCTB, 2021, Class V, p. 8)

From this lesson, students may perceive that a woman must take up her husband's last name after marriage, since she has to take up the title "Mrs." after marriage. Also, the book gave examples of Ms. Smith. Here, students might be confused about whether the last name Smith was her husband's or father's name. In Unit 16, Lessons 1 and 2, another school teacher was found named Mrs. Alam. The use of the title "Mrs". to address a woman suggests her identity in relation to her husband or male partner, while the title "Miss". or "Ms". refer solely to her identity. However, in Bangladesh, usually teachers are not addressed by "Mrs."; instead, their original names are used.

Besides these, male characters often appeared as stronger than females. In Unit 1, Lessons 4 and 5, at the Town Hall Language Club, Tamal and Sima, two young children listened to English language CDs and watched DVDs, as well as conversing in English with their friends. Equality was found there, as one male and one female were shown

practicing English together. But they met a new person named Andy Smith. The male child Tamal knew him and Sima did not. And Tamal took the responsibility to introduce the girl to him. Again in unit 2, lessons 1 and 2, Tamal was shown very busy as he was taking medicine to his grandmother. In unit 12, lesson 1, again the conversation between Andy and Tamal was found where Andy wanted to know about some tourist spots in Bangladesh. Andy already visited Cox's Bazar. Then Tamal recommended Andy to visit Sreemangal and Saint Martin's Island. Here, Tamal shared his knowledge about various tourist places and offered suggestions. This is how, the knowledge and leadership quality of the boy Tamal was demonstrated in the textbook of Class V, whereas, Sima appeared as a very passive girl. Thus, discrimination was exposed as the words used for Sima and Tamal did not show equal attributions.

Class IV

A large number of boys were found in a race competition in unit 10, lessons 1-2, of the textbook for Class IV. In the race competition, three girls and five boys participated. Along with the large number, it has also been noticed that a boy named "Fazle" won the match, whereas a girl named "Tamanna" got the second position. Such representation showed the secondary position of women. The boy "Fazle" was also referred to as "very fast". Besides, another boy named "Samir" got the third position.

Similar discrimination in the choice of words was noticed in unit 17, lessons 1-2, through an image where some boys and girls were shown. Among them, one boy was running and a girl Mita mentioned, "The boy is running very fast" (NCTB, Class IV, p. 34). Further, a boy Salam informed that the girls were playing, but no adjective was used with girls.

In addition, positive attribution was used to refer to the male characters only. For example, in unit 15, lessons 1-3, Sagar's grandfather was referred to as a 'very smart' man. However, in this unit, the female characters – Sagar's grandmother and mother were shown busy with mundane household chores and they are not referred to as 'smart' persons.

Class III

Discrimination in the title was found in the English language textbook for Class III like the textbook for Class V. For instance, in unit 1, lessons 1-3 of the *EfT* textbook for Class III, a female teacher was addressed as Mrs. Fareha. The name Mrs. Fareha appeared again in unit 30, lessons 1-3, along with a male teacher named Mr. Mahbub. Another female teacher was addressed as Mrs. Moury in unit 31, lessons 4-5. Discrimination was revealed here as the title 'Mrs.' indicates the marital identities of those teachers, but this issue (marital status) did not arise while addressing the male teacher. Moreover, social reality was not presented here as in Bangladesh teachers are not addressed as Mr. or Mrs.

Class II

Linguistic sexism was noticed through the discriminatory title in the textbook for Class II, like the other textbooks. In unit 26, lessons 1-3, a female teacher was introduced as Miss Mariam. The title 'Miss' referred to the marital identity that she was unmarried. However, male characters did not face such discrimination.

Hence, the *EfT* textbooks were found embedded with the biased demonstration of gender in terms of the use of language. The use of language including nouns and pronouns, the preference for placing men first, and the word choices made by the writers, revealed the extent of male dominance. In contrast, women were

underrepresented in a range of aspects, such as the use of nouns and pronouns, firstness, leadership qualities, etc.

4.3 Multi-modal Representation

Through multi-modal representation, this chapter analyzed different modes of activities or occurrences of male and female characters. For an instance, this chapter examined different occupational roles, visibility of men and women, characterization, domestic roles and the minimal representation and portrayal of female characters in the primary textbooks.

4.3.1 Occupation

Improper representation in occupation was clearly found in the *EfT* textbooks. In this study, the total number of occupations mentioned in the books was counted first. Then it was categorized as how many professions were associated with men and how many were with women.

Class V:

The *EfT* textbook for Class V presented the following occupations through stories and images:

Table 4.3

Men and Women in Occupation in the Textbook of Class V

Occupations	Male	Female
-------------	------	--------

Teacher	0	2
Banker	1	0
Firefighter	1	0
Guide	1	0
Doctor	1	1
Singer	0	1

The findings of Table 4.3 showed that male characters were presented as firefighters, bankers, guides, and so on. In contrast, women were presented as singers and teachers. Only in the case of a doctor, both a female character and a male character were depicted.

In the story titled ‘occupations’ in Unit 9, Lessons 1 and 2, Raju was shown as a firefighter. He was inspired to choose this profession from practical experience. When Raju was in Class V, a fire broke out in his school. A group of firefighters arrived to extinguish it. While watching them from the schoolyard, Raju felt motivated to choose the profession of firefighting. At first, he did it as a volunteer and then he became a full-time firefighter. This was indeed a challenging job and Raju was inspired as all the firefighters were men. Girls did not get them as their role models.

In contrast, lessons 3 and 4 of the same unit depicted a lady as a singer which is a less challenging profession. The figures below depicted both a boy (Raju) and a girl in different professions:

Figure 4.7

A Man as a Firefighter



(NCTB, 2021, Class V, p. 34)

Figure 4.8

A Woman as a Singer



(NCTB, 2021, Class V, p. 35)

Thus, the story of Raju and figures 4.7 and 4.8 revealed discriminatory occupational roles for men and women.

Besides, men were presented as writers/editors and guides, whereas no girl was depicted in such roles. Unit 19, lessons 1 and 2, presented a student magazine named “Sunshine Magazine” (NCTB, 2021, Class V, p. 74). The writer/editor of the magazine was a boy – Farhan Ahmed. From this, young learners may perceive that only boys can be writers/editors. Girls will be alienated. The magazine consisted of a story where students went to visit the Liberation War Museum. A guide welcomed them to the museum. To indicate the guide, the male referent term “he” was used which showed that the guide was a man, not a woman. The guide was presented as a dynamic and responsible person. No female character was found to play such professional role throughout the book.

Class IV

Diversified professions for women and limited professions for men were explored in the fourth-grade (Class IV) textbook. The occupations in this textbook (through stories and images) have been shown in the following table:

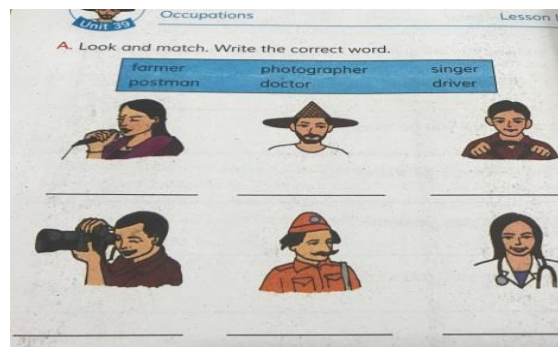
Table 4.4*Men and Women in Occupation in the Textbook for Class IV*

Occupations	Male	Female
Pilot	1	0
Government officer (retired)	1	0
Doctor	1	2
School teacher	1	
Farmer	1	0
Photographer	1	0
Singer	0	1
Postman	1	0
Driver	1	0
Cleaner	1	1
Boatman	1	0
Nurse	0	1
Dentist	1	0
Tailor	1	0
Fisherman	2	0
Garment Worker	0	1
Rickshaw driver	2	0
Guard	1	0

Table 4.4 showed that 17 types of occupations were presented in the English language textbook for Class IV. Here, women were portrayed only as doctors, singers, nurses, cleaners, garment workers, and teachers whereas men were presented in diversified occupational roles, such as pilots, government officers, teachers, doctors, postmen, cleaners, drivers, boatmen, farmers, dentists, tailors, and fishermen. Such discriminatory occupational roles were also explored through visuals. The following figures exposed unequal roles for men and women:

Figure 4.9

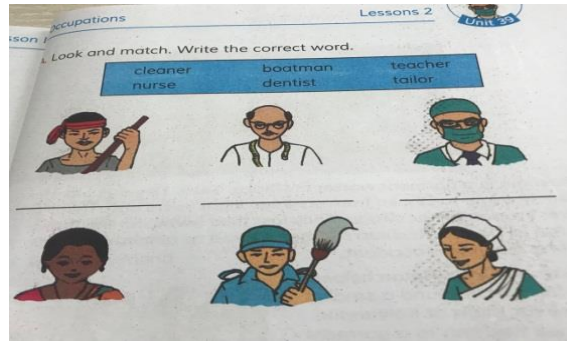
Discriminatory Depiction of Men and Women in Occupations



(NCTB, Class IV, p. 78)

Figure 4.10

Women in a Limited Range of Occupations



(NCTB, 2021, Class IV, p. 79)

Both figures 4.9 and 4.10 exposed the imbalance in occupational roles. Figure 4.9 showed that among six, only two individuals were female and they were depicted as a singer and as a doctor. Figure 4.10 also showed that there were only two women among six persons and they were presented (women) as a teacher and a nurse.

Along with images, stories also represented women in stereotypical professional roles and men in diversified and challenging roles. For example, lessons 1-2 of unit 3, depicted the family of Farzana and Jamil, where their mother, Rehana Parvin was shown as a doctor and their father, Aziz Ahmed was shown as a pilot. In lessons 3-4 of the same unit, Farzana and Jamil's grandfather, Altaf Uddin was portrayed as a retired government officer and their grandmother, Jahanara Begum as a housewife. Thus the story represented two women, one as a homemaker and another one as a doctor which is a stereotypical profession for women.

A similar stereotypical professional role was also presented in unit 15, lessons 1-3, in the story titled 'Sagar's family. Sagar's father was presented as a doctor while his mother was shown as a homemaker. Besides, Sagar's grandfather was presented as a retired school teacher and his grandmother was shown as a homemaker.

In addition, 'teaching' was found as one of the common professions for women in the textbook. In unit 27, Hasna Hena, a female character, was depicted as a teacher.

Her students Munir and Nipa mentioned that Hasna Hena was an English teacher who taught in a primary school in Dhaka.

Furthermore, ‘garment worker’ was another profession associated with females in the fourth-grade (Class IV) textbook. Lessons 1-2 of unit 40 of this textbook presented the struggle of Reshma’s family. Here, Reshma was shown as a garment worker. Her father was a rickshaw driver who died in an accident. Reshma’s mother was shown stitching “Nakshi kathas” at home and selling them.

Besides these, three images of occupations were found in unit 41, lessons 1-3. Here, a male rickshaw driver and a guard were depicted and a female character was shown as a cleaner. Thus, men were presented in a widespread range of occupations than their counterparts in the textbook for Class IV.

Class III

A limited range of occupation was found for women in the textbook for Class III, like the textbooks for Class IV and Class V. Numbers and types of occupations for men and women in the textbook for Class III were presented in the following table:

Table 4.5*Men and Women in Occupation in the Textbook for Class III*

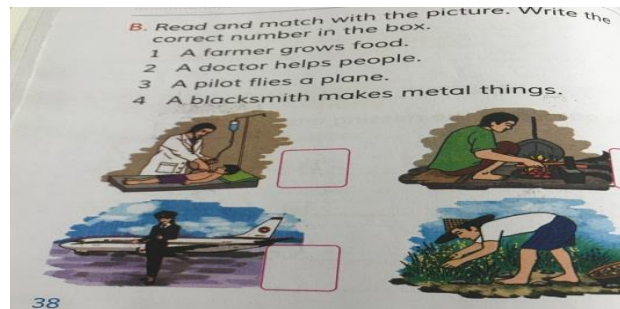
Occupations	Male	Female
Farmer	1	0
Doctor	0	1
Pilot	0	1
Blacksmith	1	0
Cobbler	1	0
Tailor	1	0
Driver	1	0
Teacher	0	3
Banker	1	0
Shopkeeper	1	0

Table 4.5 revealed that there were ten occupations in the *EfT* textbook for Class III. In this book, women were shown only in three occupations. While, women were presented as teacher, doctor and pilot, men are presented in a widespread range of professions such as farmer, blacksmith, cobbler, tailor, driver, banker and shopkeeper. However, depicting a female character as a pilot is an encouraging example in this textbook, but the female pilot was portrayed in an image only without any description.

The occupational roles were also presented through images. The following figures represented men and women in various occupations:

Figure 4.11

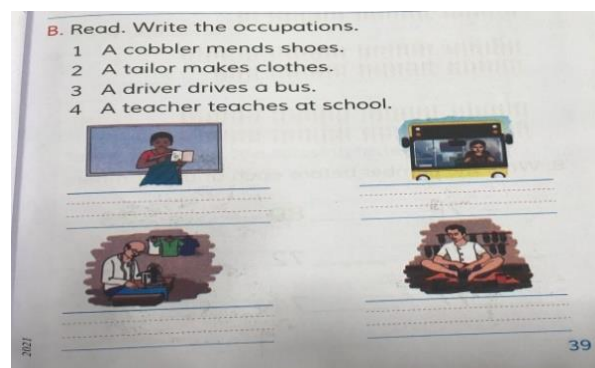
Men and Women in Different Occupations



(NCTB, Class III, p. 38)

Figure 4.12

Disparity in Occupational Roles for Men and Women



(NCTB, Class III, p. 39)

Figure 4.11 presented four people in different occupations. Among them two were women (a doctor and a pilot) and two are men (a blacksmith and a farmer).

However, figure 4.12 presented four occupations where only one female character was visualized and that female character was presented as a teacher.

Besides, discrimination in occupation was explored in the chapter titled 'occupations' in unit 19. Lessons 1-2 of unit 19 showed four occupations where two men and two women were presented. Lessons 3-4 of the same unit showed four occupations, and here, three of them were men and only one was woman.

In addition, the images in unit 38, lessons 3-4, presented a man as a shopkeeper and a girl as a customer. Here, a girl came to the shop to buy soap. In reality, nowadays, female shopkeepers are seen in various department stores. However, no female character was shown as a shopkeeper throughout the book which denies social reality.

Along with these images, a story revealed stereotypical occupations in the textbook for Class III. Unit 34, lessons 3-4, presented Tisha's family where Tisha's mother was shown as a teacher and her mother as a banker. Teaching for women and banking for men are very conventional representation of occupation.

Class II

Like other textbooks, the *EfT* textbook for Class II also presented teaching as women's profession. This textbook presented two types of occupations through images and stories.

Table 4.6

Men and Women in Occupation in the Textbook for Class II

Occupations	Male	Female
Teacher	0	3
Farmer	1	0

Table 4.6 revealed that only women were portrayed as teachers and a man was portrayed as a farmer. The professions (teachers and farmer) were found from the images and stories of the textbook for Class II. An example of female teacher through an image has been presented in the following figure:

Figure 4.13

A Female Teacher with her Students



(NCTB, 2021, Class II, p. 52)

Figure 4.13 showed a female teacher, Miss Mariam, with her students in the story titled 'Kaniz's life' in unit 26, lessons 1-3. Here, Miss Mariam was presented as Kaniz's school teacher.

Along with images, a story also depicted a female teacher. A teacher Anita Sarker was depicted in the story 'Anita's life' in unit 27, lessons 1-3. Thus, teaching was shown as the only profession for women which demonstrates stereotypical gender roles.

Class I:

Like the textbook for Class II, the textbook for Class I also presented females as teachers. The textbook for Class I only showed one occupation. Images of female teachers have been presented in the following figures:

Figure 4.14

A Female Teacher at her Workplace



(NCTB, Class I, p. 6)

Figure 4.15

A Female Teacher Addressing her Students



(NCTB, Class I, p. 6)

Both figure 4.14 and 4.15 showed a female teacher in different activities. In figure 4.12 the teacher began her class with greetings and in figure 4.13; she ended by saying ‘Good bye’.

Besides, women as teachers were shown in Unit 16, lessons 1-3. In activity A, a female teacher was shown calling her student and in activity B, a female teacher was shown giving different instructions to her students. Thus, this textbook suggested teaching as the only occupation for women.

4.3.2 Visibility

Equal visibility of male and female characters is another criterion to achieve gender equitable textbooks. In order to measure the visibility, firstly, the numbers of images referring to men and women in the textbooks were counted in this study by the researcher. Then, the images and captions were analyzed through gender lens. Findings have been presented below through tables and figures.

Class V

Figure 4.16

Visibility of Female and Male Characters in the Textbook for Class V

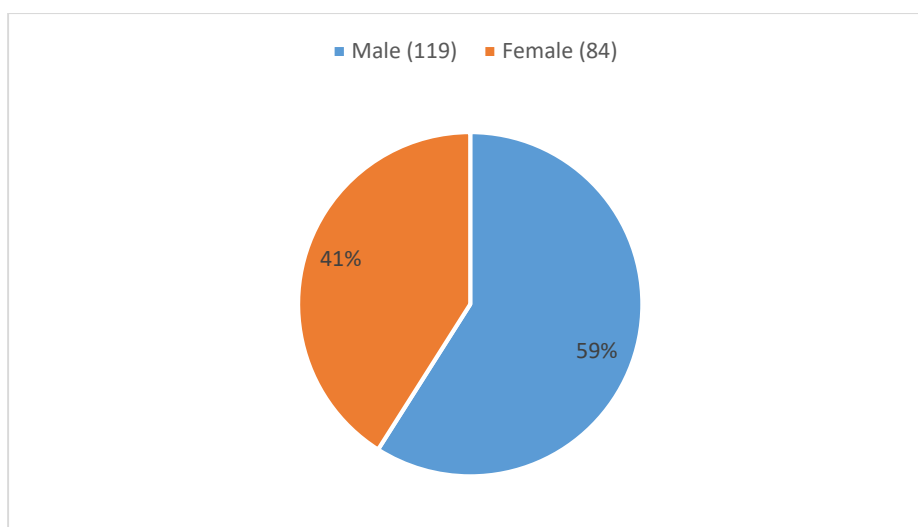
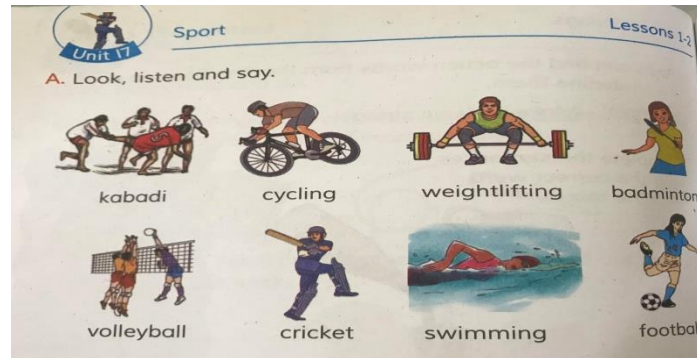


Figure 4.16 exposed that only 41% female characters were portrayed through images, whereas it was 59% for male characters. Findings indicated unequal representation of female and male characters in the *English for Today* textbook for Class V. In some images, it was not possible to analyze the content. For example, it was not possible to identify female and male characters clearly in the images of the workers, repairing the bridge and the river flooded the field (NCTB, Class V, p. 94) as the images were colorful, but hazy. However, such colorful images are used in the textbooks as colorful pictures and illustrations in the textbooks give positive impressions to the young learners as their eyes meet pictures before texts (Ghoushchi et al., 2021). In their study, Ghoushchi et al. exposed that most of the EFL textbooks feature eye-catching images and pictures to draw the attention of the learners.

Discrimination was found not only in the number of images but also in visualization. For instance, while women were visualized in fashion and health magazine, men were pictured in sports magazine in Unit 4, Lesson 5. Visualizing women in fashion or health and men in sports represented the patriarchal manifestation. Men were also highlighted in sports in unit 17, lessons 1 and 2. These lessons displayed eight types of sports activities through images, including cycling, *kabadi*, weightlifting, volleyball, badminton, swimming, cricket, and football where men outnumbered. The following figure displayed those images of sports activities.

Figure 4.17

Men and Women in Different Sports Activities



(NCTB, 2021, Class V, p. 66)

Figure 4.17 showed only two images of women where they were found playing football and badminton. Men were portrayed in *kabadi*, cycling, weightlifting, and cricket. It was not clear in the images whether the men or the women played volleyball and swimming by. Though in the text (p. 66), *Anousha* declared that she went swimming and cycling, no image was presented in the textbook.

Class IV

Along with the *English for Today* textbook for Class V, the textbook for Class IV also exposed discrimination in visualization. The following table presents the frequency of male and female images:

Table 4.7

Visibility of Male and Female Characters in the Textbook for Class IV

Images of male Characters		Images of Female Characters		Total
Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Per cent	
150	55	123	45	273

Table 4.7 showed that 45% female characters and 55 % male characters were portrayed through images of the textbook for Class IV. Such representation portrayed domination of male. Moreover, female characters were visualized stereotypically through some images. The following figures revealed the discriminatory roles of men and women in images:

Figure 4.18

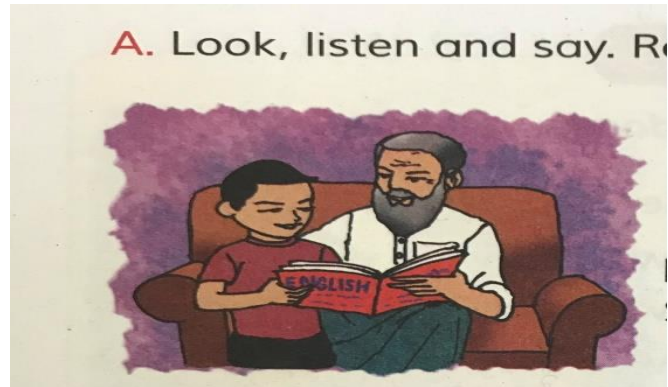
Visualization of a Man and a Woman



(NCTB, Class IV, p. 7)

Figure 4.19

Visualization of the Role of a Man



(NCTB, Class IV, p. 32)

Figure 4.18 depicted a male character who was reading newspaper, whereas a female character was taking tea. Figure 4.19 showed that Sagar's grandfather was reading stories to him; no female character was visualized in the textbook with reading or writing activities.

Besides, discriminatory gender role was explored in unit 40, lessons 1-2. The lessons showed an image of a garment factory where all the workers are female.

Figure 4.20

Female Characters as Garment Workers



(NCTB, Class IV, p. 80)

Women were visualized as garment workers in figure 4.20. In reality, men also work in the garment factories which was ignored in this textbook. Thus, social reality was denied through visualization.

Class III

Discrimination was also noticed regarding visualization of men and women in the textbook for Class III. The following table presented discrimination in the number of male and female images:

Table 4.8

Visibility of Male and Female Characters in the Textbook for Class III

Images of Male characters		Images of Female characters		Total
Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	

Table 4.8 showed that 48% female characters and 52% male characters were portrayed through images in the *EfT* textbook for Class III. Thus, women suffered from low visibility in the textbook for Class III.

Besides, only boys were portrayed in sports activities in the English language textbook for Class III like the textbook for Class V. Unit 33, lessons 1-2, and unit 35, lessons 1-3, of the *EfT* textbook for Class III showed two images where boys were playing football, but no girls were portrayed in sports throughout the textbook. Thus, female characters were visualized in stereotypical roles. The portrayal of boys in outdoor activities and women in indoor activities has been presented in the following figures:

Figure 4.21

Boys were Playing Outside



(NCTB, Class III, p. 66)

Figure 4.22

Boys were in Outdoor Sports



(NCTB, Class III, p. 70)

Figure 4.23

A Woman was Sewing



(NCTB, Class III, p. 71)

Both Figures 4.21 and 4.22 showed that boys were busy with sports. Figure 4.23 showed that a lady was sewing. Such representation manifested that the indoor work was meant for women whereas sports or outside activities were for men.

Class II

The *EfT* textbook for Class II was found as an exception regarding the number of male-female images. A high frequency of female images was noticed in the textbook

of Class II. Nevertheless, discrimination was revealed in the images. The following table represented the number of images for male and female characters:

Table 4.9

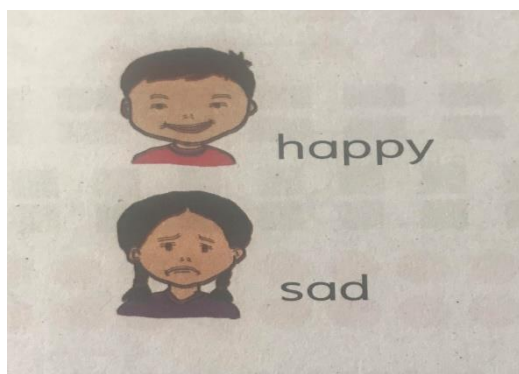
Visibility of Male and Female Characters in the Textbook for Class II

Images of Male characters		Images of Female characters		Total
Frequency	Per cent	Frequency	Per cent	
75	40	111	60	186

Table 4.9 has shown that 60% of female characters and 40% of male characters have been portrayed through images. Though the *EfT* textbook of Class II showed more images of female characters than male ones, some images demonstrated discriminatory gender roles for boys and girls. Such as, unit 15, lessons 1-4 of Class II showed a girl named Rima who was busy gardening. Rima's weekly activities were shown through images. Rima was shown putting and nurturing a seed in a tub. However, no boy was shown in such activities and thus, gardening is presented as girls' work. Besides, discrimination was noticed in the facial expressions of a boy and a girl in the following figure.

Figure 4.24

Discrimination in Facial Expression



(NCTB, Class II, p. 58)

Figure 4.24 shows that a boy was visualized as happy whereas a girl was visualized as sad. Thus, the visual positioning of the girl and the boy revealed discrimination.

