



# Gender Bias in a Philippine Setting: Decoding Manifestations of Gender division in English Curriculum Modules

Dr. Elreen A. Delavin<sup>a\*</sup>, Dr. Morena C. Buayan<sup>b</sup>, <sup>a,b</sup>Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa  
Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology, Cabitan, Mandaon,  
Masbate, Philippines, Email: <sup>a\*</sup>[delavinelreen@gmail.com](mailto:delavinelreen@gmail.com)

This paper aimed to examine the manifestations of gender bias in English curriculum modules, in the Philippines. It examined the male and female illustrations along with texts and pictures and occupational roles and were characterized into four gender biases, such as stereotyping, subordination, multiple burden, and marginalization. Content analysis was used in the five English modules at the elementary level. Frequencies of male and female for different manifestations of gender bias was utilised. Findings of the study from the content analysis revealed that English Modules in the Philippines perpetuate gender biases. Thus, special attention to the pedagogical implications for children has been considered in this study.

**Key words:** *Gender Bias, Gender Stereotyping, Marginalisation, Multiple Burden, Occupational Roles, and Subordination.*

## Introduction

Textbooks are the most compelling educational tools. It inform children's developing attitudes and preferences. Textbooks are one of the first forms of media to demonstrate which educational "norms" are intended to be transmitted in the classroom (Sabir, 2008). Textbooks may be used by teachers for core learning in 70-95% of classroom time (Recaña, 2019). Textbooks have economic and ideological implications. It has long been understood that textbooks are a basic vehicle of socialisation, conveying knowledge, and values (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009).

What is seen and read in textbooks can be immortalized by those who read it. This content forms a gender schema to the reader. A biased representation of females and males in textbooks can



alter a students' sense of what is normal for women and men in our society. In other words, the content of the textbooks reinforce gender as a social division and perpetuate inequalities between men and women. Experts and authorities in education also believe that the health – mental, social, cultural and scientific – of every learner depends on a balanced and appropriate system of education (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012).

The *Millennium Development Goals of 2000* and *Sustainable Development Goals of 2012* promote gender equality. They advocate for women and have addressed gender problems that beset countries worldwide with some success. However, this problem is still explicitly manifest in the Philippines. The *Republic Act (RA) 9710* or the *Magna Carta of Women (MCW)* is the localised *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence on the Right* which mandates all government agencies to take actions to mainstream gender equality. There are four key entry points in an organisation that lead to action taken: Policy, People, Programs and Projects, and Enabling Mechanisms. This policy commits all government agencies to integrating the principles of gender equality, gender equity, gender sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights in the provision and governance of basic education. Also, the policy requires a gender-responsive curriculum be implemented in the education system. Despite this, inequality of gender is still persistent and reinforced through the socialisation processes in school where cultural knowledge is formally dispensed (Java & Parcon, 2016). Indeed, there are local and foreign studies instigated with gender biases in school. Specifically, the school curricula and textbooks still spread manifestations of gender bias. Gender Schema theory underscores the way people organise their mental system of information in classifying gender behaviour (Bem, 1981). This gender behaviour is known as ‘gender role,’ which is based on a set of perceived behavioural norms expressed in a particular society (Rice, 2001). Hence, the influence of what children see and read will leave an imprint in their minds as to what should be their roles in society.

This research investigated the manifestation of gender bias in English curriculum modules in the Philippines. It focused on the four dimensions of manifestation of gender bias by the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW): Gender stereotyping, subordination, marginalisation, and multiple burdens. The findings of this study will be an initial step toward revisiting Philippine textbooks to ensure that Gender-Responsive Basic Education is being implemented and promoting gender equality in the Philippine education setting.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aimed to determine the following objectives:

- Critique the division of labor depicted in text and pictures for female and male characters in the Philippine English curriculum modules

- Examine the manifestation of gender bias in the Philippine English curriculum module text and pictures of occupational roles.

The objectives will be examined against the following manifestations:

- a. Gender stereotyping
- b. Subordination
- c. Marginalization
- d. Multiple Burden

### **Methodology**

This study used both qualitative and quantitative approaches to a Content Analysis methodology. Content Analysis in this study used a paper and pencil hand coding procedure. This was elaborated by Brugeilles and Cromer (2009) in their manual *Analyzing gender representations in school textbooks*. They examined the materials, which included dialogues, exercises, reading texts, captions, novel excerpts, and poems. Also, Palmquist (1998) noted that the content analysis method via paper and pencil is advantageous in tracking down errors during the proceedings of coding compared to automated programs.

