The Portrayal of Men and Women in Arabic Textbooks: Insight from Indonesian Pesantren

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Abstract:

Although gender representation in Arabic textbooks has been extensively documented, little is known about it from the perspective of local textbooks. To fill this void, the present study aims to examine gender representation in Arabic textbooks at one of the most prominent Islamic Boarding Schools in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. This study uses a case study research design and Choiroh and Taufiq's theory (2020) to analyze data. The research findings revealed that the gender representation in that textbook encompasses stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, and double burden in the themes of time, sports professions, and patient clinics. The factors behind the emergence of gender representation were classified into internal and external factors. Internal factor is caused by being written by a female Arabic teacher, while external factor includes patriarchal culture. This research implies that teachers or instructors in Islamic boarding schools need training or workshops to discuss gender equality so that stereotyping, marginalization, and the double burden that disadvantages women can be considered and avoided.

Keywords: Gender Representation, Man and Women, Arabic Textbook, Pesantren

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender equality issues have long been discussed, but they continue to be unique and exciting issues within the academic community (Mencarini & Sironi, 2012). Ariyanto (2018) examined that the construction of women as inferior beings is still prevalent today. Within the legal

framework, the government has an interest in achieving gender equality by giving every citizen an equal footing with the law. Even all Indonesians must be treated equally before the law and given equal opportunity to contribute to the country's development regardless of ethnic, religious, political, economic, and gender backgrounds. Following to empirical study, Reeves (1987) highlighted that the Indonesian government formally supports equal rights for its citizens to obtain respectable employment and an acceptable standard of living.

In America, Iran, and Indonesia, concerns about gender representation in textbooks have also been extensively investigated empirically (Atchison, 2017, Foroutan, 2012, Zuhriyah, 2022). For instance, Atchison (2017) revealed that gender representation in an American textbook is poorly documented in schools and universities. According to Foroutan (2012), men predominately write 35 English and Arabic textbooks in Iran. This result also demonstrates that the male dominance model is more robust the more education a person has. According to Zuhriyah's (2022) research report in Indonesia, masculine character names predominate in Indonesian Arabic textbooks instead of female characters. Additionally, Izzuddin et al. (2021) report that how gender is portrayed in textbooks might affect how well pupils comprehend the concept of gender equality. Although gender representation has been well explored, as this earlier research paper demonstrates, it disregards the Arabic language textbooks used at Ummussabri, one of the biggest and the best Islamic Boarding Schools in Kendari, South East Sulawesi, Indonesia.

This study aims to complement previous research by addressing two questions to fill the existing research void. First, how is the issue of gender represented in Arabic textbooks in Ummussabri? Second, what are the factors that influence the appearance of gender representation? the answer to those questions offers new insights into how gender issues are portrayed in Arabic textbooks for grade VIII at the Ummussabri Islamic Boarding School and the variables that affect these representations. This study argues that male representation in the textbook is typically high if the author is a man. The tendency for women's representation will be higher than that of men in a textbook if a woman writes it. As a result, there will not be any issues with discrimination against women, their marginalization, their carrying two burdens at once, or their subjugation. This is due to the presumption that a female author will advocate for female interests, minimizing negative aspects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Concepts of Gender Representation

The usage of language that expresses the gender identities of men and women can be seen as a representation of gender equality. In this instance, Choiroh & Taufiq (2020) argue that a textbook frequently portrays male and female gender identities unequally. Imbalance can take many forms, including (a) stereotypes, which involve unfair treatment of one gender and cause harm to that party, and (b) subordination, which involves the concept that the male is superior to the female. This leads to a lack of acknowledgment for women in terms of policy, making it challenging for them to have a strategic role in an organization or community; (c) marginalization of one party, which typically affects women. The causes of its occurrence are incredibly varied and include customs, beliefs, religious interpretations, governmental policies, and knowledge; (d) violence, specifically when one party is victimized, and this harms them not only physically but also mentally and psychologically; (e) double burden is adopted to describe a situation where a person is required to handle multiple tasks at once. The present study employs this concept to

examine how gender issues in grade VIII Arabic textbooks are handled in one of the most prestigious and significant Islamic boarding schools in Kendari. As a result, this study should be able to shed light on gender representation in textbooks and the factors that affect them.

