Gender and Reproductive Health Study
Policy Brief no. 1

Gender Depiction in Indonesian Primary and Secondary School Textbooks: 
The Way Forward

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Gender equality can be achieved if an understanding that women and men have the same rights is taught from the beginning of primary school and if roles that are more gender-neutral are observed by children in their own homes. Revising school textbooks to accommodate more gender neutral messages is a way forward in establishing a society that respects and practises gender equality.

Gender Definition and Understanding

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles ascribed to males and females. These roles are learned, change over time, and vary widely within and across cultures. Socially learned gender is an acquired identity and thus can be unlearned and replaced with a more progressive understanding of gender roles. This policy brief proposes that Indonesian schools, curriculum, and textbooks adopt progressive gender roles to promote a more equitable relation between women and men (Utomo et al., 2009).

Progressive gender roles prevail in societies where both women and men have equal opportunities: in sharing the domestic duties and child rearing; education and work; work relations; equal rights to leadership in bureaucracy, society, religious activities and politics; as well as being treated equally in all aspects of life. Progressive gender roles imply that women and girls are not treated subordinate-in any way and are not seen as being objects of sexuality.

Findings from Analysis of Gender Depiction in Primary and Secondary School Textbooks

Four major subject areas where depiction of gender roles is commonly portrayed were chosen. These were Bahasa Indonesia and English Language, Islamic Religion, Science-including Biology, Social Sciences, and Sport and Healthy Living (Pendidikan Kesegaran Jasmani, Olah Raga dan Kesehatan). The educational levels chosen to be evaluated were Years 1, 6, 9 and 12.

A gender content analysis module was created and used by the researchers to evaluate the textbooks. Each member of the research team independently analysed each book. The data were then compiled and analysed using simple statistics and the results are presented in the bar charts below. Each researcher also took separate notes related to both the content and pictures found throughout the books.

Depiction of Gender Roles and Norms in the Indonesian School Textbooks

![Figure 1. Percentage of textbooks by publishers, Indonesia, 2007](image)
Figure 1 shows the publishers of the 83 school textbooks that were analysed. In total, there were 15 publishers with two dominant publishers, Yusdhistira (19.28 %) and Erlangga (14.46 %).

Public Sphere: Male Domination

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate gender depiction of the textbooks in the public and domestic spheres. In the public sphere, the depictions are male dominated while in the private sphere, the depictions are female dominated meaning that strong gender stereotyping is evident. Male domination in the public sphere is most evident in Grade 6 texts and least evident for Grade 1 texts.

The following pictures provide some of the examples of illustrations of the public sphere used in the textbooks. Pictures 1-3 are examples of the many pictures and illustrations used in schools textbooks of male dominated roles in the public sphere depicting gender bias as many women also worked in these fields. Pictures 4 through 7 are examples of some of the very few depictions of women working as professionals. Representation of women and men working together in an office setting as portrayed in Picture 8 (similar to Picture 5) is very rare. There should be more pictures and illustrations of this type included in textbooks.

Picture 1. Mr Iskandar, Anto’s father giving a talk on telecommunication at his school.

Source: Nurcholis and Mafrukhi, 2007:11.

Picture 2. Male doctor briefing mothers

Source: Darisman, M. et al. 2007a:92
Picture 3. Male doctor examining a child while mother watches at a distance

Source: Darisman, M. et al. 2007:5

Picture 4. Female dentist examining her patient

Source: Panut et al., 2006:9

Picture 5. Female scientist working with her co-male scientist

Source: Kadaryanto et al., 2007:145

Picture 6. Professional female office staff

Source: Sudarti and Grace, 2007:78

Picture 7. Female news reader

Source: Sudarti and Grace, 2007:158.

Picture 8. Female and male professionals working in an office

Domestic Sphere: Women’s and Girl’s Duties

Figure 3 shows extreme female domination in depictions of the private sphere in all grades. Women are shown as conducting domestic chores including: cooking and washing clothes; house cleaning; groceries shopping; looking after the sick - children and elderly; caring for children; taking children to the doctor or dropping children to school. Depictions of domestic duties are dominated by women, with the highest stereotyping evident in Grades 6 and 1. Depictions of women doing domestic duties and providing care are strongly evident in everyday life of Indonesian women and girls (Utomo, 2005).

Pictures 9-11 show girls but not boys being taught domestic duties as well as looking after the sick. The dominance of images such as this underscore the difficulties faced in reforming the domestic sphere so that it is not targeted to women and girls only.