Categories established before analysis by professional researchers and authors internationally and locally were adopted. In this study, the categories used were taken from Kabira and Masinjila (1997), the *National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women* (1999) and the *Philippine Commission on Women*. There were three categories of human activities: Reproductive, productive, and community roles. These were determined along with texts and pictures in the English curriculum modules. Further, the four categories of manifestations of gender bias (Gender stereotype, marginalization, subordination, and multiple burdens) were examined along with occupational roles. Other activities such as educational, leisure, and sports-based were decoded from a textbook from Brugeilles and Cromer (2009).

The study used learner's modules from Grade 1 (beginning of primary school) up to Grade 5. It used the English curriculum module purposely due to its characteristic of carrying an abundance of cultures, norms, and values, including those about genders. These norms and values are transmitted both consciously, such as in 'bright' visual and descriptive examples, or unconsciously such as in the author's use of language (Recaña, 2019). Additionally, the English curriculum modules specifically may have an impact upon children in the sense that they contain stories that are often appealing to young children and so might be read more often, hence leaving a deeper imprint on them, instilling a schema based on what they have read.

Qualitative analysis was used to categorise images into different gender roles. The theories and concepts from the *Philippine Commission on Women* (PCW) and related research served as a

guide to decode occupational roles. The texts and pictures were analysed quantitatively by determining the frequency of males and females occurring in reproductive, productive, and community roles/activities and manifestations of gender bias.

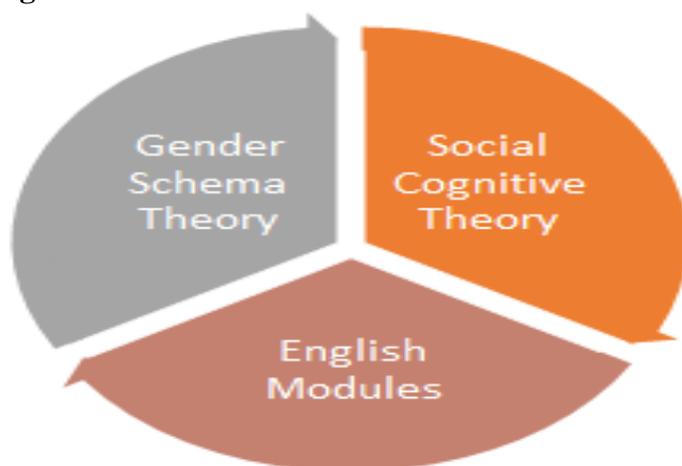
### Framework of the Study

The Gender Schema Theory (see Bem, 1981) forms part of the framework of this study. This theory underscores the way people organise their mental system of information in relation to classifying gender behaviour. This gender behaviour is known as 'gender role,' which is based on a set of perceived behavioural norms in a particular society (Rice, 2001). Gender schema, as explained, is a distinction between sexes that serves as a basic shaping principle for a human culture according to Gender Schema Theory. When gender schema are applied it results in one's perceived gender role being assimilated into one's self-concept.

The second element of the research frame is formed by Social Cognitive Theory which on the other hand emphasises three environmental structures in schools: Imposed, selected, and constructed (Bandura, 1989). Social systems that cultivate generalisable competencies create opportunity structures, provide aidful resources, and allow room for self-directedness to increase the chances that people will realise what they wish to become (Bandura, 1989).

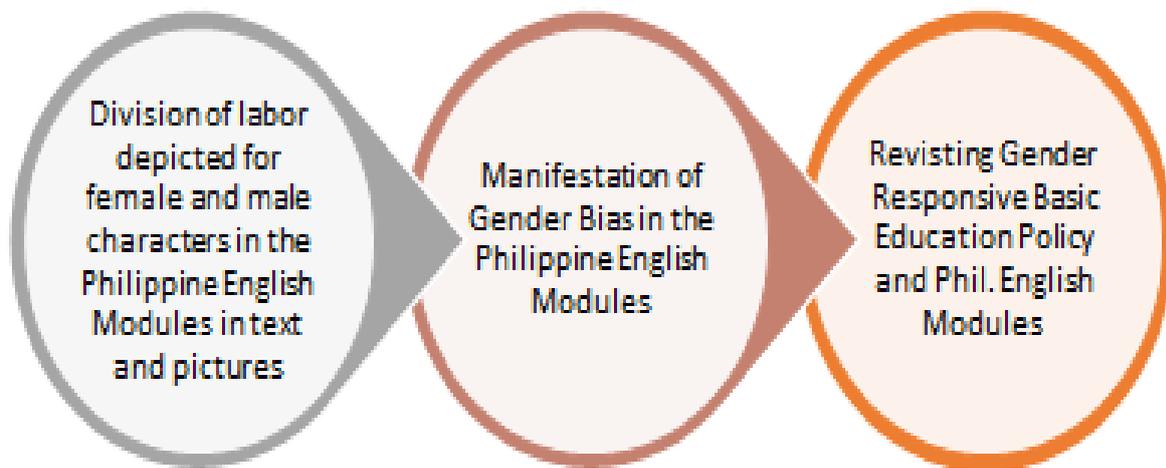
In the imposed environmental setting of a school, teachers, curricula, textbook content, and the class environment are all forced upon a child regardless of his/her personal preference. In such a setting, children develop gender perceptions based on what they learn through the curriculum, teachers and other mechanisms at school. Thus, these two theories reinforce what is written or presented on the English curriculum modules in the Philippines which influences children's gender identities.