Class I

The *EfT* textbook for Class I also revealed the high frequency of female images like the textbook for Class II. Nevertheless, the textbooks for Class I also conveyed unfair messages through images. The following table has presented the number of male-female images:

Table 4.10

Visibility of Male and Female Characters in the Textbook for Class I

Images of male characters		Images of female characters		Total
Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
48	48	53	52	101

Table 4.10 also showed 52% female characters and 48% male characters through images. Like Class II, the *EfT* textbook for Class I also showed more female images. Though female characters outnumbered through images, discrimination was noticed in visualization and explanation. For instance, the listening and speaking activity in unit 10, lessons 1-3 included the activity “Look at the ground. Look at the sky” which showed discrimination.

Figure 4.25

Discrimination in Visualization



(NCTB, Class I, p. 20)

Figure 4.25 showed that the boy was looking at the sky and the girl was looking at the ground. Thus, discrimination was revealed through this visual as ‘looking at the sky’ directed the unlimited view of the boy whereas ‘looking at the ground’ directed the restricted view of the girl.

4.3.3 Characterization

Discrimination was noticed in characterization in the *EfT* textbooks of the primary level. Biased representation was observed in the stories and exercises in the textbooks for Classes V and IV. However, the textbooks for Class III, Class II and Class

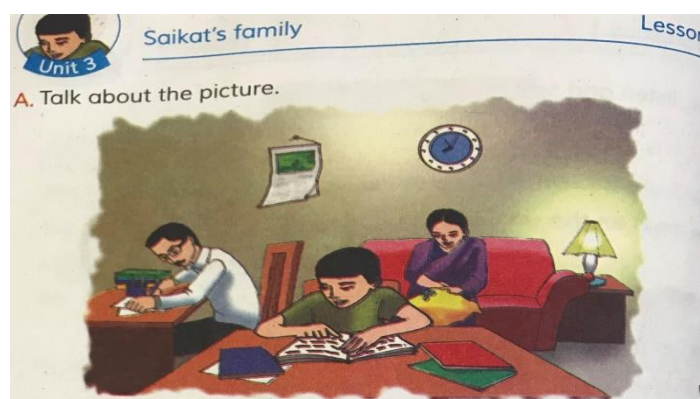
I did not contain any such stories that depicted characterization. Thus, data from the textbooks of Class V and IV were analyzed below:

Class V

The story of Saikat's family in unit 3, lessons 1 and 2, showed Saikat's father writing stories and listening to music when his mother was busy with household chores.

Figure 4.26

Stereotypical Representation of a Family



(NCTB, Class V, p. 10)

The stereotypical representation of women was vivid in figure 4. 26. Here, the woman was doing the mundane work – sewing while the father was writing and the boy is reading. Lessons 3 and 4 of the same unit contain a chart showing the family's evening activities where Saikat's father was engaged in reading and his mother in menial or mundane activities.

In addition, Sufia and her mother were shown engaged in a conversation in Unit 16, Lessons 1 and 2 where the mother was portrayed stereotypically. Here, the daughter was seeking permission from her mother for going out to play. The mother ensured whether her homework was finished or not. The girl answered affirmatively and then the mother allowed her to go and suggested her not to play for too long. Men were not shown looking after the children in this way.

Class IV

Stereotypical representation in characterization was also noticed in the *English for Today* textbook for Class IV. In lessons 1-3 of unit 15, there was a story titled ‘Sagar and his family’. The story showed that Sagar’s grandfather helped him with his homework. On the other hand, his grandmother worked at home and can made the best “pithas” in the world.

Besides, in unit 16, lessons 1-2, the story titled ‘Sagar’s week’ also showed Sagar’s grandfather’s support in his studies. The story mentioned that on week days, Sagar studies Bangla and English with his grandfather. Thus, the stories of “Sagar’s family’ and ‘Sagar’s week’ represented the discriminatory characterization of men and women by portraying Sagar’s grandmother in household chores and his grandfather in educational activities.

Further, lessons, 1-2 of unit 40, a garment worker Reshma struggled in her life. Her family had to shift to Dhaka from a village due to river erosion. Reshma’s father died in an accident. The family faced financial crises at that moment. Then, Reshma’s uncle Ratan helped the family. He found a small house for the family. Moreover, uncle Ratan helped Reshma get a job in the garment factory. Thus, Reshma’s story indicated

that a woman ultimately needs to depend on a man which demonstrates patriarchal value.

4.3.4 Domestic Roles

Women were projected in all sorts of domestic roles such as cutting, cooking, washing, and looking after the children, gardening, etc. in the textbooks for Classes V, IV, III and II. In contrast, no man was shown participating or helping in the household chores. A common feature of gender-biased representation in textbooks is the portrayal of women solely in domestic roles. Household roles and activities of men and women in the textbooks have been presented below:

Class V

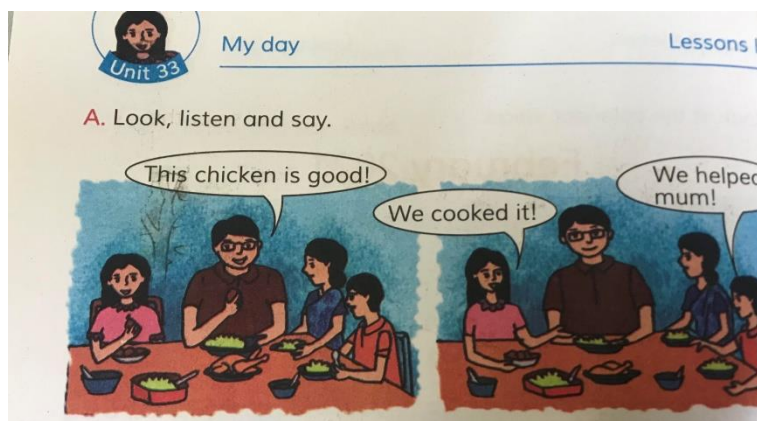
In the *EfT* textbook for Class V, Saikat's mother, Sufia's mother, and Azim's mother all were shown engaged in household chores. They cook, wash dishes, and at the same time, take care of their children's studies. All of these activities were very time-consuming, but they were devalued in society. No male character was depicted in domestic roles. Only in unit 16, Lessons 3 and 4, Azim was shown helping his mother when she requested him to put the dishes in the kitchen (NCTB, Class V, 2021, p. 63).

Class IV

Stereotypical representation of domestic roles was depicted in the textbook of Class IV through images and stories. In unit 33, lessons 1-2, two pictures of a family were portrayed with captions where the family members were taking meals together. Clichéd representation of men and women was presented through the captions.

Figure 4.27

Stereotypical Representations of Domestic Roles



(NCTB, Class IV, p. 66)

The captions of figure 4.27 showed that the father was delighted and expressed gratitude for the cooking, while the second image's captions portrayed the mother as the cook, with the children assisting her. Thus, the images represented cooking as a woman's job only. The images also demonstrated the traditional patriarchal role of men, that is – to taste and judge the quality of the food.

In lessons 1-2 of unit 35, an image portrayed Alvi's grandmother in the conventional domestic role of cutting and cooking. Similarly, lessons 1-3 of unit 15 depicted Sagar's mother engaged in gardening. It was mentioned that she grows the best tomatoes and cucumbers in her neighborhood. Sagar's grandmother also helped his mother in the garden.

Class III

Discrimination in the domestic role was presented through the images and instructions in unit 9, lessons 4-6 of the *EfT* textbook for Class III. There were four images in these lessons. The first two images contained the instructions of a mother to her daughter when the daughter came home from school. The mother asked her daughter to put her bag down and then change her clothes.

Figure 4.28

A Girl in Household Activities



(NCTB, Class III, p. 19)

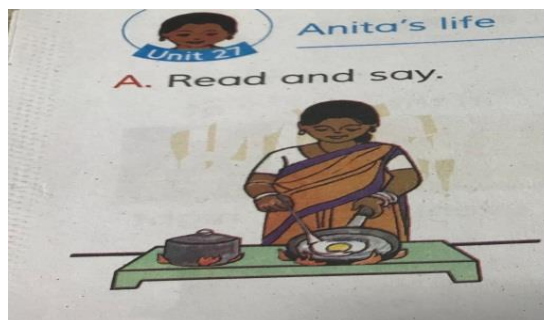
The captions in figure 4.28 showed that the mother asked the daughter to help her when she came back from school. However, no male character was shown helping in the household menial activities. Such representation manifested biased domestic roles for boys and girls.

Class II

The *EfT* textbook for Class II also represented biased domestic roles. For instance, Anita Sarkar was presented as a school teacher in unit 27, lessons 1-3. The story titled “Anita’s life” demonstrated Anita’s morning routine as – “She gets up early in the morning. She cooks breakfast for her family” (NCTB, 2021, Class III, p.54). After that, she goes to school.

Figure 4.29

Anita Sarker was Cooking



(NCTB, Class II, p. 54)

Figure 4.30

Anita Sarker was Teaching



(NCTB, Class II, p. 54)

Figures 4.29 and 4.30 showed that Anita Sarker had to cook before going to school. This story indicated that women had to do their household responsibilities at first and then they might go for their professional responsibilities. However, no man was portrayed to carry out such double responsibilities.

4.3.5 Minimal Representation of Famous Female Characters

Minimal representation of famous female characters was observed in the textbooks for Class V and Class IV. These textbooks highlighted the famous male characters only.

Class V

A passage on the Kishorganj district in unit 10, lessons 1 and 2, mentioned that this was the birthplace of Chandrabati, the first female poet of Bangla literature, but no detailed information and no image were given. However, the images of famous male

characters like the writer Upendrakishore Roy Chowdhury, the painter Zainul Abedin, and the first acting president of Bangladesh Syed Nazrul Islam were given in the textbook. This showed the omission and negligence of successful female characters. The name of the famous poet Sukumar Roy was mentioned here. The unit also mentioned that the name Kishoreganj was derived from the name of an old male landlord, either Brojakishore Pramanik or Nandakishore Pramanik.

In these lessons, five famous male characters including the landlord were presented, whereas only one female character was noted. The ratio of the famous male characters was 86% and the ratio of the famous female character was 14%. Here, males outnumber females. Even in these lessons, some establishments of the Kishoreganj district were mentioned where males dominate as well. The fort of Isha Khan at Jangal Bari and Shah Muhammad Mosque at Egaroshindhur were named after male characters and the Shiva temple was named after the female poet Chandrabati.

Class IV

A famous painter SM Sultan was presented in unit 34, lessons 1-2 of the textbook of Class IV. The struggle of the Sultan's early life was depicted here. It was mentioned in the story that people around the world know about Sultan and his paintings. Besides, the names of two other internationally famous painters were mentioned here – Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali. Both of them are male characters. However, no famous female character was presented in the textbook for Class IV.

Thus, discrimination was noticed in depicting men and women in the textbooks at the primary level in Bangladesh. Along with linguistic representations, gender

disparity was also explored through multi-modal representation. For instance, discrimination in occupation, visibility, characterization, and domestic roles was found. Men and women were depicted in conventional gender roles. Along with these, famous male characters were highlighted in the *EfT* textbooks whereas famous female characters were underrepresented. Hence, the reinforcement of patriarchal family structure was explored in the *EfT* textbooks.

4.4 Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Gender Bias in Textbooks

To explore the perception of the teachers regarding gender bias in the primary level textbooks of Bangladesh, 20 teachers of primary schools were interviewed. 10 of the 20 teachers were selected from an urban area and the other 10 were selected from rural areas. At first, the teachers were given a survey questionnaire and their responses were noted down. Then one-to-one interviews were taken with semi-structured questions. Findings from both the questionnaire and interview sessions are presented below:

4.4.1 Findings from a Questionnaire Survey for the Teachers Located in the Urban Area:

Table 4.11

Perceptions of the Primary Teachers (urban area) Regarding Gender Bias in the Textbooks

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Textbooks should represent equal power and opportunities for women and men	40%	60%			
2	Gender equality can be reflected through linguistic and multi-modal (images, actions and visibility) representation of men and women in the textbooks	30%	70%			
3	More male referring terms, first place appearance, more visibility and active roles of boys may marginalize girls	40%	60%			
4	Women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power	40%	40%		20%	

5	Most of the historical figures, literary scholars and leaders are men in the textbook	60%	40%	
6	In contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society, but this social reality is overlooked in the textbooks	60%	40%	
7	Underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls	30%	50%	20%
8	Teachers play crucial roles to ensure equal representation of men and women in the classroom		50%	50%
9	Consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to ensure gender equitable materials	70%	30%	

10 Primary textbooks need 60% 40%
to be updated in order to
eliminate gender bias

Table 4.11 revealed that all the respondents from urban areas perceived that textbooks should represent equal power and opportunities for women and men. 40% of the teachers strongly agreed and 60% of them agreed with statement 1. Similarly, all the teachers believed that gender equality could be reflected through the linguistic representation of male and female characters in the textbooks. 30% of the respondents strongly agreed and 70% of them agreed with the statement. Besides, all the respondents also believed that more male referring terms, first place appearance, more visibility and active roles of boys might marginalize girls. 40% of the respondents strongly agreed and 60% of them agreed with the statement.

However, as far as women's occupations were concerned, different perceptions of teachers were found. 20% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power. Conversely, 40% of the teachers strongly agreed and the other 40% of teachers agreed with the statement.

Further, in response to the statement - 'most of the historical figures, literary scholars and leaders were men in the textbooks' 80% of respondents strongly agreed and 20% of respondents agreed. In addition, all of the respondents perceived that 'in contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society, but this social reality is overlooked in the textbooks'. 60% of the respondents strongly agreed and 40% of them agreed with the statement.

Different perceptions were noticed in response to the statement – ‘underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls. Though 30% of teachers strongly agreed and 50% of teachers agreed, 20% of teachers disagreed with the statement.

Besides, as far as teachers’ roles were concerned to ensure gender equality in teaching, the respondents were divided in their opinions. Whereas, 50% of the teachers agreed that ‘teachers play crucial roles to ensure equal representation of men and women in the classroom’, the other 50% of them disagreed with the statement. Moreover, all the respondents perceived that ‘consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to ensure gender equitable materials’. 70% of the teachers strongly agreed and 30% of them agreed with the statement.

Furthermore, findings from the survey also revealed that all the respondents feel the necessity of updating the textbooks. 60% of teachers strongly agreed and 40% of teachers agreed with the statement that primary textbooks need to be updated to eliminate gender bias.

4.4.2 Findings from a Questionnaire Survey for the Primary Teachers Located in the Rural Areas

Table 4.12

Perceptions of the primary teachers (rural areas) regarding gender bias in the textbooks

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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1	Textbooks should represent equal power and opportunities for women and men	60%	40%
2	Gender equality can be reflected through linguistic and multi-modal (images, actions and visibility) representation of men and women in the textbooks	50%	50%
3	More male referring terms, first place appearance, more visibility and active roles of boys may marginalize girls	60%	40%
4	Women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power	60%	40%
5	Most of the historical figures, literary scholars	70%	30%

	and leaders are men in the textbook				
6	In contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society, but this social reality is overlooked in the textbooks	40%	20%	20%	
7	Underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls	60%		40%	
8	Teachers play crucial roles to ensure equal representation of men and women in the classroom		40%	40%	20%
9	Consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to ensure gender equitable materials	50%	50%		

10 Primary textbooks need 60% 40%
to be updated in order to
eliminate gender bias

Table 4.12 revealed that teachers of primary schools located in rural areas also perceived that textbooks need to exemplify equal power and opportunities for women and men like the teachers of urban areas. 6 out of 10 (60%) teachers strongly agreed and 4 out of 10 (40%) teachers agreed with statement 1. However, that 60% of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement were female. All of the respondents also perceived that gender equality can be reflected through linguistic and multi-modal representations of men and women in the textbooks. Table 4.14 shows that 5 out of 10 (50%) teachers strongly agreed and the other 5 (50%) teachers agreed with statement 2.

Besides, all the respondents perceived that more male referring terms, first place appearance, more visibility and active roles of boys may marginalize girls. 6 out of 10 (60%) respondents strongly agreed and 4 out of 10 (40%) respondents agreed with statement 3.

However, differences in perceptions were noticed among the respondents with statement 4. 6 out of 10 (60%) teachers strongly agreed that ‘women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power’, but 4 of them (40%) disagreed with the statement. Nevertheless, all the female respondents (6) perceived that discriminatory occupational roles may demonstrate repressive power whereas; all the female respondents (4) perceived that such biased representation may not demonstrate repressive power.

Though the respondents had different perceptions regarding statement 4, all of them acknowledged that ‘most of the historical figures, literary scholars and leaders are men in the textbook’ (statement 5). 7 out of 10 (70%) teachers strongly agreed and 3 out of 10 (30%) agreed with the statement. It indicated that all of the teachers confessed the existence of gender disparity in terms of presenting famous persons; female characters were underrepresented in the textbooks. However, all of them did not feel that the underrepresentation of women may create repressive power in the social context of Bangladesh.

Different perceptions were noticed with statement 6 – ‘in contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society, but this social reality is overlooked in the textbooks’. 4 out of 10 (40%) teachers strongly agreed and 2 out of 10 (20%) teachers agreed with the statement. However, the other 2 teachers (20%) disagreed with the statement.

Like statement 6, different perceptions were also noticed with statement 7 – ‘underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls’. 6 out of 10 (60%) teachers agreed whereas rest 4 (40%) teachers disagreed with the statement. Nevertheless, that 40% of teachers who disagreed with statement 4 are all men.

In addition, different opinions were explored regarding teachers’ roles in ensuring equal representation of gender. Though 4 out of 10 (40%) teachers agreed with statement 4 – ‘teachers play crucial roles to ensure equal demonstration of men and women in the classroom’, 4 (40%) of them disagreed and rest 2 (20%) of them strongly disagreed with the statement. In contrast, all of the respondents felt the necessity of consciousness of textbook writers for ensuring gender equality. Thus, 5 teachers (50%)

strongly agreed and the other 5 teachers (50%) agreed with statement 9 – ‘consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to ensure gender equitable materials’.

Finally, table 4.12 revealed that all the respondents felt the necessity of updating the textbooks to ensure equality. 6 out of 10 (60%) of the respondents strongly agreed and 4 out of 10 (40%) of them agreed with statement 10 – ‘primary textbooks need to be updated to eliminate gender bias’.

Thus, findings from Tables 4.11 and 4.12 exposed that teachers from both urban and rural areas perceived the necessity of gender equitable textbooks for the primary level of education in Bangladesh. The respondents had different opinions regarding the occupational roles and marginalization of women. 30% of respondents from urban areas and 40% of teachers from rural areas perceived that women in stereotyped and men in diversified occupational roles do not demonstrate repressive power. Besides, though most of the respondents perceived that the underrepresentation of female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls, 20% of respondents from urban areas and 40% teachers of from rural areas did not agree with that. Further, the respondents had also different opinions regarding teachers’ roles in promoting gender equality. However, all the teachers (both urban and rural) explained their opinions elaborately during the interview sessions.

4.4.3 Findings from the Interviews of the Teachers of the Urban Area

Ten teachers (five male and five female) of Dhaka city were interviewed with semi-structured questions. The interviews of the respondents were transcribed to obtain the materials for analysis. For confidentiality reasons, all the respondents (ten teachers) were referred to in the findings and discussion sections using pseudonyms. Teachers of

the primary schools located in the urban area were referred to as - TPSUA A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J.

The interviewed teachers were asked about their perceptions regarding the role of textbooks and textbook writers and the teachers; Linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender in the primary textbooks and the impact of the biased representation of gender upon learners. Then, the interviewed teachers were also asked about their recommendations for enhancing gender equality in textbooks. Findings from their interviews i.e. the perceptions and recommendations of the urban teachers are presented below:

4.4.3.1 Role of the Textbooks. All of the interviewed teachers perceived that textbooks have a significant impact and hold a crucial position in education. These (textbooks) also help develop a sense of gender equality in the learners of primary schools. TPSUA D and I argued that English language textbooks have immense importance in the context of Bangladesh as English is very popular and considered the language of practice. Both teachers and learners have special attention to English textbooks.

Then, the teachers were asked in what ways textbooks can change the perception of the learners about the stereotypical patriarchal society. In response to the question, respondents TPSUA A, D, G, I and J suggested using equal attributions for men and women. Respondent TPSUA H focused on an equal number of images in the textbooks. Besides, respondent TPSUA C opined that examples of women's contribution and success should be highlighted in the textbooks and respondent B feels the necessity of revising the textbooks for better impact.

4.4.3.2 Role of the Textbook Writers. The teachers were enquired about their perceptions regarding the roles of the textbook writers for gender representation in the textbooks. All the respondents acknowledged the significant roles of textbook writers. They were asked whether the intentions, attitudes and strategies of the textbook writers are reflected in the textbooks. In response to this question, TPSUA A mentioned that the writers were not conscious of gender equality, thus, discrimination was found in the textbooks. Moreover, TPSUA E and TPSUA H perceived that writers' attitudes were responsible for gender disparity in the textbooks. However, TPSUA B, C, D, F, G, I and J argued that discrimination exists in the textbooks due to the social reality. While these respondents did not find the attitudinal problems of the writers rather they felt that the writers presented the social practices, TPSUA E and H recommended that textbook writers need to adopt some strategies to maintain equality. Besides, all the respondents felt the necessity of more female authors to ensure gender equality in the primary textbooks.

4.4.3.3 Role of the Teachers. The teachers were asked to what extent they think that teachers' choice of words and explanation of the textbook contents influence students' perceptions. In response to this question, the respondents were divided in their opinions. Five out of ten respondents opined that teachers play vital roles to ensure equal representation of men and women in the classroom. TPSUA A mentioned that teachers can introduce different occupations to the learners which are not even mentioned in the textbooks. Then, teachers can encourage female learners to choose challenging professions in future. TPSUA C had similar perceptions. This respondent (TPSUA C) added that teachers can expose several opportunities to female learners. For example, TPSUA C mentioned that-

I often address my female learners as leaders (to make fun) and I add that as both the prime minister and the leader of the opposition are women in Bangladesh, you (female learners) belong to the leaders' community. Who knows – you can be a leader one day. (TPSUA C)

Thus, TPSUA C perceived that by conveying such messages female learners subconsciously may dream to be leaders. Like respondents TPSUA C, TPSUA D also perceived that a teacher has the scope to add something even which is not mentioned in the textbooks. According to this respondent (TPSUA D), it is very important how a teacher explains and interprets the contents of the textual materials for the betterment of the learners. She mentioned –

We see some women in our society are doing unconventional jobs. We can tell our students that though your textbooks are depicting women in a few professions, you can see that women are developing themselves and are taking challenges nowadays. So, you can take the challenges too. (TPSUA D)

Teacher J also focused on the teachers' own examples and explanations. For example, this respondent (TPSUA J) stated that while a text is showing a boy in an outdoor sport or a challenging activity, a teacher can mention that a girl can also take part in such activities. This is how; girls will also be motivated to participate in challenging work. However, teacher F confessed that he never thought about teachers' role to ensure gender equality in the textbooks earlier, but now he feels that teachers' words and explanations may have a positive impact on learners.

The other five teachers (TPSUA B, E, G, H and I) perceived that teachers (especially the primary teachers) only deliver the textual contents in the classroom. They also argued that teachers explain and elaborate the materials produced by the

textbook writers. Respondents TPSUA B, G and H opined that it is the responsibility of the textbook writers to produce gender equitable materials. Besides, respondents TPSUA E and I mentioned that if the textbook writers show equality through the stories and images of the textbooks, teachers will naturally convey those messages to the learners. Moreover, TPSUA E argued that –

If the textbook writers present unequal examples in the textbooks, learners will remember those examples as written materials have a long term impact. The young learners might forget what the teachers said in the classroom whereas, they (learners) will read the textbooks at home and those printed materials will stick in their minds. (TPSUA E)

Hence, TPSUA D emphasized the writers' roles than the teachers' roles to convey gender-neutral messages in the classrooms. Thus, respondents TPSUA B, E, G, H and I opined that gender-biased messages the textbook writers create obstacles for teachers to teach about gender equality in the classrooms. However, respondents who spoke about the significant roles of teachers believe that both writers and teachers have to think and work to promote gender equality for young learners.

4.4.3.4 Linguistic Representation of Gender in the Textbooks. All of the teachers perceived that gender equitable languages (for example, choice of words, use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, firstness), illustrations and examples of the textbooks may inspire both girls and boys to equally work for society. TPSUA A shared his own classroom experience regarding the biased representation of gender in textbooks. He shared that one of the female learners in his class (in Class IV) asked him why there are more male names in the stories. Teacher A referred to those more male names created a negative impact on his female learners. Thus, this respondent (TPSUA A) felt that

discrimination in words and illustrations creates adverse effects on young minds. Besides, respondents TPSUA B and C also think that textbook writers should use equal language and examples. Other respondents (TPSUA D, E, F, G, H, I and J) also mentioned that equal language and illustrations in the textbooks can motivate both boys and girls to work for society whereas, the biased representation may marginalize girls.

4.4.3.5 Multi-modal Representation of Gender in the Textbooks. Different perceptions were noticed among the interviewed teachers regarding occupational roles. Eight out of ten teachers perceived that both genders should be presented equally in all types of professions and three of them perceive that equality is not possible in all aspects. Respondents TPSUA A, C, D, F, G, H, I and J stated that both genders should be equally portrayed in all professional roles in the textbooks. These respondents perceived that though our society possesses patriarchal values textbooks can work as change makers. Consequently, textbooks can portray women in unconventional roles. The respondents also perceived that women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles may demonstrate repressive power. However, two teachers (TPSUA B, and E) had different opinions. These respondents opined that women are not secure in all professions in our social context. For example, TPSUA B mentioned that-

Men can choose diversified professions in our country such as night guards, firefighters, bus drivers etc., but women cannot choose such professions as a society cannot ensure their security. (TPSUA B)

Thus, respondents B and E felt that men are portrayed in the diversified and challenging roles in the textbooks that simply represent our social realities. Therefore, these two respondents did not think that women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in

diversified roles demonstrate repressive power. However, respondents TPSUA B and E were male and they emphasized social reality than portraying women in all professions. Nevertheless, all the female respondents perceived the necessity of presenting women in any profession in the textbooks to ensure equality.

