

GENDER STEREOTYPING IN THE CURRENT SECONDARY LEVEL ENGLISH  
TEXTBOOK(S) IN NEPAL: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

A Dissertation

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## AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation/thesis of *Ms Yasoda Tiwari* for the degree of *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* presented on 25 April 2025, entitled *Gender Stereotyping in the Current Secondary Level English Textbook(S) in Nepal: A Critical Analysis*

## APPROVED BY



Asst. Prof. Bharat Pd. Neupane, PhD

Dissertation Supervisor

Gender-related issues and their impacts have become a significant topic of discussion because they directly connect with the constitutional right to equality. In the field of education, textbooks are considered a significant source for teaching and learning in Nepal. Therefore, it should not be presented in a gender-biased manner. I have experienced that English textbooks of the secondary level often promote the traditional stereotypes of gender representation by shaping learners' perceptions and understanding of social roles and norms. In such a situation, we expect to have inclusive teaching material that can avoid such biases so that inclusivity and gender equality in education can be offered. This study explores the representation and portrayal of gender, especially the misrepresentation of gender roles, social norms, and the stereotypes genders use in the current English textbook of grades IX and X. This study also explores how the misrepresentation of gender influences maintaining the fundamental rights of being unbiased in the classroom and equality in education from the perspective critical discourse analysis. The textual and visual repressions of male and female characters in the textbooks were also critically analyzed from the perspective of gender schema theory.


With this note, this study tried to answer two different questions: How do secondary-level English textbooks represent gender? How do stakeholders perceive the portrayal of gender in textbooks? To address these questions, I used Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to critically analyze the representation of gender roles and

responsibilities in the current secondary-level English textbooks (IX and X). I have also used narrative inquiry as a second method, especially for exploring the essence of the second question of my thesis, where I interviewed five stakeholders, including three female secondary English teachers, a curriculum designer, and a textbook writer.

In the first part, I have presented my experiences as a teacher in Nepal, highlighting the extensive gender biases present in secondary-level English textbooks (IX and X). These biases manifest not only in language but also in the roles assigned to characters within the textbooks. The research underscores that textbooks serve as significant socialization tools that can either challenge or reinforce societal norms regarding gender roles. Similarly, the second part of this research highlights gender misrepresentation in the textbooks by capturing women in traditional roles, such as caregivers or homemakers. In contrast, men are frequently portrayed as leaders or professionals. This disparity perpetuates stereotypes that limit students' perceptions of gender capabilities and career aspirations. The frequent use of male pronouns and masculine language reinforces the notion that men are the default or normative gender. This linguistic bias marginalizes women and non-binary individuals, contributing to an inequitable learning environment. Visual materials in the textbooks also reflect gender biases, with male characters often shown in positions of authority and female characters depicted in supportive roles. The visual representation further entrenches societal stereotypes about gender roles. The researchers' findings presented that such misrepresentations mainly affect students' understanding of gender equality and their understanding of gender inequality. With the help of this critical discourse analysis, the prescribed textbooks can be improved and can stop students from forming wrong and discriminatory beliefs. The findings also suggest a need for curriculum developers to create balanced and inclusive educational materials that promote gender equality.

Based on the experiences shared by my informants and theoretical discussion, the research concludes that gender misrepresentation in textbooks is ethically unjustifiable and requires urgent revision. This issue calls for decisive action from educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to acknowledge and address the impact of gender bias in educational materials, particularly in the current textbooks, which serve as significant tools for teaching and learning in the context of Nepal. The study underscores the need to prepare gender-friendly textbooks that might challenge traditional stereotypes and promote equitable representations of all genders.

Textbooks can play a transformative role in cultivating positive perceptions and highlighting social change by fostering inclusiveness in educational content. Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on gender equality in education, emphasizing the crucial role of textbooks in influencing societal norms and encouraging gender-friendly learning platforms for every gender in the classroom.



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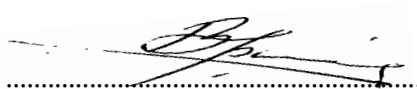
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## शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा दर्शनाचार्य (M.Phil.) उपाधिको लागि यसोदा तिवारीको नेपालमा हालको माध्यमिक स्तरको अंग्रेजी पाठ्यपुस्तक(हरू) मा लैङ्गिक स्टेरियोटाइपिङ: एक आलोचनात्मक विश्लेषण (Gender Stereotyping in the Current Secondary Level English Textbook(s) in Nepal: A Critical Analysis) भन्ने शिर्षकको शोधपत्र शिक्षा संकाय, काठमाण्डौ विश्वविद्यालयमा ११ बैशाख २०८२ गते मा प्रस्तुत गरियो ।



सह प्रा. भरतप्रसाद न्यौपाने, पीएचडी  
शोध निर्देशक

लैङ्गिकसम्बन्धी विषयहरू र तिनका प्रभावहरू अहिलेको सन्दर्भमा निकै चर्चाको विषय बनेका छन्, किनभने ती विषयहरू नेपाली संविधानमा उल्लेखित समानताको अधिकारसँग प्रत्यक्ष रूपमा जोडिएका छन्। शिक्षाको क्षेत्रमा पाठ्यपुस्तकहरू सिकाइ-शिक्षणको महत्वपूर्ण स्रोत मानिन्छन्। त्यसैले यस्ता सामग्रीहरूमा लैङ्गिक पूर्वाग्रह देखिनु अनुचित हुन्छ। नेपालमा माध्यमिक तहको अंग्रेजी पाठ्यपुस्तकमा प्रायः पारम्परिक लैङ्गिक रूढिहरूलाई प्रोत्साहित गर्ने खालका सामग्रीहरू देखिन्छन्, जसले सिक्नेहरूमा सामाजिक भूमिकाहरू र मान्यताबारेको बुझाइलाई प्रभावित गर्छ। यस्तो अवस्थाबाट मुक्तिका लागि सबैलाई समेट्ने खालका शिक्षण सामग्रीहरू चाहिन्छ, जसले लैङ्गिक समानतालाई प्रोत्साहन गरोस्।

यस अध्ययनमा कक्षा ९ र १० मा प्रयोग हुने हालको अंग्रेजी पाठ्यपुस्तकमा देखिएको लैङ्गिक प्रतिनिधित्व, विशेषतः गलत रूपमा देखाइएका लैङ्गिक भूमिकाहरू, सामाजिक मान्यताहरू र रूढिगत दृष्टिकोणहरूको विश्लेषण गरिएको छ। यसै सन्दर्भमा, कक्षाकोठामा हुने सिकाइमा कुनै पक्षपात नरहोस् भन्ने संवैधानिक अधिकारलाई कसरी प्रभावित गरिरहेको छ भन्ने पक्षलाई समेत आलोचनात्मक विमर्श विश्लेषण (Critical Discourse Analysis) को दृष्टिकोणबाट बुझ्ने प्रयास गरिएको छ। पाठ्यपुस्तकमा देखिएका पाठ्य तथा दृश्य (visual) सामग्रीहरूमा पुरुष र महिला पात्रहरूको प्रतिनिधित्वलाई लैङ्गिक योजना सिद्धान्त (Gender Schema Theory) को आधारमा समेत विश्लेषण गरिएको छ।

यस अध्ययनले दुईवटा मुख्य अनुसन्धान प्रश्नहरू उठाएको छः १. माध्यमिक तहका अंग्रेजी पाठ्यपुस्तकमा लैङ्गिक प्रतिनिधित्व कसरी गरिएको छ? २. पाठ्यपुस्तकमा देखिएको लैङ्गिक चित्रणलाई सरोकारवालाहरू कसरी हेर्छन्? यी प्रश्नहरूको उत्तर दिनका लागि आलोचनात्मक विमर्श विश्लेषण (CDA) प्रयोग गरी कक्षा ९ र १० का पाठ्यपुस्तकमा भएका लैङ्गिक भूमिकाहरूको विश्लेषण गरिएको छ। साथै, दोस्रो प्रश्नको गहिरो उत्तर पत्ता लगाउन कथात्मक अनुसन्धान (narrative inquiry) पद्धति अपनाइएको छ, जसअन्तर्गत पाँच जना सरोकारवालाहरू तीनजना महिला अंग्रेजी शिक्षक, एकजना पाठ्यक्रम डिजाइनर, र एकजना पाठ्यपुस्तक लेखक सँग अन्तर्वार्ता लिइएको छ।

शोधको पहिलो भागमा अनुसन्धानकर्ताले शिक्षिकका रूपमा आफ्ना अनुभवहरू प्रस्तुत गरेकी छन्, जसमा माध्यमिक तहका पाठ्यपुस्तकमा देखिएका लैङ्गिक पूर्वाग्रहहरूको चर्चा गरिएको छ। यस्ता पूर्वाग्रहहरू भाषिक रूपमा मात्र नभई पात्रहरूको भूमिकामा समेत देखिन्छन्। अनुसन्धानको निष्कर्षले पाठ्यपुस्तकहरू सामाजिककरणका प्रमुख साधन भएको देखाउँछ, जसले समाजमा प्रचलित लैङ्गिक भूमिकाहरूको मान्यतालाई या त चुनौती दिन सक्छ या अझ सुदृढ गर्न सक्छ।