2.2 Previous Studies on Gender Representation in Arabic Textbooks

Empirical research that emphasizes the role of textbooks in the transmission of values (Feng, 2019; Imelwaty et al., 2022; Puspitasari et al., 2021), behaviors (Kuhbandner & Emmerdinger, 2019), norms (Bakken & Andersson-Bakken, 2021), and gender (Azisah, 2017; Backhouse & Cherrier, 2019) is still prevalent. Kostas (2021) hid that English textbooks are considered androcentric. Moreover, Jabeen, Chaudhary, and Omar (2014) reported that English textbooks in Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangla show pro men and women are shown in closed and passive roles. Lee (2018) examined the construction and representation of gender in EFL language textbooks in Japan, showing that the "male-first" phenomenon continues. Košir & Lakshminarayanan (2023) found that gender discourse in Indian English textbooks that is visually expressed exhibits significant gender stereotypes, reporting, and gender bias. Women dominate most domestic and manual labor, while men are portrayed in professional and leadership roles, validating the gender asymmetry in structure and roles. At the same time, the findings of Bachore & Semela's (2022) research showed that men dominate quite a few aspects, such as language use and actors in prestigious professions, while women are described as company employees and school psychologists. Vu & Pham (2023) reported that women are described as less independent; their choices are more limited, and they have fewer resources than men. This means that the manufacture of textbooks in Vietnam is still heavily influenced by Confucian patriarchal values.

Specifically, the issue of gender representation in Arabic textbooks has been documented by many scholars. However, only a few analyze the Arabic language textbooks used in one of the most prominent Islamic boarding schools in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi. For example, Aomeur (2014) revealed that the representation of men and women in Arabic textbooks in Algerian schools is still problematic. The textbook still describes stereotypes and traditional perspectives on gender issues. The representation of men is more loaded than that of women. Men are still the "central point" in most sentences, the main figures in sentences and pictures. Baghdadi & Rezaei (2015) described that textbooks transmit values, behaviors, norms, and perspectives regarding gender. So, it becomes imperative to compile balanced and not one-sided textbooks. In addition, Izzuddin et al. (2021), in their research on the depiction of women in Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers, reported an unfair positioning of women in textbooks, which negatively impacted students. This research is then confirmed by Kholiza's research report (2021), which shows that the textbooks studied still contain gender bias seen from four aspects, namely, work roles, character values, social status, and gender bias in hobbies. Kuraedah et al. (2023) reported that gender representation in Arabic textbooks compiled by the Ministry of Religion's book preparation team was verbally and visually dominated by men. Of the six themes discussed, gender representation shows male dominance except for "tourism," which women dominate. This is because, regarding sociocultural construction, women tend to travel more to tourist areas than men. In this case, Subhan (2015) revealed that the representation of gender bias in Arabic is influenced by several factors, such as the Arabic vocabulary, which has many synonyms, the use of personal pronouns, the determination of boundaries, and the determination of the meaning of *ataf* letters.

The existing research shows that the depiction of men and women in Arabic textbooks at one of the largest and leading Islamic boarding schools, Ummussabri, Kendari, is under-researched. Therefore, this research is expected to complement the existing research in gender and Arabic textbooks and contribute to developing knowledge about gender construction in Arabic textbooks and why it can happen.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

The present case study examines one of the Arabic textbooks taught in grade VIII, Ummussabri, Islamic Boarding School, Kendari. Yin (2011) argues that a case study is a detailed study of a specific subject. So, this research examines an Arabic language book in grade VIII Ummussabri, Kendari Islamic Boarding School, because it was written by a female teacher who teaches at that Islamic Boarding School.

3.2. Research Context

Since 2014, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has provided Arabic textbooks as a scientific tool with a scientific approach, summarized in the process of observing, asking, exploring, associating, and communicating. In enacting a particular curriculum, such as curriculum 2013 in Islamic boarding schools, the textbooks are essential and decisive, because students or teachers might explore moral values presented in those textbooks. In 2021, one of the teaching staff at the Ummusshabri Islamic Boarding School prepares course materials that are practical and easy for students to understand, which are arranged based on the Islamic curriculum as stated in the decree of the Ministery of Religious Affairs, numbers 183 and 184 of 2019. The subject matter in the book must combine information derived from factual circumstances or conditions in everyday life so the presentation of the material is more comprehensive. The Arabic textbook compiled by Fauziah as an Arabic teacher at Secondary school, Ummussabri Islamic Boarding School, was launched on July 1, 2021, then adopted as teaching material in the learning process to date (Prayetno, Interview, Arabic Teacher, September 5, 2022). This Arabic textbook for grade VIII includes six chapters. Each chapter deals with time, school days, home days, professions, sports, and patient clinics. Each chapter consists of vocabulary, dialogue, grammar, reading, and writing, which begins with vocabulary, fundamental competencies, and core competencies at the beginning of each chapter. Chapters one to three are first-semester material, while chapters four to six are employed as second-semester.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