Though differences were noticed in the perceptions of the teachers regarding the occupational positions of women in the textbooks, all of the interviewed teachers (both male and female) agreed that men and women should be equally presented through the images along with the stories and exercises. Besides, all the respondents acknowledged that most of the historical figures, literary scholars and leaders are men in the primary textbooks. They felt the necessity of including famous female characters. Respondents TPSUA D, G and I mentioned the significant roles of including famous female characters in the textbooks. Respondent I added that-

Examples of famous female characters will certainly motivate female learners. If learners find the reference of both male and female famous persons, female learners will be motivated. At the same time, male learners will also be aware of the equal skills and intellects of both men and women. (TPSUA I).

Further, respondents B, C and E added that if textbooks highlight famous female characters male learners will also develop a sense of respect towards women.

Furthermore, the interviewed textbook writers were asked about their perceptions regarding the discrimination of gender in domestic roles. All the respondents agreed that biased representation exists in textbooks. Moreover, they think that social practice is responsible for discrimination in domestic roles. Respondent TPSUA A mentioned that it is not possible to deny social reality. He added that people in Bangladesh are habituated to seeing women in the household chores and this reality

is presented in the textbooks. Respondents TPSUA E and H mentioned that textbook writers' stereotypical views are reflected in the textbooks. Respondent TPSUA G talked about teachers' stereotypical views too. She (respondent TPSUA G) mentioned that writers presented the conventional domestic roles and teachers are also familiar with such scenarios therefore, they convey the conventional messages about the domestic roles of women to the learners. However, respondents TPSUA A and C suggested that boys can also be shown doing household chores in the textbooks. As an example, respondent A referred to the images (Figure 4.26) of unit 9, lessons 4-6 of the *EfT* textbook for Class III, where a mother asked her daughter to do some household chores when the girl came from school. Respondent TPSUA A mentioned that stories and images in textbooks can show the participation of boys in such activities. Besides, respondent TPSUA C added that nowadays men also participate in domestic work. He added that though men's participation is not very common, but one or two stories and images could present their (men's) involvement in mundane works to enhance equality.

Along with the biased representation of domestic roles, the interviewed teachers also acknowledged that women are not properly manifested in sports in the textbooks. TPSUA A, E and H mentioned that girls are participating and winning in sports nationally and internationally, but the primary textbooks did not represent the success of women in sports. Respondents TPSUA E and F mentioned girls' outstanding performances in school sports competitions whereas no story or image shows the achievement of girls in sports. Thus, all the interviewed teachers opined that equality women's participation and success are underrepresented in the textbooks. Eight respondents out of ten (all female respondents and two male respondents) perceived that underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls. However, two of the male teachers (TPSUA B and E) did not think that

girls will be alienated due to underrepresentation. According to these respondents, female learners are familiar with the underrepresentation of women as they observe discrimination in their families and societies. However, these respondents (TPSUA B and E) felt that both boys and girls should be equally presented in the textbooks for betterment.

4.4.3.6 Impact of Biased Representation of Gender in Textbooks. All the teachers had a common perception that the biased portrayal of gender in textbooks can have adverse effects on the minds of young learners. All of them agreed that in this age level (6 to 10 years) learners develop their sense of gender equality and thus, equal representation of gender is required for their progress. The interviewed teachers were asked to what extent unequal gender roles and power relationships in the textbooks may lower female learners' expectations and limit their potential. In response to this question, teacher A argued that such representation will make the girls inferior. Thus, they may not dream to accept any challenges and work for society. Respondents B and C and E also had the perception that unequal representation may work as an obstacle in the way of female development. Respondent D added that due to biased representation girls will be degraded day by day. Besides, respondents I and G argued that if textbooks show the active roles and successes of men, then female learners might be disappointed and alienated too. Consequently, such biased representation will discourage girls to work hard. The other three respondents (F, I and J) also had similar perceptions. According to the respondents TPSUA F, I and J, gender biased textbooks will teach the learners (both male and female) about discriminatory gender roles. TPSUA I argued that –

If textbooks portray solely women in indoor roles and men in outdoor roles, no change will take place in society. Both male and female learners will learn the

gender differentiated role from their childhood. Though children learn different gender roles from their families, textbooks can show them equal gender roles. (TPSUA I)

Thus, the teachers acknowledged the negative impact of gender disparity in textbooks on young learners. In contrast, all the interviewed teachers agreed that gender equitable language and examples in the language may inspire girls to determine their professional and societal roles.

4.4.4 Recommendation of the Teachers of the Urban Area

All of the interviewed teachers of the primary schools located in the urban area acknowledged that inequality and discrimination exist in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. They felt the necessity of representing equal power and opportunities for both genders to enhance equality in the textbooks. Therefore, they recommended a few strategies to eliminate gender bias in textbooks. Their recommendations are presented below:

4.4.4.1 Reviewing the Textbooks. All the respondents felt that the existing primary textbooks need to be updated to eliminate gender bias. TPSUA H argued that

—

Young learners of the primary schools of Bangladesh have to be able to keep pace with global progress. Textbooks can play a vital role to make learners global citizens, but unfortunately our textbooks underrepresent the achievement of women. (TPSUA H)

Thus, this respondent (TPSUA H) recommended reviewing the textbooks. Along with her respondents TPSUA C, D, G, I and J strongly recommended reviewing the

textbooks and tracing inequality. Besides, respondents TPSUA A, B, E and F also suggested revising the textbooks to eliminate discrimination.

4.4.4.2 Raising Awareness among Writers and Teachers. All the respondents focused on raising awareness among textbook writers. The respondents also felt the necessity of raising awareness among the teachers. Though five out of ten teachers perceived that teachers only explain the textual materials and teachers do not play crucial roles to ensure equal representation of men and women in the classroom, they also felt that teachers have to be aware of gender equality. Respondents TPSUA B, C and G stated that our society is patriarchal and biased. They added that till now in many cases, men dominate and play active roles, especially in outside activities. TPSUA C added that-

The current state of our society is characterized by a patriarchal system, where men often hold dominant positions and are actively involved in various societal activities. On the other hand, women continue to face discrimination and are often relegated to secondary roles. (TPSUA C)

Respondents TPSUA B, C and G felt that as women are discriminated against in society, textbooks can motivate them to go forward. Thus, the awareness of textbook writers is much needed.

4.4.4.3 Ensuring Equality through Languages and Illustrations. Equality through the words (nouns, pronouns, adjectives etc.) and illustrations can promote gender equality in the textbooks – this was perceived by all the interviewed teachers. Thus, all the respondents recommended using positive attribution for both men and women in the textbooks. Respondent TPSUA A focused on using equal numbers of male-referring and female-referring nouns and pronouns in the textbooks. Besides,

respondents TPSUA B, D, F and G emphasized ensuring equality through illustrations. These respondents mentioned that images have a long-term impact on the minds of young learners. Thus, if the learners explore more visibility of women in the textbooks, they will start visualizing them in different activities. Therefore, the respondents recommended using equal language and images for both women and men.

4.4.4.4 Highlighting Women’s Contribution. The interviewed teachers recommended emphasizing the contribution of women to the well-being of their families as well as society in the textbooks. Respondent I suggested that in each textbook, at least one chapter should be added which will highlight the famous female characters and their contribution to the country. Respondent C argued that-

It is regrettable that women are often overlooked in our textbooks despite the fact that our Prime Minister is a globally recognized female leader. By emphasizing the contribution of women contributions of women, textbooks can inspire and motivate learners. (TPSUA C)

Besides, respondents TPSUA B, C, D, G, H and J stated that nowadays women are working inside and outside the home. Their involvement in domestic activities and occupations needs to be focused on. Respondents TPSUA I and J mentioned that some women in our society do not work outside, but they are engaged in gardening and sewing and they earn and contribute to the family. The respondents added that such contribution of women is disregarded in the textbooks. As an example, respondent TPSUA I referred to a story from the *EfT* textbook for Class IV, titled ‘Sagar and his family’ (lessons 1-3 of unit 15), where Sagar’s mother grows tomatoes and cucumbers. She (respondent TPSUA I) mentioned that the gardening of Sagar’s mother could be

presented in a different way such as, it could be shown that she (Sagar's mother) earns money by selling vegetables. According to respondent I, women can be honored by giving an economic value to their hard work. Similarly, TPSUA B, C and G recommended that women's successes in sports such as cricket, football and volleyball can be highlighted in the textbooks.

4.4.4.5 Increasing the Number of Female Writers. Finally, the interviewed teachers recommended including more female writers for writing the textbooks. Respondents TPSUA D argued that –

Female writers will be more concerned regarding highlighting female characters along with men in the textbooks. If the policy makers add more female writers to the team, textbooks might reflect gender equality, which will certainly have a positive impact to promote gender-neutral textbooks. (TPSUA D)

Along with TPSUA D, respondents G, H, I and J felt that female writers can include the contribution and successes of women more than male writers. Besides, respondents TPSUA A, B, C, E and F stated that gender balance is needed in the writers' team. As there are only three females out of eight writers, these respondents (TPSUA A, B, C, E and F) considered this problem as one of the significant reasons for the inequality in the current textbooks. TPSUA C doubted that –

Male writers' perceptions and attitudes had been much reflected in the primary textbooks as the majority of the writers were male. Traditional patriarchal representation of women in the primary textbooks could be minimized including more female writers in the team. (TPSUA C)

Thus, all the teachers felt the necessity of more female voices and recommended increasing the number of female writers.

Hence, the teachers of the primary schools located in urban areas acknowledged the presence of gender bias in the primary textbooks of Bangladesh. They perceived that textbook writers play significant roles in promoting gender equality in textbooks. Further, the teachers mentioned that if textbook writers produce gender-neutral textbooks, it would be easier for them to ensure equality in the classroom.

4.4.5 Findings from the Interviews of the Teachers of the Rural Areas

Ten teachers from two districts of Bangladesh were interviewed with semi-structured questions. Six of them were female and four were male. The number of male-female respondents was selected upon the availability and willingness of the teachers to take part in the research. The interview data were transcribed to obtain the materials for analysis. To maintain confidentiality, all the respondents were referred to in the findings and discussion sections using pseudonyms. Teachers of the primary schools located in the rural areas were referred to as - TPSRA A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J.

Like the teachers of the urban area, the teachers of the rural areas were also asked about their perceptions regarding the role of textbooks, textbook writers and teachers. Further, they were asked about linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender among learners. In addition, the teachers of rural areas were also asked about their recommendations to enhance gender equality in the textbooks. Findings (perceptions and recommendations) from their interviews are presented below:

4.4.5.1 Role of the Textbooks. The role of textbooks was viewed as crucial by all of the respondents. Like the teachers of the urban area, teachers of the rural areas also

mentioned the special roles of English language textbooks in the context of Bangladesh. TPSRA B, C and I perceive that in Bangladesh, especially in the rural areas of Bangladesh skill in the English language is associated with prestige. Learners try to learn English from the *EfT* textbooks. Hence, TPSRA C perceives that English language textbooks can be a medium for spreading gender-neutral messages as learners read these books with special emphasis.

However, all the teachers perceived the significant role of textbooks in conveying gender equality; especially the female teachers gave much emphasis on the role of textbooks in developing a sense of gender equality among the learners of primary schools. Respondents TPSRA A, C, D and G mentioned that textbooks can change the perceptions of the learners about the stereotypical patriarchal society by eliminating male-female discrimination in the textbooks. For instance, respondents TPSRA A and C mentioned that if equal participation of men and women is presented in both household and outside works in the textbooks that might have a better impact on learners.

4.4.5.2 Role of the Textbook Writers. All the respondents from rural areas perceive the significance of the role of the textbook writers. All of them felt that writers need to be conscious of ensuring gender equality. However, different opinions have been explored among the male and female respondents in terms of the intentions and attitudes of the writers. All the female teachers (TPSRA A, B, C, D, G and H) perceived that the intentions, attitudes and strategies of the textbook writers are reflected in the textual materials. For example –

If the writers are well intended that they will ensure gender equality in the textbooks, they will adopt a few strategies deliberately. They will be conscious of preparing the contents. Otherwise, their stereotypical beliefs and attitudes will be reflected in the textbooks. (TPSUA D)

In contrast, all the male respondents (TPSRA E, F, I, and J) perceived that a writer's individual choice or strategy was not reflected in the textbooks, but rather that the writers represented social reality in the textbooks. According to these respondents (male), our society discriminates between men and women. Thus, the textbook writers demonstrated that reality in many cases. Then, the respondents were asked how far they feel the necessity of more female authors to ensure gender equality. In response to the question, most of the respondents (8 out of 10) agreed that if more female authors are included in the writers' team, the representation of women along with men might be enhanced in the textbooks. Nevertheless, 2 out of 10 respondents perceived that it is not necessary to include more female authors to ensure gender equality. They added that if all the writers are aware of gender equality male or female writers can ensure this (equality) in the textbooks.

4.4.5.3 Role of the Teachers. The respondents of the rural areas perceived that teachers have very limited roles to ensure gender equality in the classroom as they deliver only the contents of the textbooks. During the interview sessions, the respondents were asked to what extent teachers' choice of words and explanation of the textbook contents influence students' perceptions. In response to the question, 6 out of 10 teachers stated that in primary schools both teachers and learners follow the textbooks. Respondents TPSRA A, B, D, E, I and J mentioned that teachers explain the

contents and learners memorize the important points of the textbooks. Further, teachers help learners solve exercises. Thus, they (teachers) do not go beyond textbooks. The teachers were further asked whether they highlight female participation while teaching the content; in response, they replied that they have never thought of gender roles while teaching. However, they perceived that if equal involvement of both men and women is represented in the textbooks, learners will subconsciously develop a sense of gender equality. Nevertheless, 4 out of 10 teachers (TPSRA C, G, H and F) perceived that teachers can go beyond the textbooks to some extent. As an instance, respondent C mentioned that if she finds any example of the success of women, she shares it with her learners in the classroom. She (TPSRA C) felt that as society is patriarchal, boys are aware of their success stories of them (men). In contrast, as many female learners are marginalized especially in rural Bangladesh, success stories of women may motivate them (girls). However, respondent C stated that if women's contributions are highlighted in the textbooks by the writers it would be convenient for the teachers to promote equality among both male and female learners.

4.4.5.4 Linguistic Representation of Gender in the Textbooks. The teachers of the rural areas also focused on linguistic equality in the textbooks like the teachers of the urban area. All the respondents perceived that gender equitable languages such as – choice of words, use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and firstness have significant roles on the young learners. Respondents TPSRA B, C and I mentioned that if positive attributes such as ‘active’, ‘smart’, ‘intelligent’, and ‘fast’ are used for both girls and boys, learners will perceive that these qualities can be achieved by both groups (men and women). TPSRA C also added that if boys are also presented as ‘sad’ and ‘tired’ in some cases, the learners will understand that boys and girls have the same sort of

emotion and strength. Further, TPSRA A, E and J opined that writers should consciously choose an equal proportion of male and female nouns and pronouns when crafting stories and exercises for textbooks.

4.4.5.5 Multi-modal Representation of Gender in the Textbooks. All the respondents were asked about their perceptions regarding the portrayal of males and females in the textbooks in sports, leadership roles, and domestic and occupational roles through stories and images. Though all of them felt the necessity of equal representation of both genders, they were divided in their opinions regarding occupational and domestic roles. 4 out of 10 respondents (TPSRA E, F, I and J) had the perception that women are not secure in all sorts of occupations in Bangladeshi society. Therefore, textbooks presented women in a narrow range of professions such as doctors, teachers, nurses, and so on. However, the other 6 respondents (TPSRA A, B, C, D, G and H) perceived that though women's occupational roles are limited in some cases in a patriarchal society, textbooks can promote equality by presenting women in diversified professions. TPSRA B perceives that textbooks can give girls the courage to break the norms. She (respondent B) further shared her own experience that she is the only working lady in her family and neighborhood. When she wanted to do a job, her family was not allowing her. However, she took the challenge and started her job. Later on, her family members were satisfied as her income was supporting her family. Thus, her financial contribution was evaluated by her family. TPSRA B also mentioned that in rural Bangladesh many women are still marginalized and they (women) think that they cannot work outside and even if they work, they can be teachers or health workers. In contrast, men are encouraged to migrate to urban areas and even abroad for betterment. Hence, teacher B perceived that if the learners find men and women in the same

professions in the textbooks they will start choosing their future profession from their childhood. They will also be able to make their family members aware of equal occupational roles for men and women.

Besides, respondents TPSRA D and G shared another social reality of the rural areas of Bangladesh that the female learners are highly involved with household chores. Many of the female learners have to do domestic work along with their studies; whereas the boys do not participate in such household chores. Thus, boys can give much time to their studies. All the teachers in the rural areas acknowledged this social reality and they opined that textbooks can be the change makers. TPSRA G mentioned that –

Unlike in urban areas, most of the female learners are bound to do the household chores before and after school. Mothers ask the girls to help them, but they do not ask for any help from boys. Thus, boys remain privileged and study well.
(TPSRA G)

However, TPSRA D perceived that –

Textbooks can change such biased mindsets of both boys and girls. If textbooks portray equal domestic roles for both gender girls will no longer think that only they have to do the domestic works. Similarly, boys will be motivated to do the household chore. (TPSRA D).

Thus, the respondents TPSRA D and G perceived that if textbooks portray both boys and girls in domestic activities through stories and illustrations, both (boys and girls)

will be aware of their equal responsibilities. Consequently, they will be able to spread this idea (about gender equality) in society.

In addition, the respondents were asked about the representation of males and females in sports in Bangladesh in textbooks. In response, all the teachers acknowledged that men were well-represented, but women were underrepresented in the primary textbooks. Respondents TPSRA A, B, I, E and J mentioned that many of the female learners of their schools participate in various sports competitions and achieve success. However, such participation and success of girls were not properly presented in the textbooks. The respondents perceived that textbooks ought to accurately depict the balanced involvement of both girls and boys in co-curricular activities, including sports.

4.4.5.6 Impact of Biased Representation of Gender in Textbooks. The respondents were asked about the impact of unequal gender roles and power relationships in the textbooks during the interview sessions. In response, all the teachers agreed that the underrepresentation of women will lower female learners' expectations. Respondents B, D and E mentioned that our society is male dominated. Here (in our society), men are privileged naturally and they are expected to take part in all challenging works and activities. In contrast, women are marginalized especially in rural Bangladesh. TPSRA D added that –

If women are underrepresented in the textbooks, female learners will limit their dreams. At the same time, male learners will develop a sense of superiority. Hence, biased representation of gender in the textbooks will have a negative

impact on both male and female learners. In contrast, gender equitable language and examples may inspire the learners. (TPSRA D)

Further, teachers E and F mentioned that if both men and women are presented in leadership roles, female learners will be encouraged to develop their skills and potential and the male learners will learn to respect women as leaders.

4.4.6 Recommendations from the Teachers of Rural Areas

All the respondents acknowledged that biased representation of gender exists in the primary textbooks of Bangladesh. Though a few teachers perceived that women are not suitable for all the challenging professions, all of the teachers mentioned that textbooks can promote equality through textbooks along with representing the social reality. The teachers think that equality can be ensured in the textbooks through the linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender. Thus, the teachers of rural areas shared a few recommendations during the interview sessions to enhance equality in the textbooks. Their recommendations are presented below:

4.4.6.1 Updating the Textbooks. The teachers of rural areas felt the necessity of reviewing and updating the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. They argued that women are underrepresented in many cases, such as in sports and leadership roles. They suggested representing men and women equally in the textbooks through languages, images and illustrations.

4.4.6.2 Raising Awareness among Writers. The respondents from rural areas perceived that the representation of gender in textbooks depends on the writers. Respondents TPSRA B, E and F strongly argued that if textbook writers consciously

choose gender-equitable materials, teachers will be bound to convey gender-neutral messages to the learners. Respondent B mentioned that-

The role of a textbook writer is crucial in promoting gender equality in textbooks. If writers make a deliberate effort to select gender-equitable content, it will obligate teachers to impart gender-neutral messages to their students. Thus, textbook writers must be aware of gender issues. (TPSRA B)

Though the respondents shared that they only discuss and explain the textual contents in the classroom, 4 out of 10 teachers mentioned that teachers can also contribute to promoting equality among learners by sharing the success of women in the classroom. However, all the respondents stated that teachers' roles are not crucial for ensuring gender equality like the textbook writers. Thus, the respondents think that policymakers should raise awareness among writers regarding the equal representation of gender in textbooks.

4.4.6.3 Representing Social Reality. The teachers of rural areas also recommended representing social realities in the textbooks. Respondents TPRSAs E, F and I, B, C and G mentioned that in the social context of Bangladesh, women may not be represented in the diversified roles and activities, but women were found underrepresented in many cases which were not expected. For example, TPRSAs B stated that no female leader is represented in the textbooks whereas women in both urban and rural areas are now actively participating in politics and many other social works. Besides, teacher F mentioned that in rural areas most women are involved in domestic activities. Thus, if girls are projected to do household chores, no one will be surprised. TPSRA C stated that-

If boys are presented in domestic roles through some stories, learners will have the ability to challenge and overcome conventional gender roles. Similarly, nowadays women are working in both public and corporate sectors, but that reality is not presented in the textbooks. (TPSRA C)

Further, TPSRA B mentioned that -

Many women in the rural areas of Bangladesh are now working in various non-government organizations (NGOs). They are significantly contributing to the economy of the country, but this social reality is overlooked in the textbooks of the primary level of education. (TPSRA B)

Thus, respondents TPSRA B, C and G recommended presenting this social reality (involvement of women in different fields) in the textbooks for the betterment of society. They perceived that such involvement of women in economic activities will encourage female learners.

Hence, the findings from the questionnaire survey and the interviews explored that teachers of primary schools located in both the urban and rural areas felt the necessity of ensuring gender equality in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. Though there are some limitations for women in Bangladesh, there are some opportunities too. The teachers felt the necessity of highlighting the opportunities. The female teachers strongly advocated for presenting women in diversified occupational roles. All the respondents also acknowledged that women are not equally projected in the stories, images, sports and activities. Thus, all the teachers (from urban and rural areas) recommended updating the textbooks with equal representation of men and women.

4.5 Textbook Writers' Perceptions Regarding Gender Bias in Textbooks

To comprehend the perceptions of the textbook writers, interviews were taken with five writers of the *EfT* textbooks. There is a total of eight writers. Among them, five are male and three are female. One of the female writers passed away and another female writer was unreachable. Among five male writers, one was found very sick and unable to talk. Therefore, among eight writers, one female writer and four male writers were interviewed. Of the five respondents, one preferred an in-person interview and the other four writers preferred a Zoom interview. The in-person interview was audio-recorded and the Zoom interviews were recorded on video. The interviewees were granted permission for the Zoom sessions to be video-recorded.

4.5.1 Findings from Interviews of the Textbook Writers

The textbook writers shared their perceptions regarding gender bias. The interviews were transcribed to obtain the materials for analysis. For confidentiality reasons, all the respondents (the five textbook writers) were referred to in the findings and discussion sections using pseudonyms. The textbook writers were referred to as TW A, B, C, D and E.

The writers were asked about their perceptions regarding the roles of the textbooks, textbook writers, gender bias in the textbooks and the reasons for the biased representations. They were also asked about their experiences as textbook writers, challenges and opportunities, the role of the teachers, the role of NCTB and reflection on education policy etc. Finally, the textbook writers were asked to mention their recommendations to enhance gender equality in the textbooks. Findings from the interviewed writers are presented below:

4.5.1.1 Role of the Textbooks. All five textbook writers emphasized the significant roles of textbooks for the learners of primary schools. Both respondents TW A and B perceived that textbooks can shape the personality of young learners. According to respondent TW B, textbooks have enormous roles to play in shaping the way learners start to think about gender stereotypes. TW A added that a student will learn positive or negative attitudes through textbooks. Thus, textbooks should represent gender equality. TW A also mentioned that learners will develop their perceptions from the contents of the textbooks. Consequently, they will spread the message outside. According to TW A, textbooks act as a mirror and groom people. Thus, textbooks should represent daily day-to-day life situations through stories and exercises where both girls and boys in a family equally work. In this way, learners may learn the responsibilities of both parents so that they can share all the work equally. This respondent opined that in this way textbooks can promote equality.

Like TW A, the other four respondents perceived that primary textbooks can promote equality. TW B mentioned that in Bangladesh, primary education is textbook centered. Textbooks are the core learning materials and learners are not encouraged to read other materials. Thus, the characters are portrayed – the images, and the roles are described in the textbooks, they have a very strong influence and impact on the minds of the students, as they get to read those things from a very early age. At that very age whatever they read or visualize that have quite a long-lasting impact on their minds.

The vital role of textbooks was also emphasized by TW C. According to the textbook TW C, primary education is the first step for learners to go beyond their

families. In primary schools, learners start visualizing the world through textbooks.

This writer added that –

Textbooks also reflect a nation's desire, national policy, political understanding, political philosophy, beliefs and attitude. Therefore, textbooks play a substantial role in the primary level of education and these textbooks have serious roles to sensitize our learners regarding gender equality. (TW C)

The vital role of textbooks for primary level learners is also focused on by the TW D. This respondent perceived that a textbook is a place where any change can take place; a textbook can change the mindset, sentiment, feelings and emotions of the learners. Respondent E has a similar perception regarding young minds. He (TW E) mentioned that textual materials have an impression on the mindset of young learners; whatever they (learners) see in the textbooks – the dialogue, conversation, and social situations – all of these influence their minds. Thus, textbooks are important for developing a sense of gender equality. This respondent (TW E) also added that textbooks can change the perceptions of the learners and if the textbook writers are careful and conscious about gender representation, a sense of equality can be developed among the learners.

