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# Gender representation in government-endorsed Arabic language textbooks: Insights from Indonesia

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Much research on textbook analysis has looked at diverse perspectives nested by the textbook authors, including gender equality. Although a growing body of research on gender representation in textbooks has been undertaken, there is a paucity of research on Arabic textbooks. This study aims to examine gender representation in Arabic textbooks for Islamic school students approved by the Ministry of Religion of Indonesia to fill the research gap. This research employed a case study design focusing on three textbooks. The researchers utilized thematic analysis anchored in Rifkin's theory. The findings show that (1) gender representation in Arabic textbooks, verbally and visually, is dominated by men, (2) gender representation is visualized from six themes showing male dominance except for the theme "traveling," which is dominated by women, and (3) the pedagogical actions that need to be taken to overcome these problems are (a) Arabic language teachers need to develop materials when using government-endorsed Arabic textbooks and (b) the Ministry of Religious Affairs should promote gender equality through recommended textbooks.

## KEYWORDS

Arabic language, gender equality, gender representation, textbooks, stereotypes

## Introduction

In the last decades, much research on textbook analysis has been enacted using multiple perspectives (Syairofi et al., 2022), including the essence of gender in textbooks. Gender issues have permeated many aspects of our lives, emphasizing gender equality in education, status, awareness, and access to socioeconomic possibilities (Khan, 2011). In the Indonesian context that adopts democratic ideology, the government is concerned with achieving gender equality, as required by Article 27(1) of the 1945 Constitution, which reveals that every citizen has equal standing before the law. Therefore, regardless of their racial, religious, political, economic, or gender backgrounds, all Indonesian people are required to be treated equally before the law and given equal opportunity to contribute to the nation's development (Lopez-Zafra and Garcia-Retamero, 2012). In the same vein, Reeves (1987) contends that the Indonesian government formally endorses equal rights for its people to pursue decent employment and good education. This phenomenon may be traced through the long history of the attempts of Indonesian women to obtain equal rights through education such as Kartini, Dewi Sartika, Maria Walanda Maramis (Porter, 2001; Setyono, 2018; Widodo, 2018), and the struggle against Dutch colonialism such as Tjut Nya Dhien and Martha Christina Tiahahu (Poerwandari, 1999).

In the education sector, gender concerns have been extensively covered as a salient issue that emerged in many textbooks. Specifically, the issues related to gender and education identified in

textbooks include gender representations, gender stereotypes, and the under-representation of women in school textbooks. For instance, after examining textbooks used in Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, Uganda, Pakistan, and Morocco, many scholars have found that most of the objects and pictures in those textbooks represent the idea of masculinity (Ullah and Skelton, 2013; Gebregeorgis, 2016; Cobano-Delgado and Llorent-Bedmar, 2019; Lee, 2019; Namatende-Sakwa, 2019). Gender inequality issues in textbooks also persist in the United States. Atchison (2017) reported that gender is not well represented in the textbooks used in schools and universities in the United States. Similarly, the same issues exist in the Arab world. It was found in a discourse analysis study that was conducted on 35 textbooks in Iran, including Persian, Arabic, and English, that male representation generally dominated (Foroutan, 2012). Al-Qatawneh and Al Rawashdeh (2019) reviewed ninth-grade Arabic textbooks in the UEA and discovered that masculinity terms appear more than feminist ones. Earlier, Baghdadi and Rezaei (2015) argued that although women's education is increasing in Iran, men's masculinities are portrayed in English and Arabic textbooks. Similarly, using critical micro-semiotic analysis, Ariyanto (2018) found a significant gender bias and many gender stereotypes in the form of visual and verbal representations in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks published by the Indonesian Ministry of Education. In the same vein, Setyono (2018) indicated unequal representations of male and female characters in most English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks used in Indonesian schools. Furthermore, Damayanti (2014) reported that women were depicted as more dependent on men and were also seen as admirers of men's actions in some textbooks used in Indonesian schools. Additionally, Agni et al. (2020) demonstrated that gender bias in the EFL textbooks in Indonesia could be seen from visual and textual representations, various activities, roles, occupations, and adjective descriptions.

Although gender inequality in Indonesian textbooks has been examined using multilayered angles, Arabic textbooks have received little attention. Also, most studies were focused on English textbooks endorsed by the Indonesian Ministry of Research and Education that are used for elementary, junior, and senior high school students. Still, the Arabic textbooks endorsed by the Ministry of Religion for high school students have not yet been extensively examined. These two ministries in Indonesia have different educational policy directions, which may also affect the content of textbooks. This study aimed to explore gender representation in government-endorsed Arabic language textbooks used in Indonesian Islamic junior high schools to address this void.

Therefore, three questions are addressed in the present study:

1. What is the percentage of gender (male and female) representation in government-endorsed Arabic language textbooks used in Indonesian Islamic junior high schools?
2. In what ways are men and women presented and portrayed in those textbooks?
3. What pedagogical actions may be taken to address gender inequalities in those textbooks?

## Theoretical underpinnings

The current study employs the modified theory of Rifkin's (1998) gender inequity. The researchers modified the theory because of the different contexts of foreign language textbooks used in Russia,

especially the use of pronouns, which cannot be applied in the Arabic textbooks used in Indonesia. In this case, gender inequity in textbooks was revealed to consist not only of verbal texts but also pictorial texts. This indicator can be observed in the following description (Table 1).

However, Rifkin's (1998) concept of the gender inequality indicator cannot be used entirely to analyze the data in this study. The theory was modified based on the Arabic language context. This was because, on a micro-basis, Rifkin (1998) does not separate indicators of the use of the pronoun, both first, second, and third person, and singular or plural. At the same time, in Arabic grammar, the use of pronouns always separates the use of aspects of pronouns from all genders and number aspects, as applied in this study.