शोधको दोस्रो भागमा महिलाहरूलाई पारम्परिक भूमिकाहरू जस्तै स्याहार गर्ने, गृहिणी आदि मा देखाइएको तथ्य उजागर गरिएको छ, जबकि पुरुषहरूलाई प्रायः नेतृत्वकर्ता या व्यवसायिक भूमिकामा चित्रण गरिएको छ। यस्तो विभाजनले विद्यार्थीहरूमा लैङ्गिक क्षमताको बुझाइ र भविष्यका पेसागत आकांक्षामा प्रतिकूल असर पार्दछ। पुरुष सर्वनाम र पौरुषीय भाषाको अत्यधिक प्रयोगले पुरुषलाई सामान्य मानक (default) को रूपमा प्रस्तुत गर्ने प्रवृत्तिलाई देखाउँछ, जसले महिलाहरू र लैङ्गिक विविधता भएका व्यक्तिहरूलाई सीमान्तकृत गराउँछ।

पाठ्यपुस्तकको दृश्य सामग्रीमा समेत यस्तै पूर्वाग्रह देखिन्छ, जहाँ पुरुष पात्रहरूलाई नेतृत्व भूमिकामा र महिलाहरूलाई सहायक भूमिकामा प्रस्तुत गरिएको छ। यस्तो प्रतिनिधित्वले समाजमा प्रचलित लैङ्गिक रूढिहरूलाई झन् गहिरो बनाउँछ। अनुसन्धानबाट प्राप्त निष्कर्षले यस्ता गलत प्रतिनिधित्वले विद्यार्थीहरूमा लैङ्गिक समानता र असमानताको बुझाइमा प्रत्यक्ष असर पार्ने देखाएको छ। आलोचनात्मक विमर्श विश्लेषणको मद्दतले यस्ता पाठ्यपुस्तकहरू सुधार्न सकिन्छ र विद्यार्थीहरूमा गलत एवं विभेदकारी विश्वासहरू विकास हुनबाट रोक्न सकिन्छ।

अनुसन्धानबाट प्राप्त तथ्यहरूले पाठ्यक्रम विकासकर्ताहरूले सन्तुलित, समावेशी र लैङ्गिक समानतापूर्ण शैक्षिक सामग्री निर्माण गर्नु आवश्यक छ भन्ने देखाउँछ। शोध सहभागीहरूको अनुभव र सैद्धान्तिक छलफलका आधारमा यो निष्कर्षमा पुगिएको छ कि पाठ्यपुस्तकमा देखिएको लैङ्गिक प्रतिनिधित्व नैतिक दृष्टिले अन्यायपूर्ण छ र तत्काल सुधार आवश्यक छ। शिक्षक, पाठ्यक्रम विकासकर्ता, र नीति निर्माताहरूले यस्ता समस्यालाई गम्भीर रूपमा लिएर शिक्षाको क्षेत्रमा देखिएको लैङ्गिक पूर्वाग्रहलाई सम्बोधन गर्न कदम चाल्नुपर्छ।

यस अध्ययनले पारम्परिक रूढिहरूलाई चुनौती दिँदै सबै लिङ्गलाई उचित र समानरूपमा प्रतिनिधित्व गर्न सक्ने, लैङ्गिक रूपमा समावेशी पाठ्यपुस्तकको आवश्यकता औल्याएको छ। यस्ता पाठ्यपुस्तकहरूले विद्यार्थीहरूको सोचमा सकारात्मक परिवर्तन ल्याउन र सामाजिक परिवर्तनको आधार तयार गर्न सक्ने क्षमता राख्दछन्। अन्ततः, यो शोधले शिक्षामा लैङ्गिक समानता सम्बन्धी व्यापक विमर्शमा योगदान पुऱ्याउँदै, शिक्षण-शिक्षण प्रक्रियामा सबै लिङ्गका विद्यार्थीका लागि समावेशी सिकाइ वातावरण सिर्जना गर्नु आवश्यक छ भन्ने पक्षलाई बलियो बनाएको छ।



यसोदा तिवारी

उपाधी उम्मेदवार

११ बैशाख २०८२

The dissertation entitled '*Gender Stereotyping in the Current Secondary Level English Textbook(S) in Nepal: A Critical Analysis*' for the *Master of Philosophy in English Language Education* was presented by *Yasoda Tiwari* on 25 April 2025.

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Dean/Chair of Research Committee

I understand and agree that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.

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25 April 2025

Yasoda Tiwari

Degree Candidate

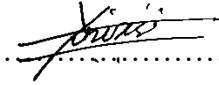


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## DECLARATION

I herewith confirm my declaration that this academic dissertation has not been submitted earlier for candidature for any other degree.



.....

Yasoda Tiwari

Degree Candidate

25 April 2025

## DEDICATION

My academic dissertation is dedicated to those who rise unyieldingly in the face of academic prejudice and inequality. This work is also dedicated to the resilient spirits who, with courage and quiet strength, challenge every form of discrimination that casts a shadow over our world. I wish their struggle to be a beacon of hope, their voices an enduring echo, and their journey a testament to the change that justice demands. This work signifies the beginning of my journey as a true scholar, seeking knowledge selflessly, speaking with conviction, and growing stronger with every step.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the collective effort and support of several individuals. Without their support and inspiration, I could not have accomplished this challenging task. I would like to acknowledge the supporting hands of all intellectual contributors.

First and foremost, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Bharat Pd. Neupane, PhD, Language Education Department, Kathmandu University School of Education, for his continuous support throughout my research journey. His guidance, inspiration, and unwavering support have been invaluable in every aspect of my study. His willingness to oversee this dissertation has opened new doors in my educational journey. I will always cherish the way he has mentored me in my academic pursuits.

I could not remain acknowledging the timely and valuable feedback of my external supervisor, Bal Krishna Sharma, PhD, who provided thorough feedback to add quality to my research. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the research committee chair and the dean of School of Education Kathmandu University Prof. Bal Chandra Luitel (PhD) and the research committee members, Prof. Hem Raj Kafle, PhD, Prof. Laxman Gnawali, PhD, Lava Deo Awasthi, PhD, and Prof. Dhanapati Subedi, PhD, for their valuable feedback to add weight on my research. Their guidance has been profoundly practical, motivational, creative, and transformative, qualities that every student needs. I have found Kathmandu University School of Education to be one of the best platforms for academic excellence.

Finally, I would like to sincerely remember and acknowledge all those who, directly or indirectly, have supported me in reaching this stage of my academic journey. Before the degree, there were unanswered questions and invisible hurdles. But at this step, I have learned to see those challenges not as obstacles, but as opportunities for deeper exploration. Today, I stand more prepared and more hopeful, ready to embrace the complexities rather than avoid them. I feel a deep sense of solidarity with all those who are committed to contributing to education and society through research.

Thank you!

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## ABBREVIATIONS

B. Ed	Bachelor in Education
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
ELE	English Language Education
ELT	English Language Teaching
GR	Gender Representation
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
M Phil	Master of Philosophy
M.Ed.	Master of Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
T.U	Tribhuvan University

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The introduction chapter of this research presents the overall agenda, including the research interest, context, rationale, problem statement, and purpose, followed by the research questions and delimitations. At the beginning of the dissertation, the chapter tries to present the introductory aspects of the issues. While there, the chapter presents the context, providing background information relevant to the study. Since this research explores gender misrepresentation in secondary-level English textbooks, the chapter showcases how different genders are misrepresented in textual and visual representations within the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. For this, a comprehensive summary of the two textbooks is separately presented in the introduction section of this dissertation.

With the help of this chapter, I also present the major claim of this study as a comprehensive orientation of the problem statement by problematizing the issue and bringing the literature support. After introducing the problem, this chapter also articulates the purpose of the research, following the research questions. The chapter ends with a comprehensive delimitation of the study and its overall process.

#### **My Interest**

As an English female teacher, I have experienced text-based gender domination in the current English textbooks in the context of Nepal. In the current textbooks of grades IX and X, gender bias can clearly be seen in every part of the book (Sharma, 2018). I am interested in this research for such gender representation, which motivated me to explore the issues and search for them. Khanal and Regmi (2021) concluded their study by highlighting the possible reasons, while they stated that patriarchal thought and its impact are the primary causes for such stereotypical gender representation in the textbook.

My interest in this research is directly associated with my own experiences of encountering gender biases, inequality, gender domination, and predominant representation of gender in English textbooks, from students' lives to teachers' lives. During my 10 years of teaching experience, I have encountered gender discrimination from the very beginning of my teaching career in and outside textbooks. If I have to tell you exactly what I noticed in the textbooks, the current textbooks mostly prefer

male characters when giving examples. Not only this, but the male characters are also shown as more potent, superior, intelligent, and knowledgeable in the textbook. At the same time, females are shown as weaker, inferior, and less intellectual than males. In this support, Jane (2024) also presented that some textbooks misrepresent gender roles, directly influencing students' social and cognitive development. She further highlighted that the notion of social perspective seems crucial in order to understand and explore gender-related issues, especially their misrepresentation in the teaching and learning context.

Using such contradictory teaching and learning tools and materials, I could not feel comfortable because I realized that unethical gender representation has a lot of impacts on students' lives. As a responsible teacher, I started identifying gender biases in different ways. I even observed from the lens the way teachers address their students in their classroom. I have also noticed and realized that the male characters are presented as stronger, braver, and respected. Meanwhile, girls are poor, weaker, and prettier. In textbooks, the 'he' pronoun is repeatedly used, and I could sense many gender-biased language and behaviors in textbooks that affected an inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Gender discrimination is deeply ingrained in a patriarchal society. Women and other marginalized genders are restricted from different opportunities in education, employment, and leadership roles (Jahle et al., 2024). Based on the above discussion, I believe these gender representations have a one-to-one connection to students' overall development. Such misrepresentations of gender mainly affect the perceptions of students as they negatively interpret and perceive gender roles. They also limit their aspirations for gender in their societal roles. Teachers praise boys for being strong or brave. Whereas girls are praised and complimented for being pretty or well-behaved, it can create negative perceptions for both genders. In this note, Adhikari (2020) stated that such biased texts promote negative perceptions and schools of thought about gender roles. I have also noticed that the textbooks repeated the use of the male pronoun 'he, which can directly influence female learners.

