




Women's images and gender equality in Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers: A case study on *Al-Asas* in Sudan

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The purpose of this article was to analyse gender biases from the wider range of gender discussion written in Arabic textbooks *Al-Asas* volumes 1, 2 and 3, published by Sinan Al-Alamiyyah in Sudan. This research employed a qualitative approach with the implementation of critical discourse analysis (CDA). The results showed that unjust descriptions of female characters usually appear in textbooks: pictures of women as second-class and illustrations of gender bias. The pictures were always dominant among members of the community. Furthermore, there were also positive images showing the position of women among men and women having the same rights. The findings theoretically highlighted the implementation of CDA to analyse the content of Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers. As a practical implication, both readers and the users, either native or non-native Arabic speakers, could avoid the nurturance of gender biases in their social lives. The main conclusion would be that the users of the textbooks can consequently identify gender bias in the textbooks.

Contribution: Through the findings of positive images on the position of women within society and women's equality rights, it is hoped that this research would become a medium of increasing social awareness about the importance of achieving gender equality. The application of the study should include the improvement of the textbooks specifically referring to gender biases that would influence users of the textbooks in different countries.

Keywords: Arabic textbook; gender equality; gender bias; non-Arabic speakers; critical discourse analysis.

Introduction

Nowadays, the issues of gender equality, justice and gender status and roles in society have become frequently heated topics of discussion, academically. There are significant differences between the concepts of gender and sex. Gender differentiates things created by society; meanwhile, sex refers to something that is part of a human's nature (Koutris et al. 2019). Sex tends not to be changeable in terms of those reproductive organs of either women or men. Meanwhile, gender, which is shaped by society and culture, is changeable; for example, women can be masculine or men can be feminine (Beere 1990; Izzuddin, Dalimunthe & Susilo 2021; Mshweshwe 2020; Stets & Burke 2000).

Gender injustice is a system or structure that places men or women in inappropriate positions, or it can also be an impression and treatment that favour a particular gender in social life or public policy that creates inequality (Beebeejaun 2017; Rokhmad & Susilo 2017). The existing gender injustice is a result of social behaviour and treatment, such as women's marginalisation, women's placement in marginal areas, subordination, stereotypes, violence against women and various disproportionate workloads (Wagner et al. 2017). For instance, constructive images of women embodied in textbooks can influence students' understanding of the notion of gender, which is usually described as unequal, so that it will become even broader (Pahlke & Goble 2015). The importance of constructing an image of gender equality in the mindset of students, teachers, book writers, book publishers and other parties will lead to a positive impact on themselves specifically and society in general (Izzuddin et al. 2021). Thus, research on the positive construct of gender equality needs to be carried out as one form of social awareness on the concept that women are always positioned unfairly.

To achieve the realisation of gender equality, it is necessary to create a reconstruction of the concept of gender in society. Gebregeorgis (2016) stated that the final goal of feminist activities, including feminist theory and literary criticism, is to change the world by promoting women's equality. The affirmative policies thus emerged to fight gender injustices such as gender stereotypes, gender biases and negative gender constructions by placing women as second-class citizens. Consequently, feminists attempt to stop sexist treatment by empowering women. Hirschman (2016) stated that gender sensitivity is aimed at providing social awareness about gender issues to the public. For example, liberal feminists continue to raise issues related to individual rights and gender equality to achieve the same in social life. Based on this explanation, the researchers limited this study to three research questions, namely (1) how are the images of indirect violence against women in Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers portrayed? (2) What are the constructive pictures of women in Arabic books for non-Arabic speakers? (3) How do negative or positive images of women in textbooks affect students' understanding of gender relations?

The researchers chose *Al-Asas* textbooks volumes 1, 2 and 3, published by Sinan Al-Alamiyyah in Sudan. This selection was based on several considerations. Firstly, these textbooks have been used internationally and can be downloaded freely from the Internet. *Al-Asas* volumes 1, 2 and 3 are all printed and distributed, and even the latest revision has been published. These edited volumes show that the use of the textbooks is still ongoing. Secondly, the learning objectives included in the *Al-Asas* textbooks volumes 1, 2 and 3 are to train students to develop the four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Therefore, students are trained to learn to use Arabic with four skills. Thirdly, because of the use of the textbooks internationally and widely, it is necessary to initiate a critical study of gender relations within the books.

Literature review

Research on textbooks with a gender perspective has been carried out by several researchers, especially those who unveil gender injustices within the books. The following recent studies, including research conducted by Amerian and Esmaili (2015), have examined Indonesian textbooks containing gender biases. The research results show that women are placed as objects of narration more often, while men are placed in the position of subjects. In addition, men who do appear as objects are mostly written about in a positive narrative. Ideally, textbooks as learning resources for students should not contain gender biases.