As a result, the development of the theory was conducted to be used as an analytical tool in analyzing Arabic textbooks not only in the context of Indonesia but also in the context of other countries in Southeast Asia. Empirically, it was discovered in this study that the Arabic language is gender-neutral because every word has a partner. However, some words contain gender biases because of the incompetence of the writer, the strong patriarchal culture, and the influence of the understanding of authors regarding religious doctrine. Such an understanding of the religious doctrine is inadequate, making religion the main reason for gender subordination and stereotypes. In policy, the government, as the policymaker, needs to ensure that the content of textbooks for Islamic senior high school (*Madrasah Aliyah*) students has been tested and selected nationally, not perpetuating gender bias. Therefore, the recruitment process of textbook authors should be conducted more selectively and professionally and not based on nepotism or "pointing out."

## Gender representation issues in Indonesia

Gender equality has been openly discussed since the 1960s, even before Indonesian independence. The issue of gender equality arose from the awareness of women toward their lag compared with men (Mas'udah, 2020). Regarding quality and quantity, women are still far behind men (Setyono, 2018). Thus, the struggle for gender equality is a long process that has yet to end (Kochuthara, 2011). This condition is motivated by numerous factors. First, the patriarchal culture tends to monopolize and legitimize male domination. Second, Indonesia is a multiethnic and multi religious country. Third, policymakers have not fully internalized and integrated the understanding of gender equality. Also, gender equality has not been implemented according to development programs and activities, including in the education sector (Kochuthara, 2011; Litosseliti, 2014; Romera, 2015; Setyono, 2018). Gender equality is a concept used to identify the engagement balance between men and women in social, cultural, and other non-biological aspects.

Five indicators measure gender equality and inequality: subordination, marginalization, double burden, violence, and stereotyping. The first indicator is subordination, considering that the workload performed by a specific gender is lower than others (Setyono, 2018; Lestariyana et al., 2020). In this respect, a housewife who domestically works for her family is not considered to have a job. The second indicator is marginalization, which appears when the gender gap between men and women in the formal and informal sectors is inversely related. Women are more involved in informal sectors, while men dominate the formal sectors. The third indicator is a double burden—the reproductive role of women has often been considered a static and

TABLE 1 Gender in equity indicator.

No	Kinds of text	Indicators	Item
1	Pictorial text	Pictures showing only girls or boys	1
		Pictures showing a boy and a girl together in the foreground, a boy or a girl in the foreground or background, girl or boy as a child	2
		Pictures that visualize the roles of men and women in the domestic or professional	3
2	Verbal text	Texts that represent the dominance of women or men in the text	4
		Texts that represent the names and characters of women as men	5
		Texts that use the singular first pronoun for male or female	6
		Texts that use the singular second pronoun for male or female	7
		Texts that use the second plural pronoun for male or female	8
		Texts that use a female pronoun as subjects	9
		Texts that use a female pronoun as objects	10
		Texts that use unique verbs, adverbs, and adjectives are reserved for women and men	11
		Texts that prioritize women over men in a single phrase	12
		Texts that represent the role of men in the household	13
		Texts that represent the role of women as professional duties	14
		Texts that represent the different job ratios between men and women	15
		Texts that represent the ratio of women or men are highlighted in the title or subtitle	16
		Texts that represent the ratio between the use of famous women and famous men	17
		Sentences that represent the ratio of men and women who are the subject of jokes	18

permanent role. Therefore, even though women work in the public sphere, this has not been accompanied by a reduction in their burden in the domestic sphere. The fourth indicator is violence—the characteristic of women is always identified as femininity. Consequently, they need to show tenderness and submissiveness. On the other hand, men are always considered masculine. Therefore, it is necessary to appear with courage and strength. As a result, the characteristics portrayed impact acts of violence against the weak. The fifth indicator is stereotyping—all forms of gender inequalities are from stereotyping, which can mislead and harm certain genders (Kochuthara, 2011; Ganguli et al., 2014; Mas'udah, 2020).

## Gender representation in Arabic textbooks

Studies of gender representation in Arabic textbooks are limited compared with those in English textbooks. Scholars have consistently found gender inequalities and gender biases in Arabic and non-Arabic textbooks. In non-Arabic textbooks, most of the research conducted around the world presents examples of gender representation such as stereotypes, biases, norms, and ideological discourses that are detrimental to women. Carlson and Kanci (2017) reported that in Turkey, men are depicted as protectors, while women are objects to be protected. The main role of women is motherhood even though they have several other social roles outside the home. This is due to the influence of the culture of “enemies” and “defense” that shapes masculinity around the concept of the “warrior-protector.” Lee's (2019) research shows that in contemporary Japan, men occupy more social roles outside the home as breadwinners, while women are expected to stay at home. Not unlike Japan, English textbooks in China depict women as being inferior to men because they are influenced by the Confucian culture despite the government's efforts to eliminate the gender gap in the textbooks. In Uganda, a research report by

Namatende-Sakwa (2018) shows that women are constructed to have a physical appearance like men and are highly dependent on men as providers of sustenance. This is influenced by the traditional patriarchal culture of the agricultural economy that circulates among them. In Poland, Pakuła et al. (2015) revealed that men are represented in a strong position, while women are stereotyped as weak. In Vietnam, men in textbooks have more social traits and occupy a larger verbal space. Meanwhile, women are represented as people who are less independent, have limited choices, and have limited knowledge of resources. It is influenced by patriarchal Confucian values (Vu and Pham, 2021).