I found the gender bias represented in English textbooks. Through a variety of examples that uphold ingrained assumptions and encourage unequal gender roles, gender bias in textbooks can be seen. First, textbooks commonly portray women in stereotyped and constrained positions, such as careers, nurses, or homemakers. In contrast, men are mostly portrayed as leaders, doctors, and engineers. In this support,

Jane (2024) claimed that young girls' job aspirations are constrained by this depiction, which also perpetuates the idea that some occupations are only suitable for one gender.

Going ahead, I also found that the current textbooks default to using male pronouns, marginalizing women and non-binary people while covertly sending the message that men are the norm. I have noticed that male names and their representation have been used in English textbooks as a fixed and default choice for textbook writers. I know the exact reasons for this practice. However, I only know its impacts on learners' social and psychological development. In this support, Maccoby (2000) presents that factors contributing to the perception that women have not had a significant impact in a number of sectors are the frequent underrepresentation or omission of the historical achievements of women. By fostering these prejudices, textbooks restrict the advancement of gender equality and contribute to the continuation of discriminatory beliefs and behaviors in society.

Textbooks are the most commonly utilized instructional resource for essential knowledge, language proficiency, and information across diverse subject areas. Concerning an English textbook, many authors have expressed their opinions on the roles of textbooks in the field of teaching and learning, especially for teaching and learning. Sheldon (1987) defines a textbook as a published resource specifically created to assist language learners in enhancing their linguistic and communicative skills. Gender discrimination is a global issue; however, it is primarily exercised in countries that have been dominated by patriarchal thoughts (Jane, 2024). Nepal is one of them because women and marginalized genders are denied and deprived of opportunities in education, employment, and leadership roles here. In this support, Jane (2024) claims that gender biases are often reinforced through stereotypical representations of gender roles, limited career choices dictated by societal expectations, and differential treatment of students based on gender.

One common manifestation of gender bias in the classroom is the use of masculine language to represent mixed-gender groups, thereby perpetuating the marginalization of female and non-binary students (Sharma, 2018). Such practices not only reinforce traditional gender norms but also undermine efforts to create an inclusive learning environment that fosters the development of all students, regardless of their gender identity.

In light of these observations and experiences, through this research, I critically analyzed and explored the extent and implications of gender bias in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. With the issue in mind, I believe this study directly contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender equality in education and inform efforts to create more inclusive and equitable learning environments for all students. With the help of this exploration, the constitutional right to be equal in terms of gender can be given to the students.

### **Textbooks and Their Influence on Students' Socialization**

Most of the time, we use textbooks as the primary tools for teaching and learning. Giroux (1981) stated that students' ideologies are affected by textbooks because they play a significant role in establishing and preparing students' perspectives and worldviews on societal roles. As a teacher, I have always taken textbooks as one of the main tools for teaching and learning, which teaches students to be socialized in their context and form their habits. It also works as a tool for generating knowledge and wisdom. In this support, Nicholls (2003) highlighted that by using textbooks, students can strengthen their academic skills.

Not only this, but textbooks also contribute as a teaching tool as they directly influence societies locally and globally (Pingel, 2010). From the above discourse, it seems clear that we professionals have to be conscious while designing and producing textbooks so that we can reconstruct a positive social narrative.

As a female teacher, I have analyzed the situation of Nepali society, in which traditional male-dominated social practices mainly guide us. Even though the textbooks are used as core teaching and learning materials, it does not practiced as they should be. In this support, Ur (2009) states that a textbook serves as a framework that guides teachers and students in a particular way. She adds that textbooks serve as a guide that helps instructors and students understand what is being taught and what they hope to get out of the course. In this regard, Hutchinson and Torres (2019) highlighted that a textbook is a structured compilation of teaching and learning materials that are thoughtfully created to match the learners' proficiency, preferences, and requirements. It provides a framework to guide and orient them. In the note, Tomlinson (2003) shared that a textbook delivers content and offers exercises for students in different aspects of languages, including vocabulary and its utterances and language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing).

We generally understand that books are integral parts of the sociocultural environment and strive to mirror societal conditions. They are an indispensable element of the educational process, serving as the central instructional resource that both educators and students depend on. In this regard, Jane (2024) highlighted that textbooks significantly shape children's upbringing as they convey patterns of social conduct, standards, and principles, either explicitly or implicitly. Consequently, textbooks serve as instruments for both fostering learning and driving social transformation (Gupta, 2020). They function as channels for instilling societal values in children. It means that textbooks frequently reinforce the idea that females, particularly women and girls, are depicted as frail, passive, and obedient. Their portrayals are predominantly within domestic, nurturing, and supportive roles.

I mostly observed that men are depicted as influential, powerful, knowledgeable, and often positioned as societal leaders. This type of gender representation perpetuates gender stereotypes due to textbooks implicitly endorsing conventional and constrictive gender roles. From a greater perspective, it is essential to consider gender-biased teaching materials (Ben, 1981). The development of gender-neutral textbooks is recognized as a critical element in fostering gender parity within education.

Educators and textbook creators must deeply understand these materials to initiate this process, underscoring the need for further gender sensitivity training for teachers. However, the current English textbooks of grades IX and X have represented gender roles in dominating and unethical ways, which seems problematic from gender and legal perspectives, as the Constitution of Nepal (2015) prohibits any gender misrepresentation. Therefore, it needs to be revised and rewritten for gender inclusion.

### **A Critical Reflection of the Current English Textbooks (IX and X)**

The current English textbooks for Grades IX and X consist of 18 chapters covering various themes relevant to the present context. It includes reading passages, exercises, project work, images, grammar items, and more. Each chapter incorporates different language functions, such as greeting, requesting, thanking, expressing emotions, socializing, and suggesting. However, these language functions are misrepresented from the perspective of gender roles. The textbook often depicts female characters as weak, underpaid, pitiable, needy, and confined to domestic work. This misrepresentation is concerning, as it reinforces gender stereotypes and contradicts the principles of gender equality (Brugeilles & Cromer, 2009). They



further argue that gender roles in school textbooks are often misrepresented due to the societal norms and patriarchal influences of a particular teaching context.

For this, the gender perspective seems crucial to be embraced in the process of analysis. Looking at the issues from the notion of Gender Schema Theory, the textbook raises significant concerns. It appears to create a gender gap by prioritizing and favoring male characters in its examples and content. In this support, Bem (1981) argues that every individual makes perceptions from the inputs they receive from their social context, including societal norms regarding gender roles. Here, my concern is that education tools like textbooks should not be biased from the perspective of gender because it seems sensitive. If the male characters and their responsibilities are prioritized in this way, it may orient students' negative perception of gender roles (Sharma & Gurung, 2021). I believe that the practice of inequality is observed as an influence on their mindset. Teachers are compelling them to accept gender biases and misrepresentation as a natural part of life and society.

The textbook includes a mix of male and female characters in various contexts, such as sports and family life, which is essential for challenging traditional stereotypes. However, I have observed that there are some chapters and sections that reinforce the stereotype of gender roles. In which women's roles and characters are presented as weaker, dependent, less competent, and less paid employees. At the same time, men are characterized as stronger, more masculine, competent, paid employees and decision-makers. This type of misrepresentation of gender can directly lead students toward negative perceptions.

In the chapters, the examples mentioned above are clearly presented, specifically regarding the stereotypical roles of males and females. Female names are primarily used for house workers, whereas male names are used for official jobs in many examples of the textbooks. In conversational activities, female characters are frequently depicted in nurturing roles, such as caring for children or assisting with household tasks, while male characters are often shown as decision-makers or providers. For instance, a dialogue may feature a woman discussing her responsibilities at home, reinforcing the stereotype that women are primarily responsible for domestic duties.

Empirical studies suggest that such gender biases push students back from forming a good perception of women's roles. Students cannot develop their good cognition, thoughts, and understanding of their social roles (Jane, 2024). Instead, they

start discriminating between genders. I believe that this type of unequal representation of gender has a direct influence on making the perception and understanding of the social norms in the context of Nepal, as we are totally connected with the joint society.

The conversational activities in the textbook also reinforce traditional gender roles. For instance, in the conversation between Sanjaya and Ramila, Sanjaya offers help to Shanti, a female character, to solve math problems. In the following example, a woman seeks help from a police officer, and a sister offers help to her brother to wash. It aligns with the stereotypical practices of society, which state that women need help from men (Sharma, 2018). These examples used in the speaking exercises, such as a woman asking for help with a toothache or a man offering suggestions, perpetuate the notion of women being more vulnerable and men being more authoritative.

Going deeper, I also found Wang et al. (2023) claiming that such text-based inequality needs to be abandoned for a peaceful learning environment learning. From the above discussion, I agree that such gender misrepresentation has negative impacts on students because it enforces the negative perception of general roles and responsibilities in social and cultural settings. It means misrepresentations of gender need to be addressed in the school textbooks in Nepal to ensure an equitable and inclusive portrayal of gender roles. This study critically examines the textbook's content to identify gender biases and stereotypes in language use, character roles, visibility, and conversations. The analysis compares these findings with participants' perceptions, providing insights into how the textbook's portrayal of gender aligns or fails to align with the principles of inclusivity and equality that the curriculum seeks to promote.