4.5.1.2 Role of the Textbook Writers. All of the textbook writers perceived that textbook writers can play strong roles to ensure gender equality in the textbooks. They talked about their roles and responsibilities and at the same time they considered textbook writing as an opportunity to change the perceptions of the learners.

Both TW A and B stated their responsibilities as textbook writers. While TW A said that it is a great opportunity for the writers to reflect the society, TW B mentioned

that it is not only a responsibility but also a huge opportunity for the writers to reach millions of people. TW E also talked about their (writers') roles and responsibilities. TW E perceived that writers can develop a sense of gender equality as they create the content, and prepare the stories, dialogues and exercises. TW B mentioned that 'writing a textbook gives a writer a wonderful opportunity to reach out to millions of people across the country, from *Teknaf* (Southern part of Bangladesh) to *Tetulia* (Northern part of Bangladesh)'. The writer added that as the messages of the textbooks go to the hands of millions of students, a writer should represent equal opportunity examples through images, nouns and pronouns. To represent men and women equally both TW B and E focused on the understanding and consciousness of the textbook writers. TW B mentioned that 'a textbook writer has to have the understanding of this huge opportunity to spread the ideas of gender equality; otherwise, it would be really difficult to reach those people (the learners)'. Moreover, TW A perceived that if the writers give the wrong message that will spread everywhere – to the teachers and learners. She referred to the chain relationship among the writers – teachers – learners. She mentioned that what the writers write, the teacher delivers the content and students follow those messages and instructions. Thus, TW B considered textbooks as the most convenient and less expensive medium to reach millions of people. TW A also considered five textbooks (from Class I – V) as ample opportunities for the writers to represent equality. This writer (TW A) added that as there are a series of textbooks from Class I to Class V if more male-referring terms are shown in one textbook, it can be balanced in another textbook. However, other textbook writers talked about the necessity of ensuring gender equality in each textbook.

Further, the writers focused on the mindset of the textbook writers. TW D perceived that gender discrimination exists in the textbooks because the textbook writers belong to the stereotyped male-dominated society. He added that learners are molded in the way the writers want. Thus, it is the great responsibility of the writers to shape young learners by representing equality in textbooks. TW C and TW E also felt the necessity of changing the mindset of textbook writers. TW E thinks that equality can be ensured through the deliberate and careful choice of words and elaborations of textbook writers.

4.5.1.3 Linguistic Representation of Gender in the Textbooks. The writers were asked about their perceptions regarding the linguistic representation of gender in textbooks. All of them agreed that there are discriminations in the choice of words by the writers in representing male and female characters. All of them agreed that male and female characters were discriminated against linguistically in the textbooks by using nouns, pronouns, adjectives and firstness. The writers think that they did not observe such discrimination consciously. However, different opinions were noticed among the writers.

For example, the writers were asked about the story of ‘Sagar’s family’ in the *EfT* textbook of Class IV where Sagar’s grandfather was referred to as a ‘smart’ man who helped Sagar in his study. On the other hand, Sagar’s grandmother was not attributed with any such adjective and it was mentioned that she (Sagar’s grandmother) makes the best ‘pithas’. Traditionally defined male and female roles are presented in this story. TW C and writer TW A had different opinions regarding such representation. TW C thinks that making ‘pithas’ are traditionally related to our grandmothers in

Bangladesh. This is our convention. Learners may not accept the opposite representation that Sagar's grandfather is making 'pitha'. However, TW A perceived that 'making pitha' could be shown with a positive attribute. According to TW A, Sagar's grandmother could be attributed as a 'smart' person as she has the skill of making the best 'pithas'. Furthermore, writer A added that it could also be mentioned in the textbook that 'Sagar's grandmother makes pithas very fast; she is talented and multi-tasking'.

Thus, TW A perceived that 'smart', 'fast', 'talented' and 'multi-tasking' – these adjectives could glorify Sagar's grandmother as well as his grandfather. TW A added that if positive attributions are shown only associated with men, female learners might be confused. A girl will feel that she is not up to the mark. On the other hand, if her male counterpart is highlighted, indirectly, writers are putting down female learners and making a girl inferior. TW A also thinks that textbook writers should not give any such message so that one group of learners suffers from inferiority complexes. The writer further added that equality must be there through the choice of words by the writer. She mentioned that making pitha is a skill. A grandfather cannot make pitha – that might be shown that he is not smart. Writer A mentioned that it is a very sad thing that positive attributions were not mentioned with women in the textbooks. TW A thinks that such discrimination reflects stereotypical social practices.

TW B, C, D and E also think that writers reflect the social practices in their writings and consequently, such discriminatory attributions and more male-referring nouns, pronouns and firstness have been used in the textbooks. According to TW B, discrimination is embedded in society. Discrimination starts in the family and it is found in the workplace too. Words presented in the textbooks are parts of that male traditional

male-dominated society. Writer B added that it becomes very difficult for textbook writers to isolate the contents of the textbooks from the reality of our surroundings. TW D has similar perceptions; According to him (TW D, stereotyping is built into the textbook writers. Both TW B and D perceived that people use discriminatory words in real life and they have no idea how language can be sexist. For example, writer B mentioned that people are not aware that the simple use of a noun or pronouns can be gender biased. They even have no idea that we can maintain equality by using equal nouns and pronouns. Regarding firstness, TW B added that we use he/she, not she/he in communication. We cannot think of using the pronouns interchangeably. This discrimination is just a reflection of our social norms and practices. However, all the textbook writers agreed that textbook writers and editors have the opportunity to change these stereotyped social practices through the equal use of words. TW A mentioned that gaps should be minimized in the number of nouns and pronouns. However, boys should not be discriminated too. Writer A suggested that writers should carefully choose the words to ensure that both genders are equally represented.

4.5.1.4 Multimodal Representation of Gender in the Textbooks.

Discrimination in the primary textbooks was found in the images along with the language. Discrimination was also exposed in the activities of men and women in leadership qualities, sports, domestic and occupational roles. All the textbook writers acknowledged that women were underrepresented in images and activities. They shared their perceptions about discrimination.

All the writers agreed that images of textbooks have a long-term influence on young learners. TW A thinks that equal participation of men and women through

images will indirectly teach the learners about equal roles and responsibilities. In contrast, unequal representation in images will teach the learners about discriminatory roles. For example, Figures 4.27 and 4.28 showed the images of Anita Sarkar who is a school teacher and has to cook before going to her workplace. Though TW D and E perceived that such representation reflects social reality, TW A perceived that the image should not be presented in such a way. She suggested that another image could be added where a man makes tea and participates in the household chores. In this way, the social role of gender can be defined where men and women both are working people and they equally work inside and outside the home. TW A perceived that such representation can be an indirect revolution, because, in a patriarchal society, men usually do not cook, but if it is shown in the textbooks, young learners will learn equal responsibilities. They will also learn that men and women can equally earn and contribute to the family. TW A perceived that only a little effort or modification can bring social change. She suggested that in the morning if a husband and a wife work together, at one point, the image will disappear from the minds of the learners but the message will be there that both men and women can work equally. TW A thinks that this is how we can go on the way to progression subtly.

TW C also agreed that equality could be maintained through images and activities. Both TW A and B talked about the story of Saikat's family (lessons 1-2, unit 3 of Class V) and Farzana and Jamil's family in unit 3, lessons 1-5 (story titled 'Family'). Figure 4.24 showed that Saikat's father was writing and his mother was sewing while the son, Saikat was reading. Besides, figure 4.16 Showed that Farzana and Jamil's grandfather was reading a newspaper and their grandmother was taking tea. However, no female character was depicted in reading or writing activities. TW A perceived that

through such representation, writers are conveying the message that girls are inferior from their childhood. TW A suggested that female characters could be shown reading newspapers or writing something and the male characters could be shown doing household chores in some stories or illustrations. Moreover, there could be a female child in figure 4.24 according to writer A. Besides, along with the images, there were evening activities of Saikat's family where it was found that from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Saikat studies and watches TV, his father reads and watches TV whereas, his mother cooks and sews. Writer C thinks that writers should be more sensible regarding such discriminatory representation. Writer C also thinks that such stories might be included but there must be some critical thinking activities, for example, students can be asked with assessing the roles of mothers and fathers and then, they might be taught that both the mothers and the fathers can perform the same tasks.

Interviewed writers also talked about the occupational roles in the textbooks. They acknowledged that there are unequal representations. However, they had different perceptions regarding the roles. For example, TW B thinks that a male character Raju was shown as a firefighter in the textbook of Class V (lessons 1-2 of unit 9) which is a challenging profession. No female character was portrayed in such a profession and according to TW B, this is our social reality. The writer mentioned that he never came across a lady firefighter in Bangladesh - that is why he felt more comfortable in showing a male as a firefighter. However, writer A had a contradictory perception regarding this. According to TW A, firefighting is a skill which should not be differentiated by gender, anybody (male or female) can learn this. TW A stated that –

Limited roles of women are not the real pictures of our society. We are not representing society. We should promote gender equality whereas we are underrepresenting one gender. A woman can be a firefighter too, as women are maintaining such roles at home. It is a skill, thus, anybody can learn this. (TW A)

TW A further added that in contemporary society, females are even working as astronauts, so, why can't they be shown as a firefighter? Though writer B argued that a woman is not presented as a firefighter due to the social reality, he feels that "female participation in challenging jobs can be promoted through textbooks. We have enough examples around us that women are actively engaged in every sector" (TW B).

TW B also mentioned that such representation reflects the conventional attitude and limitations of the textbook writers in portraying women. In contemporary Bangladesh, women are working as pilots too. However, in the textbook of Class IV (unit 3, lessons 1-2) a man is presented as a pilot, but no woman is presented in this profession. In the textbook of Class III (unit 19, lessons 1-2) there is only an image of a female pilot without any elaboration. Writer B perceived that the description and elaboration of a female pilot could motivate girls. Writer B also perceived that – these are small things but they may have an enormous impact on young learners; one simple image or one simple text might have stoned the seed of ambition or desire in a rural girl and a girl may start dreaming to be a pilot. Thus such representation has an enormous influence, but TW B acknowledged that they (textbook writers) failed to do that.

Similarly, all the interviewed textbook writers acknowledged that equality was not maintained in the textbooks regarding leadership qualities and sports. Writer A perceived that like occupational roles, the underrepresentation of women was also there in terms of leadership quality. It seemed very strange to TW A that whether women are in strong leadership roles in politics in Bangladesh, these are not reflected in the textbooks. TW B and C, D and E had the same perceptions. Writer B thinks that female leadership should be highlighted in the primary textbooks. TW B perceived that inequality in a leadership role should be identified and the gap should be minimized. TW D also talked about the underrepresentation of female leadership in the textbooks and suggested ensuring equality. Writer E perceived that our society is changing and women are taking leading roles now. Women are becoming airline pilots, and they are becoming entrepreneurs too, but such representation was not found in the textbooks. TW B suggested that the leadership role of women should be highlighted and gender balance should be carefully maintained by textbook writers in future.

Along with the activities, and leadership roles, women are also underrepresented in sports. TW B thinks that there could have been better representation and active participation of girls in sports in the textbooks. Writer C perceived that textbook writers should be more careful in the representation of the participation and success of women. He thinks that if encouraging examples are added in the textbooks, girls will be motivated to participate everywhere. Writer A perceived that the stories should not be presented in the textbooks only in such a way that men are highlighted in sports. For example, Fazle was the winner in a race competition in the story “Who’s first?” (unit 10, lessons 1-2) in the textbook of Class IV. Writer A stated that Fazle was shown as a winner in one story and another story could show a

female winner elsewhere which was not found. Writer A also mentioned that girls are participating and getting success in sports such as cricket, football and volleyball etc. and thus, representation of sports through women is important. According to writer A, the participation of men is already established in our society whereas women are participating nowadays. This message can be conveyed to young learners through textbooks. Therefore, it is very significant to promote women in sports in textbooks.

Besides, the textbook writers also talked about the exclusion of famous female characters in the textbooks. TW C stated that there is no doubt that inclusion will motivate girls. The writer asserted that for any reason, the inclusion of famous female characters was missed in the primary textbooks. He also opined that the consciousness of the writer is needed regarding this aspect.

4.5.1.5 Impact of Biased Representation of Gender in Textbooks. The interviewed textbook writers stated the negative impact on the learners of primary schools due to gender biased textbooks. However, TW B and D think that gender biased representation in textbooks will not have a devastating impact on the learners as they (learners) are already in a patriarchal society. Writer B perceived that a girl faces discrimination in her family, school, society and her community. Society is responsible for developing the low self-esteem of a girl. Writer D mentioned that parents in Bangladesh are mostly unaware of gender equality and they have the tendency to separate education from the real life. Therefore, our families practice the conventional attitude. However, none of these writers (B and D) denied the significant role of textbooks in promoting gender equality and developing the mindsets of young learners. Writer D perceived that if more female characters are introduced in the textbooks,

definitely it will have a positive impact on learners as well as their parents. Similarly, writer B stated that textbooks may play a more constructive role in promoting learners' expectations and in developing their high self-esteem. He (TW B) mentioned that there is no reason to deny the fact that gender equitable language and examples may inspire girls to determine their professional and societal roles. Writer B further added that equal representation in the textbooks will obviously help establish equality, but this may not be enough or the only thing to change the mindset as people tend towards believing the reality. If a girl is ill-treated in her community, it would be demoralizing for her. However, according to writer B textbooks can work as a turning point, textbooks may start the change by ensuring equality and consequently, we can expect the change in the real world. Hence, textbooks may have a crucial impact on bringing about societal change.

Whereas unequal representation has a negative impact on learners, equal representation can bring change. TW E perceived that equal representation in textbooks can have a very positive impact. He further added that if care is taken for male and female roles positively and if there is no discrimination, definitely it will help to achieve a gender-balanced society. Writer C has similar perceptions. According to writer C, society is not only made by males rather by females too. Thus, textbooks cannot disregard or cut down a substantial number of populations of society. Writer C also added that females are contributing a lot to our society. They (females) are contributing to our GDP and human development. Thus, it is the responsibility of the textbook writers to acknowledge the service and contribution of women towards their families and the country. The writer (C) further added that if we want our learners to be the learners of the next generation, they (learners) must have a sense of dignity; they should

be respectful to everyone and they can develop that sense through the textbooks. On the other hand, if textbooks represent a traditionally male-dominated society, learners will learn discriminatory gender roles and there will be a defamatory impact upon them according to the textbook writer A. TW A illustrated this concept by mentioning that due to biased representation, boys will learn a domineering attitude. Consequently, they will not respect their mothers and sisters. In contrast, if textbooks can establish some positive examples through stories, a boy will also be respectful towards women and he will also be aware of his household responsibilities.

Thus, all the textbook writers stated the negative impact of the biased representation of gender and at the same time, they expressed the ways of making positive changes by promoting gender equality in the textbooks.

4.5.1.6 Representation of Social Reality in the Textbooks. In the interview sessions, the textbook writers were enquired whether they should imitate the social reality or they should promote an idealistic society. Of the five textbook writers, three mentioned that they think they should promote an idealistic society whereas, two writers mentioned that they should make a balance between social reality and an idealistic society.

TW C perceived that learners need to be introduced to social realities and at the same time, they should be allowed to think critically. The respondent further added that on the one hand, it is the responsibility of the textbook writers to make the learners familiar with the existing realities and on the other hand, they (writers) need to guide learners to dream of a better world. TW C added that one cannot have a dream for a

better world until one does not have a sense of social realities. Hence, there should be a balance between expectation and reality. TW D also focused on making a balance between social reality and idealistic society. The respondent (TW D) added that if the textbook writers show all utopian things that will not be acceptable. However, TW D perceived that at least one or two lessons from each textbook can represent unconventional examples to promote equality, for example, some examples can be included where a male character cooks and participates in household activities.

Promoting equality was focused on by TW B. According to TW B, ideally, the textbook writers have to promote gender equality where no discrimination will exist. He added that textbook writers have some roles and duties towards society. TW B perceived that an idealistic society can be established in textbooks with a little effort. For example, he mentioned that – if a lesson includes a dialogue between a salesperson and a customer to improve communication skills, gender issues can be incorporated with this language task. If a female shopkeeper and a male customer can be shown, that will convey the idea that a girl can be a shopkeeper too and this will disrupt the concept of traditional patriarchal society. This is how; an idealistic society can be introduced in textbooks. TW E also thinks that textbook writers should go beyond the social realities for betterment. He added that –

Textbook writers should not present the existing scenarios only; rather they should look into the future. Change is possible if the writers are aware of promoting equality. In contrast, if writers always present the realities of the patriarchal society that will manifest the superiority of men and inferiority of women. (TWE)

TW E also agreed that social reality was underrepresented in terms of the achievements of women in the current textbooks. Such underrepresentation can demonstrate the inferiority of women. TW A mentioned that they (writers) should not produce the textual materials in such a way that female learners suffer from inferiority complexes.

Thus, all the writers accredited that stereotyping should be avoided and gender equality should be represented in the textbooks. Though discrimination exists in society, textbooks should promote equality for betterment.

4.5.1.7 National Education Policy and the Role of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). One of the goals of the National Education Policy in Bangladesh is to eliminate social and economic discrimination regardless of race, religion, or creed, and to eliminate gender inequality. Hence the interviewed writers were asked about the degree to which gender parity was maintained in the primary school textbooks of Bangladesh. All the respondents answered that gender bias still exists in textbooks. The respondents were further asked about the reasons. In response, all of them mentioned that our patriarchal society and the conventional mindsets of textbook writers are responsible for the discrepancy. TW B mentioned that several attempts were taken for maintaining gender equality, but social reality worked as an obstacle. He mentioned that their attempts were fragmented. TW B also added that most of the textbook writers were men and they have stereotypical mindsets. The respondent further added that on the one hand, writers have to think about promoting the ideals and on the other hand, they have to try to maintain the trends and norms that exist in society. There is a dichotomy and tension between the two. TW D stated the same opinion. He mentioned that our culture has male-female discrimination. Hence, it is built-in in our society. Writer D also mentioned that being textbook writers, they could not come out

of the traditional social structure. This respondent (writer D) further acknowledged that it is their failure that they (textbook writers) could not establish equality in the textbook due to social, religious and cultural barriers.

Then the textbook writers were asked about the role of NCTB in ensuring the equal representation of men and women. They were also asked whether they have got any directives regarding gender issues. All of the interviewed textbook writers acknowledged that NCTB has clear instructions for textbook writers about maintaining gender parity. However, two of the textbook writers perceived that gender equality lies in the NCTB policy and guidelines too, but it has not been properly implemented yet. TW D mentioned that –

NCTB is conscious of gender representation in textbooks theoretically; however, they did not focus on gender equality while providing instructions to the writers. The authority should play stronger roles so that the writers maintain equality. (TW D)

TW E also stated that awareness should be ensured by NCTB. He also added that gender equality can be strongly emphasized and thus, NCTB should brief the writers regarding this when they (writers) prepare the scripts – the stories, dialogues, exercises and illustrations.

Writers A, B and C perceived that if the writers follow the guidelines of NCTB properly then, gender equality can be maintained in the textbooks. TW C stated that there are very clear guidelines from NCTB that focus on gender neutrality. He also

mentioned that the National Curriculum has a set of instructions for the writers. The textbook writers need to understand the aims and objectives of the curriculum policy. TW B also mentioned that the curriculum designed by the NCTB focuses on gender neutrality. TW B further stated that there are very specific instructions for textbook writers regarding maintaining gender parity. Both TW A and B perceived that textbook writers should follow the guidelines properly.

Thus, all the respondents agreed that gender parity is focused on by the NCTB, but it is not properly maintained while writing the textbooks. The respondents perceived that awareness should be enhanced by the NCTB and at the same time, the writers need to be conscious regarding gender equality while writing the textbooks.

4.5.1.8 Challenges and Opportunities. Time constraint has been referred to as the most challenging part by textbook writers. Of the four interviewed textbook writers, four mentioned that time constraint is a huge limitation. They have also mentioned that if they had sufficient time, they (writers) could have come up with better books.

TW C mentioned that textbook writers usually get a very short period to finish writing. This respondent perceived that whereas a textbook should be written within a sensible time frame, the authority asks writers to produce a book within one or two months. Writer C shared his own experience and mentioned that –

I got only three months to write the textbooks for Class IV and Class V. I did not get enough time to review. If we (writers) had enough time, we could count the proportion of male and female characters, review the stories and illustrations from a gender perspective, and produce gender-equitable textbooks. (TW C)

TW C also added that after writing the textbook gender issues should be carefully checked and researched and to do this, at least one year is needed to produce a textbook. TW D had the same perception. This respondent (TW D) gave the example of Sri Lanka. He mentioned that in Sri Lanka, one year is allocated to writing a textbook. He thinks that Bangladesh should also allocate at least one year to write and check the textual materials. TW D mentioned that limited time is an obstacle to producing ideal textbooks. Like TW C, writer TW D also stated that if they had enough time, they could check, and recheck and thus, gender disparity could be minimized. TW B and A also considered time constraints as a great challenge. TW B stated that –

Producing national textbooks is a challenging task. The government has to distribute the books on the very first day of the academic year. Therefore, we have no scope to miss the deadlines we commit to the government. It is a commitment to the nation too. Thus, we have to produce the books within a short period. If we had much time, we could have come up with better books.

(TW B)

Like writers C and D, writer B also mentioned that if they (writers) had sufficient or more time, they could have come up with better books. TW A also focused on rechecking the drafts with sufficient time. She mentioned that due to time constraints, textbook writers cannot re-read and check the write-ups properly. TW A thinks that textbook writers need to check the drafts carefully, trace whether any discrepancy is there, and identify the wrong presentation.

Thus, writers A, B, C and D viewed time constraints as the foremost hindrance in achieving gender fairness in the textbooks. However, TW E thinks that there is a time constraint, but that is not very severely constricted. According to TW E, lack of awareness and mindfulness of the textbook writers impede the establishment of gender parity. He stated that textbooks need to be reviewed through a gender lens after these (textbooks) are written by the authors. TW E also perceived that if the writers work through a gender lens, then imbalance can be eliminated even within a limited timeframe.

Then the writers were also asked whether they faced any interventions from the administration. All the writers mentioned that they did not face any interventions from the authority or the government. Moreover, they received support from the editors, their co-authors and NCTB. Writer B mentioned that NCTB has provided them (the writers) with all sorts of logistic support, in proofreading, composing and finally producing the textbooks.

Thus, the writers perceived that if they did not have time constraints and if they were more conscious of gender discrimination they could have produced better textbooks. All of them agreed that it is a huge opportunity for textbook writers to convey their messages throughout the country. Thus, with the support from NCTB, the textbook writers can utilize the opportunity to ensure gender equality in the textbooks which can change society.

4.5.1.9 Teachers' Role. The textbook writers were asked about their perceptions regarding teachers' role in conveying gender-neutral messages to the learners through textbooks. All the interviewed writers stated the significant role of the

teachers. TW C perceived that a teacher's role is more important than a writer's. He added that –

The textbook writers are experts in writing instructional materials and they are the dreamers, but the teachers are the change makers. The textbook writers can produce gender-equitable materials, but it is the responsibility of the teachers to deliver the contents properly. Teachers can enhance the critical thinking ability of the learners. (TW C)

TW D also talked about the significant role of teachers. He (TW D) added that if teachers are not aware of gender discrimination, then only textbooks cannot do anything. TW B, E and A also have similar perceptions regarding the consciousness of the teachers. Both TW B and E think that gender equality cannot be ensured if the teachers are not aware of gender performativity and do not demonstrate the equal roles of males and females to the learners. Writer B claimed that many of the contents of the textbooks are not positively delivered by the teachers in the classroom. The writer (B) also claimed that there are some good lessons in the textbooks which are not explained properly in the classroom. The respondent further added that if the teachers do not explore the textbooks properly, then desired learning outcomes will not be achieved. TW B further claimed that teachers sometimes do not even know the purpose of many of the lessons. They are not aware of the warm-up activities, pre-reading, post-reading activities, comprehension questions, focus questions etc. TW B stated that the teachers should know the book first, and then they (teachers) will be able to explain gender equitable contents to the textbooks. TW A also thinks that a teacher can put a positive impression on students and equally, a teacher may foster a negative impression. The

respondent added that a teacher can destroy or uplift a student. Therefore, teachers can demonstrate equality to the learners. TW A further added that teachers can tell learners about equality in sports, workplaces and household chores and thus, teachers can integrate gender in lessons.

Hence, all the textbook writers perceived that awareness of the teachers regarding gender equality is highly needed to convey equal messages in the classroom. They think that to promote gender parity, textbook writers need to ensure gender-equitable materials and at the same time, teachers need to ensure proper demonstration of those materials.

4.5.1.10 Strategies and Recommendations. The textbook writers were asked whether they followed any particular strategies regarding ensuring gender equality while writing the textbooks. In response to this question TW A, C, D and E mentioned that they did not follow any separate strategy; they followed the guidelines and strategies of NCTB. However, TW B shared that he particularly tried to follow certain strategies. For example, TW B mentioned when he was depicting a family of three people, he tried to show at least one female character. The writer also added that he included female names consciously. TW B further added that he tried to be sensible to himself. However, writer B acknowledged that more conscious efforts were needed as gender bias still exists in textbooks.