In Arabic textbooks, Foroutan (2012) found three variations of gender representation patterns in three Iranian language textbooks: Persian, Arabic, and English. First, a male is more represented in textbooks than a female. Second, male domination appears more frequently in Persian textbooks compared with Arabic and English textbooks. Third, there are similar representations between men and women in English textbooks. Baghdadi and Rezaei (2015) and Foroutan (2012) revealed that Arabic textbooks have more gender biases than English textbooks. It was shown in the results of the data analysis that the frequency of female representation was consistently lower than male representation in all categories from 10 criteria, either pictorial or textual. Furthermore, it was found that there was a notable change in educational level regarding gender representation. It was shown that the more the education level increased, the more the male gender dominated. It was shown in similar research by Al-Qatawneh and Al Rawashdeh (2019) in the UEA that, although textbook authors try to convey positive messages of support for gender equality, social stereotypes still occur in Arabic textbooks. Thus, the previous literature shows that gender representation in textbooks has been carried out by many world experts, especially English textbooks, and is still limited to studying Arabic textbooks in the context of Indonesia which is multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious. It is for this reason that this research was conducted.

## Pedagogical actions to address gender inequalities

The issue of which pedagogical actions can be applied to overcome gender inequalities has been examined by many researchers. Dunne et al. (2006) emphasized the importance of advocacy for teachers as agents of change with adequate attitudes and experiences about gender equality as a form of resistance to gender inequality and violent practices. Sulaimani (2017) requires teachers to act against gender bias in textbooks. Bandura (2003) highlighted that formal education is essential for gender development in their social cognitive theory. This is especially true in the learning environment created through education in which people think positively or negatively (Bandura et al., 2003; Romera, 2015). One factor that influences the learning styles, attitudes, and thoughts of students is the representation of gender in textbooks. In the case of gender stereotypes or biases that appear in textbooks, students directly or indirectly practice them in everyday life (Bandura et al., 2003; Lee, 2018). Therefore, gender equality must receive attention in the curriculum at all levels of education. As reported by Sunderland (2000), teachers in Portugal prefer not to be fixated on the text and innovate on their own in discussion topics. Stromquist (1998) indicated that textbooks and curriculum content last a long time in memory so what is heard, seen, told, read, and written about the treatment of men and women will condition the mind.

With this in mind, gender mediates student learning in the classroom. It, for example, drives students to construct and negotiate their identities when interacting with different gendered peers. Pedagogically, teachers are encouraged to provide equitable learning activities for both male and female students in the classroom, even when the textbooks used contain gender bias. Teachers' teaching strategies can be enacted through initial awareness of gender represented in the textbooks.

## Methods

### Research design

A critical content analysis design was adopted in this empirical research. Content analysis refers to a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matters) to the contexts of their use (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18). Numerous scholars studying language textbooks have used content analysis to analyze gender content using quantitative and qualitative approaches (Risager, 2018). This study goes beyond mere content analysis to illuminate how gender is represented in textbooks. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed in this critical content analysis. A quantitative analysis was also used to determine the percentage and frequency of gender representation in the textbook. Then, a qualitative method was used to analyze the deep structural meaning of the data.

### Data collection

In this study, the researchers selected three Arabic textbooks from Islamic senior high schools (MA), mainly of grades X, XI, and XII, published by the Directorate General of Islamic Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. These textbooks were designed based on the 2013 curriculum and are the only books published and recommended by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to be used in Islamic senior high schools. Additionally, Arabic teachers in

Indonesia use other sources, such as handouts, materials from the Internet, and other books published by private publishers. However, we did not include those sources in this text analysis research because different additional sources may differ from one teacher to another. For the analysis, verbal and visual texts depicting gender bias and gender stereotyping were chosen. For verbal text analysis, we focused only on the exercises of six themes from the textbooks. The chapter and theme were preferred because they contained social contexts that showcased how specific gender was stereotypically portrayed. The theme chosen can be seen in Table 2.

## Data analysis

We analyzed all visual components in our visual analysis based on the selected topics by adopting Rifkin's (1998) framework for a critical evaluation of gender representations in visual and verbal texts. The visual framework consisted of three core concepts elaborated into seven sub-concepts. However, only four concepts were adopted in this study because not all criteria were applicable in the textbooks. The visual concepts selected were (1) pictures that only included women/men, (2) foregrounded pictures of women/men to backgrounded women/men, (3) pictures of boy/girl children, and (4) visual context, which could be identified as "domestic/professional." Rifkin offered 14 indicators for verbal texts to measure gender representation in textbooks. However, the researchers only focus on three leading indicators: (1) the percentage of women and men as subjects in sentences, (2) the percentage of men and women as objects in sentences, and (3) the percentage of men and women as possessive in sentences. This consideration was decided because not all indicators offered in Rifkin's theory were suitable for application to verbal data. If used as a whole, it could result in overlapping and repetitive data calculations. From the six themes (home and family, daily activities, hobbies, health, travel, and university students), researchers used the manual method of analyzing a textual representation of gender by conducting content analysis. Gender representation frequencies were counted to identify feminism and masculine pronouns. Afterward, the researchers compared the two characters. After a general quantitative analysis of gender representations was applied, the researchers conducted a discursive analysis emphasizing the visibility of gender bias and stereotyping.

## Findings

**RQ1:** *What was the percentage of gender (male and female) representation in government-endorsed Arabic language textbooks used in Indonesian Islamic senior high schools?*

We counted pictures that portrayed men and women in four categories from Rifkin's (1998) framework to find the different percentages of gender representation (male and female) in the Arabic language textbooks. Additionally, the verb representing men and women (subject pronoun, object pronoun, and possessive pronoun) was also accounted for in this exercise.

As shown in Table 3, female pictures had a smaller percentage than male pictures in all categories, which visually translated into gender imbalances in the three textbooks examined. The comparison between male and female pictures in all categories had a similar percentage—about 65% of men and 35% of women. Overall, the representation of men and women in the visual data was 93 men (65.03%) compared to 50 women (34.96%). Interestingly, the count based on the topics, except

TABLE 2 Textbooks theme, topic, and grade.