### **Rationale of the study**

Gender representation in educational materials plays a pivotal role in cultivating students' mindsets for their societal roles from a gender perspective. In this support, Blumberg (2008) claimed that the perceptions and attitudes of students toward gender roles, equality, and social norms need to be improved in educational materials. On this note, Sharma (2019) also claimed that the school education system is a key vehicle for socialization in the context of Nepal because it offers a significant role for higher education in Nepal and beyond.

As a responsible teacher, I believe that the misrepresentation of gender I have experienced and encountered is not ethical. Suppose the current textbooks start misrepresenting gender roles and responsibilities as less important than other roles and responsibilities. In that case, their representation can promote misleading stereotypes and foster cognitive biases about gender identity and social expectations for younger children. I have noticed that the present English textbooks for grades IX and X are one of the most essential tools to build children's perceptions and behavior of gender roles. These textbooks form the core of the national curriculum. Since educational research is constantly trying to increase women's and men's equality, it seems essential to explore the issues of gender misrepresentation in the current English textbooks for grades IX and X. In this support, Sadker and Zittleman (2007) stated that academic research has shown the harmful misrepresentation of both male and female genders. It also highlights that the biased representation of male and female characters in a variety of social settings, including conversations, professions, and images, has several negative consequences (Ullah & Skelton, 2013). Selected stereotypes are reinforced by unsegregated representation of male and female figures in conversations, professions, and visual representations of gender, negatively affecting their views of gender roles.

This study is relevant because it contributes to the current discussion on gender misrepresentation, inequality, and gender biases in education. Since it provides a critical exploration of the stereotypes' misrepresentation of gender, I think it has a high rationale. While previous studies have suggested that there may be some form of gender bias in textbooks, this study explores and analyzes the issue. The major concern is how these stereotypes actually influence the way language and imagery effectively reinforce conventional gender roles (Lee & Collins, 2010). According to Bem (1981), repeated exposure to narratives in textbooks made up of gender stereotypes can build students' intellectual foundations and affect their understanding of social roles and their identities.

Moreover, the study has the potential to influence current educational practices and policy by providing insights that may inform future textbook revision. As Nepal steps forward towards the vision of more just education, our study highlights the need for textbooks that encourage gender awareness and reject emasculated stereotypes. A prevalent issue in Nepal's education system, this study provides a pathway toward new policy development as a response to the global calls

for better gender equality in education (UNESCO, 2019). Through this analysis, the study contributes to academic discourse while also advocating for the concrete goal of creating more inclusive and empowering classrooms for all students.

### **Problem Statement**

Gender representation in educational materials is critical in shaping students' socialization and cognitive development. The Government of Nepal (2015) ensures in the current Constitution that gender equality is a fundamental right, mandating the elimination of all forms of gender-based discrimination in every sector, including education. Article 18 of the current Constitution ensures the right to equality, explicitly prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of gender, while Article 38 guarantees women equal rights and protection from exploitation. The current curriculum of the secondary level education of Nepal (2078 BS.) also ensures the provision of gender equality and inclusion by aligning with constitutional rights. Despite these provisions, the current grades IX and X textbooks fail to align with these principles. They frequently prioritize male characters in exercises and examples, perpetuating stereotypes and reinforcing gender bias. This misrepresentation undercuts efforts made to develop an equal and inclusive educational system in Nepal. Textbooks act as primary sources of learning as they also directly reinforce or challenge social norms, such as gender roles and identities (Blumberg, 2008). From this perspective, I took the conclusion that misrepresentation of gender roles in textbooks affects students' social and mental development as they develop their perceptions of gender roles and responsibilities, which affect the psychological programming of their social roles and responsibilities as well as the direction their teachers instruct them through their textbooks.

Existing research by Jane (2024) has demonstrated that textbooks can perpetuate gender biases by promoting stereotypes that align men with power and agency while portraying women as passive, dependent, or confined to traditional roles, which is also supported by Sadker and Zittleman (2009). According to the hypothesis in this study, the current English textbooks used in Nepal constitute a gender-biased corpus, whereby male pronouns dominate examples and exercises, and female characters are always seen in socially inferior positions visually and in text (Lee & Collins, 2010). This imbalance could have far-reaching consequences in reinforcing gender inequality in society by limiting the aspirations and self-concept of female students, who may internalize these stereotypical portrayals as normative.

Looking from this perspective, the misrepresentation of gender in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X is not an ethical practice from either the government side or the theoretical side, because the notion of gender schema theory highlights that gender discrimination is not an ethical practice. This study critically explored gender misrepresentation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. The study mainly focused on how male and female characters in both textual (lexical choices) and visual (images and illustrations) are represented from the perspective of gender equality.

This lack of debate would mean that the promotion and perpetuation of gender bias by textbooks remains an omission in the educational system (Jane, 2024). In its present form, these biases continue to undermine efforts towards gender equity by contributing to the perpetuation of situations in which students (particularly girls) are physically or emotionally taught to operate as subordinates. This can jeopardize students' academic self-esteem, limit future career aspirations, and perpetuate unequal levels of society's power structures (Blumberg, 2008; Taylor, 2020). A failure to address these issues in textbooks would disregard the greater goal of adequate education. It would negatively impact social progress toward gender equality, one of the main targets of the global sustainable development agenda (UNESCO, 2017). The issue seems serious because it has been practiced against the constitutional rights ensured by the Nepal Government (Government of Nepal, 2015). Therefore, it is essential to explore the perceptions of teachers, book writers, and curriculum developers to minimize such misrepresentation of gender in textbooks.

From the perspective of gender, this study explores the existing English books for grades IX and X. It systematically assesses the perceptions of teachers, authors, and curriculum developers as a group using a gender lens. Scholars agree that textbooks contribute to the development of gender identity by reinforcing or challenging traditional gender roles in society and their influence on how students internalize society's norms and expectations (Floro & Piccio, 2021). In this regard, the study may contribute to a broader understanding of the ways textbooks may perpetuate or undermine gender inequalities in the social and cognitive development of learners on gender roles in Nepal.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study critically analyses and explores the textual representations of males and females in the English textbooks of grades IX and X, focusing on how lexical and

visual materials are used from a gender perspective in the current textbooks. This study also examines how such gender representation either reinforces or challenges gender inequality and explores stakeholders' perspectives on gender portrayal in textbooks.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do the current English textbooks at the secondary level represent gender?
2. How do stakeholders perceive the portrayal of gender in the textbooks?

### **Delimitation of the study**

Everything related to the chosen issue seems not possible to explore at the same; therefore, this research has been delimited to the analysis of text contents exclusively within the Nepalese Secondary English Textbooks for grades IX and X. With this delimitation, the research focus has been made on analyzing and exploring the textual representations of male and female in the English textbooks of grades IX and X, with a special emphasis on how lexical and visual materials are used from a gender perspective in the current textbooks. The study primarily involves discourse analysis of elements within these textbooks, such as poems, reading passages, dialogues, illustrations, activities, photos, and exercises. Other grade levels, content types, and school types are not considered within the scope of this research.

### **Chapter Summary**

Here in this chapter, I have tried to present the overall introduction to the issue and the concept of this dissertation. While introducing the issues, the chapter covered the background and problem statement, a comprehensive summary of the current English textbooks of grades IX and X, and the rationale of the study, the purpose of the study, followed by research questions.

I have tried my best to showcase my interest in choosing this issue. As a responsible female teacher, I felt the domination of gender roles in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. After realizing the need, I could not wait to explore the perception of English teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers to conduct this study.

In the problem statement section, this chapter comprehensively defined the issues with the help of literature support. While explaining the problem of this research, I tried to link the issue from the perspective of the Nepal government's constitutional provision of gender equality. Linking with the policy provision helped me rationalize the call for this research. With the help of this chapter, I also presented

the purpose of this research. After presenting the purpose, I immediately shared the research questions and delimitation of this research process.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to the study. It explores existing research and theoretical perspectives that align with the study's objectives and research questions. The chapter begins with a thematic review, discussing key concepts related to gender representation in educational materials. This is followed by an analysis of these themes through the lens of Gender Schema Theory, which was initially proposed by Sandra Bem (1981). Similarly, the chapter also introduces the theoretical notion of Critical Discourse Analysis.

In addition to theoretical perspectives, the chapter includes a review of policies and educational frameworks that address gender representation in textbooks. It also examines previous research conducted in different countries, highlighting findings related to gender bias in educational materials. A detailed discussion of Gender Schema Theory is presented, emphasizing its relevance in understanding how textbooks shape students' perceptions of gender roles. Towards the end of the chapter, the research gap is identified, demonstrating the need for this study. Finally, the conceptual framework provides a structured approach to analyzing gender representation in Nepal's secondary-level English textbooks.

#### **Gender Representation: What and How?**

Gender Representation generally refers to how gender is treated traditionally and is biased. It means textbooks consistently reveal that these materials often reinforce conventional gender roles and stereotypes. Across various countries, including those in South Asia, textbooks have been found to disproportionately portray males as authoritative, active, and in leadership roles. At the same time, females are frequently depicted in passive or nurturing roles (Durrani, 2008). In these educational materials, male characters are often associated with professions such as doctors, engineers, and leaders.

