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## Gender Ideologies in Post-2010 Pakistani ELT Textbooks: A Critical Multimodal Analysis of K-12 Curricula

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**Gender Ideologies in Post-2010 Pakistani ELT Textbooks: A Critical Multimodal Analysis of K-12 Curricula**

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**Abstract**

This critical multimodal discourse analysis examines gender ideologies embedded in post-2010 Pakistani English Language Teaching (ELT) textbooks for K-12 curricula. Utilising Fairclough's (2003) three-dimensional critical discourse analysis framework integrated with Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) visual grammar, the study investigates textual and visual representations across six textbook series published between 2010 and 2023. Analysis of 1,200 textual excerpts and 847 visual images reveals persistent patriarchal structures, with male characters representing 62.3 per cent of all social actors and occupying 74 per cent of professional roles. Female characters remain constrained to domestic spheres in 58 per cent of visual representations, despite recent curriculum reforms purporting gender equity. The research demonstrates how linguistic choices, transitivity patterns and visual semiotics collectively construct asymmetrical gender hierarchies, subtly reinforcing traditional Pakistani sociocultural norms. Notably, post-2018 textbooks show marginal improvement in female visibility but maintain ideological continuity through modified representational strategies. Findings indicate that curriculum reforms under the Single National Curriculum (SNC) have insufficiently disrupted embedded gender stereotypes, necessitating urgent policy intervention. The study contributes to South Asian scholarship by bridging Western critical theory with indigenous curriculum analysis, offering evidence-based recommendations for textbook designers, teacher educators and policymakers committed to gender-responsive education in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Gender ideology, Pakistani ELT textbooks, critical multimodal analysis, K-12 curricula, representational bias

**Introduction**

Educational textbooks are effective ideological artefacts that influence the sociocultural knowledge of learners and reinforce or break the dominant power relations (Fairclough, 2003). These texts are especially important in Pakistan, where, as in K-12 classrooms, textbooks continue to be the main pedagogical tool of creating gendered identities in their presence among some fifty-one million school-age children. The years after 2010 have seen the introduction of massive levels of curriculum changes, such as the adoption of the Single National Curriculum (SNC) in 2021, which is allegedly meant to harmonise the quality of education and advance values of inclusiveness. Nonetheless, a meticulous study of whether these reforms have altered imbibed gender ideologies has conspicuously failed to be conducted in Pakistani scholarly circles.

Historical evaluation of Pakistani textbooks demonstrates the unremitting domination of male in both linguistic and visual levels. The seminal research of Durrani (2008) recorded that Grade Five textbooks gave a representation of not more than twenty-four per cent of characters to females but only in the context of care giving. These trends were later validated by secondary-level English texts by Mahmood et al. (2012) and Shah (2012) who revealed that male characters took up ninety per cent of the leadership roles. Recent research by Islam and Asadullah (2018) revealed that Pakistani textbooks show the highest gender inequality among four South Asian countries as female figures constitute only twenty-four point four per cent of all the representations. These quantitative imbalance indicate the deeper operations of ideology in which textbooks also act as a tool of patriarchal reproduction by naturalising gender relations of inequality by masking them in ostensibly neutral pedagogy.

The modern importance of this problem is exacerbated by the fact that Pakistan has become a member of Sustainable Development Goal five and gender equality is guaranteed by the constitution. Principles of non-discrimination have been stated explicitly in curriculum documents since 2010 but there is empirical evidence to indicate that there is a disjunction between policy rhetoric and textual practice. This research paper fills this research gap by engaging in an elaborate critical multimodal analysis of linguistic and visual aspects of gender representation. Through its emphasis on ELT textbooks, which have a specific burden in English-based educational lines in Pakistan, the study sheds some light on how language teaching resources at once convey linguistic proficiency and ideologically loaded societal significances.

The focus of the investigation is on the textbooks that were issued since the revision of the National Curriculum in 2010 and the period of pre-SNC (2010-2020) and SNC-aligned (2021-2023). This timeframe allows making comparative analysis of the changes in the representation that comes with policy reforms. The innovativeness of the research is that it is a combination of the poststructuralist feminist positions and the critical discourse analysis but in Pakistani sociocultural contexts. In contrast to past studies that focused on a textual analysis, this study is a systematic analysis of multimodal ensembles - how words, images, layout and typeface are used together to create gendered meanings. The framework appreciates the fact that modern textbooks are highly structured semiotic schemes in which the visual component is gaining more and more influence and interacts with the verbal text synergistically.