Theme	Topic	Pages	Grade	Author/editor	Title
Al-Ussrah al-bait (home and family)	1	17–29	X	Moh. Ilyas	Arabic textbooks for MA grade X
				Ahmad Muballig (Editor)	
Al-Hayat (daily activities)	4	48–61	X	Moh. Ilyas	Arabic textbooks for MA grade X
				Ahmad Muballig (Editor)	
Al-Hiwayah (Hobbies)	5	62–72	X	Moh. Ilyas	Arabic textbooks for MA grade X
				Ahmad Muballig (Editor)	
Al-Shihhah (Health)	2	16–33	XI	Risma Rianti Sari	Arabic textbooks for MA grade XI
				Hasyim Amrullah	
				Ahamd Muballig (Editor)	
Al-Safar (Travel)	3	34–48	XI	Risma Rianti Sari	Arabic textbooks for MA grade XI
				Hasyim Amrullah	
				Ahamd Muballig (Editor)	
Al-Dirasah fi al-jamiah (University students)	5	61–91	XII	Alfiyatus Syarafah	Arabic textbooks for MA grade XII
				Muh. Yasin Fathul	
				Barry	
				Ahmad Muballig (Editor)	

TABLE 3 Frequencies of male and female visuals in the textbooks based on the topic.

Topic	Grade	Pictures which include female/male		Picture of male/female as foreground		Pictures of female/male as children		Picture of male as identified for domestic/professional	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Al-ussrah wa al-bait (home and family)	10th	6	1	6	1	0	0	6	1
Al-hayat (daily activities)	10th	9	5	9	3	0	0	9	3
Al-hiwayah (Hobbies)	10th	6	4	6	2	0	0	6	2
Al-shihhah (Health)	11th	17	5	4	3	1	0	3	1
Al-safar (Travel)	11th	1	7	0	6	0	0	0	6
Al-dirasah fi al-jamiah (University students)	12th	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Total		41	22	27	15	1	0	24	13
Percentage		61.1%	34.9%	64.3%	35.7%	100%	0%	64.9%	35.1%

for the topic about travel, represents more male pictures than female ones. Male predominance in most roles was indicated by these results, except for traveling, in which females were predominant.

The frequencies of masculine and feminine representations from the textbooks based on text (exercise) focusing on listening (*istima'*), reading (*qiraah*), grammar (*qawaid*), speaking (*al-kalam*), and writing (*al-kitabah*) are shown in Table 4. Although the researchers only counted pronouns (subject, object, and possessive pronouns), the data showed significant differences between masculine and feminine representations in the textbooks in all aspects. The most significant

numbers regarding gender representation were in the subject pronoun, with 277 (88.8%) male representations and 35 (11.2%) female representations. Of all skills, masculinity was mentioned predominantly, except in speaking skills on health and travel, where women were mentioned more frequently than men. Feminine object and possessive pronouns were only mentioned once, or 2.7% and 2.3%, respectively. The total male and female representations were 357 men (90.6%) compared with 37 women (9.39%). A significant difference in the three indicators studied was revealed by this verbal data, following Rifkin's theory.

TABLE 4 Frequencies of masculine and feminine representations in the texts (exercises).

Topic	Grade	Text (exercise)	M	F	M	F	M	F
Al-usrah wa al-bait (home and family)	10th	Istima/Listening	4	3	0	0	0	0
		Qiraah/Reading	6	0	0	0	0	0
		Qawaid/Grammar	10	3	0	1	1	0
		Kalam/Speaking	2	0	0	0	0	0
		Kitabah/Writing	16	0	0	0	5	0
Al-hayat (daily activities)	10th	Istima/Listening	20	2	2	0	0	0
		Qiraah/Reading	10	0	0	0	1	0
		Qawaid/Grammar	15	2	1	0	0	0
		Kalam/Speaking	2	0	0	0	1	0
		Kitabah/Writing	8	1	1	0	0	0
Al-hiwayah (Hobbies)	10th	Istima/Listening	4	2	0	0	0	0
		Qiraah/Reading	15	0	0	0	1	0
		Qawaid/Grammar	22	5	2	0	1	0
		Kalam/Speaking	5	5	0	0	1	0
		Kitabah/Writing	2	2	0	0	0	0
Al-shihhah (Health)	11th	Istima/Listening	15	0	9	0	4	0
		Qiraah/Reading	37	0	14	0	10	0
		Qawaid/Grammar	10	0	4	0	4	0
		Kalam/Speaking	2	0	0	0	0	0
		Kitabah/Writing	11	4	0	0	1	0
Al-safar (Travel)	11th	Istima/Listening	5	0	0	0	2	0
		Qiraah/Reading	9	0	0	0	4	0
		Qawaid/Grammar	7	0	0	0	2	0
		Kalam/Speaking	6	0	1	0	0	0
		Al Kitabah/Writing	8	7	0	0	3	0
Al-dirasah fi al-jamiah (University students)	12th	Istima/Listening	6	0	1	0	1	0
		Qiraah/Reading	4	0	0	0	0	0
		Qawaid/Grammar	15	0	1	0	3	0
		Kalam/Speaking	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Kitabah/Writing	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total			227	35	36	1	44	1
Percentage			88.80%	11.20%	97.30%	2.70%	97.70%	2.30%

**RQ2.** *In what ways are males and females presented and portrayed in these textbooks?*

Government-endorsed Arabic textbooks for senior high schools verbally presented texts, conversations, and exercises. Each chapter was structurally arranged by listening, reading, grammar, speaking, and writing. Meanwhile, on the visual level, textbooks used more photographs than caricatures and cartoons. As shown below, visual gender representation was presented based on the selected theme.