In daily lives, people are often unaware and misunderstand the difference between gender and sex. Some people often connect specific gender roles with sex, as the connection is biologically considered human nature, which is not changeable. For example, taking care of children, cleaning the house and cooking are associated with domestic roles of women. These different gender roles do not matter if they

do not lead to gender injustice. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2017) states that the portrayal of gender injustice is an indirect form of violence. In previous years, the concept of gender equality has been introduced publicly to societies. Even so, gender inequalities that occur in real life still exist (Smirnova et al. 2019). Many studies on gender relations in various parts of the world, especially the research on gender equality in textbooks, have proven the existing inequalities. This means that gender comprises the characteristics of men and women which are formed within a society. Meanwhile, sex refers to something that becomes a human's nature (Koutris et al. 2019). This human's nature is a matter of the biological difference between men and women. Physical differences can be seen from the genitals and genetic differences. A person is referred as a woman when she has a certain reproductive organ with two X chromosomes. Moreover, a man has a different reproductive organ with one X and one Y chromosome.

On the one hand, a woman's role is mostly portrayed in the domestic field, such as doing housework (cooking, washing dishes, sweeping the house and others) (Reeves 2019). On the other hand, images of women's roles in the professional field, such as being managers, business owners or successful entrepreneurs, are less seen in public (Ulwan 2021). In other words, women in social life are mostly positioned lower than men; therefore, it becomes common knowledge that men are considered central agents in society (Curaming & Curaming 2020). Such images are regarded as an indirect form of violence because women are indirectly placed in the second class. Such indirect abuse can lead to a negative effect on the image of women in the real world; for example, some people may have the notion that women are not competent in doing any work outside the home. An assumption like this is a common gender stereotype existing in social relations. This stereotype can provide a negative effect to each gender, because:

[T]he stereotypes display traits which are seen as desirable for males and females in a particular culture; therefore, people who deviate too far from the stereotypical 'standards' are seen as gender-inappropriate. (Alsmearat et al. 2017:85)

The importance of recognising gender bias is evidenced by many studies examining the illustrations of women's roles in textbooks (Ariyanto 2018; Bakar et al. 2016; Cobano-Delgado & Llorent-Bedmar 2019; Dabbagh 2016; Emilia, Moecharam & Syifa 2017; Hall 2014; Kuruvilla & Thasniya 2015; Parker, Larkin & Cockburn 2017; Sleeter & Grant 2017; Sulaimani 2017). Izzuddin et al. (2021) recognised that the study of gender equality in textbooks is critical, as they consider textbooks to play a vital role in learning that can shape students' mindsets about each gender's role. If gender injustice is portrayed in a textbook, then students' mindsets will also be formed like that; for example, the activities of women are illustrated in a textbook as domestic servitude, so women are presented as not having an essential role in society.

Furthermore, Setyono and Widodo (2019) examined the textbook *Nationally Endorsed English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks for Senior High School Students in Indonesia*. He found a portrait of gender injustice against women in the instructional textbooks. This researcher stated that based on a critical perspective of feminism, women were portrayed unfairly in EFL textbooks (Nashriyah et al. 2020). The researcher said that in these textbooks, women were illustrated taking part in domestic affairs, without many roles outside internal matters. At the same time, men were always portrayed as successful people with high positions and ranks in public life. This phenomenon can create disharmony of gender relations in students' mindsets. This research also found images of stereotypes attached to women used in a lesson by displaying two pictures of a short conversation between two women. The phrase, 'What a nice dress!' appeared in the first picture, followed by another sentence, 'You look gorgeous!' According to the researcher, the two figures referred to a stereotypical portrait attached to women who often praise the appearance of others. If this stereotypical portrait is maintained continuously, it can result in a negative image of women (Setyono 2018).

A similar study conducted by Darni and Abida (2017) examined gender biases presented in Indonesian textbooks for elementary students. Both researchers mentioned that there were gender inequities in women's images in Indonesian books. The researchers also divided the types of unjust depictions into four parts, namely (1) gender biases in children's games, (2) occupational division of children's labour, (3) gender stereotypes about occupations and (4) attitudes. Women in Indonesian textbooks studied by the researchers were always illustrated with domestic affairs, such as taking care of the housework, cooking and cleaning. Meanwhile, men were identified with activities that were always related to outside the home. In their conclusion, the researchers stated that the writers of the elementary school textbooks had not incorporated gender equality as a parameter in the curriculum... the existing sharp stereotypical images that dominated the public sphere had placed women in the private area (Mitchell & Martin 2018). Then, they ended their statement with suggestions for readers to provide learning materials that lead to dismantling the tradition of gender discrimination.