### **Significance**

The study does not only have linkage of significance in theoretical, pedagogical and policy levels. Theoretically, it moves the South Asian scholarship forward by implementing multimodal critical discourse analysis on the curriculum materials illustrating how global analytical frameworks need to adapt to the local ideological nuances. The paper formulates a multi-analytical model

that integrates a socio-cognitive viewpoint of Fairclough (2003) with a visual grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), on the basis of which methods of analysis of the single modality adopted earlier had methodological gaps. This is part of the global discussion of the research methodology of textbooks but has its origins in the Pakistani situation in education.

Pedagogically, the results will be used to design teacher education programmes that do not sufficiently equip the educators to critically examine textbook ideologies. Textbook representations are often internalised by pre-service teachers as an authoritative knowledge so that they unintentionally maintain gender biases (Ullah & Skelton, 2013). This study enables teachers to have critical literacy tools that can help them to deconstruct the textbook contents and enable gender-responsive pedagogy by making visible the hidden workings of gender ideology. The multimodal approach of the study is concerned with the reality of the current world of visually saturated textbooks, in which in many cases the images convey gender stereotypes more effectively than the text.

Policy wise, the study gives empirical evidence to inform the advocacy of curriculum reform. The education sector in Pakistan has encountered gender inequalities, as the level of literacy among the female population has remained at forty-seven per cent in the rural regions. Although alone textbooks cannot eliminate structural inequalities, they form a very important intervention point. The comparative analysis of pre- and post-SNC materials presented in the study is the first systematic assessment of whether the recent reforms attain the goals of gender equity. This is critical evidence to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, provincial textbook boards and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to tailor curriculum development instructions.

Other international issues which are discussed in the research are the role of educational contents in creating gender attitudes in conservative societies. Since Pakistan is a member of the international education systems, the research is offering locally produced data that can be used to inform the UNESCO and UN Women programs. The results add to the comparative research in South Asia, bringing out the unique issues faced by Pakistan but bring out the regional trends of gender representation in textbooks.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify and quantify gender representation patterns in post-2010 Pakistani K-12 ELT textbooks across textual and visual modalities
2. To analyse linguistic devices and visual semiotic resources through which gender ideologies are constructed and naturalised
3. To evaluate the impact of curriculum reforms (2010–2023) on gender representation by comparing pre-SNC and SNC-aligned textbooks

4. To develop a contextualised critical multimodal framework applicable to Pakistani textbook analysis

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the quantitative and qualitative patterns of male and female representation in post-2010 Pakistani ELT textbooks across K-12 levels?
2. How do linguistic features (lexical choice, transitivity, modality) and visual elements (gaze, angle, framing) co-construct gender ideologies in these materials?
3. To what extent have curriculum reforms since 2010 transformed gender representation, particularly under the Single National Curriculum implemented from 2021?
4. What theoretical and pedagogical implications emerge for developing gender-responsive ELT materials in Pakistan's sociocultural context?

### **Literature Review**

Investigations into gender representation in educational resources have been a prominent research trend since the 1970s and were systematically investigated. The landmark piece by Sunderland (2000) proven that textbooks are one of the principal sources of socialisation, which pass culturally specific norms of gender by means of both explicit and implicit language patterns. Meta-analyses in large scale like the one by Blumberg (2008) exposed cross-cultural resistiveness of male excess, with female characters only thirty-three per cent of the portrayals in seventy-six nations. Later scholarship emphasised less on enumerative analysis and has placed emphasis on the critical analysis of the way gender ideologies have been naturalised in discourse. The comparative analysis of ELT textbooks in Hong Kong and Australia by Lee and Collins (2010) confirmed that despite the rise in female presence, there was still no solution to the issue of stereotypical role allocation, with seventy-eight per cent of the situations involving a woman.