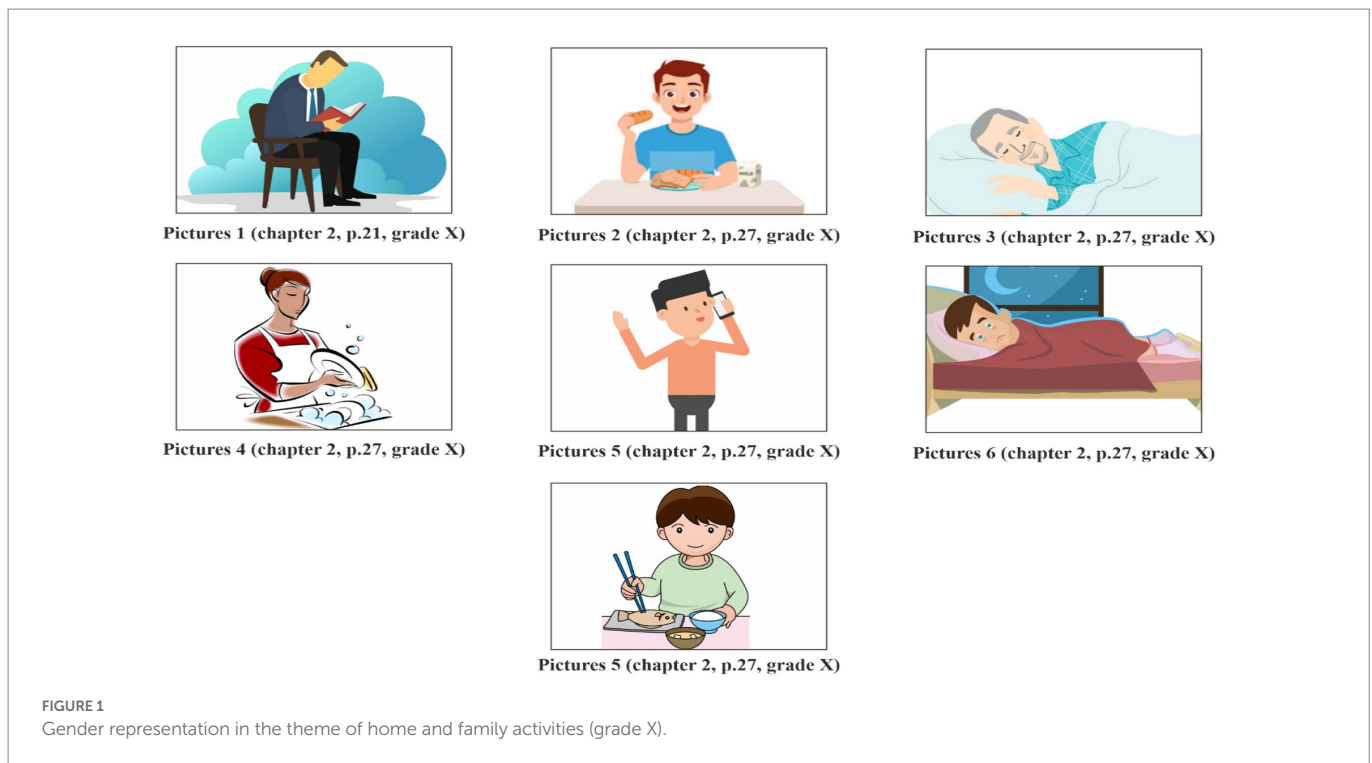
### Portraying males and females in the theme of home and family life

The pictures about home and family can be found in Chapter Two, pages 17–29. The pictures on this topic have a robust male representation

and appear to stereotype the female characters vividly. Inequality of gender representations can be seen on pages 21 and 27. On those pages, male pictures were presented more than female pictures. Six of the seven pictures were men and only one was a woman. In the family context, the female image was portrayed stereotypically. The woman was presented as a mother who worked domestically for her family (Figure 1, picture 4). Concurrently, men were shown in some activities, such as reading (Figure 1, picture 1), having breakfast and dinner (Figure 1, pictures 2 and 7), on the bed (Figure 1, pictures 3 and 6), and on the phone (Figure 1, picture 5).

### Portraying men and women in the theme of daily activities

In the theme of daily activities, the authors of Arabic textbooks of senior high school grade X portrayed 13 photographs on pages 48 and



52. Six of the 13 pictures represented girls. However, female representation in the foreground was shown in only three pictures: female students and male students in the class (Figure 2, picture 10), a mother in the market (Figure 2, picture 4), and a female news anchor (Figure 2, picture 5). In the other three pictures, women were represented in the background. In 10 other images, outdoor activities that males strongly dominate were shown, such as practicing activities in the laboratory (Figure 2, picture 3), sports (Figure 2, picture 2), a journalist (Figure 2, picture 6), a doctor checking a patient (Figure 2, picture 7), an engineer (Figure 2, picture 8), cleaning services (Figure 2, picture 9), a scavenger (Figure 2, picture 10), a police officer (Figure 2, picture 11), a preacher (Figure 2, picture 12), and farmers (Figure 2, picture 13).

## Portraying men and women in the theme of hobbies

The authors represented eight photographs on the topic of hobbies (pages 62–72). The hobbies shown were reading, photography, painting, sports, and cooking. Of all the pictures, only two represented women—pictures 3 and 5 (cooking activities). The other hobbies were represented by men, such as photography (Figure 3, picture 1), painting (Figure 3, picture 2), and sports (Figure 3, picture 7). There was one picture in which a woman and a man were shown in one frame: a picture of two students in the library. There seemed to be stereotyping of the female gender in the visual data.

The visual data are supported by the verbal data on page 69, as shown below.

The male gender was strongly represented in the text in Figure 4. The character Sulaiman (a male student) had some hobbies, such as reading, painting, sports, and photography. Gender gaps and stereotyping appeared in this chapter because there was a picture featuring a female, but they were not described in the text. Many women

have hobbies and can perform the same activities as in the picture. The marginalization and labeling of the female gender are shown in Figure 5 (pictures 3 and 5), where women are portrayed in cooking activities.