Another study conducted by Tainio and Karvonen (2015) examined 59 textbooks – including exercise books – which were used in Finland schools. In these textbooks, they found gender biases in terms of writing (text) and visualisation (pictures). The two researchers examined the overall images of gender relations in the textbooks they researched, then classified the images into three parts: (1) male, (2) female and (3) other (characters not described or not mentioned by gender). Their research results showed that the male domination over female was found in a number of portrayals of characters' roles. The details of such portrayal in mother-tongue textbooks were as follows: 61.3% of the participants were male, 31.6% were female and 4.4% were other. Whereas for mathematics textbooks, 53.8% of participants were male,

the percentage of female participants was 31.6% and 14.6% of participants were others. For vocational education textbooks, the rate of male participants was 52.8%, 42.9% were female participants and others were 4.3%. The overall pictures of the book for male participants were 58.2%, for female participants were 33.5% and others were 8.3% (Tainio & Karvonen 2015).

In addition, Ordem and Ulum (2020) examined gender representation included in the EFL textbooks used in Turkey. They found remaining gender biases used in the EFL textbooks, both visually and textually. The researchers also cited Mitra's research results. They identified that only a small proportion of students were sensitive to the gender bias phenomena presented in the textbooks. The majority of other students who were interviewed accepted the stereotypes portrayed in their books without hesitation. Instead, they did not want to raise gender-related issues in their learning in the classroom. There was something different in this research compared with others that examined similar topics. Research on gender issues in textbooks generally has a negative connotation (a description of gender inequality). However, another side of research findings was discovered based on several books depicting men doing activities that are usually stereotyped to women, such as cooking and cleaning the house. In contrast, women were imaged as superheroes and could achieve successful careers, such as being a scientist or a pilot (Baghdadi & Rezaei 2015).

Omar (2018) analysed the gender stereotypes in an Arabic textbook for learners in the first three grades in Jordan. To achieve the objective of the study the researcher used a descriptive analytical method, representing a community study of the books in the Arabic language. Various tools for descriptive analysis have been developed and verified. Furthermore, after the analysis had been confirmed, the results of the study showed that in the committee for those who wrote Arabic language books for the first three grades, women were the majority. The authoring and review teams were mostly male. It showed that the total number of repeated gender-related words (males) reached 922 and 70.87% wholly. Consequently, the emerging gender gap referring to female-related words reached 379 (29.13%). The total number of gender-related images (male) based on the total number of photographs was 250 (71.43%). On the contrary, the total number of gender images (female) reached 100 and 28.57%. Furthermore, the total number of gender-related addresses (male) reached 8 at 16.67%, the gender-related titles were 2 at 4.17% and the general addresses based on the total number of addresses were 38 by 79.16%. The analysis of gender roles showed that the occupations practised by women were limited to six occupations, with the most prominent being nurse and teacher. Twenty professions were related to men, most notably pilot, fisherman and farmer. It showed that creativity and innovation, health roles, heroism, courage and ownership of property were specialised to men, not women. Regarding social roles, men could be seen as fathers, uncles, brothers, grandfathers and cousins, while women could be

seen as mothers, grandmothers and aunts. The study result showed that more roles were provided to men than women.

Another study conducted by Al-Qatawneh and Al Rawashdeh (2019) was entitled 'Gender representation in the Arabic language text book for the ninth-grade students approved by the Ministry of Education in the United Arab Emirates'. This study focused on investigating the gender representation in an Arabic-language textbook. The criteria examined include the ratio of gender (female to male) appearances, the ratio of gender (female to male) in aspects of religion and history, education, professions, social and family life, tradition, the language used in the evaluation questions, titles of address for women and order of mention. To examine these criteria, the manual method of analysis was adopted. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the bias in favour of men was clearly prevalent, as the phenomenon of men first referring to the secondary status of women was evident in the textbook examined. However, the findings also revealed the common use of the neutral title 'Ms' to address women. Thus, it was recommended to correct gender representation in the textbooks used in educational settings to ensure fair gender representation in educational materials.

Finally, Blumberg's research (2015) observed textbooks in four countries, namely Chile, Georgia, Pakistan and Thailand, which appeared to include gender biases in practically every book. He identified similar patterns on gender research issues in textbooks, namely (1) women were significantly under-represented; (2) women and girls included in texts or illustrations were nearly always depicted in highly stereotyped roles in the home; (3) in relatively few cases, women's images in non-domestic positions or activities were overwhelmingly of the most traditional type; (4) girls and women were usually passive and often static, while 'courageous' and 'confident' referred to boys and men undertaking exciting and worthwhile endeavours and occupations; (5) more gender-unequal phenomena in many countries tended to have somewhat more intense (or unfavourable) under-representation and stereotypes, but similarities far exceeded variations in unequal intensity; and (6) research that has measured improvement of gender relations over time, often decades, shows that the pace of reducing gender biases in textbooks is more often slow (even glacial) than rapid (Blumberg 2015).