Along with writer B, all other interviewed writers acknowledged the existence of gender prejudice in the textbooks and shared their recommendations to enhance

gender fairness in the primary textbooks. The recommendations of the interviewed textbook writers are presented below:

4.5.1.10.1 Raising Awareness. All the respondents recommended raising awareness among textbook writers, editors, and textbook authorities. TW E perceived that to enhance gender equality in textbooks, awareness is needed for both the writers and authorities. TW B perceived that many textbook writers do not maintain gender balance in their writings as they are not aware of this issue. This writer (B) believes that existing underrepresentation in the textbooks is not intended by the writers. He added that discrimination came from the subconscious minds of the writers. They (writers) are habituated to looking, talking, and writing like this due to the patriarchal society. Writer D has the same perception. According to writer D, as the textbook writers belong to the stereotyped society, gender discrimination is incorporated in their minds. Thus, this respondent thinks that textbook writers need to come out of their stereotyped mindsets. Besides, TW D also focused on the necessity of awareness of authority. He mentioned that NCTB and the people involved in textbook production need to be aware of gender neutrality. He added that –

Gender equality lies in the policy, but it has not been properly implemented yet. Thus, the authority has a very strong role to focus on gender equality in the textbooks and raise awareness among the stakeholders. (TW D)

In addition, TW A and B mentioned the vital roles of the textbook editors too. TW B mentioned that it is also the responsibility of the editors to check whether gender neutrality is maintained in the textbooks or not. While talking about the responsibilities

of the editors, TW A also mentioned that editors should not change any content without the consent of the writers. Both TW A and B perceived that if the editors are aware of gender equality, they will be able to review the contents properly and share the discrepancies with the writers. Thus, textbook writers think that awareness of the writers, editors and the people involved with textbook writing can ensure gender equality in textbooks.

4.5.1.10.2 Arranging Training for the Textbook Writers. The interviewed textbook writers recommended arranging training or workshops for producing gender-equitable materials. TW B believes that if there are some awareness-raising workshops or training sessions for the writers, they will be able to do much better in maintaining gender equality in the textbooks. TW A, C, D and E also urged the necessity of arranging training for the writers. TW A suggested that more research is needed regarding enhancing gender neutrality in textbooks and the research findings can be shared with the writers through workshops. TW E recommended that gender experts can be included in the textbook writing committee. This respondent (TW E) also suggested that those experts should review the textbooks through a gender lens. Besides, writer A recommended that the authority should groom up new textbook writers through training sessions.

4.5.1.10.3 Ensuring Equality through Linguistic and Multi-modal Representations. The textbook writers perceived that future textbook writers should come out of the present discrimination in the textbooks. TW A mentioned that textbook writers aim to go forward. Hence, the writers need to be careful regarding the usage of

the language and the multi-modal aspects such as occupational and domestic roles, illustrations, visibility, the inclusion of famous female characters etc.

TW B and D also mentioned the necessity of the conscious choice of words by the writers. Both of them (TW B and D) mentioned that discrimination in the use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and firstness should be reduced. The writers (B and D) also think that existing discriminatory words should be reviewed and future textbook writers should be aware of this. Besides, the respondents also felt the necessity of enhancing equality in the occupational and domestic responsibilities of both men and women.

Writer A shares a similar perspective on the functions and pursuits of both genders. She recommended that challenging professions for women should be shown in the textbooks. She also added that through the textbooks, a little girl may dream to choose a challenging profession in her future life. TWA A also mentioned that nowadays, men are studying culinary arts – such examples can be included in the textbooks. Learners can be taught that cooking is related to food value and balanced diet is important for all and thus, cooking should not be differentiated for men and women. She further added that textbooks can show that a boy is studying culinary arts and taking cooking as a profession. At the same time, a girl may be a firefighter or an astronaut. TW A also mentioned that nowadays men are participating in and winning the Master Chef competition. This insight is needed to be incorporated in the textbooks that food is not only for taste; it is for good health. Thus, anyone (a boy or a girl) can learn the skill of cooking. TW A perceived that such representation in textbooks will help change the view of society. TW D also has the same perception. He mentioned

that presenting men in the household chores will be a sort of revolution and textbook writers can do that for betterment. Besides, all five interviewed writers recommended that the examples of famous female characters who are achieving success in different fields at home and abroad should be highlighted in the textbooks.

4.5.1.10.4 Coordination among Writers. The textbook writers mentioned the necessity of coordination among the textbook writers while writing and after finishing writing the textbooks. TW A mentioned that after writing, all the lessons should be rechecked, and the number of male-female referring words should be counted by the writers and editors. TW D felt the necessity of teamwork for enhancing gender equality in the textbooks. He also recommended including more female writers in the team as he thinks that both the voices of male and female writers are important for enhancing equality. TW D also suggested that in a team the writers should work together to highlight different occupational roles and activities of women which are exclusively reserved for men in the traditional patriarchal society. TW D further recommended that the concerned people from NCTB and the education ministry should be included in the team.

4.5.1.10.5 Following the NCTB Guidelines. The interviewed writers also recommended that textbook writers should strictly follow the guidelines of the NCTB while producing the textbooks. TW A and C mentioned that as a textbook reflects a nation's desire, national policy, political understanding, beliefs and attitude, NCTB prepared the guidelines for the writers keeping this point in mind. TW C stated that –

There are clear guidelines from NCTB regarding ensuring gender equality. However, those guidelines are not properly followed by the textbook writers in many cases. It is very much needed to follow the instructions of the NCTB for producing gender-equitable textbooks. (TW C)

Hence, the textbook writers focused on following the NCTB guidelines for betterment. They perceived that by adhering to the guidelines set by the NCTB, the quality of textbooks could be improved, which ultimately led to a positive impact on learners.

4.5.1.10.6 Recommendations Regarding Time Constraints. Of the five respondents, four writers recommended setting a sensible time frame for writing and producing the textbooks. TW A, B, C and D suggested allocating much time for the textbook writers to check and recheck all the lessons. Though TW D thinks that gender equality can be maintained even within this limited time, he also feels that if the writers are allocated much time better textbooks can be produced. Writer C strongly recommended setting a sensible time frame (at least one year) so that the writers can write, re-write, research, pilot and can explore if there is any discrimination before the textbooks reach the schools.

Thus, the textbook writers perceived that if the above recommendations and strategies are implemented, then it would not be difficult to produce gender-equitable textbooks for the learners of primary schools in Bangladesh. However, all the respondents acknowledged that this research can raise awareness among the authors regarding gender representation.

Hence, results from both the quantitative data (numeric figures) and qualitative data (analysis of language, stories, visibility, characterization, occupation etc.) reveal the existence of gender bias in textbooks. Firstly, Discrepancy was found in the numeric data. For example-

- Men outnumbered women in terms of nouns and pronouns in most of the cases.
- A higher number of male characters enjoyed first place occurrence than female characters.
- A wide range of occupational roles was shown for men whereas, a limited number of occupational roles were depicted for women.
- Men also outnumbered women in terms of visibility.

Further, the qualitative interpretation of data also exposed discrimination. The key findings are as follows-

- Men were presented as active, bold, fast and smart with leadership qualities, whereas women are presented as passive and slow. Moreover, no woman was presented as with leadership qualities which underrepresent the social reality
- Women were presented as less challenging professions and their contribution to the economy of Bangladesh was overlooked.
- Men were visualized in sports and outdoor activities through stories, exercises and images, whereas women were mostly depicted in the household chores.
- Famous female characters were not highlighted in the textbooks.

Hence, findings from the methodological triangulation (from the quantitative findings and qualitative findings) exposed the clear signs of gender bias in the textbooks of primary level of education in Bangladesh.

Moreover, the stakeholders of the study i.e., the teachers and the textbook writers also acknowledged the existence of gender bias in the primary textbooks and shared their recommendations.

The key findings from the perceptions and recommendations of the teachers (from both quantitative and qualitative data) are as follows -

- All (100%) of the teachers perceived that women are underrepresented in the textbooks. All of them agreed about the significant role of the textbooks and textbook writers; however, all of them did not perceive the significant roles of the teachers. 11 out of 20 teachers argued that teachers only convey the contents produced by the writers.
- All (100%) of the teachers also believed that textbooks should provide equal opportunities and empower both genders. They acknowledged the existence of gender bias in the textbooks. Further, they blamed their patriarchal social practices for the biased representation of women.
- All (100%) of the teachers agreed that equality could be ensured by the linguistic usage and activities of men and women. Though all of the teachers advocated for using gender-equitable language, different perceptions were noticed regarding occupational roles. 8

out of 20 teachers perceived that women are not suitable or secure in all professions in Bangladesh.

- 55% of the teachers perceived that underrepresenting female characters may alienate girls. However, 45% of them disagreed with that statement. The teachers perceived that gender biased textbooks might lower girls' expectations and lower their potentials.
- All (100%) of the teachers perceived that consciousness of the textbook writers was crucial for ensuring equality in the textbooks. The teachers recommended reviewing and updating textbooks, raising awareness among writers and teachers, highlighting women's contribution, and increasing the number of female writers.

The key findings from the perceptions and recommendations of the textbook writers are as follows –

- All the writers acknowledged the significant roles of the textbooks, textbook writers and teachers. Though, some of the teachers felt that they (teachers) only convey the messages of the textual materials, the writers disagreed with such perceptions. The writers perceived that while they are the dreamers and planners, the teachers are the actual change makers, as they meet the learners in the classrooms.
- All the writers also acknowledged the existence of inequality in the textbooks. They also blamed the social practices and patriarchal mindsets of the writers.
- The writers perceived that positive attributions should be used equally for both genders. They argued that only men were shown in the

challenging professions to represent the traditional social norms. However, the writers perceived that they could promote equality by breaking the bias.

- Two of the writers perceived that gender bias in the textbooks will not have a devastating impact on learners as they are familiar with the discrimination in society. Nevertheless, all the writers agreed that equal representation of gender in textbooks will have positive impact on learners.
- The writers recommended raising awareness among writers, editors and textbook authorities, arranging training for the writers to ensure equality through linguistic and multi-modal aspects, coordinating among writers, following the NCTB guidelines and setting a sensible time-frame to produce the textbooks.

Therefore, findings from the triangulated data i.e., from the content analysis and interviews; from the quantitative and qualitative data affirm gender disparity in all five *EfT* textbooks. Nevertheless, both the teachers and the writers perceived that their consciousness (teachers and writers) and the textbook authorities regarding gender equality might change the scenario by breaking the patriarchal norms.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter revealed gender discrimination in the *EfT* textbooks from Class I to Class V through linguistics and multi-modal representation. Then, the chapter explored the perceptions of the stakeholders i.e. the teachers and the textbook writers. All the interviewed teachers and textbook writers acknowledged the biased

representation of gender in primary textbooks. Moreover, the stakeholders felt the necessity of eliminating gender bias from the textbooks. They (both the teachers and the writers) further suggested ways of enhancing gender equality. Hence, the next chapter discusses the data from the contents of the textbooks and interprets the data obtained from the questionnaire and stakeholders' interviews. Interpretation is based on the triangulation of information and data obtained from diverse sources in light of the conceptual framework

Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter analyzed and interpreted the data to get the answers to the research questions of the study. Findings in chapter 4 revealed gender inequality in the contents of the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. The study traced discrimination against women through languages along with other multi-modal resources. Besides, findings also explored the perceptions and recommendations of the teachers and writers regarding gender inequality in textbooks.

5.2 Inequality of Gender in Textbooks through Linguistic Representation

Gender differentiated linguistic usage was explored by the use of nouns, pronouns, firstness and choice of words in the previous chapter. For example, male characters not only outnumbered the females and were prioritized firstness in gender pairs, but they were also portrayed as having a privileged status and were given greater respect than female characters through the words chosen by the writers. Moreover, many instances of embedded inequality and biased messages were uncovered. Hence, a multifaceted view of gender discrimination was observed through linguistic representation.

5.2.1 Domination of Male-referring Nouns and Pronouns

Discrimination in the male-female ratio may create the impression to the learners that textbooks demonstrate a gender hierarchy that favors males (Curaming & Curaming, 2020). However, the findings of the current study revealed that textbooks at the primary level of education are dominated by male-related nouns. Among the five, male referring nouns outnumbered the three textbooks. Discrimination was highly visible in the textbook for Class I where the male-female ratio was 78% and 22%. More

male-referring terms indicated male domination. Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that the domination of men in English textbooks may reproduce the marginalization of women among young school children. Thus, the supremacy of men may disregard women. However, in the use of the pronoun, the gender balance was found in the four textbooks among five. Though this was an encouraging example but more could have been done as the more predominant use of male referring pronouns than female ones manifests dominance (Mihira et al., 2021). Besides, the frequent use of male-referring nouns and pronouns in the textbooks implies that the textbooks have been constructed from an androcentric point of view (Ahmad & Shah, 2019). If more examples highlighting female characters are represented by textbook writers, girls will be conscious regarding their rights and power as consciousness acts as a liberating force (Nicholls, 2005). If equality is found in portraying female and male characters, both groups will be aware of their power and potential. Eventually, they will equally contribute to society.

5.2.2 Second-place Position of Women

The referencing of male characters before female characters manifests the second-place position of women. The findings of the study revealed that the primary textbooks lacked equality in terms of firstness. Male and female characters were not paired equally. The use of 'he' before 'she' in most of the sentences in the textbooks demonstrated the first-place position of men. Such first-place positioning of men in the use of pronouns might indicate the sexist language (Wardhaugh, 2010). Equality was not maintained with regard to firstness in images along with languages (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Though a female image appeared first in figure 4.4, embedded discrimination was noticed as a boy started the conversation which displayed 'masculinity traits'. Mihira et al. (2021) listed speakers as being bold, formal, brave, and strong - masculinity traits

- and, in contrast, listeners as being weak, passive, and dependent – femininity traits. Thus, though figure 4.4 showed two girls and two boys, the critical image analysis exposed implicit discrimination. Such subtle distinctions can be considered as signs of males’ superiority over females (Khalid & Ghania, 2019).

Hence, Equality was not maintained in the ‘order of appearance’ in the textbooks for Classes V, IV, III, II and I. Such ordering reinforces the second-place status of women and the superiority and dominance of men (Hartman & Judd, 1978; Ahmad & Shah, 2019). Moreover, stating males before females in textual content gives more worth to males, which reflects or adheres to some deeply rooted traditional attitudes. Thus, the precedence of one gender exposes the social reality in the textbook (Suchana, 2021). However, despite this social reality and contextual constraints, equality can be established in the textbooks through the conscious efforts of the textbook writers. Khalid and Ghania (2019) recommended choosing visuals that display both females and males equally to eliminate gender disparity.

5.2.3 Patriarchy through Diction

Variation in the choice of words for women and men depends on some social and cultural norms. Nevertheless, such linguistic variations may marginalize women (Coates, 2015; Sunderland, 2006). Stereotypical femininity and masculinity were revealed in this study through the dictions used by the textbook writers in the primary textbooks of Bangladesh. Discrimination in the use of titles, leadership qualities of men, support, and guidance of men and dependence on women became visible. Moreover, adjectives denoting positive qualities, such as – ‘very smart’, and ‘very fast’ were only associated with male characters which reinforce the superiority of men. Representing

only men (not women) with positive attributes has been viewed as linguistic patriarchy by Azad (1995).

Different titles for males and females appeared in the *EfT* textbooks of Class V, Class III and Class II. Women were addressed as Mrs. /Miss and Ms. – these titles exposed their marital identities whereas for males, only one title ‘Mr’ is used. The English language offers only one title for men and multiple titles for women which may mislead young learners. Moreover, using one title (Mr.) for all men and three titles (Miss, Mrs. / Ms.) for women exposes linguistic sexism. A language that exhibits sexism can have an impact on both the cognitive and emotional aspects of the individuals (Sunderland, 2006). Though linguistic sexism is a feature of the language and the English language often offers gender-biased terms, Musty (2015) suggested that textbook writers can decide to use some unconventional terms for betterment. “According to feminists such differences in the ascription of titles for both genders are mentioned as a major cause of gender discrimination” (Ahmad & Shah, 2019, p.11). Discrimination in the title shows evidence of gender bias in the English language and such discriminatory use in the textbooks strengthens inequality (Mihira et al, 2021). Feminist linguistic approaches considered linguistic discrimination as a way to reinforce gender inequality. Mills and Mullany (2011) worked on feminist linguistic approaches and stated that gendered language conveys the discourse of patriarchy where women become marginalized. Hence, to promote gender fairness, it is crucial to replace discriminatory language with more inclusive alternatives (Tyarakanita et al., 2021).

Besides, presenting Tamal as a knowledgeable person in the textbook for Class V (lesson 1, unit 12) demonstrated the superiority of men. Tamal’s leadership quality was

also noticed in the story which reflects the supremacy of a man. Such dominance of men portrays women as weaker linguistic partners (Musty, 2015). Montgomery (1995) also revealed that traditionally, men are viewed as competitive in conversation and dialogues, whereas women are treated as being supportive and cooperative. Montgomery's findings also resemble Lakoff's (1973) 'Deficit Model' which created a dichotomy between women's language and men's language. Lakoff explored that women's language demonstrates their lower status and weaker position and men's dominance in society. However, such dominance of men through language and in adopting the active role asserts men's authority in society (Khalid & Ghania, 2019). Thus, it can be said that Tamal's active role was presented in a 'polarized' way through the dialogues in unit 12, lesson 1. Such 'polarization' and gender differences through language convey the discourse of patriarchy (Mills & Mullany, 2011). Besides, in the story 'How far is Saint Martin's?' (Lessons 1-8, unit 12), Sima was presented as a passive girl who lacks leadership qualities. Patriarchy shows the passive and powerless position of women and such traditional repressive power imposes restrictions (Foucault, 1977). Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) theorists argued that gendered language reflects patriarchal power relations by positioning men and women differently. According to Fairclough (1995), gendered language is one of the ways in which power relations are reflected and reinforced in discourse. Further, Mills and Mullany (2011) traced that in the 'discourse of patriarchy', the success of women is shown under the leadership of men whereas; the 'equal opportunities discourse' may help them become empowered.

Besides, the success of men in sports was also depicted in the textbooks. Showing the boy Fazle's first position and the girl Tamanna's second position in sports in the *EfT* textbook for Class IV (lessons 1-2, unit 10) represented the inferiority of one

gender. Moreover, women's success in sports was ignored there. From this example, students of primary schools may perceived that in sports, boys' participation and capacities are higher than those of girls. In reality, the Bangladeshi women's cricket team won the T20 series against Ireland in 2018. Earlier, they (the women's cricket team) won the women's T20 Asia Cup in Malaysia. Thus, the discourse of patriarchy was demonstrated in the textbook by underrepresenting women in sports. Such underrepresentation and inferiority of one gender may create boundaries and hierarchies in social life (Hussein, 2022). Besides, inferiority through language and activities was viewed as a way of marginalizing women by Mihira et al. (2021). In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that limiting the participation and success of women may reproduce patriarchal ideology.

Moreover, 'gendered discourse' was also visible through the use of adjectives. In the English language textbook for Class IV, the boy 'Fazle' (unit 10, lessons 1-2) and another boy (unit 17, lessons 1-2) were referred to as 'very fast'. Likewise, in unit 15, lessons 1-3, Sagar's grandfather was attributed as 'very smart'. However, no female character was referred to as 'very fast' or 'smart' in the textbooks from Class I to Class V. Similar type of adjectival discrimination was noticed by Musty (2015). In his study, Musty (2015) mentioned that such discriminatory words reinforce stereotypes. Such dictions – 'fast' and 'smart' in the textbook of Class V indexed with masculinity and these masculine traits showed greater respect for men. Such stereotypical masculinity marginalizes women (Millet, 2016). Thus, women were linguistically underrepresented.

Hence, linguistic differences between genders were found in the above examples. From such discriminatory languages, learners may expect that boys will always be bold, active, saviors, and responsible and girls will act under their guidance.

However, in reality, in contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society. Here, women are actively involved in politics and achieving success in sports. Even history revealed the leadership of women in Bangladesh through their (women's) participation in various movements (Falgunee, 2018). In her study, Falgunee (2018) explored that women in Bangladesh struggled and occupied themselves in various movements from the ancient period and became successful. However, such success stories of women were not projected through language in the stories or exercises in the textbooks. Nevertheless, the connection between the use of language and gender was focused on by Mihira et al. (2021). In their study, Mihira et al. mentioned that many dictions and sentence constructions in textbooks create a demeaning effect on women. They (women) may perceive their inferior identity as poststructuralist theory views language and identity as inseparable aspects (Hall, 1996; Sultana, 2018). Mihira et al. (2021) also revealed that linguistic explanation often fosters the biased perception that women cannot hold equal positions with their counterparts. They are treated unequal socially, culturally, politically and professionally.

5.3. Gender Representation in the Textbooks through Multi-modal Aspects

Gender inequality was explored through the modes of activities of men and women in the *EfT* textbooks along with the use of language. Findings revealed that stereotypes and restrictive roles were embedded in the occupation, visibility, characterization and domestic activities of women. Moreover, omission or minimal representation of famous female characters was also observed in the stories and illustrations of the primary textbooks. Such restrictive roles and omissions manifested the domination of male characters over female characters.

5.3.1 Disparity in the Occupational Roles

Male-female discrimination in occupation shows the superiority of men and the subjugation of women, which demonstrates traditional patriarchal social culture and repressive power (Suchana, 2021). However, findings revealed that primary textbooks of Bangladesh demonstrated disparity in occupational roles. All types of occupations which occurred in the textbooks of primary level (Class V, IV, III, and II) were counted and divided into those held by men and those by women. Findings exposed that women were presented in seven occupational roles, whereas men were represented in twenty-one roles. Women's occupations were shown limited to teachers, doctors, nurses, singers, cleaners, and garment workers. However, one image represented a female pilot in lessons 1-2, unit 19 of the textbooks of Class III without any information. This representation reflects similar findings by Musty (2015) and Amruthraj (2012). In his study, Amruthraj revealed that men were placed in various professional roles whereas nurses and teachers were consistently women in the primary textbooks of Tamil Nadu, India. Besides, Musty (2015) in his study revealed that there were examples of jobs typically held by one gender in the textbook produced in the UK. For instance, Musty mentioned that in his study men were presented in diversified roles such as boxers, hairdressers, etc. while females were presented as nurses and cleaners. He added that female characters were omitted in some professions. To eliminate the imbalance in occupation, Musty suggested that both men and women can be presented in non-stereotypical roles in the textbooks. For example, Musty (2015) mentioned that if men are portrayed as homemakers and women in challenging professions such as police officers that might encourage learners to choose any profession.

As mentioned earlier, this study explored that the textbook of Class III (unit 19, lessons 1-2) portrayed one woman as a pilot in an image which might be an encouraging

example, but no detailed information was provided regarding her job. In contrast, a male pilot was presented in lessons 1-2, unit 3 of the textbooks of Class IV with detailed information. Both the name and age of the pilot were mentioned there along with his image. It was also added that the pilot Aziz Ahmed (lessons 1-2, unit 3, of Class IV) works at Biman Bangladesh Airlines and he flies to many countries. In the case of a female pilot, only an image was shown (in lessons 1-2, unit 19 of Class III). Thus, female representation in non-traditional occupations was not highlighted, whereas representing a woman as a pilot could be shown as a benchmark of progress.

In contrast, men were presented and highlighted in the diversified and challenging occupational roles, such as firefighter, banker, guide, doctor, teacher, pilot, government officer, farmer, photographer, postman, driver, cleaner, boatman, dentist, tailor, fisherman, rickshaw driver, guard, blacksmith, cobbler and shopkeeper. Such stereotypical occupational roles misrepresent the contribution of women in contemporary Bangladesh. In reality, women are involved in diversified occupational roles. Moreover, presenting women in challenging and unconventional positions could represent the changing notion of contemporary Bangladesh. Such changing notions from the stereotypical womanhood to the ‘new womanhood’ can minimize gender oppression (Chowdhury, 2018b).

Such unequal roles for men and women were referred to as ‘prejudiced representation’ by Goyal and Rose (2020). They added that “such prejudiced representation might not only constrain male and students’ relationship with people of the other gender but could also restrict the conceptualization of their present and future identities including a selection of academic subjects and career” (Goyal & Rose, 2020, p.2). Brugeilles and Cromer (2007) also asserted that unfair manifestations restrict the

vision of human beings regarding their identities. Therefore, such representations are harmful to both males and females.

Moreover, the stereotypical representation of women exhibits traditional patriarchal social behavior. In a patriarchal society, “women have been often excluded from prestigious areas of human activity and this has often made these activities seem clearly male” (Narayan, 2004, p.213). In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) revealed that the reproduction of stereotypical ideologies and patriarchal values in English textbooks subjugates women by restricting their involvement and participation. Gharbavi and Mousavi (2012) found an association between women’s limited occupational roles and textbook writer’s culture. They mentioned that “a culture embodies and sustains social values attached to male or female and it shapes people’s expectations about what types of jobs men and women should do and how they should behave” (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012, p. 46). They argued that in contemporary society everyone knows that a girl can be a corporate leader or even a firefighter instead of a housewife, while a boy can rear children without shame.

Thus, the male characters were found monopolizing the dominant roles in the textbooks of the primary textbooks in Bangladesh. Such predominance of men overshadows female characters (Barton & Sakwa, 2012). Besides, such dominance and superiority of men presented in the English textbooks reflect two folds implications according to Mihira et al. (2021). On the one hand, the dominance of men in English textbooks may reflect that society privileges men’s interests and on the other hand, such representation may reproduce women’s marginalization among school children (Mihira et al., 2021). They further added that the limited range of occupations for women in the textbooks will convey the idea to female learners that they have limited occupational

choices in future. In contrast, women in challenging professions may act as role models for female learners (Munawar, 2004). Thus, equal representation in the textbooks may expose the same choices and opportunities for both male and female learners.

5.3.2 Underrepresentation of Women through Discriminatory Visualization:

Visuals are referred to as highly significant for the EFL textbooks since visuals help learners clarify the concepts of the textbooks. Thus, visualization helps formulate the perceptions of the learners and less visibility of one gender in the textbooks adheres to discrimination. The visual imbalance between females and males might distort the values of young learners as visual discourse along with written discourse works as a significant tool for successful communication (Giaschi, 2000). “Much meaning is conveyed through images, photos, cartoons and illustrations, any visual misrepresentation of females and males might spoil the bias-free texts or distort the high values preached to students in the course of their learning experiences” (Khalid & Ghania, 2019, p. 774). Therefore, the present study analyzed gender positioning in the visual discourse of the primary-level textbooks of Bangladesh.