In contrast, female characters are shown as homemakers, teachers, or caregivers, reinforcing a limited set of gendered expectations. A study conducted in Pakistan traced that textbooks underrepresented women and perpetuated rigid gender norms by assigning male characters to more public and socially valued roles while confining female characters to the domestic sphere (Ullah & Skelton, 2013). Such



depictions are not restricted to textual narratives; they are also evident in visual materials, where images overwhelmingly favor male characters in prominent and action-oriented settings. These biased representations subtly convey the message that men are more valuable or capable than women, thus perpetuating gender inequality from an early age.

From the perspective of Gender Schema Theory, these biased representations in textbooks can significantly affect students' cognitive development and understanding of gender roles. Therefore, Bem (1981) assumed that children develop mental frameworks or "schemas" based on their observations of gender roles in their environment, which then influence their behavior, expectations, and self-concept (Bem, 1981). When textbooks consistently stereotypically portray gender, students are likely to internalize these stereotypes, shaping their understanding of what is socially acceptable or achievable for males and females. For instance, girls exposed to textbooks where women are shown only in caregiving or subordinate roles may limit their aspirations, believing that leadership or technical roles are reserved for men. Similarly, boys may develop a skewed sense of entitlement or superiority, expecting to dominate public and professional spaces. In South Asia, where traditional gender norms are still deeply rooted, these biased representations in textbooks can significantly impede efforts toward gender equality by perpetuating stereotypes that hinder both girls' and boys' full potential (Ullah & Haque, 2016). From this, it represents that gender misrepresentation affects girls' learning and boys' perception of female characters. From this, it seems clear that gender representation in textbooks has a negative connotation, as it is rooted in using gender dominantly. I have also experienced such issues in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X.

### **Natures of Gender Representations in Textbooks**

Gender (mis)representation is a burning issue in recent times because it directly divides society into two groups. The representation of gender in textbooks has a lot of issues from legal, social, and individual perspectives. This is a tendency to practice traditional role division based on gender. In this support, Ullah and Skelton (2013) claimed that one of the most prominent tendencies is giving unnecessary emphasis on male characters. The male characters are mainly used frequently and given greater importance in both textual and visual materials. I have also observed this situation in the current English textbook in our context.

This overuse of male characters presents the clear message that men are more significant or central to societal functions. I believe that this might help to contribute to gender imbalances in students' perceptions of roles in society. On the other hand, female characters are often shown in secondary or passive roles. It hardly represents females in positions of power or authority, which is not ethical from the perspective of gender. Similarly, Blumberg (2008) highlighted that such imbalance is quantitative and qualitative, as female characters are frequently depicted as socially weak or dependent on their male counterparts. These representations reinforce the stereotype that women are less capable or assertive than men.

Another common nature of gender representation in textbooks is the stark division of labor along gender lines, particularly in relation to professions. Males are typically assigned to outgoing, prestigious, and economically significant jobs, such as doctors, engineers, and teachers. At the same time, females are taken for granted to perform roles, including cooking, cleaning, and nursing, in a patriarchal society (Durrani, 2008). This occupational segregation in textbooks reflects and reinforces the gendered division of labor in society, teaching students from an early age that specific jobs are naturally suited to one gender over the other. In this regard, Ullah and Haque (2016) said that visual representations promote the stereotypes of gender roles. It also represents men in active, professional settings and women in passive, home-based activities; such practices are also found in Nepali textbooks. This type of social hierarchy in the name of jobs has a lot of issues in Nepal and beyond. The claim is that the biases that exist in Nepali textbooks not only misrepresent the realities of modern gender roles but also affect the advocacy of gender equality.

### **Possible Language Domination in English Textbooks**

The English textbooks used in secondary-level schools in Nepal, mainly the English textbooks for grades IX and X, may reflect a form of linguistic dominance that presents a wide range of sociocultural and political influences. Jane (2024) highlights that language hegemony is not just about linguistic preference but often carries implicit power dynamics, reinforcing the dominance of English over local languages and cultures. Such hidden language dominances are primarily exercised in the Nepali textbooks. According to Canagarajah (2005), such dominance can perpetuate educational inequalities, marginalizing non-native speakers and prioritizing a global language at the expense of native linguistic identities. In Nepal, where linguistic diversity is vast, the emphasis on English within educational materials raises

questions about cultural representation and the potential erosion of native languages (Phyak, 2016). This context prompts a critical review of English language textbooks to assess the balance between global language competency and cultural inclusivity.

### ***Textual Gender Domination***

In the representation of gender in textbooks, textual forms of gender representation are one of the common ways of representation, which helps writers present gender names, roles, and social responsibility in written form (Jane, 2024). In the current grades IX and X textbooks, I noticed writers used textual sign symbols that explicitly indicate gender domination. In which male characters are frequently used, their names and roles are highlighted through textual form, which seems problematic from the perspective of gender schema theory (Bem, 1981). A study by Sharma (2018) sheds light on the prevalent issue of textual gender domination within English textbooks for grades 9 and 10 in Nepal. The research revealed a significant disparity in the representation of male and female characters, with male protagonists and examples outnumbering their female counterparts.

The discussion of gender biases highlights the traditional gender roles, with male characters often depicted as assertive leaders or professionals while female characters are relegated to supporting or domestic roles (Sharma, 2018). Textual domination refers to gender-based favoritism in which one gender is given disproportionately higher representation or preference by the writer.

### ***Gender Bias in Language Use***

The linguistic bias in these textbooks is further emphasized by the consistent use of masculine language, particularly the default pronoun 'he,' to refer to generic individuals or professionals. Smith (2017) and Jones (2019) present their findings, highlighting how such language usage reinforces the notion that males are the norm while females are marginalized. I have noticed many sentences like “A doctor should treat his patients with care” neglect the existence of female doctors and perpetuate gender stereotypes (Smith, 2017; Jones, 2019). I have also noticed similar sentences and examples in English textbooks.

### ***Stereotypical Gender Roles***

Some typical gender roles exist in our society. Some stereotypical gender roles totally highlight traditional expectations of masculinity and femininity in the performance. Such roles limit individual potential and promote societal inequalities across generations. As a teacher, I have noticed that some research by Patel (2020)

and Kumar (2021) underscores the prevalence of stereotypical gender roles within educational materials. The current textbooks of grades IX and X often prioritize the characters of boys in almost every role performance. Male characters are generally preferred in more substantial and more prestigious social roles, like game players, doctors, engineers, lawyers, etc. However, the female characters are presented as the opposite of the male characters. In this support, Patel and Kumar (2020 and 2021) showcased that such practices of gender roles negatively influence students to make their perceptions based on their potential. From the above discourse on socially rooted gender representation, I understood how stereotypical gender roles in educational materials restrict students' self-perceptions and reinforce societal gender-based inequalities.

### ***Unequal Treatment in Classroom Dynamics***

Among many, not getting equal space in the textbooks by the textbook writers is one of the typical gender representations. I have noticed that male characters are frequently highlighted and given space in the textbooks and by the teachers during the class. At the same time, female characters get unequal space in different types of textual representation. Classroom observations conducted by Gupta (2019) and Singh (2020) have revealed instances where teachers inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes through differential treatment of students. Male students are often praised for their academic achievements or leadership qualities, while female students receive compliments primarily on their appearance or demeanor. This disparate treatment affects students' self-esteem and perpetuates unequal gender dynamics within the classroom (Gupta, 2019; Singh, 2020). The above discussion highlights how unequal representation in textbooks and classrooms, coupled with differential treatment by teachers, perpetuates gender stereotypes and impacts students' self-esteem.

### ***Preferences of Masculine Language***

In the current textbooks, male-dominated language is preferred, especially when giving examples of letter recipients. While doing so, the textbook writers use (Dear Sir & Dear Raju). This representation of gender is one of the ways of gender bias and domination. As the current Constitution of Nepal (2015) ensures the gender rights of every individual, the current gender representation in the textbook seems unethical. Linguistic analysis conducted by Brown (2019) and Taylor (2020) reveals the prevalence of masculine language in classroom discourse. In this support, Brown

(2019) stated that such linguistic practice contributes to the normalization of male dominance in educational settings and marginalizes female and non-binary students.

The English textbook for grade nine in Nepal exhibits significant gender issues at the lexical, demonstrative, and social hierarchy levels. At the linguistic level, the language used often perpetuates traditional gender roles, with terms and expressions that reinforce male dominance and female subordination. For instance, male characters are frequently associated with leadership and action-oriented roles, while female characters are depicted in passive or supportive roles. Demonstrative elements like photos, images, and cartoons in the textbook further exacerbate these issues. Visual representations often portray men in positions of power and women in domestic or subservient roles, reinforcing outdated stereotypes and failing to present a balanced view of gender capabilities and roles in society (Malla, 2021; Shrestha, 2020). From the above discussion, it can be said that the current English textbook of grade IX promotes gender bias through its language and visual representations, reinforcing traditional stereotypes that depict men as dominant and active while relegating women to passive or supportive roles, thus reflecting and perpetuating societal inequalities. A qualitative assessment of textbooks by analyzing both language and visuals seems mandatory to explore gender portrayal in terms of firstness, visibility, character attitudes, and stereotypes. It examines socially marked gender issues, including roles, characteristics, and conversations, by analyzing explicit content, such as male and female representations in pictures, social roles, and activities. Although no participants were involved, the study focuses on how gender is presented in the grades IX and X textbooks, aiming to support revision from a gender perspective.