Methodology

This research employed a qualitative approach. Analysis of the data in this study was visual; that is, the text comprised a dialogue between characters and the total number of discussions taken from all textbooks used as research objects. The data source was reached from *Al-Asas* volumes 1, 2 and 3, published by Sinan Al-Alamiyyah. The data collection technique used is the reading technique, which is completed by intensive reading of research data by determining gender signs in the text of *Al-Asas* volumes 1, 2 and 3 carefully and thoroughly. Data analysis stages were identifying data findings based on gender perspective and data classification based on the formulation of the research questions.

To study gender relations in Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers, researchers applied a qualitative content analysis method with critical discourse analysis (CDA). Most previous studies have found and drawn conclusions from the prevailing images of gender biases and gender stereotypes in textbooks, while others mentioned that several books described successful women who had roles outside their domestic activities, such as being able to apply to work as personnel manager or even serving as mayor (Setyono 2018). As a study of language, CDA is largely used as an analysis to uncover a linguistic representation to understand social discourses. This means that language is analysed not only by describing linguistic aspects but also its context. Language is used for certain purposes and practices; however, when it is used in a CDA, it becomes a medium to reach certain goals and practices, including ideological practices and the initiation of sociocultural situations surrounded around a discourse. The notion of discourse in CDA considers language as a social practice and includes the context as an important part of the language (Wodak 1997). Furthermore, CDA relates to the concept of power mingling within the discourse. Within the text, the discursive is governed by differences of the strength of decoding parts; furthermore, it is determined by its discourse and genre. In short, CDA can be defined as the basis for the analysis of structural relationships, domination, discrimination, power and control expressed within the language. In other words, CDA aims to investigate critical social disparities as they are expressed, shaped and legitimised within the language.

As qualitative research, this study used text analysis to scrutinise the existing gender perspective included in *Al-Asas* texts. Sara Mills text analysis was used to develop CDA. Meanwhile, the whole data were collected in the form of vocabulary, clauses, sentences and paragraphs consisting of gender perspectives in the reading text. Sources of data in this study were *Al-Asas* textbooks volumes 1, 2 and 3, published by Sinan Al-Alamiyyah. Researchers acted as the main instrument during data collection, assisted by working tables. The data collection technique used was the reading technique, completed by reading the research data intensively and by determining the gender markers showed in the *Al-Asas* textbooks carefully and thoroughly. We also note the results of the observation of important data in the reading text of the *Al-Asas* textbooks, was recorded in a format that had been prepared for later analysis. The data analysis stage consisted of (1) identifying the data findings based on a gender perspective, (2) classifying the data based on the two research formulations using working tables and (3) starting data coding to facilitate further analysis.

Results

Images of women as second class

Labelling as the second class refers to a condition of women in which they are placed in the second position after men. It means that women are considered unequal to men: their

views are presented as marginalised figures occupying only a specific domain. Bryson (2019) stated that because of such marginalised positions in work areas identified in promotion prospects, women are far less likely to be promoted than men. Bryson's explanation can be found in the examples of women who are positioned in the second class. This is a reality in social life that is happening right now. However, after a while, there have been progressive efforts to achieve gender equality carried out by the feminist movement, aiming to build a harmonious society in which there is no exploitation and discrimination while living in a democratic society with freedom and no social stratifications based on class, caste and gender injustice (Bell 2016). Thus, even textbooks should be free from things that can bring gender biases.

Positioning women in the second class is identified as a form of indirect violence. Placing women as second class is not directly recognised by students; however, students' thinking can be influenced to come to this position through learning from the textbooks. As women are socially constructed as second-class citizens, students' mindsets are formed to allow the rise of gender discrimination attitudes that will be perpetuated in future (Ferrell et al. 2018).

Placing women as a second class is a long-established phenomenon. As said by Rosenthal, Smidt and Freyd (2016):

But even in times when they had a privileged status, unique in the ancient world, they [women] were not socially equal to men; taking part in religion and government, they could have the role of regulation, but the pharaoh was male; priests and warriors were lazy; woman's role in public life was a secondary one.

This situation is affected by the influential patriarchal culture inherent in all elements of society.