**Figure 1.** Gender Theories



## Conceptual Framework

**Figure 2.** Conceptual Framework



The framework influences how the findings of the study are understood and implemented. As such, the extent of the manifestation of gender bias in the Philippine English curriculum modules (English Modules) might be addressed by effectively implementing a Gender Responsive Basic Education tool (Figure 2) that could be released by the Department of Education. Revisiting and revising the policy when preparing module instructional materials, such as textbooks, can promote gender equality and equity.

## Results and Discussion

### *Division of labor depicted for female and male characters in the Philippine English curriculum modules in text and pictures*

The ‘division of labor’ describes an assignment of tasks and roles to men and women on account of sex. It differentiates the allocation of male and female labor in the home and the workplace. Kabira and Masinjila (1997) and the *National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women* now *Philippine Commission on Women* identified three categories of human activities: Reproductive, productive, and community roles. *Reproductive roles* are carried out at home for the preservation of the family, such as collecting water, nursing children, cooking, etc. *Productive roles* refer to the production of goods and services for the generation of income. Lastly, *Community roles* are done for the overall welfare of the community, like attendance in public barazas, funerals, and church activities. Unlike productive activities, reproductive and community functions are unpaid (Java & Parcon, 2016). Reproductive roles and community roles are referred to as the ‘care economy’, and are unpaid work.