Findings from chapter 4 revealed that the majority of the images of the primary textbooks displayed clear signs of discrimination against female characters. Equality was not maintained in terms of visibility in the *EfT* textbooks for Classes V, IV and III. The female-male ratio was 41% and 59% in the textbook of Class V, 45% and 55% in the English language textbook of Class IV and 48% and 52 % in the textbook of Class III.

Along with the number of images, women were discriminated against by men in visualization in the textbooks. Whereas men were more visualized in the sports and

outdoor activities and women were visualized in the household routine activities in the *EfT* textbooks for Classes V, Class IV and Class III. Such representation can transmit the perception to the learners that outdoor activities should be dominated or monopolized by boys whereas; girls are restricted to household chores.

While a woman was visualized in a fashion magazine, men were visualized in a sports magazine in unit 4, lesson 5 in the book of Class V. Visualization of women in fashion and health magazines reflected stereotypical forms of feminine identity as disciplinary practices such as dieting, beauty techniques, fashion tend to transform the female “body” as an object (Foucault, 1977). Discriminatory visualization was also noticed in the textbook for Class III. Figures 4.21 and 4.22 visualized boys in sports and figure 4.23 visualized a woman sewing. Men in sports and women with handicrafts or magazines display traditional stereotypical roles of men and women (Musty, 2015). In his study, Musty also mentioned that such traditional roles of men and women make textbooks gendered. However, women in Bangladesh are actively participating in sports, and economic and political activities, but textbooks did not include this reality. Thus, women’s participation in sports and outdoor activities was not appropriately projected in the textbooks. However, real and appropriate culture needs to be represented in the classroom (Hartman & Judd, 1978). Therefore, textbooks should highlight women’s participation and achievement instead of simply visualizing them in fashion and health magazines or portraying them in handicrafts.

Besides, depicting male characters in reading, and writing and female characters in cooking, and looking after the children also manifest inequality. Figures 4.16 and 4.17 depicted such a biased representation. Both Figures 4.18 and 4.19 showed the involvement of men in reading and educational activities. While figure 4.18 visualized

a man reading a newspaper, a woman was showing taking tea. Besides, figure 4.19 showed that a man was helping with his grandson's studies. Gender stereotype was embedded as no woman was shown reading the newspaper or writing anything throughout the textbooks (from Class I to Class V). Such underrepresentation can be viewed as an implicit indication of the unworthiness of women (Porreca, 1984). In contrast, if women were visualized in reading and writing activities or as important people in society, that could motivate girls. Female visibility in the textbooks in important positions in society may inspire girls (Goyal & Rose, 2020).

In addition, visualizing only female characters as garment workers reinforces gender stereotypes. Portraying only the female workers in the garment factory (in figure 4.20) revealed discrimination as men also work in the garment factories in Bangladesh. Thus, social reality was not presented there. Besides, women were merely presented as garment workers, but their contribution to the RMG sector was not manifested, whereas this sector (RMG) has emerged as the leading sector of the Bangladeshi economy. Female contribution to the labor market is contributing to the social and economic progress of the country (Chowdhury, 2018b). However, such contribution of women in poverty reduction and socioeconomic progress was ignored in the textbooks. Thus, social reality was denied in the textbooks of the primary level of education. Nevertheless, the necessity of representation of the real world in the textbook was indicated by Goyal and Rose (2020). They mentioned that textbooks should keep up with the changes in society and the progress of women in the actual world.

Though gender biases in textbooks represent a real sense of concern, encouraging representation was also noticed in terms of visibility in the textbooks for

Classes II and I. The female-male ratio was 60% and 40 % in the *EfT* textbook of Class II and 52% and 48% in the textbook of Class I. However, though the quantitative analysis showed more female visibility in these textbooks, the qualitative interpretation of a few images manifested biased representations. For example, unit 15, lessons 1-4 of Class II showed a girl named Rima who was busy gardening, which is an unpaid domestic work and stereotypically associated with girls. Besides, the images of unit 29, lessons 1-3 of Class II visualized a boy with a happy face and a girl with a sad face. Similarly, in unit 10, lessons 1-3 of Class I visualized a girl looking at the ground while a boy was looking at the sky. Such facial expressions reflected discrimination, as body posture and facial expressions may convey meaning to the learners (Khalid & Ghania, 2019). Thus, Looking at the sky may imply ambition whereas looking at the ground may indicate limitations to the learners as Khalid and Ghania (2019) argued that ‘gaze direction’ conveys meaning.

Thus, instances of embedded inequality have been uncovered through the interpretation of the visual discourses. Such discrimination in visuals carries implicit messages of men’s dominance over women. However, if equal visibility can be displayed through activities, occupations, sports and politics in the textbooks, girls may formulate their mindset regarding their participation in all sorts of actions.

5.3.3 Stereotypical Characterization

This study revealed that opposite traits and personalities were used in the characterization of men and women. While men were presented in active and challenging roles, women were presented in less active and less challenging roles. Such representation of men and women by opposite individualities might marginalize women

(Millet, 2016). The findings of the current study also revealed that the characters were described in a traditional manner of masculinity or femininity in the *EfT* textbooks of primary schools. Such a traditional association of female characters with feminine traits (such as weak and subversive) and male characters with stereotypically masculine traits (such as strong and independent) identify the persistence of gender binary oppositions (Mihira et al, 2021).

For example, both Saikat's (unit 3, lessons 1-2), Sufia's (unit 16, lessons 1-2) and Azim's (unit 16, lessons 3-4) family activities presented segregation of gender and manifested unequal representation in the textbook of Class V. While Saikat's father was visualized reading and writing, his mother was sewing. Similarly, Sufia's mother and Azim's mother were also shown busy with household chores and looking after their children. None of them (mothers) were portrayed in outdoor or reading-writing activities. According to Hartman and Judd (1978), textbook writers or teachers transmit the values to the learners. The *EfT* textbook for Class V exposed Saikat's father's involvement in creative and productive activities such as reading and writing stories. In contrast, the book showed Saikat's mother, Sufia's mother and Azim's mother's participation only in mundane activities like household chores, child care, and so on. Such stereotyped representation manifests 'service-oriented' roles for females and 'power-oriented' roles for males (Zeenatunnisa, 1989).

A similar biased representation was revealed in the story 'Sagar and his family' in the *EfT* textbook for Class IV (unit 15, lessons 1-3). This story represented Sagar's grandfather in educational activity while Sagar's grandmother's activity was limited to making 'pithas'. Thus, the role of the female character was shown restricted to household activities only.

Besides, the identities of female characters were denied in some cases in textbooks. For example, in Unit 16, Lessons 1–4 of the English language textbook of Class V, female characters were portrayed as Sufia’s mother, Azim’s mother, and a female teacher as Mrs. Alam. None of them was presented with their original names. Such denial of identities marginalizes women. Sultana (2021) explored the connection between language and identity and mentioned that identity is performed in everyday language practices. Thus, if those female characters (Sufia’s mother, Azim’s mother, and Mrs. Alam) were referred to by their original names, their identities could be established.

In addition, a girl named ‘Reshma’ appeared helpless when her father died in the *EfT* textbook for Class IV (unit 40, lessons 1-2). In her helpless situation, uncle Ratan helped her get a job in a garment factory. Thus, the male character Ratan appeared as a savior to Reshma’s family after the death of her father. Such helplessness in a woman and helpfulness in a man manifest the ‘traditionally defined roles of genders’. If women reject such ‘traditionally defined roles, there is a risk of being alienated from the power structure of society (Narayan, 2004). In her study, Narayan (2004) also mentioned that women try to find a sort of security in conventionally defined roles. This concept of Narayan is relatable to Reshma’s case in the textbook of Class IV.

Thus, Saikat’s father’s involvement in reading and writing and Sagar’s grandfather’s involvement in educational activities, omission of the original names of Sufia’s mother, Azim’s mother, Mrs. Alam and finally, Reshma’s dependence on a male character again proved the gender binary oppositions in the textbooks of Class V

and Class IV. Similar findings were revealed in Indonesian EFL textbooks by Mihira et al. (2021). In their study, Mihira et al. mentioned that men were depicted with positive personality traits such as active, full of spirits, hard workers, and skilful in the EFL textbooks of Indonesia. Damayanti (2014) also recognized the existence of, ambiguous, diligent, hard worker, independent, brave, rational, healthy, and strong male characters in the EFL textbooks of Indonesia. However, these discriminatory traits in characterization in the textbooks might impart learners with the binary divisions that might limit the potential of both gender (Julianti et al., 2019).

Such binary representations also reflect the subjugation of women, which shows repressive power. Foucauldian theory revealed that repressive power may produce “docile bodies” that cannot bring any social change. Thus, oppressive relationships between men and women will be an obstacle to establishing fair social and economic relations.

5.3.4. Men in Outdoor Activities and Women in Domestic Settings

Depicting female characters in almost all domestic works is one of the conventional features of gender biased representation in textbooks. “The higher representation of female characters in domestic roles is closely related to real societies’ cultural values.” (Mihira et al., 2021). In the traditional patriarchal society, the domestic setting is considered the space for women whereas the outdoor setting is considered the space for men. However, Women in the domestic and passive roles and men in the challenging roles can engender a sense of exclusion and alienation among female learners.

Depiction of female characters in domestic settings and in the typical ‘womenistic’ roles, such as cooking, washing dresses, cleaning, and raising children may limit the social roles of female learners (Ahmad & Shah, 2019, Millett, 2016). Such stereotypical feminine roles were noticed in Saikat’s mother, Sufia’s mother and Azim’s mother in the English language textbook of Class V. These women were shown working hard for long hours, but their work was not recognized as all of these were unpaid jobs. Depicting women only as low-status workers, mothers and wives spreads the concept of sexism (Amruthraj, 2012).

Besides, the stereotypical domestic role was presented in Figure 4.27 (in chapter 4) in the textbook of Class IV, where the mother cooked and the father appreciated. The dialogues in this figure exposed power relationships. The woman cooked and looked for recognition and appreciation from her husband. Such dialogue defined the traditional masculine and feminine roles. Here, the appreciation of the man demonstrated the language of power. Musty (2015) connected language and power in his study; he mentioned women’s language as the ‘language of the powerless’. Visualizing girls in “serving” meals to boys in English textbooks was also explored by Yasin et al. (2012). In their study, Yasin et al. mentioned that such gender roles demonstrate the unequal relationship between boys and girls. A similar representation was also explored in the textbook of Class III in this study. Figure 4.28 (in chapter 4) represented the domestic roles of a schoolgirl. The girl was asked to do the household chores by the mother, but no boy was asked to do such work. Thus, figure 4.27 and figure 4.28 demonstrated the traditional patriarchal role of women, that is – the domestic setting is an area for women to perform, whereas tasting and judging the quality of the food is men’s work. Narayan (2004) explored that such domestic

responsibilities of a mother and a wife are highly appreciated in a patriarchal society. “Women are also seen as the cornerstones of the spiritual wellbeing of their husbands and children, admired for their supposedly higher moral, religious, and spiritual qualities, and so on” (Narayan, 2004, p.215). Similar concepts were also explored by Blangsinga et al. (2021). In their study, Blangsinga et al. demonstrated that patriarchal society allocates typical masculine doings to the male members, whereas conventional feminine duties are assigned to the female members.

The patriarchal culture was also manifested in the story of Anita Sarkar in the English language textbook of Class II (unit 27, lessons 1-3). Figure 4.29 and figure 4.30 showed teacher Anita Sarker’s double responsibilities (domestic and occupational). From this story and images, learners (both boys and girls) may perceive that women have to do the household chores before starting their professional duty whereas men do not need to play such double roles. In a patriarchal society, “men who share household and child-rearing responsibilities with women are mistaken if they think this act of choice, often buttressed by the gratitude and admiration of others” (Narayan, 2004, p.22). Moreover, allocating household chores to women and positioning them in domestic spaces in the English textbooks may reinforce the traditional belief that only women should do domestic activities.

Thus, depicting women in domestic chores and men in outdoor activities in the textbooks reinforce gender discrepancy. In contrast, if men and women are shown equally sharing domestic responsibilities, learners may understand equal rights and power. Thus, both male and female learners will be inspired to work and contribute to society.

5.3.5 Gender Bias through Minimal Representation of Famous Female Characters

The maximum representation of famous male characters and minimal representation of famous female characters in the textbooks expose the male-dominating feature of society. In their study, Khalid and Ghania (2019) warned that the omission of women from foreign language textbooks might weaken their abilities. Findings in this study revealed that only one woman poet Chandrabati was referred to in the textbook of Class V, along with many male famous persons. Moreover, no female famous person was presented in the textbook of Class IV. The famous painters SM Sultan, Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dali were referred to in that textbook (Class IV). Thus, while reading the textual materials and visualizing the images, students may perceive that only famous male characters are highlighted in society, not female ones. The underrepresentation of female characters was also explored by Hartman and Judd (1978) and Porreca (1984). In her study, Porreca (1984) stated that underrepresentation of the female characters can discreetly be considered as a sign of their unfitnes. Through such underrepresentation, readers might overlook the contribution of women (Musty, 2015). Gharbavi and Mausavi (2012) argued that the exclusion of women in textbooks reflects writers' ideology. If the textbook writers represent inequality, that manifests their belief that women cannot play influential roles in society. Thus, the negligence of women in the textbooks may limit the expectations of the girls (Suchana, 2021). Consequently, boys may start developing a sense of superiority. Alongside, if textbooks show women's contribution and success, girls will be aware of their skill and aptitudes and they (girls) will contribute for the wellbeing of the society (Suchana, 2020). Hence, the society will be benefited.

The above discussion revealed the answer to research question 1 of the study. The discussion and interpretation of the data assert that gender is not represented equally in the textbooks of primary level of education in Bangladesh. Firstly, discrimination was noticed in the use of language (nouns, pronouns, titles, and dictions). Equality through the use of language is significant as language plays a crucial role in defining and characterizing human identities (Rahman, 2021). Further, discrimination was also noticed in various multi-modal aspects. For example, discrimination was noticed in the professional roles of men and women, women were found less visible, and stereotypical characterization of female characters was explored; men were portrayed in the outdoor activities with success, whereas women were depicted in the unpaid domestic roles in most of the cases. Besides, the achievements of famous female characters were not emphasized in the textbooks. Thus, the textbooks manifested patriarchal ideology by demonstrating the superiority of men and the inferiority of women. Such biased representation was found responsible for creating an oppressive social state in numerous research studies.

5.4 Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Gender Representation in Textbooks

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 20 teachers were interviewed in this study to expose the perceptions of the teachers regarding gender representation in the primary textbooks of Bangladesh. Among them, 10 teachers were selected from the primary schools located in the urban area and the other 10 teachers were selected from the primary schools located in the rural areas. Firstly, they were given a questionnaire which contained 10 statements. The responses were measured through a Likert scale. The Likert scale statements contained five points – strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. Then face-to-face and Zoom interviews (as per the choice of the respondents) were conducted individually with the 20 respondents.

Findings accumulated from both the quantitative data (from the questionnaire) and the qualitative data (from the interview) reflected the perceptions of the primary school teachers regarding gender representation in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. Findings revealed that the teachers acknowledged the existence of gender disparity in the textbooks. They (teachers) perceived the necessity of gender equitable textbooks for the learners. However, the respondents confessed that they were not so concerned regarding gender bias in the textbooks earlier, but this study helped them identify the discrimination. The perceptions of all the respondents have been discussed in the following sections.

Responses elicited from the questionnaire revealed that all the 20 teachers of the primary schools located both in urban and rural areas chose ‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’ options from the Likert scale for statements 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 10 (in table 4.11 and table 4.12). Hence, they perceived that textbooks should represent equal power and prospects for women and men, gender equality can be reflected through the linguistic and multi-modal representation of both men and women in the textbooks, more male-referring terms, first place appearance, more visibility and active roles of boys may marginalize girls, most of the historical figures, literary scholars and leaders are men in the textbooks, in contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society, but this social reality is overlooked in the textbooks, consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to ensure gender equitable materials and primary textbooks need to be updated to eliminate gender bias. Then, the teachers shared their in-depth opinions regarding gender representation in the textbooks during the interview sessions. Their perceptions and recommendations have been discussed in the following sections.

5.4.1 Significant Role of Textbooks to Ensure Equality

All the interviewed teachers perceived that textbooks can play a very crucial role in developing the mindsets of young learners. Various research studies also explored the significant role of textbooks and the adverse effects of biased textbooks on young students (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020; Mihira et. al, 2021, Munawar, 2004). Despite having a crucial role, gender bias still exists in textbooks due to the social construction of gender. Pakistani teachers in Munawar's study mentioned that gender imbalance is reflected in the textbooks as disparity lies in society (Munawar, 2004). In their study, Lee and Gahrouei (2020) stated that young learners may have detrimental impacts on their minds if textbooks show men and women from a distorted viewpoint. Further, Lee and Gahrouei also referred to textbooks as the 'trusted resources' for young learners' affective development.

Thus, the present study investigated the Bangladeshi teachers' perceptions regarding the ways of enhancing gender equality in primary textbooks. In response, the interviewed teachers suggested using equal attributions for men and women both through texts and images in the textbooks, especially in the English language textbooks. 5 teachers explored the significant role of English textbooks in the context of Bangladesh. They stated that the English language is considered a prestigious language in Bangladesh and thus, English textbooks remain a center of attraction here. Contemporary research studies also explored the connection between the English language and prestige, social mobility and stratification. The English language is becoming popular in Bangladesh in terms of indexing prestige (Sultana, 2021). Alongside this, the English language acts as a factor of social stratification and is becoming popular to attain upward social mobility (Nur et al., 2021; Rahman, 2021).

5.4.2 Consciousness of the Textbook Writers can Break the Bias

Mixed opinions of the interviewed teachers were noticed regarding the role of textbook writers. Though all the respondents acknowledged the significant roles of the writers, the majority (14 out of 20) of them did not blame the attitudinal problems of the authors for the biased representation. They perceived that gender disparity exists in the textbooks due to the social reality. However, 6 out of 20 respondents perceived that textbook writers' neutral attitude regarding gender can break the bias. The study of Vu and Pham (2021) also revealed the same perception. In their study, Vu and Pham conducted interviews with three authors of English textbooks in Vietnam. The findings of their study exposed that the interviewed authors themselves perceived that they (authors) have to pay attention to gender issues while writing textbooks. The Vietnamese English textbook writers also indicated that writers can make primary school learners conscious regarding gender neutrality in an implicit way through textbooks. They further added that writers can enhance gender equality by showing equal rights and responsibilities for both genders (Vu & Pham, 2021).

5.4.3 Teachers Convey the Messages of the Writers in the Classrooms

Findings revealed that a majority of the respondents did not consider teachers' roles as crucial for ensuring gender equality in textbooks. While 9 respondents out of 20 perceived that teachers can play a significant role in promoting gender equality, 11 respondents had different opinions. 5 respondents from urban areas and 6 respondents from rural areas think that teachers only deliver the textual materials produced by the writers in the classroom. They also perceived that it is the sole responsibility of the textbook writers to produce gender equitable textbooks and teachers will only follow the materials. In contrast, teachers who argued that they (teachers) also play a significant role in promoting gender equality in the classroom, mentioned that though

the teachers mainly follow the materials developed by the writers, teachers can interpret in different ways and can play a significant role in maintaining gender parity.

However, various research studies explored the significant roles of teachers along with writers to convey gender-neutral messages to learners. Whereas the textbook writers produce the contents, teachers explain and interpret the textual materials to the learners. Thus, teachers have the strong opportunity to help learners realize the talent and ability of both genders (Kollberg, 2016; Lee & Gahrouei, 2020; Vu & Pham 2021). Thus, equal representation of gender can be ensured by “sensitizing the teachers about gender discrimination and asking them to highlight gender-biased issues in education” (Ahmad & Shah, 2019, p. 1). Lee and Gahrouei explored the voices of Iranian school teachers’ perceptions regarding gender bias in English language textbooks where the interviewed teachers suggested a few strategies for enhancing gender equality in the classroom. For example, the interviewed teachers in Iran advocated that teachers can help learners realize that both boys and girls have the same capability. They (the Iranian teachers) also added that teachers can even redress ‘textbook sexism’ by letting them (learners) know about their abilities. In their study, Lee and Gahrouei (2020) also focused on the role of school teachers in developing the mindsets of young learners. “School teachers can play a more active role in the promotion of gender equality among the younger generation” (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020, p.1124). In addition, Lee and Gahrouei suggested that teachers can minimize the disparity in textbooks by using gender equal language in the classroom. They further added that teachers can even supplement some teaching materials to present males and females in similar roles. A similar perception was also noticed in the study of Vu and Pham (2021). In their study, Vu and Pham suggested that teachers should be encouraged to engage learners in the discussion on gender equality. “Both awareness raising and pedagogical tools in working with gender

could be provided so that teachers not only detect possible gender biases in textbooks, but also enact their agency in using textbook mandates to invite students to the gender equality discussion and realization” (Vu & Pham, 2021, p.19). Moreover, Kollberg’s study on the perceptions of Swedish teachers also revealed the importance of teachers’ strategies to promote gender equality in the classroom. One of the interviewed teachers in Kollberg’s (2016) study mentioned that though the authors produce the textbooks, at the end of the day the use of those textbooks depends on the teachers. Ultimately, teachers teach learners how to approach society. Another interviewed teacher in Kollberg’s study mentioned that it is the responsibility of the teachers to interpret the texts and to make the learners feel that there is a bigger world out there. Teachers need to engage in a process of critical analysis and evaluation of textbooks and educational materials to identify any conflicting ideas, such as gender discrimination, biases, neglect, misrepresentation, or stereotyping (Chowdhury, 2018a). In her study, Chowdhury (2018a) stated that teachers need to possess the skills and knowledge required to effectively handle and instruct on materials that promote inequality, discrimination, stereotypes, and other similar issues. Thus, while using the textbooks, teachers can highlight other contents; they can provide the learners with examples of women’s success along with men (Vu & Pham, 2021). Hence, teachers can help learners think outside of the box.

5.4.4 Linguistic Inequality Demonstrates Gender Discrimination

All the interviewed teachers recognized that gender bias exists in the primary textbooks through linguistic representation. One of the respondents – the teacher of the primary school in urban area A (TPSUA A) shared his own experience that a female learner expressed her dissatisfaction in the classroom as there were more male names in the textbooks. Discrimination in the use of nouns and pronouns to describe men and

women can yield evidence of gender imbalance (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). Such an imbalance will restrain girls' progress and achievement and affect their involvement in various actions (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). However, to encourage girls, teachers can try substituting male names with female ones while talking about gender roles in the classroom (Goyal & Rose, 2020). A similar perception was explored by Swedish teachers in the study of Kollberg (2016). The teachers of Sweden opined that equal gender representation through language is a key issue in teaching. They (the Swedish teachers) suggested that teachers should interpret the textual materials from different perspectives to promote gender inequality (Kollberg, 2016). The dominance of men and the underrepresentation of women might have adverse effects on learners (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020). Teachers in Iran perceived that the underrepresentation of women through the use of language can hold back girls from success. The current study also revealed that the interviewed teachers of Bangladesh (both urban and rural) perceived that linguistic discrimination such as inequality in the choice of words, use of nouns, pronouns and adjectives, and firstness might discourage girls to take challenges. Thus, Iranian teachers in the study of Lee and Gahrouei (2020) recommended that textbooks should embody both men and women equally as women occupy half of the world's inhabitants.

5.4.5 Dichotomy among Teachers Regarding Women's Occupational Roles

While sharing their perceptions, the interviewed teachers talked about the occupational and domestic roles and visibility of men and women. They also talked about the underrepresentation of women in sports and activities and the omission of famous female characters. In all of the cases, the interviewed teachers found discrimination in the textbooks. However, they differed in their opinions regarding the occupational roles of both genders. Responses from the teachers of the primary schools

located both in the urban and rural areas revealed different perceptions for statements 4, 7 and 8 of the Likert scale (table 4.11 and 4.12). The 4th statement was that ‘women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power’. 40% of the respondents from urban areas strongly agreed and 40% of them agreed, but 20% of respondents disagreed with statement 4 (table 4.11). Later, those 2 (20%) respondents were asked about the reasons for their disagreement during the interview sessions. In response, they shared their perceptions that they think our society does not allow women in all types of challenging professions, and our women are habituated to such social realities. Thus, they perceived that women in stereotypical and men in diversified roles will not demonstrate repressive power. Nevertheless, those 2 teachers were male. However, 3 out of 5 teachers in the urban area perceived that such discrimination in occupation will demonstrate unequal power relationships. Male and female teachers of the primary schools located in the rural areas were also divided in their opinions with statement 4 (table 4.12). While all of the female teachers strongly agreed with statement 4, all the male teachers disagreed with the statement.

The respondents (from the primary schools located in both urban and rural areas) who perceived the limitation of women mentioned that society cannot ensure the security of women if they want to be night guards, firefighters or bus drivers. They perceived that textbooks presented men in the challenging professions and women in the less challenging professions and in all sorts of domestic roles which manifest social reality. However, in the study of Lee and Gahrouei (2020), the Iranian teachers stated that the depiction of female characters in a limited range of activities than male characters would affect the learners and consequently, female learners will perceive that they are not equally significant as male characters in the society. Like Bangladeshi textbooks, the underrepresentation of females was also vivid in Iranian and Pakistani

textbooks. In their studies, Lee and Gahrouei (2020) and Munawar (2004) explored that female characters were mostly presented in the textbooks with trivial and insignificant works in Iran and Pakistan respectively. They were also shown staying and working indoors. Besides, women's occupations were mostly restricted to housekeeping and teaching, whereas male characters occupied prestigious roles or worked outdoors as scientists, physicians, soldiers, museum guides, police officers, pilots, firefighters, drivers, and sportsmen. The Iranian teachers firmly believe that such a wide range of activities of men and a limited range of activities of women will incorporate the patriarchal orientation and affect the construction of the identity, emotions and attitude of the female learners. In contrast, "the depiction of women's accomplishments in school textbooks could be used to support females who are striving for success, thereby providing students with a model for their own personal and career pursuits" (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020, p. 1124). The necessity of female role models in textbooks was also stated in the study by Munawar (2004). In his study, Munawar explored the perceptions of Pakistani teachers regarding gender bias in textbooks, where the interviewed teachers recommended portraying more female characters in diversified occupational roles in the textbooks as students consider the portrayed roles in the textbooks as models for themselves. In contrast, the underrepresentation of female characters may instill a sense of inferiority among girls.