The data for this study was derived from an Arabic textbook for grade VIII at Ummussabri Islamic Boarding School. The data encompass textual and visual text representing gender identity. To gather both textual and visual data, the following procedures are employed; (1) read the entire book from chapter one to chapter six several times and attentively, (2) write down and tally the names of persons who identify as either men or women, (3) note the usage of words that address women and men as gender identity indicators. The same names are only reported once. The exact location is only reported once; (4) note words that depict links between gender identification and identity markers; (5) data were analyzed using Choiroh & Taufiq's theory (2020) regarding gender representation which includes stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, violence, and double burden.

4. RESULTS

This study looks at how gender is portrayed in Arabic textbooks for grade VIII at Ummussabri Islamic Boarding School and the factors affecting that depiction. The findings demonstrate that stereotypes, marginalization, subordination, and double burdens are all depicted in the textbook's treatment of gender, while internal and external variables also contribute to this representation.

4.1. Gender Representation in Arabic Textbook

Before discussing gender representation in Arabic textbooks, the findings of this study describe forms of gender representation in Arabic textbooks for grade VIII Islamic Boarding School Ummusshabri Kendari through the percentage of the use of people's names in a conversation, the percentage of the use of illustrations of single male and single female images and the number of male and female images in a group in the vocabulary. In this case, the study's findings showcased that the number of illustrations of people in the textbook reaches 113 data. Sixty-one data represent male images, while 23 data represent female images. The other 29 data represent images of men and women in the same group. In terms of percentage, the number of male image data reached 53.9%, the total female image data reached 20.3%, and the number of male and female images simultaneously reached 25.6%. An example of the visual data can be observed in Figure (1).

Figure 1: Illustration of single male and female, as well as boy and girl

The findings of this study report that the use of male or female names in a conversation is different. In general, there are 12 names employed in a conversation. There are three names for men, while there are nine names for women. If the percentage is used, the use of male names reaches 25%, while the use of female names reaches 75%. In addition to mentioning names separately, the portrayal of male and female names in a conversational text is also found. Three male names and 9 female names were found. The distribution map of the use of names in these conversations can be observed in the following description. Natifah and Shafiyah are the names in the first chapter, "Hours." The second chapter uses the theme "My days at school" using the names of a girl, Natifah, and a boy, Fauzan. The third chapter,, "My days at Home" uses Mom and dad's names. Furthermore, the names Natifah and Sofiyah were used again in the fourth lesson. The fifth lesson with the theme "sports" uses the names Fauziah and Fauzan, while the sixth lesson uses the names "Marda" which denotes a boy, and Saidali denotes a female name.

4.1.1. Stereotype

The term "gender stereotype" refers to an evaluation based on a person's behavioral traits, whether male or female. These qualities include a person's race, gender, ethnicity, and communication abilities. Men, for instance, are viewed as strong, while women are viewed as weak. In actuality, neither all men nor all women are strong. There are weak men and strong women, and vice versa. The gender stereotypes found in textbooks are illustrated in the following Figure (2).
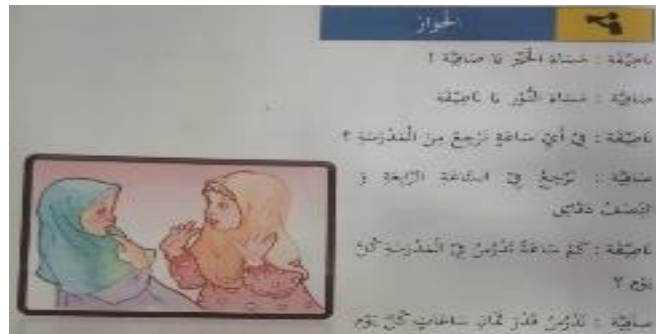

Figure 2. Conversation between Natifah and Shofiyah

Natifah and Shofiah were having this conversation. Natifah is dressed in a brown outfit with a headscarf, while Shofiyah is attired in a blue dress with a green headscarf. Natifah greeted her by extending her hands and wished her a lovely afternoon. She was then wished a pleasant afternoon in return. Shofiah responded to the congrats, but she took a step backward. The two talked about their separate academic schedules during the conversation. The image suggests that there is a gender stereotype that suggests women enjoy talking or gossiping with their pals. In actuality, guys also engage in the habit of socializing with others. Men are frequently found to chat and converse more than women.