### **Policy Review**

Gender representation and its protection have a lot of policy documents because they hold a wide range of advocacy discourse in Nepal and beyond. I reviewed national and international policy documents to strengthen my argument from policy discourse. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) includes provisions related to gender equality. These provisions aim to advance gender equality, eradicate gender-based discrimination, and ensure the empowerment and participation of women in all spheres of society. The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all individuals, irrespective of gender. These rights include legal equality, uniform protection under the law, and the prevention of gender-based discrimination.

The current Constitution of Nepal (2015) explicitly prohibits any form of gender discrimination. It recognizes that women, marginalized communities, and individuals facing gender-based discrimination should have the right to appropriate affirmative action for their proportional representation and participation. Similarly, the Nepal Government (2021) preserves gender equity and inclusion as fundamental rights, promoting equality and non-discrimination. Article 18 guarantees the Right to Equality, ensuring no one is discriminated against on the grounds of gender, caste, ethnicity, or other statuses. Article 38 affirms Women's Rights, including the right to participate in all areas of state structures, proportional representation, and protection against gender-based violence.

The theory has emphasized gender equality and inclusion in all state mechanisms, processes, and institutions. It shows a society where women and men have equal rights and opportunities and where gender disparities are addressed. The Constitution mandates that at least one-third of the total number of members elected or nominated in various state bodies, including the federal parliament, provincial assemblies, and local bodies, should be women. This provision aims to enhance the representation and participation of women in decision-making processes.

### **Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights**

The Constitution recognizes the right of women to live with dignity, without discrimination, and to participate in all aspects of social, economic, and cultural life. It emphasizes the need to eliminate gender-based violence, trafficking, and exploitation and promotes gender-responsive policies and programs. It acknowledges the historical discrimination and injustice faced by women and affirms the commitment to achieving social justice and gender equality. It calls for the elimination of gender-based discrimination, gender stereotypes, and harmful traditional practices that discriminate against women.

Going beyond the Sustainable Development (SDG) goal no. 4 for Quality Education, it says gender equality is critical for achieving inclusive and equitable education. It emphasizes the requirement to eradicate gender inequalities in the classroom, promote girls' access to quality education, and ensure equal opportunities for women and girls in lifelong learning and skills development.

Apart from this, the education system in Nepal is rigidly based on strong legal structures and regulations intended to promote gender equality, and gender neutrality should be a characteristic of textbooks. In the same manner, the Constitution of Nepal

mandates gender equality and forbids discrimination, thereby establishing the National Women's Commission to monitor progress.

The National Gender Equality Policy (2077) is, in particular, the document that states the necessity of women's representation and empowerment. This is applicable to all spheres of life, including the education sector. In this connection, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has integrated the promotion of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) as part of the whole curriculum framework. They should be free from gender stereotypes, provide equal representation of men and women in the materials, and promote equal opportunities for all students.

The commitment of Nepal to international treaties like the CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration is justified by these legal obligations to adopt gender-sensitive materials in education. The failure to follow this guideline will see men and women's equal involvement in decision-making roles, besides what they contribute and can achieve, in textbooks, thus flying the flag for a wider community of learners. Based on the policy discourse on gender and its representation and treatment, I became strong in exploring gender representation in textbooks and its impacts on learners.

### **Theoretical Review**

This theoretical review aimed to explore and critically analyze the current English textbooks for grades IX and X in Nepal from a gender perspective, focusing specifically on the lexical and visual representation of male and female characters. With this mindset, I have employed two different theoretical notions for my research. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used for the first question, which requires a critical lens to explore gender misrepresentation in secondary-level textbooks. Similarly, the Gender Schema Theory is used for the second question to explore the stakeholders' perception of gender representation in the current secondary textbooks of Nepal.

### **Gender Schema Theory**

Gender Schema Theory, developed by Sandra Bem in 1981, provides a framework for understanding how individuals internalize societal gender norms and roles. In this theory, Bem (1981) highlights that children learn about gender roles and expectations through cultural and societal cues, forming cognitive structures known as gender schemas. These schemas influence individuals' perception and processing of gender-related information, guiding behavior and attitudes.

When analyzing gender representation in textbooks and its possible impacts on students' mental, social, and personal aspects, gender schema theory is particularly relevant. The lexical and visual representations of male and female characters in these textbooks can contribute to developing and reinforcing gender schemas among students. If textbooks predominantly depict males in active, authoritative roles and females in passive, subordinate roles, they may reinforce traditional gender stereotypes. Conversely, balanced and diverse representations can promote more egalitarian gender schemas, encouraging students to envision a broader range of possibilities for themselves and others, regardless of gender (Martin & Halverson, 1981). Gender Schema Theory describes how societal norms shape individuals' understanding of gender roles through cognitive structures, influencing perceptions and behaviors. This theory instructs me on how biased depictions of male and female roles can reinforce traditional gender stereotypes in order to analyze the prescribed textbooks. It also helped me balance the misrepresentations of gender in the textbooks.

Based on the theoretical orientation of the theory, I believe that reviewing gender schema theory is essential for exploring gender representation in the current English textbooks for grades IX and X in Nepal because it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how children internalize gender norms and roles through societal and cultural cues. Given that textbooks are a significant educational tool, how they present male and female characters can significantly influence students' gender schemas.

With the help of gender schema theory, we can critically assess whether the textbooks in question perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes or promote gender equality. This is important because the internalized gender schemas formed during adolescence can shape students' self-perceptions, aspirations, and interactions with others. Identifying and addressing any biases in these educational materials is essential for fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Therefore, Gender Schema Theory serves as a vital lens through which we can evaluate the impact of lexical and visual representations of gender in these textbooks, ensuring that they contribute positively to developing students' gender identities.

The gender schema theory explains how cultural norms and socialization affect people's perceptions of gender roles and expectations. It draws attention to how cognitive processes contribute to maintaining long-standing gender stereotypes.



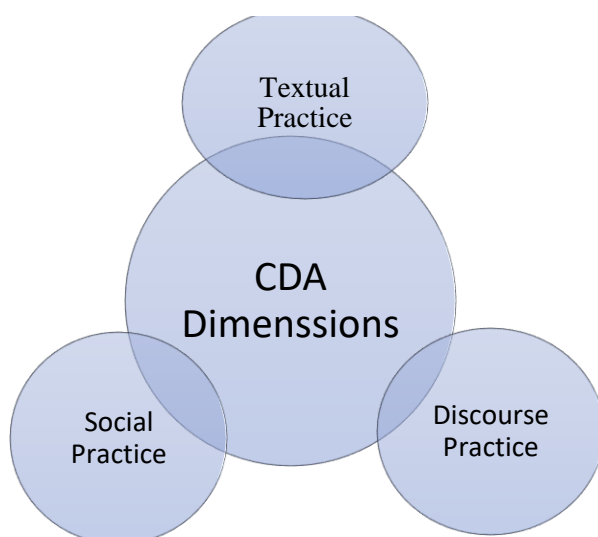
However, the gender schema theory also recognizes that exposure to varied and anti-stereotypical material can alter or challenge gender schemas. People may modify or expand their gender schemas as they come into contact with new experiences and information in order to include a more inclusive understanding of gender.

In this research, I analyzed how gender is represented, where this theory provided a framework to assess whether lexical and visual representations reinforced stereotypes or promoted inclusivity. The findings highlighted how biased portrayals perpetuate societal norms, while balanced content fosters gender equality and broadens students' understanding of roles.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

In my research on gender representation in English textbooks for grades IX and X in Nepal, I have employed Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the primary methodology. The concept of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), developed by Norman Fairclough in the 1980s, is a robust analytical tool designed to explore how language and visuals in texts can reinforce or challenge social power structures, including gender roles (Fairclough, 1995). As presented in the theoretical orientation, the analysis framework of CDA is grounded in the theoretical premise that language is not merely a means of communication but a social practice that constructs and maintains social realities. According to Fairclough (2013), the theoretical framework of CDA posits that language use is intertwined with power relations and social structures. Therefore, it can be one of the best ways to control social inequalities and power imbalances.

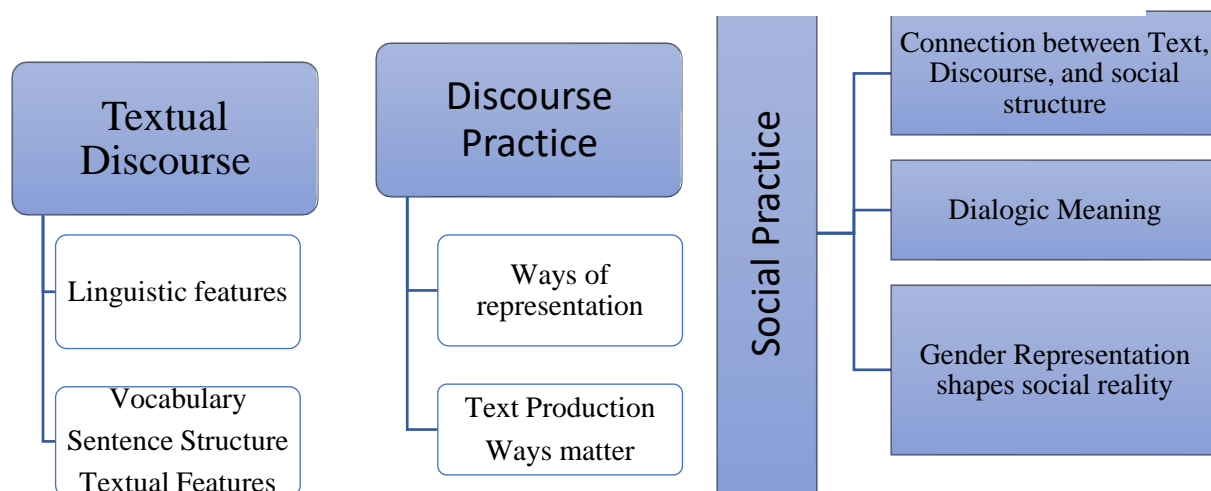
**Figure 1**  
*Focus Area of CDA*



According to Fairclough (1995), CDA involves three interrelated dimensions, including text, discourse practice, and social practice. It means the textual dimension examines the linguistic features of the text, such as vocabulary, syntax, and cohesion. The discourse practice dimension looks at text production, distribution,

and consumption processes, considering how social contexts and power relations influence these processes.