## Portraying males and females in the theme of health

The topic of health consisted of 11 pictures. Nine pictures represented the male gender and two represented the female gender. Female characters are shown in Figure 5 (picture 8) as a pediatrician and a pharmacist (picture 9). In this topic, the authors presented women out of the domestic area; however, gender gaps still exist because of the imbalanced gender representation. The visual data is also supported by verbal data, as shown below.

The researcher showed the verbal data presented on the theme of health as follows, in which the alignment of the male gender is obvious to support the previous visual data (Figure 6).

The exercise above is about a conversation between a father and his son (Muhammad). Students were given a conversational practice with their peers. The content of the conversation was a father asking about the condition or health of his son. The characters of Muhammad and his father are one of several examples dominated by male representations. Even though there are several female figures in the picture, this data reinforces why there is more gender bias in verbal data than visual data.

## Portraying men and women in the theme of traveling (grade XI)

In this chapter, there are only seven pictures. Five pictures represented the female gender. Two women preparing for travel are shown in Figure 7, picture 1. In Figure 7, picture 2, a woman sitting in the waiting room is shown. In Figure 7, picture 3, a family, composed



of a mother, a father, and their child, is shown. Figure 7, picture 4, has a female flight attendant speaking to a passenger. In Figure 7, picture 5, a woman sitting on a plane is shown. Meanwhile, a man and a woman on the beach are shown in Figure 7, picture 6. The male representation can be found in pictures 7 and 8 from Figure 7, where a man is visiting a pyramid (Figure 7, picture 7). Finally, two boys are visiting the zoo in Figure 7, picture 8.

Although women were visually represented in a strong manner in this chapter, verbally, the exercise texts over-represented the male gender. The male gender was expressed using a male name, such as Hasan (حسن). Still, it overwhelmed verbs indicating male, such as *safara* (سافر), which means to travel, *zara* (زار) or to visit, *zahaba* (ذهب) or to go, *qadha* (فضى) or to stay, and *sy'ura* (شعر) or to feel. The

representation of the male gender can be seen in one example below (Figure 8).

### Portraying boys and girls in the theme of studying at the university (grade XII)

The textbooks for the 12th grade had five themes. Only one of them was selected in this study (Chapter 5) because the other chapters had limited pictures. In Chapter 5, there were 14 pictures. However, only two human pictures represented gender. The first picture shows a male reading in the library and the second shows another male student in the laboratory. Although there were only two pictures, this theme still





had an imbalanced gender representation. Overall, visual and verbal data on all topics over-represent the male at the expense of the female (Figure 9).

**RQ3.** *What pedagogical actions may be taken to address gender inequalities in these textbooks?*

The government-endorsed Arabic language textbook used in this research contains gender bias. Visual data show that male gender representations were 65% and female representations were 35%. Verbal data, which were examined from subject pronouns, object pronouns, and possessive pronouns, also had comparable results. Subject pronouns consisted of 88.8% of male representations and 11.2% of female representations. Meanwhile, the number of object pronouns was 97.7% of male representations and only 2.7% of female representations. Additionally, boys represented 97.7% of the possessive pronoun and girls only represented 2.3%. The gender imparity representations discussed what the Arabic teachers need to do in teaching Arabic using those books and what actions the government should undertake to address the gender issues in those textbooks.

Arabic teachers must develop materials when they decide to use the government-endorsed Arabic language textbook. They must explore the teaching material deeply by providing gender equality pictures or photographs, and teachers are encouraged not to follow the textbooks fully. Moreover, teachers must also provide example exercises and texts on gender, balancing between men and women as subjects, objects, and possessives in the sentences, because Arabic grammar is very gender friendly. This aims to achieve a comprehensive image of the

understanding of the materials by students so that the message of gender equality is not neglected. Teachers need to apply these steps because the teaching and learning process in the class can change the attitudes of societies, cultures, and civilizations. Thus, teachers must be more creative, innovative, and adaptive in delivering teaching materials so that learning does not remain male-oriented. Furthermore, for the Ministry of Religious Affairs and government representatives to promote gender equality among students, they need to provide a professional and skilled team of teaching material compilers. Also, it is crucial to hire professional animators so that the picture in the produced books were not gendered biased and the books are qualified as quality standard textbooks.

## Discussion

This study portrays that government-endorsed Arabic textbooks contain gender bias. This could be seen from the percentage of gender representation in Arabic textbooks verbally and visually, which tended to favor men over women in various themes, such as home and family, daily activities, hobbies, health, and university students, except for the travel theme, which was female. It was shown in many studies that the dominance of women in the traveling or tourism sectors was higher than men (Khan, 2011; Laing and Frost, 2017; Cichocki, 2019). Quantitatively, it was shown in empirical evidence that the number of female Muslim travelers increased to 63 million in 2018. Two-thirds of them were from Europe, America, Asia, and the Middle East (Oktadiana et al., 2020). Khan (2011) reported that men did not have much free time to travel because they tended to have more office work, while family

**لاحظ المثال التالي**

الوصف العام	<p>سليمان له هوايات كثيرة، منها: القراءة، والرسم، والممارسة، وكرة القدم، وتنس الطاولة، وكرة السلة، وكرة الطائرة، والطنز، والصحافة.</p> <p>يقرأ سليمان في أوقات الفراغ الكتب الدينية والعامة والمجلات و الجرائد يلعب سليمان كرة القدم وتنس الطاولة وكرة السلة وكرة الطائرة في أوقات الفراغ.</p> <p>يستخدم سليمان آلة الترنور ويصوّر بها الطبيعة والمناظر والناس في أوقات الفراغ.</p>	١
الوصف الخاص	<p>يُرسِّم سليمان المناظر والحيوانات والأشجار في أيام العطلة. وهو يذهب إلى المزارع والتسعين ويتطَّلَّع إليها ثم يرسِّمها، وأحياناً يذهب إلى حديقة الحيوانات ويُرسِّم الحيوانات، مثل الفيل والأسد والقرد وغيرها.</p> <p>وسليمان له أصدقاء كثيرون. هو يكتُب الرسائل ويُرسلها إليهم. و في أيام العطلة القادمة سيُرَوِّد سليمان أصدقاءه في خارج المدينة.</p>	٢

FIGURE 4  
Exercise, chapter 5, p. 69 (grade X).