This study discovers the existing visual images of female characters or figures who are always positioned at number two, namely the position after the male characters(s) in the textbook *Al-Asas*. Figure 1 illustrates some of the pictures displayed in *Al-Asas* volume 1. Based on the given illustrations, the female characters can be recognised and understood in several illustrations of the textbook that *Al-Asas* described as the second class, because women are always positioned after the male characters. This image can shape the students' mindsets; as a part of the community, students can also discriminate against women as they have learned from the textbooks. In the scheme of gender theory initiated by Sovič and Hus (2015), children learn about male and female roles from the culture in which they live. Children adjust their behaviour to align with the gender norms of their learning from the earliest stages of social development. If gender bias is continuously carried out in the making of textbooks, then this misleading may later harm women. It can happen to students who will grow into adults in the future (Helmer et al. 2017). In their minds, the construction of how women are positioned in society can lead to unfair treatment of women in real life (Mooney & Evans 2018). Textbooks are one of the most accessible media to obtain and use as learning resources. Therefore, books should be free from things that can subordinate one gender unfairly to another (Lee 2014). Gender education for children is expected to be implemented in accordance with the international technical guidance on sexuality education. In it, readers are informed about when the time is appropriate to teach children. For example, four to five-year old children can begin to learn about their sexuality through the introduction of their reproductive organs as a vital part of their bodies. Reproductive function education is needed from an early age so that they can understand how to protect themselves. Sexuality can also be introduced through inviting them to bathe with parents of different sexes so that they are aware of



Source: Bader, F.A., 2010, *Al-Asas for teaching Arabic for non-native speakers*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, Alexandria, VA.

FIGURE 1: Women's visual images as the second class.

being men and women who indeed have different biological traits; at a later stage, this introduction will also lead to identifying other differences, such as positions in Muslim worship and so on. This is necessary because equality is not education about equality but understanding differences normally and not hierarchically.

Furthermore, at the age of five years and above, children can be given toys to help balance and process their psychomotor and motoric skills, as well as their gross and fine skills. Through this process, children need to receive explanations from their parents, for example, about the benefits of playing a game without being told which one is for boys and which one is for girls. Instead, they need to focus on the substance included in the message of playing a game.

In the long term, they are introduced to gender equality from an early age. This introduction will not only foster self-confidence but also their ability to share roles with partners in the future. For example, sons will become husbands who will not hesitate to share roles in cooking, washing, etc., and girls will become wives who will not mind if they have to paint walls or repair the roof because they do not want to stigmatise those certain jobs that are related to a certain gender.

Illustrations of gender biases against women

According to Terrell et al. (2016), gender bias is the opposite of gender equality. Gender bias, also called sexism, is something that can describe social discrimination based on sexual membership. Sexism is discrimination and prejudice against someone based merely on type of sex, which also refers to all systems of differentiation against a sex type individually. Sexism can refer to different beliefs or attitudes: (1) the belief that one sex is more valuable than another, (2) male or female chauvinism, (3) misogynistic attitudes (hatred towards women) or misandry (hatred towards men) and (4) distrust of people of different sexes. Gender bias is an assumption that favours one gender, being male or female. For example, women are considered more suitable for household nurturance, thus doing all domestic work. In contrast, men are considered more suitable to work outside home to earn a living for their family.

This present study found that there is a predominance of masculine vocabulary portions and characters in conversations included in the textbooks. Based on the analysis results, the researchers discovered that gender inequalities in the *Al-Asas* volumes 1, 2 and 3 consist of the presentation of a male figure who is dominant in comparison to women. Masculinity (also known as manhood) is a number of attributes, behaviours and roles associated with boys and men. Masculinity is socially defined and biologically created. Masculine traits differ from gender. Both men and women can be masculine. The traits inherent in the term masculine are courage, independence and assertiveness. These characteristics vary and are influenced by social and cultural factors.

One volume of the textbooks comprises six chapters of lessons: for size 1, there are 25 conversations; for volume 2, there are 25 conversations, while for volume 3, there are 22 interviews.

The research results show that men's domination over women is very high in these *Al-Asas* textbooks. This finding illustrates well the percentage of dialogues between men and men, which is far higher than the rate of conversations between women and women, as well as dialogue between men and women (provided in Table 1).