**Figure 2**  
*Textual and Social Dimensions of CDA*



Source: (Fairclough, 1995)

In my research, I have used Fairclough's framework to analyze the gender representations in the selected textbooks from both textual and pictorial perspectives. This approach allowed me to examine the language used to describe male and female characters and the visual representations accompanying the text. The dimensions mentioned above allowed me to uncover how gender is constructed and reinforced through the interplay of language and visuals in educational materials.

The analysis processes were started by selecting textbooks that reflect the current curriculum and collecting examples of both written content and images. I then situated these materials within the sociocultural context of education in Nepal, considering the policies and cultural expectations around gender (Dijk, 2001). A detailed review of the textbooks followed, where I analyzed how male and female characters were portrayed, the language used to describe them, and the frequency of each gender's appearance. This step revealed recurring patterns of bias or stereotypical roles that could influence students' understanding of gender.

With the help of the framework proposed by Fairclough, I connected the content of the textbooks to broader social discussions about gender, demonstrating how educational texts can shape or reinforce students' beliefs and attitudes. The final phase of the analysis involved critiquing these representations and making recommendations for creating more balanced and fair portrayals of gender. Through

this process, CDA not only highlighted issues of gender bias but also provided insights into how changes could be made to promote gender equality and challenge stereotypes in educational settings.

### **Review of Previous Studies**

As gender inclusion is a known area, researchers have shown a keen interest in how gender roles are constructed in society. While searching the literature, I also traced some of the studies highlighting how gender is portrayed in textbooks. In recent times, several studies have delved into how gender roles are presented in these textbooks, uncovering insights into the visual aspects (such as drawings and photographs) as well as the textual elements (written and dialectical texts) that present gender characters. In this regard, Bem (1981) stressed that gender-based studies must be critical as they come under critical discourse. Most of the previous research emphasizes that the language aspects of male and female presentations are generally revealed through some semantic features of gender-biased words, such as nouns, pronouns, gender-specific words, and the order of mention. When referring to both genders, the tendency is to mention the male gender first. This consistently prioritizes men over women, establishing a hierarchical structure where women are consistently positioned as subordinate to men.

Jane (2024) conducted research highlighting the significant impact of gender representation in Textbooks on student achievement in the United Kingdom. The study concluded that the misrepresentation of gender in textbooks has two layers of effects, including students' cognitive and social impacts, which directly influence students' level of achievement in their learning spaces.

I also reviewed a core literature of Porreca (1984), in which he stated that the sequence of references denotes such gender representations as firstness. He suggests that the gender-specific words placed in the initial position (like mother/father or he/she) could be perceived as carrying a greater degree of significance or status to set the concept in the student's mind.

Rizkiyah et al. (2022) conducted a study titled Analyzing Gender Representation in English Textbooks for Indonesian Junior High School Students through Critical Discourse Analysis, aiming to uncover the visual and textual portrayal of male and female characters, employing the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach as the research methodology. Adding a little more, Mahmood (2022) also researched gender by focusing on how gender is portrayed in English as a

Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks published by the Punjab Textbook Board Lahore for elementary-level students. The findings revealed a persistent depiction of women in stereotypical roles, resembling traditional mothers and homemakers, which undermines their intellectual and physical potential. Similar to observations in developed countries, this phenomenon was evident in the English textbooks used in government schools.

I also reviewed research by Sani (2022), who discovered that the textbook exhibits a male-centric dominance in illustration, theme, and language, lacking equal gender representation. He found unequal gender representation in textbooks; however, there is no research on the Nepalese context. Therefore, I have decided to conduct my study on how the English textbooks reflect and are in line with modern pedagogy and social expectations of the reform relating to the representation of gender in Nepal.

In another study conducted by great advocates of gender issues, Asghar et al. (2021) explored that women were nearly overlooked in the textbooks, constituting a mere 20.95% of the sampled materials. The total number of females was discernible in 23.1% of all characters, 25.7% of depicted images, 9.8% of professional roles, and 15% of occupational positions. They also highlighted that giving less priority to female in the textbooks might influence their social perception.

Based on previous studies, gender stereotypes hold preconceived beliefs regarding differences between genders. Typically, societal norms dictate that males are dominant while females are considered subordinate. As noted by Talbot, gender stereotypes aligned with specific ideologies contribute to the perpetuation of naturalized gender inequalities. These stereotypes reinforce the established dominance of males and the submissive role of females. The expectation is that women should ideally remain silent, contrasting with the perceived natural dominance of men in communication. Consequently, females can be characterized as predetermined, emphasizing that men tend to exhibit more dominance in their speech than women.

Mary and Rhoda emphasize strategies to mitigate misunderstandings related to gender stereotypes. Firstly, they suggest that stereotyped groups should be clearly identified as possessing low degrees of authority. Secondly, a significant portion of the population tends to adhere to the characteristics associated with stereotyped groups. Overcoming stereotypes proves challenging, even when confronted with conflicting examples. Lastly, a noteworthy point is that many individuals are unaware of their stereotyping tendencies and reject the application of stereotypical

characteristics to their group. Previous research has identified an imbalance in gender representation within textbooks, but there is a lack of studies addressing this issue in the Nepalese context.

### **Research Gap**

The previous studies presented biases in EFL textbooks, with researchers like Porreca (1984) and Mahmood (2022) highlighting male dominance in language, visuals, and roles. Women are often depicted in traditional, subservient capacities, reinforcing stereotypes. However, very few studies have explored these issues, which creates a significant gap for this study. In spite of the extensive research in the global context, there is a noticeable gap in understanding how EFL textbooks reflect gender representation in Nepal. As I could not trace any studies addressing the issue of gender misrepresentation in the textbooks within the Nepalese context, it remains unclear whether these textbooks align with modern pedagogical principles and societal expectations of gender equity. Therefore, I decided to explore how to fill this gap by critically examining the gender representations in Nepalese English textbooks, contributing to the discourse on inclusive and equitable educational practices. The studies have been carried out to explore the gender representation of English textbooks at the secondary level. However, most research studies have been carried out in a foreign context. In the context of Nepal, the study was carried out in textbooks based on the old curriculum. This study explored gender representation in the current English textbooks from the perspective of teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers through the lens of Gender Schema Theory in the present context.

### **Chapter Summary**

The chapter discussed literature related to gender misrepresentation, which is associated with the area of my study. A theoretical understanding of the issue supports the issues of representing gender roles and their responsibility. This chapter thematically defines the issues, theory, and previous findings. With the help of the earlier studies, the chapter also presented a comprehensive report on the research gap.

As textbooks fulfill the educational needs of learners by providing meaningful content, I realized that addressing them would work as gender-friendly content for teaching and learning. The theoretical discussion of the chapter illustrated that the issue of gender representation is relevant and has a lot of rationale to be explored. The study has embraced two different theoretical guidelines to examine the

misrepresentation of gender roles in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. The gender schema theory highlighted that gender roles should not be presented in a biased way, as they directly influence the students' level of perception. Finally, the chapter illustrated that the unequal representation of gender in textbooks has several negative impacts. The research gap of the chapter has presented that the current English textbooks of grades IX and X have not yet explored the perspective of gender representation.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I present a detailed overview of my research methodology, covering philosophical considerations, research design, paradigm, approaches, sources of information, study area, procedures, tools, techniques, data analysis and interpretation, quality standards, and ethical concerns. The chapter begins with a discussion on philosophical considerations, where I highlight the ontological, epistemological, and axiological aspects of my research.

Following this, the chapter outlines the research design, explaining the broader methodological framework and the specific research method used. The chapter also describes the approaches adopted to collect and analyze data, including the sources of information and the intended study area. The chapter presents an enriching discussion on the tools and techniques employed in data collection and the strategies used to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings.

The chapter further explores the methods of data analysis and interpretation, emphasizing how the collected data is processed to derive meaningful insights. Finally, I address ethical concerns related to the study, ensuring that the research upholds integrity, confidentiality, and respect for all participants.

#### **Philosophical consideration**

Research Philosophy research is based on the interpretation of reality, the way of knowing and making meaning through subjective interpretation, and the value system of viewing knowledge and meaning. The philosophical guidelines pave the way to assimilate the proposed research and the philosophical ground. So, I explored my proposed research with the philosophical stances on ontology, epistemology, and axiology. In this support, Creswell (2012) defines research as a series of steps employed to analyze information to enhance comprehension of a particular topic or issue. He further presented that the three stages of research, including question generation, gathering information to address the topic, and developing a response, are essential in the research process. There are several factors to consider when attempting to answer research questions. One of them is the philosophical viewpoint. The researcher usually stands on a philosophical stance from which they view reality.