**Figure 3.** Percentage of Division of Labor Depicted for Female and Males

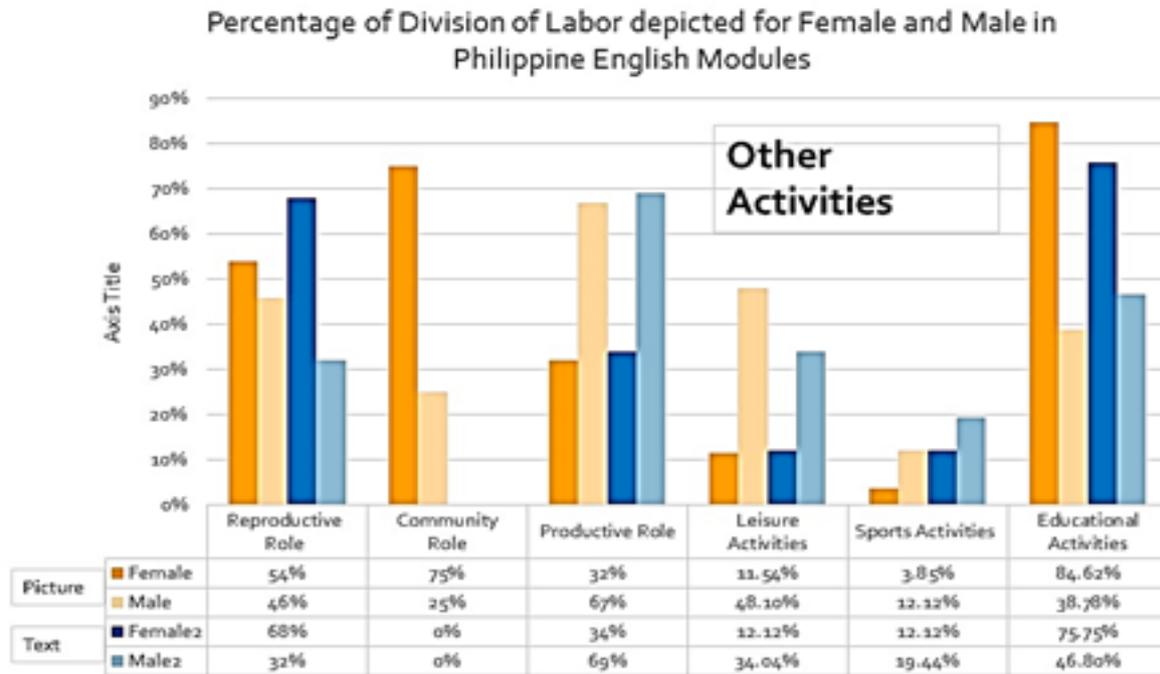


Figure 3 presents the percentages of the divisions of labor amongst female and male characters in the Philippine English curriculum modules along with the text. Reproductive roles in the English curriculum modules are cleaning, buying foods, washing dishes, doing the laundry, nursing the children, feeding animals, cooking or serving foods, gardening, setting the table, folding clothes, and repairing homes. It is noted that of the 53 portrayed reproductive roles, mostly females tended these roles in the English curriculum modules compared to males.

These observations are comparable to findings in a study by Yasin and colleagues (2012) on Malaysian textbooks where women more than men were dominantly in domestic spheres like attending their children’s needs, providing them with loving care and support, and attending to the typified roles of wives, mothers and nurturers. These observations were supported by the study of Poduval and Poduval (2009), who explained that motherhood confers upon a woman the duty of raising a child. Society in this light perceives women to have more ability to raise a useful member of society. This infers that it is still in the Filipino culture for women to be ‘in-charge’ of the care economy. Both males and females were mostly portrayed in their socially and culturally defined domestic functions. These findings are in contrast with the study conducted by Java and Parcon (2016), in which males dominated the portrayal of reproductive roles. However, they examined different books in the Philippines with different subjects and dates of publication. Overall, closing the gender gap in the domestic role must be emphasized. Text books and curriculum documents shape the minds of the readers as to which role they must perform rather than the roles that are available to them, gender aside.



One way to attend this is via ‘Community role’. It is not depicted in the English curriculum modules used in Philippine schools including texts. The portrayal of the community role must be considered for future curriculum developments given the content impacts on the readers and how they choose to contribute to the development of the community. ‘Productive roles’ – the occupational roles portrayed in the English curriculum modules such as teacher, engineer, doctors, farmer, and the like – are the roles being paid in exchange for energy and time spent. The findings revealed that males were portrayed in the English curriculum modules in most (67 %) of the productive roles in pictures and 69% in the text. This means that English curriculum modules depict males as occupational characters.

The highest percentage of occupational roles were depicted as doctors in pictures and farmers in the text in male, while being a teacher was the highest depicted occupational role for women in both pictures and text. This study is similar to the study Sabir (2008) undertook in which females were allocated, most commonly, occupational roles as teacher and a vendor, while males were given multiple occupational roles, most commonly police officer, fisher, and doctor.

Hence, the occupational roles are portrayed as masculine. In contrast, females are allocated more nurturing and secondary workforce roles.

On the other hand, some occupational activities in these modules identified women as having a greater percentage involvement, such as in educational activities. This means that female portrayal in education emphasizes female-oriented role. But still, an equal depiction of males and females in education roles is recommended to achieve sustainable development gender equity goals for the Philippines. Sports and leisure activities were also decoded, and males dominated by percentage. It is therefore noted that Philippine English curriculum modules contain stereotypical portrayals and illustrations of male and female activities despite the guidelines for gender responsive education and laws in gender equality. GAD advocates in schools may be struggling with implementing gender responsive messages since stereotypes and other manifestations of gender biases are still reinforced in the primary tools for learning. As is attended by this study, the prescribed textbooks for English learning are exhibiting bias.

**Manifestation of Gender Bias in Occupational Roles in the Philippine English Curriculum Modules along with text and pictures**