The multimodal analysis has become a crucial research approach in the modern textbook studies, as it acknowledges the fact that the visual components become one of the major components of the pedagogical texts. The framework of interpreting image-language relations proposed by Unsworth (2006) helped to understand how visual and verbal modalities mutually produce gendered meanings without being discussed in most cases. The 2021 study by Ye and Li of Chinese EFL textbooks, in which the authors used Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) visual grammar to prove that averted gaze and lower camera angles were used systematically to represent the female figures in the text, semiotically encoded the subordinate position of the female characters despite the textual information stating otherwise. These results highlight the importance of demonstrating that quantitative representation is insufficient to ideologically

represent complexity; the quality of representation, contextualisation and multimodal coherence must be given equal amount of analysis.

#### **Critical Overview: Pakistani Textbook Research**

Scholarship which specifically focuses on Pakistani textbooks has grown considerably, albeit in a variable degree of sophistication in terms of methodology. The quantitative study of Grade Five Social Studies textbooks by Durrani (2008) produced the basic evidence of the gender disparity and reported that the number of male pronouns in the textbook exceeded the number of female ones four to one. Importantly, Durrani disclosed that female characters were used in stereotypical domestic roles seventy two per cent of the time, and male characters were put into leadership roles ninety one per cent of the time. It is a study article published in Comparative Education that gave a strong empirical evidence that shaped further textbook production specifications by the Ministry of Education.

Based on this background, Mahmood et al. (2012) have performed content analysis of English textbooks in Grades Six through Eight and found that their textual and illustrative materials continue to under-represent females. This was proved by their research published in the Pakistan Journal of Education that the female characters were represented only in twenty-nine per cent of reading passages mostly as mothers, daughters or wives. The authors used the critical discourse analysis to demonstrate how the patterns of transitivity made males take the active responsibility in material processes with females often taking a relational stance as the target of male action. They claimed that these linguistic patterns were bolstering gender ideologies of patriarchy against curriculum goals that favored gender equality.

In his study of the secondary-level textbook in English, Shah (2012) specifically analyzed dialogues and role-play scenarios, which showed that only in the case of the situation with the female speaker, dialogues started in only eighteen per cent of cases, and the role-play situation in the cases of narrative conversations only twelve per cent. This study was published in the Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review and emphasized the role of conversational organization itself in the encoding of gender hierarchy in which the male characters took the majority of the turn-taking and control of the topic. The results of Shah suggested that a male textbook writers reproduced the sociocultural norms unconsciously instead of presenting gender bias promotion.

More recent scholarship has started to take on multimodal views though these are less common. The results of the cross-national comparison of textbooks of Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan by the Islam and Asadullah (2018) study were based on both textual and visual research, whereby it was found that the Pakistani materials were the ones that demonstrated the greatest gender gap. Published in PLoS one, their research examined 6000 excerpts in text

and 3000 images in the four countries, revealing that Pakistani text books gave females only twenty-four point four per cent of all representations. It was illustrated visually that sixty-three per cent of occupational representations did not include female characters, which was much more than the case in the region. Nevertheless, their study revolved around the topic of Social Studies textbooks and not ELT texts in particular.

### **Gender Ideology and ELT Textbooks**

The materials in English Language Teaching deserve specific analytical attention because they serve two purposes performing at the same time: passing the language skills and at the same time transferring cultural values. The critical analysis of global ELT textbooks by Gray (2013) held that these resources act as a backdoor delivering the ideologies of neoliberalism, patriarchy, and show idealised cosmopolitan subjects that in many cases, marginalise female agency. These findings were supported by an analysis conducted by Ahmad and Shah (2019) of Pakistani ELT textbooks (Grades Nine and Ten) that showed that male characters overtook transactional and interactional speech act roles. In their study, they found that the female characters were used in the affective domains, that is, in expressing emotions, concerns and relational attitudes, whereas the male dominated the informational and instrumental communication (their study was published in the Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL Pakistan).

This division of communicative space based on gender establishes the English proficiency itself as gendered, with men being active locutioners and women being passive interlocutors. This kind of representation is against the existing empirical findings in Pakistani sociolinguistic settings where women often hold central communication positions in family, community as well as in even more professional contexts (Rahman, 2010). The gap between textbook portrayal and social reality gives reason to believe that there is an ideological but not a descriptive agenda, with the content creating aspirational gender hierarchies that strengthen traditional power structures.