Even science textbooks can display very traditional gender roles using, for example, a picture of women cooking to explain about sources of heat (Picture 12). In another example, throughout the book, the author uses a group of three friends consisting of two female students (Geni and Eca) and a male student (Sakti) (Picture 13). Geni is depicted as a girl who mostly states facts or asking questions and sometimes does silly things like touching a hot pan or not turning the light off at night. In contrast Eca is always asking questions while Sakti has the role of the competent student who always knows the right answers and explains them to his classmates (Rachmat, 2007). Illustrating female students (Geni and Eca) as being not as knowledgeable as the male student (Sakti) work against developing and forming an understanding of progressive gender norms among students.

Pictures 14-18 also convey strong messages that women have to be responsible for domestic chores and caring. Picture 16 is one of the numerous depictions in the books of men relaxing over a cup of tea or reading the newspaper in contrast to no depictions of women relaxing in the same way. Providing a positive gender message, Picture 14 shows a father looking after a toddler.

Men are also shown working around the house in Pictures 15, 17 and 18 but men and boys conventionally are depicted working in household activities outside the house while women and girls are depicted as performing all the domestic duties within the house. These pictures and illustrations foster students’ perceptions that the domain of women and girls revolve around domestic activities while men and boys work beyond the home and control the public sphere.

The stories and pictures used in English Language textbooks were more progressive than texts in other subjects in terms of delivering gender equality messages. For example, Picture 19 shows that a boy can make gado-gado, an Indonesian salad and work together with a girl. In Picture 20, a father and son prepare dinner giving time for the mother to relax.

Social Leadership and Technology

Depictions of social leadership and technology are dominated by men. Although there are many female social leaders, women activists, politicians, previous president, ministers and bureaucrats as well as scientists who have received international awards and female astronauts in Indonesia, these were under-represented in the school textbooks.

Arts and Environment

People represented in the field of arts were more likely to be male. Interestingly, in the field of environment sustainability and maintenance (kerja bakti), both men and women were actively represented. However, in this case, men were shown as conducting neighbourhood clean up and maintenance, cleaning the gutters, collecting garbage, fixing and making wooden bridges, while women were preparing and providing the drinks and food for the men. Boys were also shown as helping with the male tasks while the girls helped with the food preparations. Thus, traditional domestic role models are depicted even for voluntary and community work. To note, it is the males’ contribution to the community that is central to these images and not the females’ voluntary work.
Perpetrators and Victims of Violent Behaviours: Moving Towards Gender Equity?

Portrayal of violent behaviours is not common in textbooks. Depictions are most common in Year 12 texts. Violent behaviour represented in Year 12 is positive because it relates to educating students about domestic violence, including child abuse. Data on violence against women was also presented. The discussion of domestic violence in the textbooks is progressive as a few years ago it was not included in the curriculum. The perpetrators (Figure 4) and the victims (Figure 5) of the violent behaviours are dominated by men (orange bars) as many illustrations of violence show boys fighting with other boys. Though depiction of females as victims was low compared to males, the highest representations of girls or women as victims were in Year 12 (blue and purple bars), again reflecting the incorporation of domestic violence information.

Progressive messages and pictures (Pictures 21 and 22) on sexual harassment and reporting are included in Sport and Healthy Living textbooks starting in Year 5 (Tim Penjas SD, 2007a: 60-62; Tim Penjas SD, 2007b; Suryatmo, 2006). These provide very good examples of progressive gender norms and the way forward towards more equitable gender norms and respect for women and girls.

Descriptions and pictures of women and men working together in school textbooks from Year 1 demonstrate gender equality. Images in textbooks of teachers and other workers, parents and other household members that display women and men performing similar tasks promote gender equality. Students exposed to these images become more familiar with the concept of progressive gender norms.

In contrast, the use of traditional gender role depictions, with men dominating public roles and women dominating domestic roles, negates students’ understanding of gender progressive roles. Once formed, societal attitudes of this type place a burden upon women because they are presumed to be the sole providers of the traditional domestic work. At the same time, they undermine rightful male roles in domestic life, such as caring for children and other relatives.