**Figure 4.** Percentage of Manifestation of Gender Bias

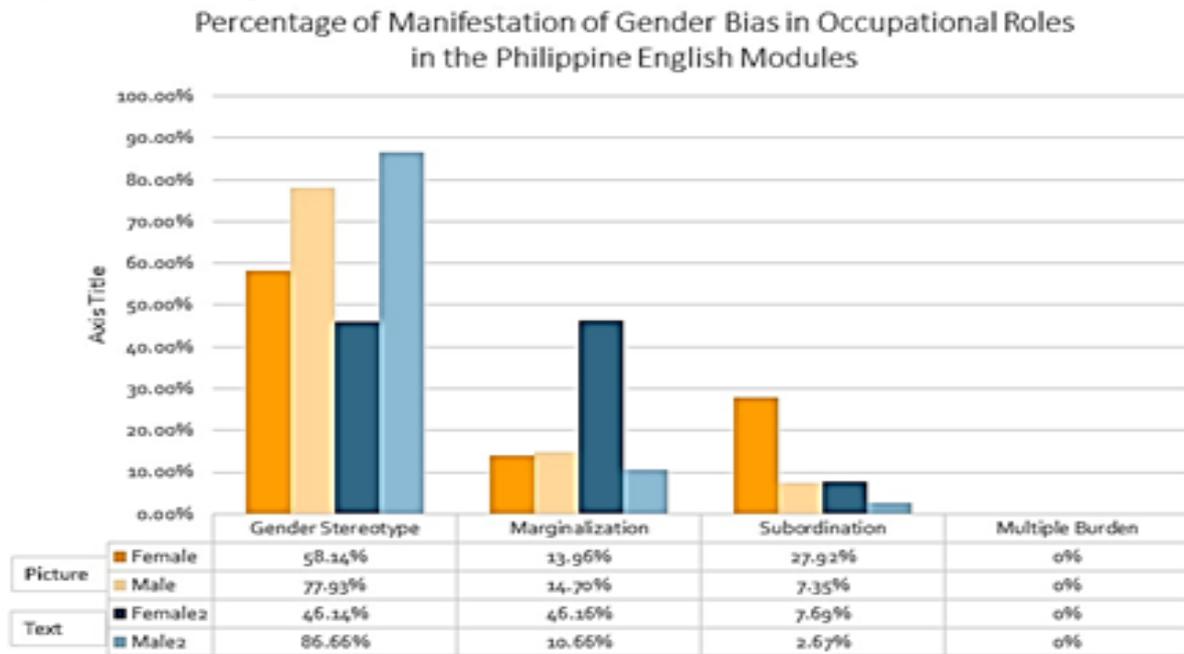


Figure 4 presents the four categories of manifestation of gender bias classified by the Philippine Commission on Women. First is *gender-stereotyped* – this is the unquestioned beliefs or images we carry in the back of our minds about women and men. This is transmitted from generation to generation. Second is *marginalization* which is the process that forces women out of a respected status through lack of or no valuation/recognition of ‘women’s work’. In detail, marginalisation is expressed in society as less access to and control over resources and benefits, unequal pay for work of equal value, being the last to be hired and the first to be fired, limited opportunities provided, and exacting sexual favours. The third is *subordination* where one gender is treated as superior. Gender subordination is the institutionalised domination by men in particular of women in the areas of occupational position (e.g. No women in politics and top positions), status (considered weaker, locked out of decision-making), women are not included in planning and decision-making processes, and excluded from processes of socialisation. The last is *multiple burdens*. This is the expected involvement of women in all three spheres of unpaid *and* paid work: reproductive, productive and community work such as: Parenting, Housework, Community Work and Work in the public sphere/informal sector (SESSION 4 Gender Bias and Marginalization, n.d.)

The findings of the study revealed that the highest percentage of manifestation of gender bias is expressed in gender stereotyping with 88% in text and 77% in the picture. Also, in 111 texts found in the modules, in relation to occupational roles, males dominated depictions in text and

illustrations (114). This means that males are stereotypically thought of as the breadwinner of the family and to have a greater responsibility in productive work than females. It is noted that most of the occupational roles of women depicted in the modules portrayed gender stereotypes since more illustrations were typically undergoing household chores, jobs and careers that are stereotyped as feminine. This is a conventional ideal of a woman. Thus, Philippine culture embodies and sustains social values attached to gender, which contours a person's outlook about what career women and men should go into. Gender stereotypes are dangerous for women. If females follow their example, they may become a nurse or vendor, and they may be derailed from jobs of desire assigned to the male stereotype (Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012).

Further, in terms of marginalisation in this study, females were assigned to 46% of the occupational roles and they were all marginal. This meant that the author's language contributed to perpetuating women into marginalised occupational roles. For example, in the module, there is no representation of women as police officers, pilots, managers, scientists, engineers or firefighters which underrepresents females in particular occupations that are available to them in reality. Women are illustrated and portrayed in texts as canteen helpers, nurses, domestic helpers, and as vendors, which depicts them in roles that are underpaid, and with limited opportunities. However, the occupational role of the male in the illustrations, in jobs that are marginalised was 14.70%. This means that there are occupational roles for males that are marginalised. They fell into work that was underpaid or earning less than they are perceived to need for everyday living. These occupational roles were gardener, fisher, factory worker, barber and farmer. But these roles are stereotyped occupationally as masculine. Thus, also manifesting gender bias. It is also noted that there are considerable differences in occupational roles that lead to the depiction of women as subordinate in the Philippine English curriculum modules, in text and pictures.