Based on the three volumes in Table 1, the dominant male characters are very high compared with female characters. The female characters reach only 12% for the highest percentage, which does not reach a quarter of the total of 100%. This dominant percentage shows that *Al-Asas* indicates a distinct gender bias in the instructional textbooks, a form of indirect gender violence. Besides, gender bias can also affect the quality of instructional materials, especially in studying Arabic. For example, in the classification of Arabic vocabularies, there are differentiating types of gender, namely *mudzakar* [masculine] or *muannats* [feminine]. When the dictionary of *mudzakar* is dominant, the vocabulary of *muannats* does not appear much; therefore, students' knowledge of the vocabulary of *muannats* becomes limited. That is because, in Arabic, different gendered words have various forms. For example, the name (يَدْرُسُ) *yadrusu* is a verb form for a single masculine, meaning 'he (a man) is learning'. The singular verb for the feminine is (تَدْرُسُ) *tadrusu*, saying 'she (a woman) is learning'. So when knowledge of feminine vocabulary is minimally presented, then Arabic learning is ineffective. Besides, in the textbooks' dialogues, as explained in the given table, visual representation of gender bias is illustrated in the form of many images of men performing daily activities, as shown in Figure 2.

The given pictures indicate a gender bias in *Al-Asas* learning textbooks. The pictures display an unequal portion of gender representation between men and women, as if women do not do as many activities in daily public life as men. Although women may also appear in the pictures and do the same events or work, if such gender discrimination continues to be a part of the textbooks of learning, then students' thinking is constructed to understand that women do not have many activities, professions or work. This type of women's image can trigger emerging stereotypes against women as those who do only a little action. Therefore, improving gender awareness as written in the instructional textbooks becomes necessary to make students more sensitive in addressing or understanding gender relations in society.

Constructive images of women in Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers

When the present research explored more pages of *Al-Asas* instructional textbooks objectively, in fact, not all the images given inside the books contained the representation

TABLE 1: Visual illustration of various male activities.

Volume 1					Volume 2					Volume 3				
Ch.	Dial.	Only male	Only female	Both male and female	Ch.	Dial.	Only male	Only female	Both male and female	Ch.	Dial.	Only male	Only female	Both male and female
2	1	X	-	-	1	1	X	-	-	1	1	X	-	-
-	2	X	-	-	-	2	-	-	X	-	2	-	-	X
-	3	-	-	X	-	3	X	-	-	-	3	X	-	-
3	1	-	-	X	-	4	-	X	-	-	4	X	-	-
-	2	-	-	X	-	5	-	-	X	-	5	X	-	-
-	3	X	-	-	-	6	-	X	-	-	6	X	-	-
-	4	X	-	-	-	7	X	-	-	-	7	-	-	X
4	1	X	-	-	-	8	-	X	-	3	1	X	-	-
-	2	-	-	X	3	1	X	-	-	-	2	X	-	-
-	3	X	-	-	-	2	X	-	-	4	1	X	-	-
5	1	X	-	-	-	3	X	-	-	-	2	-	-	X
-	2	-	-	X	4	1	X	-	-	-	3	X	-	-
-	3	-	-	X	-	2	X	-	-	-	4	X	-	-
-	4	-	-	X	-	3	X	-	-	5	1	X	-	-
-	5	X	-	-	-	4	-	-	X	-	2	-	-	X
6	1	-	-	X	-	5	X	-	-	-	3	-	-	X
-	2	-	-	X	-	6	X	-	-	-	4	-	-	X
-	3	-	-	X	-	7	X	-	-	-	5	X	-	-
-	4	X	-	-	-	8	X	-	-	6	1	X	-	-
-	5	X	-	-	-	9	-	-	X	-	2	X	-	-
-	6	X	-	X	5	1	-	-	X	-	3	X	-	-
-	7	-	-	X	-	2	X	-	-	-	4	X	-	-
-	8	-	-	X	-	3	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	9	X	-	-	6	1	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
-	10	X	-	-	-	2	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Percentage		13/25 = 52	0/25 = 0	12/25 = 48	Percentage		17/25 = 68	3/25 = 12	5/25 = 20	Percentage		16/22 = 73	0/22 = 0	6/22 = 27



Source: Bader, F.A., 2010, *Al-Asas for teaching Arabic for non-native speakers*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, Alexandria, VA.

FIGURE 2: Visual illustration of various male activities.

of gender injustice. There were also several relatively fair and constructive portrayals for women, as illustrated in Figure 3.

The given pictures reveal that there are texts that illustrate that women can carry out the same activities as men, such as studying, going to school, writing, drawing, etc. The following descriptions also demonstrate that women's events are not only in the domestic sphere but also public. Therefore,

the constructive imagery of women, as included in the textbooks, can build and influence students' understanding of gender equality. Several other pictures display images of gender equality contained in the *Al-Asas* learning textbooks, present in the following examples.

The picture in Table 2 shows that women have fewer high roles than men, as it is shown through the pictures that men can find pens while women do not find them. The overall



Source: Bader, F.A., 2010, *Al-Asas for teaching Arabic for non-native speakers*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, Alexandria, VA.

FIGURE 3: Women's activities in the textbook, volume 1.