Today, young women are educated to be workers in the public sphere as well as performing home duties. Men are only educated to be workers in the public sphere. School textbooks can play a very important role in moving Indonesia forward to a more gender progressive society where both women and men are able to contribute in both the public and private spheres.
Policy Recommendations

• The national curriculum does not promote an explicit progressive policy on gender relations. This needs to be revised quickly through additions and amendments to all subject areas.
• Textbook illustrations and pictures selected by textbook authors and publishers from Year 1 to Year 12 tend to be heavily gender biased and should be reformed. Examples and pictures that accommodate more gender progressive norms should be used.
• The Ministry of National Education and State Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Children Protection should lead in ensuring that school textbooks are providing knowledge, information, illustrations and pictures that are promoting progressive gender norms.
• Funding should be allocated to train authors of school textbooks so they will understand the concept of gender equality and accommodate more gender progressive norms in their illustrations and pictures used in school textbooks.
• Authors should be certified as having gender progressive understanding and only certified authors should be permitted to write school textbooks.

References


Textbooks

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Description of the Study: Integrating Gender and Reproductive Health Issues in the Indonesian National School Curricula.

In the first stage of this two-stage study, content analysis of more than 300 primary and secondary school textbooks was undertaken on issues relating to reproductive and sexual health education and gender. The second stage was a school-based survey conducted in Jakarta, West Java, West Nusa Tenggara and South Sulawesi.

For the content analysis the team analysed the National Curriculum to see if reproductive health was specifically mentioned and searched for relevant words that indicating content relevant to reproductive health issues. After identifying in grades, subjects and semesters where reproductive and sexual health information is given, textbooks based on the curriculum from various publishers were selected. School textbooks analysed included: Sport and Healthy Living (PENJASKES); Science and Biology; Social Sciences and Islamic Religion.

An evaluation module was developed for the analysis of 13 fields of reproductive and sexual health. These were: genital hygiene; STDs; HIV and AIDS; female reproductive problems; male reproductive health problems; pregnancy and delivery; human growth and development; reproductive technology; social aspects of reproductive health; moving towards liberal culture and its consequences; family institution; violence and sexual crimes and religious aspects of reproductive health. The coverage of each topic and the accuracy of the materials provided in the textbook were evaluated by the team.

A content analysis was also performed using a gender content analysis. Areas evaluated included: public and domestic spheres; education and gender; social leadership roles; arts; technology; roles in environmental sustainability; violence and photos or pictures used in the textbooks. All fields were evaluated according to whether the material was male or female dominated; mostly male or female content; and degree of equality between males and females.

Gender analysis was conducted by evaluating the text and pictures used in Sport and Healthy Living (PENJASKES); Science and Biology; Social Sciences and Islamic Religion, Bahasa Indonesia and English Language school textbooks for year 1,6, 9 and 12.

In the second stage a survey of Year 6 (N=1837) and Year 12 students (N=6555), teachers (N=521) and school principals (N=59) in Jakarta, West Java, West Nusa Tenggara and South Sulawesi was conducted (N=8972) to evaluate respondents’ understanding regarding reproductive health and gender. The sampling of schools was performed in several stages. First, in every province two districts were selected, one urban and one rural. Two public schools and two religious schools were selected in each selected district that represented the best school and a medium performing school. Thus in every province, 16 schools were selected. In the selected schools, all students in Years 6 and 12 participated in the survey and filled in the self administered questionnaire in class. The research team gave instructions and stayed in class so that students may ask questions if they don’t understand. Following the survey, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted among school teachers and principals, local religious leaders and policy makers. A series of policy briefs will be developed from this study. The research team was led by Dr. Iwu Dwisetyani Utomo and Prof. Peter McDonald.

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Attachment

Picture 9. Transferring stereotypical domestic roles from grandmother to granddaughter.

Picture 10. Grandmother being served a cup of tea by granddaughter.

Picture 11. Mother and daughter looking after the sick husband/father.

Picture 12. Explanation about sources of heat in Science textbook, female domestication in the kitchen, cooking as an example.

Picture 13. Geni, Eca and Sakti used through out the textbooks as model of students discussing about science related issues.

Picture 14. Caring of children chores I.

Source: Nurcholis, 2007: 34.

Source: Darisman, 2007a: 53.


Source: Panut et al. 2006, 49.


Picture 15. Caring of children and other domestic chores II.


Picture 16. Caring of children and other domestic chores III.

Source: Nurcholis and Mafrukhi, 2007: 84.

Picture 17. Domestic chores IV.

Source: Rusmiyati et al. 31.

Picture 18. Domestic chores V.

Source: Rusmiyati et al. 52.


Source: Mukarto, 2007: 78.

Picture 22. Progressive picture and message on reporting of sexual harassment act.

Source: Tim Penjas: 175.

Source: Suryatmo: 64.