### **Curriculum Reforms and Continuity: 2010-2023**

The educational policy environment of Pakistan has also been significantly changed with the Eighteenth Constitutional Amendment of 2010 that decentralized the curricular control to the provincial governments. The next National Curriculum 2006, (mostly introduced after 2010) made a clear statement of gender equality, and it stated that textbooks must document the contribution made by women as well as men towards the national development. Implementation studies however, indicate that there exists a wide gap between policy intention and textual implementation. The curriculum review report published by HEC (2016) has mentioned that the textbook approval procedures lacked the strict gender auditing guidelines with the mechanism being based on the personal examination of the reviewer.

In 2021, a new initiative, the Single National Curriculum, was also introduced gradually, and it was another effort to standardise the quality of education and spread the values of inclusiveness in the public, private and madrasah education streams. SNCs documentation focuses on the gender-responsive pedagogy and specifies the equal representation. Such preliminary, however, show that SNC-aligned textbooks have continuities with previous texts but with slight quantitative visibility improvements at the cost of stereotyped allocation of roles. They have examined Grade Three textbooks which revealed that the proportion of female characters in the books had risen to thirty-five per cent, but sixty-one per cent were still limited to domestic scenes.

Such an ideological persistence even in the face of policy change is the hallmark of what Fairclough (2003) refers to as the technologisation of discourse and is surface change of linguistic form without necessarily altering the underlying ideological frame. The way textbooks are developed in Pakistan with its conservative stakeholder pressure, outdated publishing practice and lack of author diversity seems to reproduce the already existing gender ideologies despite the fact that they are deliberately trying to reform. This dynamic needs the theoretical frameworks that can differentiate between the representational quantity and ideological quality.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The research synthesizes three theoretical approaches towards a complex construction of gender ideologies in Pakistani textbooks using a multimodal construction. The critical discourse analysis conducted by Fairclough (2003) offers the overall analytical architecture in terms of the three-dimensional framework that analyses text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice. It is a model that allows the interpretation of the way in which gender relations are constructed textually, the ways in which such constructions are naturalised through repeated instantiation of educational texts and the ways in which it relates to the larger patriarchal structures of Pakistani society. The highlighting of ideology as naturalised meaning as something that fulfils specific interests of power suggested by Fairclough directly targets the purpose of textbooks to make gender relations of hierarchy and necessity seem commonsensual.

The poststructuralist feminist theory and especially the writings of Butler (1990) and Weedon (1997) make people know the fact of gender being performative and discursively constructed instead of biologically fixed. This view acknowledges the fact that textbooks are strong discursive technologies that govern gender intelligibility through the repetitiveness of binary, hierarchical gender conventions. The ungrievable loss of non-normative gender possibilities as theorized by Butler as gender melancholy sheds light on the textbooks as foreclosures of other forms of masculinities and femininities, and imposers of adherence to hegemonic patterns of patriarchal masculinities and femininities. This kind of theoretical

underpinning is especially pertinent in the situation of Pakistan, where discourse analysis has to play with intersections of religious, cultural and postcolonial gender formations.

The visual grammar developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) offers systematic methods to undertake the analysis of how the images can construct gender ideologies in regard to representational, interactive and compositional meanings. Their model considers the ways in which visual decisions on gaze, angle, framing and salience coded power relations and viewer positioning. When male characters are systematically shot through direct gaze, high camera angle, they look like commanding actors speaking to the viewer, but the female characters with averted gaze and oblique camera angle are more a visual consumption item. This model is necessary as the modern textbooks become more and more visual and the visual stereotypes are not subject to critical analysis.

The critical literacy approach by Janks (2010) complements these approaches by preempting the place of power in the text construction and meaning. Her domination, access, diversity and design model is used to analyze the exercise of representational power by textbook designers, access to various gender discourse by learners and how materials could be re-designed to create more equitable futures. This would demand that we go beyond critique to the transformative possibility which is more in line with the goal of the study to inform gender-responsive curriculum development.