TABLE 2: Text translation of Figure 4.

He (male) is reading.	A boy has found a pen.	She (female) prostrated.
She (female) is reading.	A girl did not find a pen.	He (male) prostrated.

pictures presented here indicate the same roles and activities between women and men as in *Al-Asas* textbooks. Women and men are described equally and are able to do similar works. This point demonstrates the existing provision of a balanced vocabulary between masculine and feminine. When counting the numbers, the roles displayed for each gender are the same (3:3). Such depictions should be presented in the textbook materials to build constructive mindsets in students without having negative images of women (Figure 4).

On the contrary, the constructive image should precisely display women who can do many activities and can achieve gender equality in the public sphere (Khurshid 2016). In addition, the students' knowledge and understanding of gender vocabulary should become more effective because of the equal provision of vocabulary forms of masculine and feminine. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's recommendation about the promotion of gender equality in Leach (ed. 2016) says that full gender equality in education should imply that girls and

boys enjoy the same chances to go to school and that they experience teaching methods and curricula, which are free of stereotypes, as well as academic orientation and counselling unaffected by gender biases. Thus, based on reducing gender biases, the main objective of the prevalent issues of gender equality is aimed to eliminate indirect violence affected by gender inequality.

Discussion

Michel Foucault's CDA is one method of analysing media texts to uncover and dissect how the media constructs a discourse. Discourse analysis emphasises the constellation of forces that occur in the process of production and reproduction of meaning. Critical discourse analysis looks at the use of language in speech and writing as a social practice. Language analysis not only describes the linguistic aspects but also relates and connects itself to its context. The context there means that language is used for certain purposes and practices, including the practice of its influential power. In regard to the focus of this present study, it relies on discourse analysis of printed media, and three important things are found that are interrelated one to another: text, context and discourse. Discourse analysis here refers to description of the text and context, which simultaneously occurs in communication processes.



Source: Bader, F.A., 2010, *Al-Asas for teaching Arabic for non-native speakers*, American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language, Alexandria, VA.

FIGURE 4: Images of gender equality by presenting masculine and feminine vocabularies.

To analyse this study, the researchers use CDA, considering that the focus of the analysis is the content of *Al-Asas* volumes 1, 2 and 3. Content discourse analysis is also regarded as capable of revealing images of indirect violence against women or constructive pictures of women shown in Arabic textbooks for non-Arabic speakers, both visual and textual descriptions. Each manual should carry ideological and cultural backgrounds that are genetic derivatives of the writer. Therefore, CDA is considered capable of examining the more extensive domains because CDA recognises language as a representation of social practice. It describes discourses as social practice, implying a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situations, institutions and social structures in which they are framed into (Wodak & Meyer 2009). Furthermore, De los Heros (2009) and Setyono (2018) stated that the CDA enables one to uncover how an ideological system is constructed by texts and social practices that (dis)privilege particular values in society.

The role of textbooks in the learning processes

Textbooks have vital roles, among other things, to become one of the learning resources and teaching materials widely used in learning processes at school. Besides, books are among of the main components of the learning process. Furthermore, the textbook is one of the implementations of the curriculum; in other words, the book is the applied curriculum (Ettl & Welter 2010). Textbooks incorporate the knowledge, norms and ideology of a particular society that are believed and considered appropriate by teachers and schools for the choice of textbooks in their instruction in classrooms. As a result, the contents of books consist of living

values in society, and the teacher should teach these values to their students (Gouviás & Alexopoulos 2018).

If a textbook portrays women's images in the second class, it only cultivates women in domestic affairs or embodying stereotypes that are common in society; therefore, those portrayals will come to students' minds and shape their mindsets. This situation happens because the main objective of the textbook itself is to develop a gender-subjective specific skill (Kereszty 2009). Based on such a case, the book is inclined to gain a reliable power and role in shaping the mindset of students who are a part of the community (Van Craeynest 2015), whose mindset is to preserve stereotypes. The textbooks are a reflection of the community itself. Furthermore, books contain inner expressions of the writer's thoughts, which are part of a society with a certain mindset and norms. In this case, Dejene (2017) said that textbooks contribute to learning through the dissemination of knowledge. However, they also play a role in children's upbringing by directly or indirectly transmitting models of social behaviours, norms and values in their minds. Therefore, the re-equipment of textbooks for both educational and social changes is required.

Accordingly, as explained earlier, the description of gender relations in the textbooks is crucial. It is reinforced by Aljuaythin (2018), who stated that students are affected by the pictures in the books, whether consciously or unconsciously. They observe, understand and interpret the images. Whether students' understanding is consciously absorbed or not, according to Coates (2015), the textbooks can change the mindset of society members, as they are 'vehicles' of socialisation of living values and

norms. Books have vital roles, among other things, to become one of the learning resources and teaching materials that are widely used in learning processes at school. Also, textbooks are one of the main components of the learning process.