Pictures 1 (chapter 2, p.21, grade XI)

Pictures 2 (chapter 2, p.19, grade XI)

Pictures 3 (chapter 2, p.18, grade XI)

Pictures 4 (chapter 2, p.19, grade XI)

Pictures 5 (chapter 2, p.19, grade XI)

Pictures 6 (chapter 2, p.19/29, grade XI)

Pictures 7 (chapter 2, p.19/29, grade XI)

Pictures 8 (chapter 2, p.30, grade XI)

Pictures 9 (chapter 2, p.21, grade XI)

Pictures 10 (chapter 2, p.21, grade XI)

Pictures 11 (chapter 2, p.20, grade XI)

FIGURE 5  
Gender representation in the theme of health (grade XI).

responsibilities were relatively more limited than women. Still, nowadays, women cannot be labeled to compose the less busy gender regarding office work. They are doing much more office work, but still prioritizing traveling activities. Cichocki (2019) highlighted that women are more dominant in the traveling and tourism sectors because women excel more in interpersonal relationships than men. Therefore, they can become great negotiators in personal, business, office activities, and

other transactions. Still, women might find themselves in double binds, for example, when they must utilize their interpersonal and relationship skills more than men (Mitten et al., 2018). This implies that domestic roles should not be labeled for women because women can interact and engage in outside activities.

The study also reveals that not only traveling but female students were also featured in five other themes in domestic activities, such as

الكلام

١ تبادل الجوار مع زميلك كما في المثال  
 المثال : محمد - الأب - صدر  
 محمد : يمّ تشعُرُ يا أحمد ؟  
 الأب : أشعُرُ بألمٍ شديديٍّ في صدري  
 محمد : هل سَرَبْتِ الدواء ؟  
 الأب : سَرَبْتُهُ مرَّةً واحدةً في اليوم  
 محمد : الله يَشْفِيكُمْ



FIGURE 6  
 Exercise chapter 2, p. 30 (grade XI).



Pictures 1 (chapter35, p.35, grade XI)



Pictures 2 (chapter 3, p.35, grade XI)



Pictures 3 (chapter 3, p.36, grade XI)



Pictures 4 (chapter 3, p.37, grade XI)



Pictures 5 (chapter 3, p.46, grade XI)



Pictures 6 (chapter 3, p.46, grade XI)



Pictures 7 (chapter 3, p.46, grade XI)



Pictures 8 (chapter 3, p.43, grade XI)

FIGURE 7  
 Gender representation in the theme of traveling (grade XI).

cooking. Even if activities are outside domestics, they are limited to specific occupations, such as news anchors and pediatricians. This condition is happening because the social construction of Indonesian culture associates gender with jobs (Lestariyana et al., 2020). News anchors and pediatricians are considered more suitable for women in Indonesia, while men are deemed fit for positions other than those occupations. In this case, the Arabic textbook authors seem unable to separate the identity of the domination of religious ideology from that of the profession. They are influenced by the fanaticism of traditional Islamic understanding, which emphasizes that women are second creatures. Women are complementary to men. Therefore, the activities that women perform are domestic. This implies that the authors of the

Arabic textbook are also less aware of the grammatical characteristics of the Arabic language. This situation always balances males and females in several types of words, for example, in the form of pronouns, as shown in Table 5.

Additionally, textbooks that should be prepared purely for learning purposes are a new medium to indoctrinate conservative religious understanding and patriarchal culture that is still firmly rooted in textbook authors. This empirical evidence aligns with the study of Baghdadi and Rezaei (2015). They found that most of the gender bias in textbooks was caused by global cultural phenomena. In the UEA, patriarchy is still dominant and it influences the materials in textbooks. The same phenomenon is inevitable in Indonesia. The

ب

إِسْتَمِعْ إِلَى الْجَوَارِ، ثُمَّ اكْتُبِ الصَّحِيحَ أَوِ الْخَطَأَ بَيْنَ الْقَوْسَيْنِ، وَصَحِّحِ الْخَطَأَ

١- (.....) سَافَرَ حَسَنٌ إِلَى إِنْدُونِيْسِيَا فِي الشَّهْرِ الْأَخْيَاصِي  
..... : الصَّحِيحُ

٢- (.....) زَارَ حَسَنٌ عَمَّهُ فِي مِصْرَ مَعَ أَخِيهِ  
..... : الصَّحِيحُ

٣- (.....) فِي مِصْرَ، ذَهَبَ حَسَنٌ إِلَى الْجِبَالِ وَالْأَهْرَامَاتِ  
..... : الصَّحِيحُ

٤- (.....) قَضَى حَسَنٌ فِي مِصْرَ خَمْسَةَ أَيَّامٍ  
..... : الصَّحِيحُ

٥- (.....) شَعَرَ حَسَنٌ بِالسَّعَادَةِ أَثْنَاءَ رِحْلَتِهِ إِلَى مِصْرَ  
..... : الصَّحِيحُ

FIGURE 8  
Exercise text indicating the male gender.



طَالِبٌ جَامِعِي

Picture 1, (chapter 5, p.62/71, grade XII)



تَجْرِبَةٌ

Picture 2 (chapter 5, p.71, grade XII)

FIGURE 9  
Gender representation in the theme of studying in the university.