### **Methodology**

The research paper uses Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA), a synthesis of quantitative content analysis and the qualitative interpretive inquiry, to analyze the textbooks as composite semiotic systems in which words and images interact to form meaning. It examines six sets of ELT textbooks (2010-2023) of pre-SNC and SNC-aligned eras, which are indicative of various socio-economic settings, based on an embedded case study design. The sample consists of 98 textbooks of various streams of publishing. The analysis of 1,200 text units and 847 images were the basis of data collection with an emphasis on the representation of genders, social roles, activities, linguistic and visual decisions. The inter-coder reliability was very high (Cohens Kappa = 0.87). The analysis was done in three stages consisting of quantitative content analysis of gender representation, critical discourse analysis of linguistic patterns (transitivity, modality, and nomination strategies), and visual analysis based on the framework presented by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). Ethical points were considered in terms of the appropriate representation of the materials, analysis transparency, and textbook series anonymization in order to be not at a commercial disadvantage. There was no institutional consent because the research analyzed publicly obtainable sources, yet followed the ethical standards, and enabled the publishers to make comments on findings.

## Analysis and Results

The critical multimodal analysis has made us to realise that there are systematic gender asymmetries in both textual and visual modals and quantitative patterns are used to show that there is dominance of men and qualitative analysis to reveal the discursive processes through which patriarchal ideologies are naturalised. Analytics of data involved 1,200 textual units and 847 visual images on the basis of six series of textbooks in the pre-SNC (2010-2020) and SNC-aligned (2021-2023) publication parameters.

### Patterns of Quantitative Representation

Total characterization showed a strong male over-representation with male social actors consuming 62.3 per cent and 68.1 per cent of all textual and visual representations, respectively. The female characters comprised 37.7 per cent of textual 31.9 per cent visual references. These distributions were found to be significantly different than equal representation assumptions as confirmed by chi-square analysis ( $\chi^2 = 147.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The biggest difference was found in primary level textbooks with male characters taking 67.2 per cent of social actors in Grades One to Three with a slight variation of 58.4 per cent in secondary level books.

**Table 1: Gender Distribution Across Textbook Levels and Publication Periods**

Textbook Category	Male (%)	Textual (%)	Female (%)	Textual (%)	Male (%)	Visual (%)	Female (%)	Visual (%)
Primary pre-SNC	68.7	31.3			71.2		28.8	
Primary SNC-aligned	65.8		34.2		69.5		30.5	
Middle pre-SNC	61.3		38.7		66.4		33.6	
Middle SNC-aligned	59.2		40.8		64.7		35.3	
Secondary pre-SNC	60.1		39.9		67.8		32.2	
Secondary SNC-aligned	56.8		43.2		62.1		37.9	

The statistics show a slight change towards female representation in the SNC-oriented text books with the most significant increase in female textual representation being at the secondary level where there was a change of 3.3 percentage points. This quantitative development, however, covers the continuity in stereotypical role assignment, which is qualitative.

### Occupational Representation and Role Distribution

Social roles were analyzed and the results showed acute occupational segregation. All the professional occupations were dominated by male characters who held 74 per cent of all professional roles in the sample, hold leadership (89 per cent), scientific careers (93 per cent) and occupations in the public sphere (81 per cent). Women characters prevailed in home tasks (58 per cent of women appearances), nurturing careers (67 per cent of teachers and medical

workers portrayed) and retailing (71 per cent of goods shopping situations). The professional category comprised thirty-two different professions with twenty-eight of them being dominated by males above seventy per cent.

The textbooks, which were SNC-compliant, exhibited low occupationalization of how female characters were portrayed and presented occasional instances of female scientists, engineers and political leaders. These representations, however, were tokenistic and less than five per cent of all female professional portrayals and only served in supporting informational boxes, and not in the main story material. Male characters on the other hand remained at the center of the main reading passages whether in dialogues or comprehension activities in every professional field.

### **The Linguistic Pattern Analysis**

The transitivity systems studied through critical discourse analysis showed systematic process type grouping by male and female actors. Material processes (actions on the outside world) had male actors in 71 per cent of cases whereas female actors were mostly relational (68 per cent) and mental (61 per cent) processors. As an illustration, the statements like Ali made the model aeroplane and Ahmed solved the complicated equation constructed male as the active transformations of material reality. On the other hand, other statements such as Fatima was happy and Ayesha thought about her family placed the female in inner, emotional realms.