On the contrary, the study found no multiple burdens in the modules, which is a good indicator that this bias does not perpetuate female and male career choices. It is noteworthy that there are no multiple burdens observed in the modules, though the eradication of gender biases can still be considered useful to broaden the ideas of female and male readers on the roles they might choose to perform in society. Also, the gender socialisation experienced through the textbooks is offered as an obstacle in society's attempt to promote gender equality, which is one of the Sustainable Development Goals. Not only that, but these gendered portrayals may come into conflict with the actual experiences of children regarding gender roles at home (Java & Parcon, 2016).



## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

After decoding the Philippine English curriculum modules, this study found there are biases illustrating conventional roles of females and males in society. Gender division of labor has significant bias as does the reproductive roles of women, typified by indoor and household chores, while productive roles are mostly assigned to males. Also, in the manifestation of gender bias in the modules it was evident that gender stereotypes in occupational roles perpetuated this bias. Thus, the curriculum modules are attributed with shaping the gender schema of the readers and the career visions of female and male students. The pedagogical practices in basic education and their influence on gender assignment must be put into consideration. Using gender-responsive materials must be encouraged. A gender-responsive textbook, for example, may better guide the teachers in implementing gender-responsive pedagogical approaches to young children.

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended: 1) The Department of Education as the major organization in the Philippine Basic Education must strictly implement and monitor DepEd Order No. 32, s. 2017 also known as Gender-Responsive Basic Education Policy; 2) Revisit the policy on the Curriculum Development Division of DepEd and coordinate with the Philippine Commission on Women on the integration of gender perspective and gender mainstreaming in the Department; 3) Gender sensitivity training, gender analysis, and other gender-related seminars must be attended by the DepEd teachers to ensure proper conveying of GAD concepts and ideas; 4) Future researchers are encouraged to widen the scope of the study, not limiting it to the number of subjects, books, year of publication, and other instructional materials used in the classroom. Further higher statistical tools and other methods of research must be employed to validate the findings of the study further. Also, a comparative study may be done in public and private schools in the Philippines using different textbooks; 5) Development of gender-responsive pedagogical approaches must be initiated to ensure the ending of the manifestation of gender bias in the Philippine educational setting.



## REFERENCES

- Bandura, A. (1989). Social cognitive theory. 6, 1-60.
- Bem, S.L. (1981). Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing. *Psychological Review* (American Psychological Association), 88 (4), 354 – 364. Retrieved at <http://www.apa.org/pubs/>.
- Carole Brugeilles & Sylvie Cromer. (2009). Promoting Gender Equality through Textbooks: A methodological guide. (January 2009), 94.
- Gharbavi, A., & Mousavi, S. A. (2012). A Content Analysis of Textbooks: Investigating Gender Bias as a Social Prominence in Iranian High School English Textbooks. *English Linguistics Research*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/10.5430/elr.v1n1p42>
- Sabir, A. (2008). Review of Moroccan school textbooks for gender equality and human rights by regional director (HREA): Project Results. Retrieved at <http://www.achr.hn/newen63.HTML>, 1 -2.
- Kabira, W.M. and Masinjila, M. (1997). ABC of gender analysis. Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). Retrieved at <http://www.afghanlivelihoods.com/>.
- Palmquist, M. (Editor). 1998. Content analysis. Retrieved at <http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/WritingCenter/references/research/content/>
- Poduval, J and Poduval, M. (2009). Working mothers: How much working, how much mothers, and where is the womanhood? Retrieved [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/).
- Recaña, Hazel (2019). Gender Representations in the Philippine K-12 Modules, Unpublished Masters Thesis.
- SESSION 4 Gender Bias and Marginalization. (n.d.).
- Yasin, M. S. M, Hamid, B. H., Othman, Z., Hashim, F., & Mohti, A. (2012). A visual analysis of a Malaysian English school textbook: Gender Matters, *Asian Social Science*. 8(12), 155–163. Retrieved at [HTTP:// dx.doi.org/10.5539/](http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/).