Furthermore, the book is one of the implementations of the curriculum; in other words, the textbook is the applied curriculum. Textbooks incorporate knowledge, norms and ideology of an individual society that is believed and considered appropriate by teachers and schools for the choice of books in their instructions in classrooms.

There are various types of gender injustice, including gender stereotypes, gender biases and the placement of women as second class. An excellent textbook should uphold the notion of gender equality rather than discriminating against one gender (Al-Qatawneh & Al Rawashdeh 2019). Gender discrimination, directly and indirectly, affects students to have a misleading understanding of gender itself; for example, women are portrayed in the domestic sphere and men are always portrayed in professional activities and work in the public area (Cline et al. 1985). Gender stereotypes still exist today and are implemented by society. Gender stereotypes are used as equipment to judge others negatively. Stereotypes also can affect someone who evaluates others; he or she would be able to influence other's judgment to discriminate against some people because of the stereotypical views he or she has (Pierre 2018).

Women and the United Nations Children's Fund (2018) defines gender stereotypes as simplistic generalisations about the gender attributes and roles of others, individually or collectively, and the differences among them. Stereotypes can be positive or negative, but they mostly convey misleading information about others. Based on this definition, stereotypes can create the mindset of society towards gender social functions, based on what they believe. Several common stereotypes develop in the community, for example, the assumption that men are stronger, have a more dominant role in society and are considered more capable of achieving a successful life than women. In contrast, the woman is imaged carefully with internal parts, subordination (second class) and fondness for dressing up (Foroutan 2012). Moh'd et al. (2020) states that for women to be able to achieve equal status, all stereotyped social roles for men and women must be eliminated. Furthermore, Islam and Asadullah (2018) state that the elimination of stereotypes and the most blatant sexism are insufficient, so according to them, to achieve gender equality, there needs to be more effort than just eliminating gender stereotypes, because of gender stereotypes contained in textbooks which can strengthen the mindset of students in viewing gender roles.

Gender injustice can occur as a result of the existence of traditional gender roles, placing men as rational, stable, able to protect and to decide on many things. At the same time, women are perceived as emotional (irrational), weak,

nurturing and submissive (Concordă 2018). These things have successfully created gender injustice and the adverse treatment of women, as has long been the case.

Conclusion

This study examined the images of women found in Arabic learning textbooks for non-Arabic speakers entitled *Al-Asas*. The study aimed to participate in promoting the notion of gender equality illustrated through the content of the learning textbooks, consisting of three volumes. Moreover, the books that became the focus of this study are widely used in many countries. Furthermore, the results of this study were the findings of images of gender injustice experienced by women in various ways, such as the placement of women as second class and gender biases.

In addition, the three-volume textbooks have also portrayed positive images of women. The books also show women's models, such as placing women equal to men in several social and professional activities in the public sphere. Therefore, this research can also be used as a medium of improving social awareness for readers about the importance of gender equality in various ways, especially its inclusion within the textbooks. Furthermore, incorporating materials of gender equality into the books should also affect the quality of students to understand and practice Arabic learning; this is because in Arabic, there are types of words based on gender, that is, *mudzakar* and *muannats*.

This research only examined Arabic textbooks for non-Arabs consisting of various female images. Therefore, it is also necessary to have a tangible manifestation of the textbook writers and the book publisher to pay attention to what has been printed and distributed. Besides, schools and teachers who are users of the textbooks are expected to be wiser in selecting the books that would be used in learning processes that would result in a maximum understanding of their students.

Limitations and further study

Despite the critical findings reported by the present study, some potential limitations deserve mention. From the essential findings reported by this study, several potential limitations need to be mentioned. The linguistic properties distinguishing authentic from contrived texts were not thoroughly discussed. Therefore, the results reported by the research in this article must be interpreted with caution. This requires researchers to further investigate gender bias in textbooks from a variety of appropriate perspectives, namely discourse analysis. Limitations also include the non-inclusiveness for other Arabic texts. Therefore, future research needs to be dedicated to investigating these other elements. Also, it will be useful and exciting to direct future research to explore gender bias in the textbook with other methods such as keyword extraction, sentiment analysis, text classification, text mining and analysis, text extraction and topic analysis.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

Y.R.U. contributed to conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, investigation, writing of the original draft and review and editing. E.H. and I.I. each played a role in conceptualisation, methodology, formal analysis, visualisation, validation and data curation.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards of research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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