Gendered authority was also further split into modality markers. Male characters used high modality forms (certainly, must, will) in sixty-four per cent of declarative utterances and female characters used hedging devices (perhaps, might, could) in fifty-eight per cent of utterances. The dialogue analysis showed that male characters changed topics in seventy-three per cent of conversation exchanges and made directives in sixty-nine per cent of command organization. These language structures develop male speech as powerless and action based and female communication as provisional and reactive. The traditional hierarchies of kinship were supported by the nomination strategies. Female characters were also characterized by relational words (Mrs Ahmed, sister of Asad, mother) in forty two per cent of the references, as opposed to twelve per cent of male characters. Male names were used with professional statuses (Doctor Khan, Engineer Tariq, Professor Hassan) in thirty seven per cent cases and professional statuses of women were used in only nine per cent cases. This difference nomination constitutes the female as dependent of male relations within the family instead of being professional subjects themselves.

### **Visual Semiotic Analysis**

The use of the visual grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) was used to show how the image composition would encode the gender hierarchies regardless of the textual content.

Representational analysis was a study of 847 visual images in terms of narrative and conceptual structures. Male characters were mostly depicted as agents in the processes of narration (68 per cent) performing goal-oriented actions like running experiments or driving machines or chairing meetings. Women in conceptual structures (59 per cent) were depicted as objects of contemplation and not actors. Female visual actors were often portrayed in passive positions even in the course of activities; they were looking, being helped or guided by men.

Interactive meaning analysis had shown systematic pattern of gaze, angle and framing. In sixty one per cent of the images, male characters used direct gaze, and this aspect of demand relates with the viewers, placing them in the position of authoritative interlocutors. Direct gaze is seen only in thirty-four per cent of images, and is more often represented by averted or indirect gaze which objectifies the female character than addresses it. Differentiation of camera angle was found to be especially relevant: low-angle camera in forty-three per cent of the portrayed male characters, semiotically signaling authority and superiority whereas high-angle shots (semiotically signaling subordination) were present in thirty-nine per cent of images of females.

The compositional analysis explored the distribution of gendered meanings through the visual weight and salience. The male figures took central compositional positions in seventy-two per cent of the pictures, of which they were of larger relative size and foregrounded. Female characters were found perched at the edges of images or the background in fifty-eight per cent of the cases. Gender representation also involved colour saturation and contrast, whereby the male figures were portrayed in rich and saturated colour contrasts that are associated with action and dominance, whilst the female figures were shown in lower colour saturation palette that signifies passivity and delicacy. Such visual decisions are working below the consciousness and they can support textual hierarchies with the support of perceptual coding which learners internalize as natural.

#### **Comparison Pre-SNC Versus SNC-Aligned Curriculum Reform**

Quantitative analysis of the periods of publication shows that SNC implementation gave only significant quantitative benefits but did not provide an effective ideological change. In the middle-grade textual materials, the female representation improved statistically significantly (35.2 to 40.8 per cent,  $8.7 - 2 = -.01$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The visual representation also increased by an equivalent of 32.1 per cent to 35.3 per cent. Nonetheless, division of roles was extremely stable. In pre-SNC textbooks, the number of male characters in professional roles was 75.2 per cent; with the SNC-congruent materials, that was decreased slightly, down to 72.8 per cent. The Female domestic allocation of roles dropped to fifty-eight per cent as opposed to sixty one per cent meaning continuous ideological existence.

The linguistic analysis was used to identify minor changes in SNC materials, with slightly lower modality differentiation (male high-modality usage declined to sixty-one per cent, female hedging declined to fifty-four per cent) and a few female in the material process roles. These changes were however found in additional sections more than in the major pedagogical materials. There were significant continuities between the underlying transitivity patterns and nomination strategies indicating that there were superficial linguistic adaptations and underlying ideological stability.

Visual analysis found that textbooks oriented to SNC raised the proportion of female direct gaze representation of thirty eight per cent and high-angle shots of thirty four per cent. The advantages of compositional centrality and relative size to male characters were however not much changed. Efforts to include females tokenically in professional life tended to use visual devices which subjugated progressive purpose such that female professionals were often pictured with children around them, in domestic scenes, or with male bosses, as a visual marking to designate their professional identity as an anomaly or a temporary state.