4.1.2. Subordination

Gender subordination refers to placing in a lower class, rank, or position. In this case, placing women in a lower position is called subordination. The form of subordination is found in chapter 3, pages 37 and 38 about vocabulary and sentences, and page 41 about conversation. On page 37, you can see the role of women washing dishes while men are getting dressed in blue clothes to go to office work. When wearing clothes, he is in front of the mirror so that his reflection appears. Not only that but women are also subordinated to the job of sweeping bedrooms and drying clothes in the yard. This means that men are in a higher position because they have office jobs, while women's work is household work. This can be observed in the following Figure (3).

Figure 3: Gender Subordination

Additionally, figure (4) supports the claim made in the preceding paragraph that men handle matters outside the home while women are responsible for taking care of the household. In other words, ladies iron their clothes while males play with toy cars outside the house. The ensuing figure illustrates this.

Figure 4: Gender Subordination

4.1.3. Marginalization

Marginalization refers to the process of marginalizing roles due to gender, which limits access, services, existence, policies, and participation in social life. In this Arabic language textbook, women's gender marginalization is an example of Figure 5.

Figure 5: Gender Marginalization

The marginalization of women's participation in public space in Figure (5) is an example of gender marginalization. A woman's only public sector job in Figure (5) is teaching. A female instructor is shown instructing in front of her students [the first image on the left]. The female teacher attempted to clarify the concepts her students did not understand with a stick. It is implied that men predominate in occupations such as cooking, selling vegetables, medicine, law enforcement, sweeping, sports, and engineering, all of which are public positions. In actuality, women have access to all jobs. Another illustration is shown in Figure (6).

Figure (6): Gender Marginalization

Figure (6) demonstrates how men predominate in and perform some of the following public tasks. Pilots, ship captains, truckers, soldiers, attorneys, judges, fishermen, tailors, and chicken growers are among the professions. This image suggests that the surrounding sociocultural context has recreated the Arabic textbook author's subconscious regarding the existence of gender marginalization.

3.1.4 Double Burden

The term "double burden" describes the distribution of responsibilities that are not reasonable and proportionate, which lowers the quality of life. Both men and women could have been assigned to this dual responsibility. In the context of textbooks, the phrase "double burden" is also used on page 53, chapter 3, on the subject of writing practice, as shown in the following Figure (7).
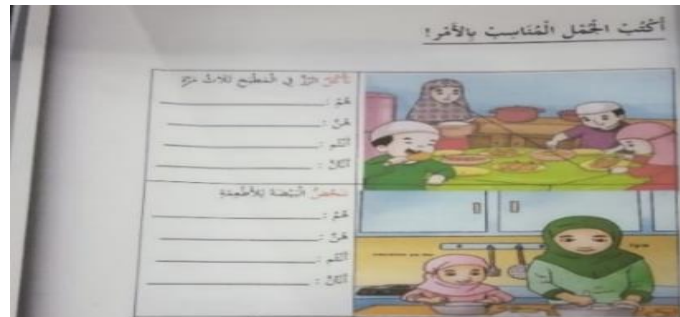

Figure (7): Double Burden

The double burden in Figure (7) shows how busy women are in caring for their household, such as cooking and preparing food for their children and husband. In this context, the mother is accompanied by a daughter to cook. After that, she also has to work in the office or company after breakfast.

4.2.1. Factors Influencing the Emergency of Gender Representation

The factors behind the emergence of gender representations in the textbook are divided into internal and external factors. The internal factor encompasses a female teacher named Ms. Fauziah, a ninth-grade Arabic teacher. When the researchers interviewed her, she argued, "Because I am a woma*n, my book represents a female atmosphere. The book also conforms to KMA RI No. 165 of 2014 and KMA 183 of 2019. So, it adapts to the current situation of the school. I must, however, acknowledge that my work did not adequately represent the concerns of women."* Another factor or external factor emerging from gender representation in the textbook is patriarchal culture. This culture still prevails because it was ingrained in the soul of Indonesian society even before people had access to written language (Mshweshwe, 2020; Sudarso et al., 2019).