However, different opinions of the respondents were also explored with the 7th statement of the Likert scale – 'underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls'. 2 respondents (20%) were from the urban area and 4 respondents (40%) were from rural areas disagreed with statement 7. Nevertheless, the respondents (both urban and rural) shared that women in stereotypical occupational roles do not demonstrate repressive power; the same respondents

perceived that underrepresentation will not enforce alienation among female learners. They again mentioned social reality for their disagreement with statement 7. They perceived that women are underrepresented from home to the workplace very often in a patriarchal society. Thus, the underrepresentation of female characters in textbooks will not be surprising to them. Though these respondents perceived that unequal representation of gender will not oppress and alienate women, they think that textbooks can help break conventional norms.

Besides, in the current study, the interviewed teachers revealed unequal representation of men and women through visuals along with the textual content. Prevailing gender stereotyping in visuals was also noticed by Finnish teachers in the study of Tainio and Karvonen (2015). Like the interviewed teachers in the current study, Finnish teachers mentioned the adverse effects of the discriminatory representation of visuals on young learners. In addition, the Bangladeshi teachers in the current study also acknowledged that famous male characters had been highlighted in the textbooks, whereas famous female characters had been represented nominally. The respondents stated that such discriminatory representation may lower the motivation of female learners. On the other hand, the overrepresentation of men will manifest the power of men. A similar perception was also noticed by some Bangladeshi English Medium school teachers in the study of Hossain (2018). The interviewed teachers in Hossain's (2018) study revealed that in the ELT textbooks, male characters were often portrayed as scholars whereas women's successes had not been focused on. Thus, the participants in Hossain's study recommended gender-neutral textbooks. However, if the textbooks demonstrate the superiority of men and the inferiority of women, teachers can play the role of minimizing the gap (Goyal & Rose, 2020). According to Goyal and Rose, teachers can critically examine the overrepresentation of men in certain

characters. Further, “teachers can make girls play the part of boys and vice-versa to foreground the prevalence of stereotypical notions about gender” (Goyal & Rose, 2020, p. 22). Thus, teachers’ explanation and interpretation regarding the depiction of male and female characters in occupation, domestic roles, sports and other activities in texts and visuals can promote gender equality.

5.4.6 Gender Biased Textbooks may have Adverse Effects on Young Learners

For the interviewed teachers, gender-biased textbooks will have negative effects on young learners. Numerous research studies also explored how teachers throughout the world perceive the detrimental impact of gender disparity on school children. For example, Swedish teachers in Kollberg’s study warned that “Stereotypes affect how people view themselves, which will influence how they act in certain situations” (Kollberg, 2016, p.16). The Swedish teacher added that unequal language in the textbooks matters for students’ learning and individual development. A similar perception was reflected by the Iranian teachers in the study of Lee and Gahrouei (2020). One of the Iranian teachers mentioned that “the development of children’s gender identity is strongly affected by their reading materials” (Lee & Gahrouei, 2020, p. 1122). The teacher further added that biased representation in conversation and illustration may fossilize the impression in female learners’ minds that they are inferior and men are superior. However, teachers can play a substantial role to change the mindset of the learners as Kollberg (2016) suggested that teachers can encourage learners to break the stereotypes through reflection and discussion.

5.4.7 Necessity of Reviewing and Updating the Textbooks

The interviewed teachers (both from urban and rural areas) had several recommendations to ensure gender equality in the textbooks. One of the significant recommendations was to review and update the textbooks. Tomlinson (2012) also

highlighted the need for ongoing evaluation and adaptation of new materials to meet the needs of learners and teachers. Besides, the interviewed teachers in the current study recommended raising awareness among the writers and teachers, ensuring equality through language and illustrations etc. They also suggested highlighting women's contributions along with men in the textbooks. Teachers in other countries like Sweden, Vietnam, Pakistan, Finland and Iran also suggested similar ideas to promote gender equality. For instance, Iranian teachers (all six respondents) in the study of Lee and Gahrouei (2020) recommended that major changes are needed in the biased textbooks to achieve gender equality. Further, raising awareness among the teachers and writers was recommended by both the Swedish and Vietnamese teachers in the study of Kollberg (2016) and Vu and Pham (2021). According to Kollberg (2016), teachers are not always aware of gender bias and thus, they manifest stereotypes in their language. Besides, Vu and Pham (2021) identified raising awareness as one of the significant issues for ensuring gender equality. In addition, Kollberg's (2016) study focused on ensuring linguistic gender equality in textbooks. Swedish teachers in Kollberg's study mentioned the necessity of teacher education to aid teachers in maintaining gender-inclusive language production in the classroom. Thus, the Bangladeshi teachers in the current study and other teachers from different countries perceived that gender equality can be ensured through gender equitable textbooks.

Hence, the perceptions and recommendations of the teachers of the primary schools located in urban and rural areas of Bangladesh revealed the necessity of updating the existing textbooks for ensuring equal representation of men and women. The research studies across the globe echoed the voices of Bangladeshi teachers. However, analysis of the findings from the survey and interviews of the Bangladeshi teachers reflect that perceptions of male and female teachers are different in terms of

gender equality to some extent. For example, the perceptions of the male teachers showed stereotypical concepts regarding the occupational roles of women whereas the female teachers strongly raised their voices to embrace the change. While the male teachers focused on presenting the limitation of women in the name of social reality, female teachers focused on promoting an idealistic society through textbooks.

5.5 Textbook Writers' Perceptions Regarding Gender Representation in Textbooks

While all the interviewed writers actively reflected on gender equality in textbooks, it was contradictory to find that they did not have explicit strategies for their materials to enhance equality. The findings of the interviews revealed that the writers had intentions to maintain gender equality, but they failed. During the interview sessions, they (the textbook writers) pointed out the stereotypical assumption of socio-cultural practices and lack of consciousness as the reasons for their failure, though Oteiza and Pinto (2008) blamed the attitudes of the writers for gender discrimination in the textbooks. However, the writers of the textbooks pointed out that the responsibility for promoting gender equality in textbooks should lie with the authority. Even though the NCTB guidelines included provisions for ensuring gender equality, the authority did not prioritize this issue when providing instructions to the writers. This attitude exhibited by the authority reflects their underlying patriarchal mindset, which was viewed as one of the reasons for not achieving gender equality by two of the textbook writers (TW D and TW E). Foucault (1978) also believed that power is a pervasive and subtle force that operates within all aspects of society, including education. Hence, the representation of gender in teaching materials was influenced by power dynamics that operated during the production and dissemination of those materials.

The interviewed writers' perceptions regarding the role of the textbooks, the role of the textbook writers, linguistic and multi-modal representation of gender in the textbooks, the impact of the biased representation of gender on the learners, representation of social reality, challenges and opportunities for the textbook writers, teachers and finally the strategies and their recommendations to eliminate gender equality have been discussed in the following sections:

5.5.1 Textbooks can Promote Equality

As the findings conveyed, the interviewed textbook writers focused on the significant roles of textbooks for young learners. For instance, the writers mentioned that textbooks can shape the personality of young learners and promote equality. Besides, learners will develop positive or negative attitudes through textbooks. The interviewed writers also asserted that textbooks have serious roles to sensitize the learners' values. Similar perceptions were also reflected in the studies of Mihira et al. (2021). While talking about the crucial role of textbooks, Mihira et al. (2021) mentioned that textbooks can deconstruct ideology as ideologies are manifested through discourses. They added that "textbooks can be a fertile ground for implanting the prevalence of women's marginalization in society" (Mihira et al., 2021, p. 576).

Further, this study also explored that the interviewed writers perceived that though language learning is the goal of the EFL textbooks, ethics and moral values should be conveyed through these (textbooks). The role of textbooks to develop ideologies and transmit moral values was also focused on by Khalid and Ghania (2019) and Musty (2015). In their study, Khalid and Ghania (2019) mentioned that while the primary objective of the EFL classroom textbook is to facilitate language acquisition and enhance language proficiency, it can also be utilized as an effective means for conveying and instilling ethical principles. Besides, Musty (2015) added that English

language textbooks are widely used for achieving command of English, but they (textbooks) cannot be anticipated as value-free. Along with values, ideologies and attitudes, textbook writer C (TW C) in this study added that textbooks also reflect a nation's desire and national policy. Hence, the crucial role of textbooks was explored by the existing research studies and the interviews of the textbook writers in this study.

5.5.2 Textbook Writers can Challenge the Stereotypical Gender Roles to Promote Equality

While all the interviewed writers perceived that textbook writers can play strong roles to ensure gender equality, ironically gender disparity was explored in all the *EfT* textbooks (from Classes 1 to V) of the primary schools of Bangladesh. During the interview sessions, the writers were asked about this contradiction. In response, the writers mentioned that they (writers) themselves are parts of the patriarchal male-dominated society. Thus, a biased attitude is deeply rooted in the mindset of the writers. TW D mentioned that textbook writers belong to a male-dominated patriarchal society and consequently, gender discrimination is reflected in the textbooks. In a patriarchal society, the family works as a state within a state where the ruler is the male head of the family. Thus, women are dominated in the family i.e., in society (Azad, 1995). This restriction is also applicable to independent women as the constitution of 'independent women' is interrelated with some authorial strategies imposed by men (Mukharjee, 2017). For example, Mukharjee (2017) stated that the new *bhadramahila* (ladies) in patriarchal societies are even dominated by the benevolent *bhadralok* (gentlemen).

The writers perceived that as they belong to the patriarchal society, they portrayed men as superior positions implicitly. In their study, Goyal and Rose (2020) also mentioned that gender imbalance in textbooks may be the consequence of an implied prejudice of numerous textbook writers. However, the interviewed textbook

writers acknowledged that they have the responsibilities to promote gender equality through their content. Both TW B and TW E perceived that a textbook writer has the scope to spread the ideas of gender equality and to familiarize the students with culture along with ensuring good command of the language. Language acquisition was viewed as a social phenomenon which focuses on men's and women's different social, economic and political positions by Gordon (2004). Thus, the content for the learners should be designed to focus on both language skills and socio-cultural ideologies. "If we want them to have communicative skills with cultural sensitivity, then we should design our syllabi accordingly." (Mortuza, 2021, p.177). A similar opinion was reflected by Musty (2015). In his study, Musty stated that writers "have a responsibility to produce material which not only encourages learners to develop their linguistic ability, but also pays close attention to the culture of the target language which they choose to represent." (Musty, 2015, p. 37). Thus, language is one of the powerful emblems of socio-cultural behavior through which textbook writers can transfer information to the learners.

The findings of this study also exposed that the interviewed writers viewed textbook writing as an opportunity to change the perceptions of the learners. Musty (2015) also mentioned that textbook writers have their own choices in producing contents. Hence, they (writers) have the option to represent both genders equally. Musty (2015) also recommended that even textbook writers can challenge the established gender roles to promote equality. For example, Musty mentioned that writers can choose unconventional words for men and women for ensuring equality even though those words appear as 'linguistically awkward'. He added that writers can take the risk of using gender-neutral terms which might be unusual. Holmes (2013) also encouraged using gender-neutral terms even though those terms sound quite clumsy as sexism is

commonly considered as discrimination against people and sexist differences have adverse pedagogical values (Hall, 2014). Further, Curaming and Curaming (2020) suggested that textbook writers need to challenge traditional norms as it is the task of the writers to promote gender equality in the textbooks.

5.5.3 Conscious use of Language may Enhance Equality

Findings from the interviews manifested that all the respondents perceive that there should not be any sort of linguistic discrimination in the textbooks whereas the primary textbooks contain gender-biased languages. The interviewed textbook writers acknowledged that they did not observe such discriminatory language consciously. Besides, the respondents accused the social reality of the gender imbalance in the textbooks. For instance, TW B mentioned that he found it very difficult to segregate the contents of the textbooks from the traditional social norms. Hence, discrimination exists in textbooks. For example, using the adjective ‘smart’ to describe Sagar’s grandfather in the textbook of Class IV highlighted a man with positive attributes. In contrast, presenting Sagar’s grandmother as “she can make best *pithas* in the world” reflects the traditional grandmother’s role in the context of Bangladesh according to TW C. However, various researchers expressed their worries that conventional language and practice may carry an implicit message of men’s dominance over women. Though Musty (2015) suggested that textbook writers can challenge conventional norms, TW C mentioned that depicting a male character in making *pithas* in Bangladeshi culture might not be accepted by the learners. However, respondent A suggested that textbook writers can highlight women even by depicting them in traditional social practices. For example, TW A mentioned that the quality of making *pitha* could be highlighted in the textbooks by attributing Sagar’s grandmother as a ‘smart’ woman. Otherwise, women

will be marginalized if positive attributions are used only for men. Mihira et al. (2021) also stated that discriminatory language may disregard women. Such discriminatory languages may also reinforce power relations and social hierarchies (Mills & Mullany, 2011). Hence, feminist approaches to language and gender emphasized the importance of mitigating power imbalances for promoting gender equality through language use.

5.5.4 Gender Parity through Multi-modal Representation may Enhance Equality

The interviewed textbook writers agreed that discrimination exists in the images and activities of the textbooks. However, the respondents were divided in their opinions regarding the biased representation. For an instance, ‘Raju’ a man was illustrated as a firefighter in the textbook of Class V which was a challenging profession and no woman was presented in such challenging roles. The textbook writers were asked during the interview sessions regarding such biased representation. Then, TW B stated that he never came across a lady firefighter in Bangladesh; hence, he felt comfortable showing a male as a firefighter. However, TW A had a different opinion regarding this. According to TW A, though women are not commonly seen as a firefighter, textbook writers could take the challenge to promote gender equality by depicting a female as a firefighter. TW A further added that such representation can be an indirect revolution of the textbook writers. Moreover, depicting men in challenging professions and women in stereotypical professions may limit the potential of girls. Fewer occupational roles of women in the *EfT* textbooks will be perceived by female learners as the only recognized jobs for them to pursue (Mihira et al., 2021). Besides, the present study also explored that only women are depicted in domestic spaces and household chores. Such a depiction of the textbook writers may establish inequality. In their study, (Curaming and Curaming, 2020) explored the role of EFL textbooks in establishing gender equality and argued that showing women in household spaces in the English language textbooks

may reinforce the conventional dogmas that women should confine themselves inside the home and do mundane activities.

Along with the written discourse, illustrations of the textbook writers have significant roles in producing gender-equitable textbooks. The present study revealed that textbook writers admitted that discrimination exists in the visual discourses along with the stories and exercises. However, the textbook writers again blamed social realities for such biased representation. For example, TW D and TW E perceived that the images of Anika Sarkar (Figure 4.29 and 4.30) represent social reality as working women in Bangladesh have to make a balance between works and home. Hussein (2022) also viewed such a double role of working women as a social reality and a ‘practice of new womanhood’ too. However, such a work-home balance also shows the prioritization of familial duties over the career of women in South Asia (Hussein, 2022). Nevertheless, TW A perceives that textbook writers can come out from this practice by portraying men in familial duties to promote equality. Other textbook writers also agreed that portraying both men and women in household chores through images may minimize gender disparity. They (writers) also acknowledged that the majority of the images in the primary textbooks exposed clear signs of bias against females. In their study regarding gender positioning in visual discourses in English textbooks, Khalid and Ghania (2019) exposed that little attention is paid to the visuals while producing the textbooks. They revealed that “in the process of making EFL textbooks, it is a common practice to entrust the task of inserting visuals to publishers, who may unintentionally pay little heed to the guidelines of avoiding gender bias amidst their preoccupations with the textbooks space limitation or the acknowledgement of content copyrights.” (Khalid & Ghania, 2019, p. 774). Further, Khalid and Ghania added that considerable meaning is carried through the visuals and images in the textbooks.

However, “misrepresentations of females and males might spoil the bias-free texts or distort the high values preached to students in the course of their learning experiences.” (Khalid & Ghania, 2019, p. 774). The interviewed textbook writers also perceive the same. They believe that misrepresentation of visuals will create discrimination. However, the respondents mentioned that the conscious efforts of textbook writers can bring change. Consciousness was also found to be an emancipating force by Nicholls (2005) for the production of textbooks. Thus, conscious representation of gender by the writers can promote gender equality in the textbooks.

5.5.5 Unfair Representation of Gender may Hurt the Elementary Learners

The present study revealed that all the interviewed textbook writers perceived that gender-biased textbooks may hurt young learners of primary schools. However, two respondents perceive that though there will be some adverse influences of gender disparity upon the learners, the impact will not be devastating. Those two respondents argued that our society is patriarchal and consequently, our families practice the conventional attitude. They also argued that learners notice male dominance in their families; thus, the impact of gender-biased textbooks may not be shocking to them. However, research studies exposed different perceptions. Many researchers expressed their concerns that gender disparity in textbooks may have adverse effects on learners. In their study, Khalid and Ghania (2019) revealed the impact of sexist ELT materials on learners. They pointed out that gender bias in the textbooks represents a real sense of worry in the whole educational domain as well as in the EFL teaching materials.

Although two of the respondents in the present study talked about not having the devastating impact of gender-biased textbooks, Lee and Collins (2008) expressed different opinions. In their study, Lee and Collins opined that students largely attach much credibility and trustworthiness to educational resources. They further added that

students incline to engage and adapt the textual contents without hesitation. Thus, the biased representation may negatively influence learners' cognition (Ahmad & Shah, 2019). However, all the interviewed textbook writers in this study admitted that textbooks may start the change by breaking the conventional norms.

5.5.6 A Balance is needed between Conventional and Idealistic Society in Textbooks

Of the five interviewed writers, three opted to represent an idealistic society, while the other two focused on finding a balance between social realities and an idealistic society. Many studies on gender equality also expose that the domination of men and marginalization of women in EFL textbooks reflect reality in society (Mihira, et al., 2021). To promote gender equality, some textbook researchers recommended avoiding the biases of society. According to Goyal and Rose (2020), "instead of imitating the realities of the world, textbook developers must consider presenting scenarios that societies aim to achieve." (p. 1). However, the findings of the present study explored that two of the interviewed writers argued for introducing the social realities to the students as the learners will not allow all the utopian concepts. These textbook writers perceived that there should be a balance between expectation and reality. However, these two respondents suggested that textbook writers have to present social realities and at the same time they should guide the learners to dream of a better world where there will be no inequalities. The other three respondents in the study perceive that textbook writers should promote an idealistic society as it is the responsibility of textbook writers to enhance gender equality in textbooks. In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) also took a standpoint for promoting gender equality and therefore, asked for the using textbooks to eliminate prejudiced manifestation of gender by deconstructing binary oppositions.

5.5.7 Opportunities can be Utilized to Overcome the Challenges

Of the five interviewed writers, four viewed the limited time for producing textbooks as a great challenge for the writers. Though another respondent perceived that if the writers get much time they will be able to review the contents, he did not view time constraints as a great challenge. However, all the respondents considered lack of awareness as one of the obstacles on the way to establishing gender equality in the textbooks. Nevertheless, all the respondents perceived that it is a great opportunity for the writer to convey any message to the whole country through textbooks. A similar perception was reflected in the study of Goyal and Rose (2020). They suggested that if textbook writers can be made more sensible of existing discriminations, it may work to minimize the current imbalance. Thus, textbook writers can take the responsibility to promote gender equality and change the mindset of young learners through textbooks.

5.5.8 Teachers need to Interpret the Textbooks Properly to Promote Equality

Significant roles of the teachers were reflected through the perceptions of all the interviewed textbook writers. During the interview sessions, all the respondents warned that if the teachers do not explain or interpret the textbooks properly in the classroom, the goals and objectives of the writers will be ruined. One of the respondents mentioned that while the textbook writers are dreamers, the teachers are the change makers. Thus, the interviewed textbook writers emphasized raising awareness among primary school teachers regarding gender equality. Various research studies also focused on the awareness of teachers to overcome gender bias. In their study, Mihira et al. (2021) expressed their concerns that sometimes teachers might inadvertently transmit biased notions in the classroom. They (teachers) can convey biased messages through language and illustrations. Thus, teachers' awareness of gender equality is needed (Mihira et al., 2021). Musty (2015) also suggested that teachers should use language in

a 'sensitive way' in the classroom. In his study, Musty suggested that teachers can inspire female learners to adopt unconventional occupational roles through games and role plays. Hence, both male and female learners will be able to challenge the stereotypical occupational roles.

5.5.9 Following NCTB Guidelines can Enhance Equality

All of the interviewed textbook writers perceived that they should precisely follow the strategies and guidelines provided by the NCTB. Three writers argued that as the NCTB focused on gender equality in the guidelines, writers should meticulously follow those. However, two respondents claimed that, though the NCTB stated the importance of equal gender representation in textbooks in the guidelines theoretically, it did not focus on gender issues while giving instructions to the writers. This lack of emphasis on gender issues may reflect the patriarchal attitudes prevalent in both the authority and broader society. Nicholls (2005) considered the school textbooks as one of the arenas where the struggle for impartiality continues and focused on the role of authority to ensure neutrality in the textbooks.

Hence, to produce gender-balanced textbooks for the children of the primary schools of Bangladesh, they (writers) offered a few recommendations including raising awareness among the textbook writers, editors and textbook authorities, arranging training sessions for the textbook writers, ensuring equality through linguistic and multi-modal representations, coordinating among the writers, following the NCTB guidelines, and setting a sensible time frame for materials development. Further, one of the interviewed writers mentioned the necessity of reviewing the textbooks through a gender lens. Similar perception was also reflected in the studies of Hossain (2018), Kabir (2015) and Khalid and Ghania (2019). In their study, Khalid and Ghania (2019) stated that "one viable way to track gender fairness in the learning materials is to revisit

this issue after a relatively long span of time.” (Khalid & Ghania, 2019, p. 775). Similarly, Kabir (2015) and Hossain (2018) also recommended reviewing and updating the existing textbooks to enhance gender equality. Besides, increasing awareness was emphasized by Gray (2002) and Kollberg (2016) to ensure women’s education and empowerment. Hence, textbook writers can inspire female learners by highlighting women's empowerment.

Thus, the voices of the writers reflected the necessity of promoting equality through primary textbooks. However, the writers acknowledged that the patriarchal social structure and mindsets of the writers and lack of consciousness are responsible for the existence of biased representation of gender in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, contradictory opinions were noticed among the teachers and textbook writers regarding teachers’ role in ensuring gender equality in the classroom. While the teachers perceive that textbook writers are solely responsible for maintaining equality in the textbooks, writers think that teachers have a crucial responsibility to convey the appropriate messages of the textbook writers to the learners.

Hence, the perceptions of the stakeholders (both teachers and writers) revealed that they could not come out from the conventional mindsets in many cases. Women were perceived as inferior to them to some extent due to the continued existence of patriarchal ideology. While addressing their discomfort concerning gender bias, the teacher research participants generally attributed the responsibility to textbook writers. Their perspective underscored that producing gender-neutral textbooks rested with writers. In parallel, the materials writer research participants recognized socio-cultural beliefs, particularly patriarchal mindsets, as contributing factors to biased gender portrayals in textbooks. Nevertheless, none did mention religious issues as contributing

factors. The omission of these factors seemed interesting, considering the presence of religious ideologies in Bangladeshi society.

However, the stakeholders (teachers and writers) felt the necessity of reviewing the textbooks to enhance gender equality in the textbooks. Thus, answers to research questions 2 and 3 of this study have been revealed by exploring the perceptions and recommendations of the stakeholders.

Finally, the study exposed that uplift of the women in contemporary Bangladesh was ignored in the textbooks through linguistic and multi-modal aspects. The stakeholders also acknowledged the underrepresentation of women in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. While women are contributing in every sector now, this empowerment was not focused on in the textbooks; whereas ‘self-empowerment’ was viewed as a vehicle to achieve progress by Chowdhury (2018b). In contrast, men were shown in privileged and prestigious positions both in domestic and outdoor settings. Men also enjoyed positive attributions through dictions. Such gender performativity represents discrimination against women and manifests patriarchy and male dominance in society as gender performativity is governed by certain gender norms, and socio-cultural and historical practices (Sultana, 2018). Though gender discrimination existed earlier in Bangladesh, the social construction of gender is a bit different in the contemporary society; there has been a steady development in excluding gender inequality in Bangladesh. Gender roles in the contemporary Bangladesh are changing as many women are entering into the paid employment (Hussein, 2022). In her study, Hussein (2022) viewed such changing position of new women as a symbol of progress. However, Hussein’s ‘new womanhood’ or the progress/uplift of women was not reflected in the textbooks which reveal the underrepresentation of women.

Hence, the study revealed that whereas the emergence of new women is visible in Bangladeshi society, women remain peripheral in the textbooks.