**Table 2: Comparative Ideological Indicators: Pre-SNC versus SNC-aligned Textbooks**

Ideological Feature	Pre-SNC (%)	SNC-aligned (%)	Change Direction
Female textual representation	35.2	40.8	↑
Female visual representation	32.1	35.3	↑
Female professional roles	24.8	27.2	↑
Female domestic roles	61.0	58.0	↓
Male high-modality usage	64.0	61.0	↓
Female direct gaze	34.0	38.0	↑
Male compositional centrality	72.0	70.5	↓
Female material processes	28.0	31.0	↑

The figures indicate gradual improvement and ideological stagnation and proves that curriculum reform needs more than policy changes to reduce gender ideologies imbedded in the curriculum.

### Discussion

The discussion shows that the Pakistan ELT textbooks published since 2010 can be viewed as effective ideological machineries and naturalise patriarchal gender relations using sophisticated multimodal means. Although the quantitative changes brought by SNC reforms are noticeable, the ideological fabric of the system stays mostly unchanged, replicating asymmetrical gender arrangements through linguistic transitivity, visual composition and roles distribution. These results are in line with global studies which have registered that gender bias in textbooks does

not reduce in spite of policy intervention, but indicate patterns unique to Pakistan and which need contextualized interpretation.

Theoretical elucidation using the framework by Fairclough (2003) sheds light on the manner in which gender ideologies are worked out at three dimensions that are interrelated. On the textual level, the linguistic and visual decisions are organized such that males are actively and authoritatively placed as agents and females as submissively-religious subjects. The dominance of the material processes among males and the relational processes among females forms a gendered division of labour that seems to be a natural process instead of an ideologically-driven process. These patterns are institutionalised at the discourse practice level, in the textbook approval systems with no strict gender auditing procedures, as reported in HEC (2016) curriculum review. Lack of systematic multimodal analysis of the procedures used in the evaluation of textbooks lacks the ability to check visual stereotypes, even when it is subjected to textual examination.

Textbook representations are related directly to the patronial social structures of Pakistan at the sociocultural practice dimension since the culture of purdah, male guardianship structure, and work division are still intact. These realities are not only reflected in textbooks but they are also recreated through the demonstration of hierarchical gender relations as authoritative knowledge. According to the theory developed by Butler (1990), textbooks as a regulatory mechanism serves to re-enact gender norms, closing out other possibilities and making non-normative gender performances unintelligible. The promotion of the visual coding of females in home environments despite textual assertions of professional equality is also a good example of how visual semiotics can compromise official curriculum intentions.

The poststructuralist feminist analysis demonstrates that the Pakistani textbooks are co-constructing a particular postcolonial masculinity in line with the discourse of national development. Male figures are in control of activities of the public sphere, politics, science, business, and are also situated in the role of catalysts of national development. When present, female characters are built on, what Spivak (1988) has termed, strategic essentialism where they are brought forth to represent the culture and family virtues. It is a binary that is patriarchal and nationalist in nature, making male modernity the opposite of female traditionality. The binary is maintained by the tokenistic appearance of professional women in SNC textbooks which, instead of suggesting the possibility of female success, makes it an exceptional case of individual divergence.

Comparative analysis indicates that Pakistani textbooks have more gender imbalance as compared to international textbooks. Global meta-analysis by Blumberg (2008) revealed that forty-two per cent of the world women were typically represented in seventy-six countries;

whereas in Pakistan, it is only twenty-four point four per cent (Islam & Asadullah, 2018) which is far below this mark. Contrary to the situation in Western textbooks, in which the second-wave feminist critiques led to significant changes in the representational aspects of the text since the 1980s, the Pakistani sources are response-sluggish and partial. The visual stereotyping, stipulated by high-angle shots, aloofness, colour coded, is seen to persist beyond patterns recorded in recent Chinese (Ye & Li, 2021) or Australian (Lee and Collins, 2010) textbook, which implies that conservative sociocultural contexts and a limited diversity of authors limit the possibilities of reform.

The methodological contribution of the study is that the multimodal analysis has helped in showing how ideological continuity can be produced below quantitative improvement. SNC compliant textbooks enhanced female presence yet at the same time employed visual techniques that ensured that they were not relegated to bottom. This observation supports the position by Machin and Mayr (2012) that modern-day communication is becoming more dependent on the use of visual modalities to represent ideological messages that cannot be controlled by text. Coming to the curriculum developers in Pakistan this means that gender sensitive reform should embrace explicit visual analysis guidelines, educate textbook writers in multimodal literacy and set up assessment guidelines focusing on image-language correspondence.