Men have long been regarded as holding the top position in society's cultural hierarchy, with women occupying the second position. This makes sense because the sociocultural circumstances of the society influence it. For instance, men leave the house to hunt, battle, travel great distances, go to sea, and trade to make a living. For the job to be conducted appropriately, this occupation unquestionably requires excellent energy and a robust physique. Men are often associated with being more energetic and physically fit than women. Then, this culture is

transmitted from one generation to the next. Men hold a more outstanding position in the hierarchy than women for this reason.

Additionally, this has an impact on every part of life and helps to create gender disparity. But as things have evolved, so has the way people make a living. Hunting and long-distance trade are no longer the primary sources of income; instead, people now labor in offices.

5. DISCUSSION

Gender representation in Arabic textbooks endorsed by Ummussabri Islamic boarding school in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia, is the focus of this study. The study's findings demonstrate that despite being created by a female author, Arabic textbooks still contain double standards, subordination, marginalization, and stereotypes around time, sports careers, and patient clinics. This is a result of the writer's subconsciously ingrained patriarchal culture; that men hold positions with greater authority than women; that women always have a dual responsibility—a responsibility when managing the home and freedom when working in an office; that a woman must bring her little child with her regardless of whether she works in an office or for a firm (Aziz et al., 2020; Hill & Allen, 2021; Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei, 2020; Namatende-Sakwa, 2019; Qazi & Shah, 2019; Wood, 2019).

Hence, despite being a woman, the book's author is unable to speak up for women's rights in the same way that feminists do in a variety of contexts, including politics, economics, social issues, and education (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020; Li, 2021; Priyadharshini et al., 2021). This kind of perspective supports Soeseno's (2013) assertion that representation, whether gender or political, can not present a flawless representation of interests and identities, only a partial or incomplete one, leaving the representation as only a claim rather than an assertion. This suggests that, as this study's findings show, a female writer can only partially capture her interests and gender identity in her textbooks. Therefore, it becomes understandable if the problems with stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, and the double burden on women can not be separated from this textbook.

This Arabic textbook is not the only one in Indonesia or the rest of the globe that addresses issues related to stereotypes, inferiority, marginalization, and the double burden of women. The research findings of Kuraedah et al. (2023) for Islamic-based schools in Indonesia show that three government-endorsed Arabic textbooks for grades X, XI, and XII still frequently stereotype students as domestic workers in social contexts such as home and family, daily activities, hobbies, health, and travel. In their research in Ethiopia, Bachore & Semela (2022) discovered that men predominately employ nouns and pronouns in the textbook. In addition, most images of elite occupations like scientists, surgeons, managers, and high-ranking government officials are male, while women are described as company employees and school psychologists. Likewise, the findings of this study concur with those of Kosir and Lakshminarayanan (2023). At the same time, gender discourse in textbooks that are expressed aesthetically displays significant gender stereotypes, inequality, and bias. The gender disparity in structure and responsibilities is validated by the underrepresentation of women in the figures, who are typically portrayed in roles including the home, domestic work, and physical labor. In contrast, men are portrayed in professional and leadership roles.

This research implies that teachers in Islamic boarding schools need training or seminars to advocate for gender equality so that when textbooks are being prepared, issues of stereotypes,

marginalization, and the double burden that disadvantages women can be considered and minimized.

6. CONCLUSION

This study aims to look at mainly how men and women are represented in Arabic textbooks endorsed by Ummussabri Islamic boarding school in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia. The study's findings showcase that this Arabic textbook encompasses stereotypes, subordination, marginalization, and double burden in the themes of time, sports professions, and patient clinics, even though a female writer wrote it. This results from the patriarchal culture ingrained in the writer's mind. Hence, it is not always true that women will always speak up for their identities and interests. This textbook demonstrates that, despite being a woman author, Fauziah does not adequately represent the interests and identities of women. This research suggests that teachers in Islamic boarding schools need training or seminars to advocate for gender equality, so when textbooks are being prepared, issues of stereotypes, marginalization, and the double burden that disadvantages women can be considered and minimized. Analysis of Arabic language textbooks on moral issues, religious moderation, or the theme of liberalism utilizing the perspectives of critical discourse analysis, thematic context analysis, or systemic functional linguistics analysis can be used to do further research.

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