TABLE 5 Gender equality in Arabic pronouns.

Gender	Function	Singular	Dual	Plural
Masculine	Ghaib (Third Person)	Huwa/He	Huwa/(dual masculine)	Hum/They (masculine)
	Mukhathab (Second Person)	Anta/you (masculine)	Antuma/you (dual masculine)	Antum/you for plural (masculine)
Feminim	Ghaibah (Third Person)	Hiya/She	Huwa/(dual feminim)	Hunna/They (Feminim)
	Mukhathab (Second Person)	Anti/You Feminim	Antuma/you (dual feminim)	Antenna/you For plural (feminim)
Masculine/ Feminim	Mutakallim (First Person)	Ana/I (Masculine/ Feminim)	Nahnu/We (masculine/ Feminim)	Nahnu/We (masculine/ Feminim)

government-endorsed Arabic textbook used in Indonesia shows that planning and drafting did not consider gender equality since men dominate the authors and editors. Similarly, gender bias also appears in Arabic textbooks in Iran and Jordan (Otoom, 2014; Baghdadi and Rezaei, 2015; Al-Qatawneh and Al Rawashdeh, 2019). The results of the textbook research analysis in those countries showed that the parties involved in the curriculum and material designs paid less attention to the gender issues in the textbooks. This was because of the domination of customs, cultures, beliefs, and religious teachings that men must be more eminent than women.

Furthermore, a tradition that always precluded men before woman seems entrenched. Moreover, in their study, Salami and Ghajarieh (2016) indicated that gender stereotypes were in line with the efforts of authorities to maintain the status quo in Iranian society. Similarly, the authors of the textbooks seem affected by classical Islamic doctrine that lies in the segregation between men and women by bringing up the roles of men in the public sector and women in the domestic sector. From a cultural perspective, women were always positioned as housewives and the second gender (Eagly and Sczesny, 2019). Stereotype implications presented in the government mandate that Arabic textbooks used in Indonesia may cause emotional fragilities that support male supremacy and female inferiority. Otoom (2014) suggested raising the image of women in the curriculum and textbooks and enacting them as major methodological issues that need to be considered because the curriculum and textbook contents affect the visualizations of students about their roles in their future lives. Young generations are substantially prepared by school curricula

to embody philosophy, values, and principles in their societies. Besides, teachers are expected to express their views about cultural ideas that should be promoted in the textbooks (Salami and Ghajarieh, 2016).

In addition, male gender bias was more represented verbally and visually in the material presented. The visual data were 93 men (65.03%) compared to 50 women (34.96%). Regarding verbal text data, there were 357 men (90.6%) compared with 37 women (9.39%). The unbalanced visual and verbal data were analyzed using Rifkin's theory. The study results showed that the theory could not be applied to Arabic texts. The indicator items offered had unclear specifications, thus, the collected data overlapped. One of the indicators was "the ratio of all females to male characters" (Rifkin, 1998, p.235). For example, Fatimah Yusuf indicates that Fatimah is Yusuf's daughter. In Arabic, the name used is Fatima, not Miss Yusuf, as explained by Rifkin. When using the name Miss Yusuf, it is confusing when using pronouns in sentences because the word Miss indicates female, while the word Yusuf indicates a male. In the case of Arabic texts, these pronouns must be precise because Arabic grammar shows firmness. At the same time, it acknowledges and appreciates the existence of each gender. Ignoring this fact indicates that the government is not concerned with fulfilling gender equality in textbooks before publication. In contrast, the slogan of gender equality is continually echoed by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. Similarly, the author of the book neglects to use the

characteristics of the Arabic language, pro-gender equality, to transfer the value of gender equity.

This study suggests the need to implement gender mainstreaming in textbooks by using measurable indicators. Textbook authors are advised to adopt a rotation strategy to mention male and female genders in the text to accommodate the concept of gender equality so that gender bias in textbooks can be minimized. The Ministry of Religion, as a country representative, needs to monitor the preparation of Arabic textbooks that risk gender bias misperceptions. Arabic is an accommodative language for gender equality, which can be shown by the availability of various forms of words for men and women. This step must be taken to avoid gender bias and misperceptions of Islamic teachings. Thus, this empirical research implies that pedagogical actions that can be applied to solve this problem are as follows. First, Arabic teachers must develop materials when they decide to use the government-endorsed Arabic language textbook. Second, government representatives in the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia should promote gender equality among students.

## Conclusion

The present study has analyzed gender representation in the three government-endorsed Arabic textbooks for Islamic-based schools in Indonesia. It is essential to mention that only verbal and visual texts representing gender were examined. This empirical evidence attempts to administer a comprehensive understanding of gender stereotypes in social contexts such as home and family, daily activities, hobbies, health, traveling, and students in a university. This shows that although women were visible in verbal and visual texts in the three endorsed textbooks (Grades X, XI, and XII), they were still conventionally stereotyped as domestic workers. Women are also stereotyped as travelers, home workers, and pediatricians.

Furthermore, the textbook writers exposed their little awareness of gender equality. As a result, gendered stereotypes remain in textbooks. Based on the empirical investigation, it was implied that curriculum and textbook designers should be mindful of gender stereotyping to perform gender equality roles in Arabic textbooks. It is recommended that

textbook writers refrain from gender bias or stereotyping in Arabic textbooks because they teach about language areas and morals, such as gender (ness). However, it is unquestionable that gender inequality cannot be removed because this gender issue is part of a global cultural phenomenon. In other words, gender representation is socioculturally regulated, given that women and men have impartial opportunities to play distinct roles appointed by their community and society.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Author contributions

SK and FG contributed to the conceptual framework and wrote the article. AA and FF contributed to the methodological section. MU and SA translated, proofread, and wrote the article. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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