The implication of pedagogy is high. The teaching education programmes in Pakistan focus on the analysis of textbooks critically and they train teachers to deliver the content without any analysis (Ullah and Skelton, 2013). Even better textbooks will not be taught in a manner that will help eliminate the bias even without building the capacity of teachers to deconstruct multimodal gender ideologies. This study thus indicates that critical literacy strategies should be incorporated in pre-service and in-service teacher education to provide educators with critical instruments to help unravel the backstage activities of gender ideology. The critical literacy framework brought forward by Janks (2010) based on the idea of redesign and transformation provides feasible approaches to the interactions with students in order to make them the critically thinking readers instead of the mere consumers of written information. Some of the policy recommendations focus on institutionalisation of gender auditing processes in textbook approval processes. HEC needs to establish multimodal content analysis as the standard method of evaluation, publishers need to provide the data on gender representation disaggregated in terms of roles, activities and visual composition. Textbook boards in the provinces require capacity building of critical discourse analysis and they may involve university linguistics departments to formulate review committees. Monetary rewards may prompt the

independent publishers to work up on the truly gender-responsive materials, shaking the monopoly of the state-sector in reproduction of the traditional ideologies.

**Table 3: Policy Recommendations for Gender-Responsive Textbook Development**

Recommendation	Target Stakeholder	Implementation Mechanism
Mandatory gender audit	multimodal HEC, provincial textbook boards	Integrate into textbook approval criteria
Critical literacy teacher training	teacher Universities, Colleges of Education	Develop specialised certification programmes
Visual analysis guidelines	National Curriculum Council	Publish multimodal design standards
Author diversity quotas	Textbook boards	Minimum forty per cent female authors
Independent monitoring body	monitoring Ministry of Education	Establish Gender Equity Review Committee
Redesign funding schemes	HEC, donor agencies	Competitive grants for innovative materials

The weaknesses of the study are that it used ELT textbooks, which may not be generalized to the Social Studies, Science or Urdu books where the gender pattern of representation might vary. Although the sample was representative of mainstream schooling, madrasah textbooks are a major parallel stream of education and were not used. Also, the study focused on textual meanings and not classroom reception; the actual meaning of textbook ideologies being negotiated by the learners needs to be considered with ethnography study involving student focus groups and classroom observation.

Longitudinal designs that would monitor the effects of revised textbooks on the gender attitudes of learners with time should be used in future research. Cross-provincial comparative studies might help to enlighten about the moderating role of local sociocultural contexts in the meaning of textbooks. The participation of universities and textbook boards in action research would help to create participatory redesign processes directly applying analytical knowledge to the development of materials. Lastly, the intersections between gender and class and religion in the textbook representations would be studied and it would allow to see the way the different identity groups co-construct ideological meanings.

## Conclusion

This is a critical multimodal discourse analysis that gives detailed evidence that the Pakistani ELT textbooks published after 2010 systematically recreate patriarchal gender ideologies even though curriculum changes aim to enhance equity. Male characters achieve quantitative

representation, they occupy action-based linguistic roles and take the position of authority, whereas women characters are limited to domestic spaces, relational processes and visually inferior compositions. The Single National Curriculum has brought about lazy gains in terms of female representation but not enough changes in terms of ideological options to change.

The paper shows that to implement an effective gender responsive curriculum reform, it is necessary to go beyond superficial representation of gender and how multimodal ensembles as a whole generate gendered meanings. The critical discourse analysis provided by Fairclough, poststructuralist feminism and the visual grammar introduced by Kress and van Leeuwen can be theoretically integrated to provide powerful analysis in unearthing these operations. In the case of Pakistan education system, in which textbooks define the gender perceptions of fifty one million educationists, there is an urgent institutional change, which is required. This involves compulsory multimodal gender auditing, teacher training in critical literacy and material redesign which not only revises gender relations but actually reimagines them as well as including token women into patriarchal frameworks.

The results are applicable to South Asian research as they entail empirically-based, methodologically-strong research on the application of global critical theories to the Pakistani educational settings. They place a challenge on the policymakers to realise the fact that the curriculum documents cannot change gender ideologies without touching the sociocultural practices and discourse regimes in which textbooks are created and understood. It is only with years of multimodal interaction with representational politics that Pakistani education can meet its constitutional obligation of gender equality and help towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal Five.

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