5.6 Conclusion

To sum up, the study identified the assimilation of the patriarchal association of power and gender bias in the textbooks of the primary level of Bangladesh through a minute examination of the contents of the textbooks and the perceptions of both the teachers and textbook writers. The analysis of the discourse revealed that females are underrepresented and less visible in the contents and illustrations. Though there are some encouraging examples, female representations are still much less as compared to those of males. Besides, the examination of the stakeholders' (teachers and textbook writers) perceptions regarding gender representation in the *EfT* textbooks of the primary schools of Bangladesh revealed that they (stakeholders) are aware of discriminatory exhibition of men and women in textbooks. However, despite having their awareness, findings from the content analysis indicated that the textbook writers tended to embrace the traditional male superiority of patriarchal society in the name of social reality and confined females to mundane activities and stereotypical jobs. Similarly, while the interviewed teachers recommended raising awareness among the writers to promote gender equality, some of the interviewed teachers still perceived that women are not suitable for all types of occupations and underrepresentation will not marginalize female learners. However, teachers reported a lack of gender-neutral contents and blamed the writers for representing inequality in the textbooks. Nevertheless, the writers believed that the authority did not prioritize gender inequality and instead had a patriarchal mindset. As a result, the study revealed a link between the authority's role, hegemony, patriarchy, and power, which led to the unequal manifestation of gender in

the textbooks. Thus, incongruity was noticed in the perception of the stakeholders. Such perception was considered as the peripheral area of interest of the practitioners regarding gender representation in the textbooks by Khalid and Ghania (2019). Hence, raising cognizance on gender issues is much needed to ensure gender representation in an equalized proportion. The next chapter has drawn the conclusion of the current study. It has discussed the implications of the findings and included the recommendations for enhancing gender equality in the textbooks.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

A conclusion was drawn in this chapter from the findings and interpretation of the data in the previous chapters in light of the conceptual framework. Hence, the chapter made conclusions based on the answers to the research questions – in what ways gender is represented in the textbooks for Class I to Class V; how gender representation is perceived by the stakeholders i.e., teachers and textbook writers and what the stakeholders think of enhancing the equality regarding the gender representations in the textbooks. Further, the chapter made conclusions on the relationship between gender and textbooks. It also focused on the impact of gender bias in textbooks on young learners. Besides, the chapter discussed the implications of the conceptual framework of the study. The chapter also stated the implications of the study. Based on the findings and implications, suggestions were put forward to the textbook writers as they produce the textbooks and to the teachers as they use those textbooks in the classroom. These recommendations will help develop the professional practice for ensuring gender equality in Bangladesh.

6.2 Conclusions on Findings

As it was mentioned in chapter 1, to carry out this research, the study was led by a set of objectives and research questions. The main research problem was to explore gender representation in textbooks. This research problem was supplemented by the perceptions of the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers). Findings were drawn by triangulating data (using both qualitative and quantitative methods and different data sources, such as – content analysis and interviews) in light of the conceptual framework.

By using the mixed-methods approach, the study revealed a biased representation of gender in both the linguistic and multi-modal aspects. During the interview sessions, the teachers and writers also acknowledged the existence of gender bias in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

For example, linguistic discriminations were explored in the study in the use of nouns and pronouns, firstness and in the choice of words by the textbook writers. Findings revealed that male referring nouns and pronouns outnumbered in the primary textbooks. Further, in the case of firstness, men enjoyed the first-place occurrences. Women were placed in secondary positions. Thus, equality was not maintained in the ‘order of appearance’ in the textbooks. Besides, the active and dominant roles of men and the passive and submissive roles of women were revealed in many cases in the textbooks through the diction of the writer. As stated in chapter 2 and chapter 5, such biased representation in the use of language may marginalize women. However, both the teachers and textbook writers acknowledged that discrimination exists in the primary textbooks (as stated in chapter 4). The stakeholders (teachers and learners) also perceived that such discrimination may lower girls’ expectations and marginalize women. Thus, girls will consider their identity lower in connection with men as language and identity are interwoven with one another (Gordon, 2004; Hall, 1996; Sultana, 2014). In contrast, they also perceived that gender-equitable languages may motivate and inspire both boys and girls. During the interview sessions, the textbook writers acknowledged that positive attributions such as ‘smart’, and ‘bold’ were associated only with men and they argued that women could be presented with such attributions. Discriminatory attributions demonstrate linguistic patriarchy (Azad, 1995). The textbook writers also acknowledged that small changes in the use of language in textbooks could bring huge positive changes in establishing equality.

Besides, discrimination in gender was also exposed in the multi-modal aspects such as – occupation, visibility, characterization and domestic role. Minimal representation of women was exposed. Findings revealed that men were shown in the diversified and challenging occupational roles, whereas women were presented in the traditional stereotyped occupational roles. Discrimination was also noticed in terms of visibility. While men were visible in outdoor activities and sports, the visibility of women was limited in indoor activities. In terms of characterization, biased representation was also exposed. While men were shown participating in reading and writing activities and helping children in their studies, women were shown making *pithas*, gardening, etc. Besides, no male character was depicted in any sort of domestic activities. Further, famous female characters were not highlighted in the primary textbooks. Various research studies explored that such discriminatory roles create oppression (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 5). Simon-Maeda (2004) exposed that gender is not considered as a free-floating aspect rather it should be viewed as social and cultural circumstances. Hence, unfair social roles reinforce patriarchy.

Nevertheless, the textbook writers perceived that the NCTB policy aimed to achieve gender equality in textbooks, but the authority did not consider the issue seriously. While the NCTB asserts that it takes gender equality into consideration in the textbooks, it appears that there is a lack of emphasis on promoting gender equality in the guidance provided to writers. This may indicate that the authorities and wider society maintain patriarchal attitudes that undervalue the importance of gender issues.

However, the stakeholders in the current study agreed that such biased representation will have an adverse effect upon young learners. Both the teachers (from urban and rural areas) and writers agreed that women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power. However, four respondents

among the twenty teachers had different opinions. Those four teachers perceived that women are not secure in all types of occupations in Bangladesh. Besides, one textbook writer also mentioned that in Bangladeshi society, women are not placed in some occupations, such as a firefighter. Thus, four teachers and one writer perceived that some biased representation still exists in the textbooks as textbook reflects social reality. Nevertheless, other teachers and textbook writers did not agree that gender bias should exist to reflect social reality. Rather, they perceived that textbooks should reflect an idealistic society. One of the textbook writers mentioned that women should be depicted in the non-stereotypical and diversified professions in the school textbooks to motivate young learners. Nevertheless, the findings of the study revealed underrepresentation of female characters in many cases. Nowadays, women in Bangladesh are working in different fields with success. While educated and middle-class women are working in the government and private sectors, less educated women are working in the agricultural and RMG sectors. Thus, all classes of women are contributing to the economy of Bangladesh. These women were viewed as ‘new-women’ by Chowdhury (2018b) and Hussein (2022). However, these new women were found peripheral in the textbooks. Nonetheless, all the teachers and textbook writers agreed that equality should be ensured by highlighting the successful women as well as men in the textbooks.

Though the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers) perceived the necessity of gender-equitable textbooks, gender bias exists in all five *English for Today* textbooks (Class I to Class V). The writers were asked about the causes of this discrimination in the interview sessions. In responses, they mentioned that they were not aware of gender discrimination while writing the textbooks. They added that they did not notice the high percentage of male referring nouns and pronouns in the

textbooks. Further, as they reflected social reality in the textbooks, biased representation was demonstrated. However, they acknowledged that this research helped them make aware of the necessity of gender-equitable textbooks. At the same time, the textbook writers felt that teachers should also be aware while delivering the materials in the classroom. They added that teachers should convey gender-neutral messages in the textbooks. The teachers also recommended that textbook writers should produce gender-neutral textbooks as they (teachers) follow the textbooks as core materials in the classroom.

6.3 Conclusions on Research Questions

The findings of the study revealed that biased representation of gender is present in the *EfT* textbooks for Classes I, II, III, IV and V. Imbalance was noticed in the illustration of gender performances in favor of men through all the categories applied in the content analysis. In terms of frequency of appearance more male characters were portrayed than female characters. Men were portrayed in the dominant roles while women were exposed in the stereotypical reproductive activities performing feminine household tasks. This tendency was explored in the literature review. Thus, the findings provided the researcher with the answer to the first research question – in what ways is gender represented in the textbooks of Class I to Class V? The study revealed the answer that gender is presented in a biased way in textbooks. Findings also revealed unequal power relationships and patriarchal oppression in the contents of the textbooks.

Further, the study traced the answer to the research question 2 – how is gender representation perceived by the stakeholders i.e., teachers and textbook writers? Findings from the questionnaire and interview revealed that both the teachers and textbook writers acknowledged the presence of gender bias in the textbooks. At the

same time, the stakeholders also expressed their concern regarding the adverse effect of gender disparity in the textbooks on the young learners of primary schools. However, they blamed the social construction of gender for the biased manifestation in the textbooks. Both the teachers and textbook writers perceived that they belong to the patriarchal society and they reflected the social reality. However, they also perceived that gender-neutral textbooks are needed for developing a sense of equality among learners.

Finally, the study revealed the answer to the research question 3 – in what ways do the stakeholders think of enhancing equality regarding gender representations in the textbooks? During the interview sessions, both the teachers and textbook writers shared their recommendations for enhancing gender equality. For instance, the teachers recommended reviewing and updating the existing textbooks to eliminate gender bias. Then, they focused on raising awareness among the writers and teachers regarding gender equality in the textbooks. Further, they suggested ensuring equality through language and illustrations. They also focused on highlighting women's contributions in the textbooks. Besides, the teachers also suggested increasing the number of female textbook writers. Along with the teachers, the textbook writers also emphasized raising awareness regarding gender equality in the textbooks. The textbook writers perceived that they should consciously make gender equality in the representation of male and female characters and the teachers should consciously convey gender-neutral messages in the classroom. Thus, gender equality can be enhanced. Besides, the textbook writers recommended arranging training sessions for the writers for maintaining gender equality in the textbooks. They also added that the writers should ensure gender equality through linguistic and multi-modal representation. Further, the textbook writers suggested making coordination among all the textbook writers. They also suggested

following the NCTB guidelines strictly. Finally, the textbook writers recommended setting a sensible timeframe for checking and rechecking all the contents before the final production.

Thus, the study revealed the answer to the research question 1 by using content analysis and research question 2 and 3 through the survey and interview. The content analysis revealed gender discrimination in the textbooks and the survey and interview findings supplemented the result of the content analysis. Hence, the study developed a comprehensive understanding of the existence of gender bias in primary textbooks by triangulating the data from the content analysis and interviews.

6.4 Conclusions on the Role of Textbooks for Enhancing Gender Equality

The role of textbooks in enhancing gender equality was discussed in Chapter 1 of this study. Numerous research studies explored the relationship between textbooks and gender equality. Researchers have pointed out those gender-equitable textbooks help learners develop the sense of equality. The teachers and textbook writers also agreed that textbooks play a vital role in promoting gender equality.

Teachers of the primary schools suggested using an equal number of images and equal attribution for men and women during the interview sessions (as explored in chapter 4). The teachers also perceived that women's contributions and achievement should be highlighted in the textbooks for motivating young girls and boys.

Besides, the textbook writers also perceived that textbooks can shape the personalities and develop the mindsets of young learners (as stated in chapter 4). They also think that textbooks must contain gender-equitable materials as textbooks play a crucial role in developing the perceptions of the learners regarding gender roles. Thus, biased representation of gender may develop the stereotypical mindset of the learners.

On the other hand, textbooks can promote gender equality through stories, examples and illustrations. If children get the perception of gender equality from the contents of the textbooks, consequently, they will spread the message outside. Eventually, the sense of equality will spread in society. The textbook writers claimed that primary textbooks play the crucial role than secondary or higher secondary textbooks as primary education is the first step for the learners to come out from their families (as stated in chapter 4). The textbook writers also argued that young learners start visualizing the world through textbooks.

Hence, it was observed that the existing literature and the interviews of the teachers and textbook writers in the current study explored the vital role of textbooks in developing the sense of gender equality, feelings, and emotion and changing the stereotypical mindset. Thus, textbook writers need to be aware of gender representation in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh. The textbook writers also felt that it is not only a responsibility but also a huge opportunity for them (writers) to convey gender neutral messages to millions of people through textbooks.

6.5 Significance of the Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework for the study led to the results that the content analyzed textbooks are clearly gender biased. It allowed the researcher to investigate the representation of gender through linguistic and multi-modal resources. At first, the study analyzed the linguistic features such as –the use of nouns and pronouns, firstness, and the choice of words. Then, the study analyzed the multi-modal aspects such as activities (occupational and domestic roles), visibility, etc., as linguistic analysis is not enough to analyze gender representation. The study also analyzed the characterization and presentation of women through images and stories. Thus, the linguistic and multi-modal analysis allowed the researcher a better understanding of the social construction

of gender, unequal power relationship and patriarchal oppression reflected in the textbooks. Besides, the conceptual framework enabled the researcher to realize the social construction of gender in the context of Bangladesh and how this construction is reflected in the textbooks. Moreover, the perceptions of both the teachers and textbook writers supplemented the result. They acknowledged the existence of biased representation of gender in textbooks and felt the necessity to review the textbooks through a gender lens.

However, the conceptual framework for the current study was drawn from the three theoretical frameworks. These are – critical theory, Foucault's concept of power and feminist linguistic approaches. As the construction between social reality, power, authority and textbooks was focused on by the critical theorists, the critical theory helped explore how social reality was reflected in the primary textbooks. Moreover, the study also explored patriarchal power and authority through the concepts of this theory. Besides, the critical theory exposed the influence of the material developers' knowledge, perception, attitude and values in the production of the textbooks. It also emphasized raising awareness among the material developers. Thus, this theory enabled the researcher to focus on the perceptions of the textbook writers. Raising awareness among teachers and textbook writers was focused on in the current study.

Besides, Foucault's concept of power was used in this study to analyze gender equality in textbooks. Foucauldian theory made connections between language and power. Foucault (1978) manifested that discourse is linked to power. He also revealed that power is related to social control. Thus, to understand the social construction of gender, power relationships, and patriarchal oppression in the contents of the textbooks, Foucault's theory of power was traced in this study.

Further, the feminist linguistic approaches of Mills and Mullany (2011) were traced in this study, as this theory focused on the connection between language and gender, power, and social stratification. According to this theory, ‘gendered’ discourse reinforces patriarchy by demonstrating the power and dominance of men. This theory also revealed that patriarchy marginalizes women as the patriarchal social order manifests the inferior and powerless position of women in society. Thus, the feminist linguistic approaches by Mills and Mullany (2011) helped the researcher reveal the existence of biased language and patriarchal oppression in the study.

Hence, the conceptual framework in the current study, based on the critical theory, Foucauldian theory and the feminist linguistic approaches enabled the researcher to investigate and draw a conclusion on gender representation in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

6.6 Implications of the Study

The findings of the current study revealed gender bias in the primary textbooks which will expose the imbalanced and oppressive condition of social and economic relationships among school children. However, the findings of the study will help textbook writers in making decisions on producing the appropriate textbooks. Moreover, the findings will enable teachers to make appropriate adaptations to the material in their future instructions. The study will be able to contribute to the field of knowledge in the following ways –

- This research focused on school textbooks which are very significant in the societal context as the socialization of gender is reinforced at school and gender bias is embedded in textbooks (Curaming & Curaming, 2020). If the children observe the

equal representation of gender roles in the textbooks both male and female learners will be motivated to offer equal contribution for society.

- By exposing the findings to the stakeholders, the research raised consciousness among the teachers and textbook writers. The teachers stated during the interview sessions that they will be aware of conveying gender-neutral messages in the classroom. Moreover, the writers also mentioned that they will focus on producing gender-equitable materials in future.

- In this way, the study will improve professional practice in Bangladesh.

Thus, the findings of the current doctoral research have policy implications for the stakeholders (teachers and textbook writers), as textbook writers produce the contents of the textbooks and teachers are the implementers of those textbooks. As the study included the interviews of both the teachers and textbook writers, they became aware of gender equality while sharing their perceptions and recommendations.

6.7 Recommendations

As gender equality is needed for the development of society, the study revealed that textbooks can play a vital role in developing a sense of equality among learners. Eventually, learners will spread the message to society. Thus, the study has the following recommendations for enhancing gender equality through textbooks -

- to raise gender awareness among the teachers so that they promote gender concerned expressions and behavior in the classroom;

- to train in-service teachers to trace and review gender inequality in the stories, exercises and illustrations;

- to raise awareness among textbook writers to provide gender-equitable textbooks in the primary level of education;
- to train the prospective textbook writers on gender neutrality and enable them using educational resources in a way that upholds gender equality;
- to conduct further in-depth research on gender representation in the textbooks other subjects, such as Bangla and social sciences, etc.

Hence, the study recommends developing a gender-inclusive national curriculum which will not disseminate gender disparity. Along with men and women, the equal rights of third gender or LGBT communities may be included in the textbooks for betterment. Eliminating gender bias has been focused on both in the National Education Policy of Bangladesh (as stated in chapter 1) and in the NCTB guidelines (as stated in the textbook writers' perceptions in chapter 4). However, the government and the NCTB authority should implement those guidelines to produce gender-equitable textbooks. The government can establish guidelines and standards for the production of textbooks, ensuring that they (textbooks) are free from gender bias and stereotypes. This can include guidelines for language, images, and content that are inclusive and representative of diverse gender identities. Besides, the NCTB authority can regulate the content of the textbooks to ensure that they (textbooks) accurately present both genders in a positive way. This can include addressing topics such as gender roles and relationships in a non-discriminatory manner in the textbooks of the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

6.8 Conclusion of the Study

The study investigated gender representation in textbooks through two different research tools – content analysis and interview. Findings from both the content analysis and interviews of the stakeholders revealed that the *English for Today (EfT)* textbooks taught in the government primary schools of Bangladesh are gender biased and stereotyped. Gender disparity was exposed both in the linguistic and multi-modal aspects in the textbooks from Class I to Class V. The *EfT* textbooks reproduced disproportionate manifestations and gender stereotypes towards female characters and domination of male characters. Women were underrepresented through the use of language, and male-referring terms outnumbered female-referring terms. Men were also prioritized by giving them first-place occurrences. In addition, in terms of visibility men also outnumbered women in the textbooks. Furthermore, men were exposed to challenging and diversified occupational roles, whereas women were exposed to stereotypical occupational roles such as teachers, doctors, and nurses. Moreover, no male character was shown doing any sort of domestic activities. Men were characterized as active, and they were shown involved with reading and writing activities, whereas women were only shown doing household chores. Further, the success and achievements of the famous female characters were not highlighted in the textbooks. Thus, it was obvious that the *EfT* textbooks presented discrimination and unfairness towards female characters. However, such biased representation does not reflect the contemporary society of Bangladesh as women are participating in every sector now. Bangladeshi women are also achieving success in sports and politics. They are contributing to the socio-economic growth of the country. The findings of the study revealed that such truth was overlooked in textbooks.

Nevertheless, the stakeholders, i.e., teachers and textbook writers, agreed that the contribution and success of women should be highlighted in the textbooks to motivate the learners. However, the teachers claimed that it is the responsibility of the textbook writers to produce gender equitable textbooks. The textbook writers also acknowledged that it is an opportunity for them to promote gender equality through textbooks. However, the writers perceived that they belong to the patriarchal society and thus, subconsciously, they depicted stereotypical roles. The writer also stated during the interview sessions that this research will raise consciousness among them. However, they also focused on the vital role of the teachers, as they directly deliver the content of the textbooks to the learners. Thus, the writers perceived that teachers can promote gender equality in the classroom by conveying gender-neutral messages to the learners.

Hence, the study recommended raising awareness among teachers, textbook writers, authorities, and the government to enhance gender equality. Gender-biased textbooks will marginalize the female learners. As a result, textbooks should deconstruct the stereotypical ideology and biases towards feminine traits in women. Moreover, textbooks should reflect equality through the use of language and activities. If textbooks depict everyone in a variety of roles, both boys and girls can contribute equally to society. Thus, by producing gender-equitable textbooks, the textbook writers can promote an ideal society.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire for the Teachers of Primary Schools

Section – A: Demographics

1. Name of the participant:
2. Gender:
3. Years of teaching experience:

Section – B: Survey on the primary teachers regarding their perception of gender representation in textbooks

Please select the responses from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree that best describe your perception towards the statements by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate boxes. Please choose only one response for each statement.

S/N	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Textbooks should represent equal power and opportunities for women and men					
2	Gender equality can be reflected through linguistic and multi-modal (images, actions					

	and visibility) representation of men and women in the textbooks					
3	More male referring terms, first place appearance more visibility and active roles of boys may marginalize girls					
4	Women in stereotypical occupational roles and men in diversified roles demonstrate repressive power					
5	Most of the historical figures, literary scholars and leaders are men in the textbook					
6	In contemporary Bangladesh, women are participating and acquiring success in all spheres of society, but this social reality is					

	overlooked in the textbooks					
7	Underrepresenting female characters in textbooks may enforce alienation among young girls					
8	Teachers play crucial roles to ensure equal representation of men and women in the classroom					
9	Consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to ensure gender equitable materials					
10	Primary textbooks need to be updated in order to eliminate gender bias					

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Teachers

Perceptions of the teachers regarding gender equality in textbooks:

1. Role of the textbooks

- a) To what extent do you think that textbooks play a vital role in developing the sense of gender equality to the learners of primary schools?
- b) In what ways textbooks can change the perception of the learners about the stereotypical patriarchal society? How do you think this may be changed for better impact?

2. Role of the textbook writers

- a) How far do you perceive that the intentions, attitudes and strategies of the textbook writers are reflected in the textbooks?
- b) Do you think that the consciousness of the textbook writers is needed to represent gender equality in the textbooks? If yes/no, why/why not?
- c) The textbooks from Class I to Class V are written by eight authors. Among them six are male and only three are female. How far do you feel the necessity of more female authors in order to ensure gender equality?

3. Role of the teachers

- a) To what extent do you think that teachers' choice of words and explanation of the textbook contents influence students' perception?
- b) How far do you agree that gender biased textbooks create obstacles for the teachers to teach about gender equality in the classroom?

4. Linguistic representation of gender in the textbooks

- a) Do you perceive that gender equitable languages (for example, choice of words, use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, firstness), illustrations and examples of the textbooks may inspire both girls and boys to equally work for society?

5. Multi-modal representation of gender in the textbooks

- a) How far do you agree that men and women should be equally presented through the images along with the stories and exercises?
- b) How is the role of leadership presented in the textbook?
- c) How far men and women have been presented in active roles?
- d) To what extent do you think that equality is maintained in the representation of occupational role? Do you agree that the occupations presented in the textbooks show the superiority of men and the subjugation of women?

(Findings show that women are presented in stereotypical professions, such as, doctor, teacher, nurse, singer etc. In contrast, men are presented in diversified roles)
- e) Representation of males and females is very typical in a domestic role. Do you agree? If yes/no, why and how?

(Findings: Saikat's family in Class V, Sagar's family in Class IV, and Anita Sarker's domestic roles in Class II show the typical domestic roles of women)
- f) What is your opinion about women's representation in sports in Bangladesh? To what extent women in sports are represented in textbooks?

- g) Do you perceive that women's participation and success are underrepresented in the textbooks? If yes/no, why and how?

6. Impact of biased representation of gender in the textbooks

- a) To what extent do you think that unequal gender roles and power relationships in textbooks may lower female learners' expectations and limit their potential?
- b) How far do you agree that gender equitable language and examples in the language may inspire girls to determine their professional and societal roles?

7. Recommendation

- a) In what ways do you think gender equality can be enhanced in primary textbooks?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Textbook Writers

Perceptions of the textbook writers regarding gender equality in textbooks:

8. Role of the textbooks and the textbook writers

- c) To what extent do you think that textbooks play a vital role in developing a sense of gender equality for the learners of primary schools?
- d) In what ways textbooks can change the perception of the learners about the stereotypical patriarchal society? How do you think this may be changed for a better impact?
- e) What are your perspectives regarding the role of textbook writers to promote gender equality in textbooks?

9. Linguistic representation of gender in the textbooks

- b) Do you perceive that gender equitable languages (for example, choice of words, use of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, firstness), of the textbooks, may inspire both girls and boys to equally work for society?

10. Multi-modal representation of gender in the textbooks

- h) How far do you agree that men and women should be equally presented through the images?

(Findings reveal that in the textbook of Class V, there are 41% female images and 59% male images and in the textbook of Class IV, there are 45% female images and 55% male images; Male-female referring nouns – 57 – 48; 30 -31; 7-2 in Class III, II and I respectively; Male-female referring pronouns – 18-21; 17-31).

- i) How is the role of leadership presented in the textbook?
- j) How far men and women have been presented in active roles?
- k) To what extent do you think that equality is maintained in the representation of occupational role? Do you agree that the occupations presented in the textbooks show the superiority of men and the subjugation of women?
(Findings show that women are presented in stereotypical professions, such as, doctor, teacher, nurse, singer etc. In contrast, men are presented in diversified roles)
- l) Representation of males and females is very typical in a domestic role. Do you agree? If yes/no, why and how?
(Findings: Saikat's family in Class V, and Sagar's family in Class IV show the typical domestic roles of women)
- m) What is your opinion about women's representation in sports in Bangladesh? To what extent women in sports are represented in textbooks?
- n) Do you perceive that women's participation and success are underrepresented in the textbooks? If yes/no, why and how?

11. Impact of biased representation of gender in the textbooks

- c) To what extent do you think that unequal gender roles and power relationships in textbooks may lower female learners' expectations and limit their potential?
- d) How far do you agree that gender equitable language and examples in the textbooks may inspire girls to determine their professional and societal roles?

12. Representation of social and contextual reality in the textbook

- a) How is gender representation in the textbooks similar to and different from real life representation? Why is it similar/Why is it different?

13. National Education Policy and the role of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB)

- a) One of the aims and objectives of the National Education Policy in Bangladesh is –“to remove socio-economic discrimination irrespective of race, religion, and creed and to eradicate gender disparity”. – To what extent do you think that gender equality is maintained in the primary school textbooks of Bangladesh?
- b) What role did the NCTB have in ensuring the equal representation of men and women in the textbook? Were there any directives regarding the issue? Why or Why not?

14. Challenges and opportunities

- a) Did you face any challenges? Or, were there any interventions from the administration? What support did you receive from the administration?

15. Strategies and recommendation

- b) Do you have any strategies for ensuring gender equality in primary textbooks?
- c) In what ways do you think gender equality can be enhanced in primary textbooks?