Scott and Usher (2011) stated that addressing philosophical matters is crucial in the research process and cannot be overlooked.

Before conducting research, one usually thinks about it silently. My research philosophy is critical in terms of my frame of reference. In this research, I was philosophically aware of my research issues and the process of following the research ethics. The entire philosophical representation is presented in three different headings, including ontology, epistemology, and axiology, to add clarity for my readers.

### **Ontology of My Research**

Ontology in research refers to the beliefs and reality of researchers. In qualitative research, researchers may have multiple realities, which shows their ontological perspective for their research. Ontology examines our 'underlying belief system as the researcher, about the nature of being and existence' (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). The ontological stance of my research reveals that the current English textbooks of grades IX and X have a lot of gender representation issues, which cannot provide the rights of equality among students from the perspective of 'gender schema theory and legal documents of Nepal and beyond.

### **Epistemology of My Research**

In social science research, epistemology refers to the beliefs researchers hold about their methods of generating knowledge (also known as the type or form of knowledge) (Richards, 2003). In this way, Bryman (2008) also defined epistemology as "an investigation into what kind of knowledge can be accepted in a profession. According to Scott and Usher (2011), all research is based on epistemology. Knowledge can be generated in many ways in this research. The epistemological stand in my study was based on my personal experiences, the literature sources cited, the textbooks proposed for my research, and the research informants. I received the information I needed from the sources described, using this as an epistemological basis for my research.

### **Axiology of My Research**

Axiology is a subject of philosophy concerned with values, including ethics and aesthetics, and how these influence human judgments and behavior. Axiology can refer to the effect of values on the research process, from the choice of research questions to how scientists interpret their findings. Axiology emphasizes how a researcher's ethical beliefs and values impact their methodological choices, how scientists interpret their data, and the overall approach to research (Lincoln & Guba,



1985). Qualitative research is particularly relevant because researchers are also well aware of their subjective biases and how their values influence the study (Maxwell, 2015). In support, Creswell (2013) also stated that researchers acknowledge that their values, as well as those of participants and other stakeholders, influence the research design and outcomes. From this, axiology is a theory of giving value to the information used in the research process.

The purpose of this study was to explore gender representation in the present English textbooks for grades IX and X in Nepal through a variety of methods, including textbook reviews, interviews with school students, and reading educational texts on gender representation in school textbooks. The data I gathered was gathered from various sources, including textbook reviews, interview findings, and literature on gender representation in school textbooks, which were valued as an Axiological stand of my research.

### **Research Paradigm: Critical Paradigm**

A research paradigm is a process that looks at the issues raised by researchers in their research. Different scholars have defined and conceptualized research paradigms from their perspectives. However, it has some underlying similarities to how the research paradigm works. Lichtman (2010) states that a paradigm is a way of seeing the world. Paradigms represent a researcher's fundamental perspective on the world and the nature of their research (Creswell, 2011). A conceptual and theoretical framework that evolved from the Frankfurt School in the early 20th century is the critical paradigm, called critical social theory. In order to promote social change and emancipation, it is rooted in the broader tradition of critical thinking and attempts to challenge dominant ideologies, power structures, and social injustices. So, in the case of my research, I would use an essential paradigm to see the reality of the gender representation of textbooks in grades IX and X from the perspective of gender schema theory. I critically examined the current textbooks and explored the perception of my participants on the issues I have noted in those textbooks. As the critical paradigm suggested and allowed me to advocate for change in the existing discourse and practices, I tried my best to recommend the findings of this research to authorized personnel, including the Ministry of Education, curriculum designers, textbook writers, and teachers to make some changes to the gender representation in the educational materials.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Method**

I use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as one of the key methodological approaches in my research, enabling a critical examination of gender misrepresentation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. CDA, developed by Norman Fairclough (1995), provides a robust framework for analyzing how language operates within power structures, particularly in educational texts. Fairclough's approach to CDA is instrumental in uncovering hidden ideologies embedded in textbooks, revealing how social structures shape discourse and reinforce existing hierarchies, including gender biases.

One of my core research objectives is to critically investigate how gender bias and misrepresentation are embedded in the language and visuals of textbooks. Fairclough's three-dimensional framework of CDA, which includes text analysis (description), discourse practice (interpretation), and socio-cultural practice (explanation), guides my study in systematically examining both textual and visual content. This framework allows me to scrutinize gendered language patterns, character representations, and underlying messages in textbooks, thereby addressing the first research question of my study.

CDA is particularly useful because it considers context, recognizing that language is not neutral but deeply intertwined with social, cultural, and institutional structures. It helps expose the ways in which textbooks reinforce traditional gender roles by prioritizing male representation while depicting female characters in stereotypical and passive roles. By analyzing linguistic patterns, metaphors, and narratives, I uncover subtle yet pervasive gender biases that shape students' perceptions of societal roles.

Moreover, CDA's interdisciplinary nature, drawing insights from linguistics, sociology, and cultural studies, enables a comprehensive evaluation of how educational materials shape learners' understanding of gender. Fairclough (1995) asserts that discourse does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it. Thus, textbooks, being primary educational resources, play a critical role in reinforcing or challenging gender norms. With the help of Fairclough's CDA framework, this study systematically examines textbooks' role in either perpetuating or challenging gender stereotypes. Through this critical analysis, I provide empirical evidence that supports the need to revise these textbooks to promote gender equity in education.

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry is for exploring human stories and their experiences to make meaning from them. It is a qualitative research method that focuses on the stories people tell to understand their experiences and the meaning they ascribe to those experiences (Saldana, 2016). For this study, I employed narrative inquiry as a second method to explore the stakeholders' perceptions of gender misrepresentation in secondary-level English textbooks (IX and X). This method allowed me to capture the personal experiences, insights, and reflections of individuals who interact directly with these textbooks. With the help of the narrative inquiry notion, I responded to the second question of my research. I collected my participants' experiences with gender misrepresentation and analyzed how language functions used in the textbooks influence the mental and social understanding of the learners in Nepal. I interviewed five key informants: secondary-level female teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers. These participants provided valuable perspectives on how gender roles are represented in the textbooks, offering educational and content development insights. Their narratives helped illuminate the nuances of gender depiction in these texts, shedding light on areas where gender bias might exist and how it affects classroom learning and student perceptions.

### **Research Site and Participants**

As this study is qualitative in nature, it tried to enrich insights for the qualitative analysis. I chose three secondary-level female teachers, a curriculum designer, and a textbook writer, as they each bring unique experiences and perspectives regarding gender biases in the English textbooks for Grades IX and X. This selection was made to ensure that both the teaching and content development aspects were represented. By engaging with individuals who work directly with these textbooks, I aimed to better understand how gender is portrayed and where biases might be present. The following profiles of my research participants help my readers to understand the context comprehensively.

**Table 1**  
*List of Participants*

SN	Participants	Professional Roles	Experiences
1	Ms. Pradhan	Female English Teacher	More than 10 years of teaching the English subject
2	Ms. Shrestha	Female English Teacher	5 years of teaching the English subject
3	Ms. Neupane	Female English Teacher	7 years of teaching the English Subject
4	Mr. Karki	English Textbook Writer	12 years of working in the field
5	Mr. Dahal	Curriculum Designer	25 years of working in the field

The names of the participants used in the table are pseudonymously presented by obtaining prior consent from the informants. I assured them that their personal information would not be disclosed or used elsewhere other than in this study.

### **Data Analysis Processes**

In qualitative research, researchers need to articulate their data collection process because it gives meaning to their research. Generally, data analysis presents how data from a particular study is analyzed. Describing the nature of data and how the data is analyzed adds standards to writing (Cunning, 1995). In qualitative research, data analysis needs to be elaborated on to add quality to research findings. I used two different approaches to analyze the information in my study because of the two distinct natures of the data sources. For the textbook analysis, I employed the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis by Norman Fairclough (1995). It allowed me to critically analyze the textbooks from a gender perspective. Also, it allowed me to highlight the language function that is demonstratively used in the textbooks for further analysis and discussion.

Similarly, I also followed Saldaña's (2016) coding strategies. In the first stage, I transcribed the narratives of my participants. After the transcription, I read the transcription and gave some highlights as codings. In the first phase of coding, I

underlined the law information shared by my participants on gender misrepresentation. Similarly, in the second level of coding, I grouped similar coding as frequently repeated information of the participants.

The steps shared by Saldana (2016) seem worth using in my research as data transcription, coding, and thematizing add rigor to the thematic analysis by allowing me to move beyond surface-level observations and identify underlying patterns of social perception of gender representation in the current textbooks of grades IX and X. The codes, categories, and themes were systematically from the nuanced nature of the analysis of data shared by my participants, providing a comprehensive understanding of the gender representations in textbooks.

### **Quality Standards**

Maintaining quality in the research process seems significant because it ensures the standard of the research findings. Quality in research refers to the essential elements that directly help researchers to provide a certain standard in their research findings. Since this research is qualitative, some elements lead this research to meet the basic standards, including credibility, authenticity, and representativeness. In this regard, Scott (2006) claimed that quality standards, such as authenticity and credibility, support this. Evaluating documents involves authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. Similarly, Lohr (2004) highlighted that quality standards in research mainly presented the connection between research processes, including study design, methods, subject selection, outcome measurement, and protection against biases and errors.

Many strategies help researchers ensure the quality of their research. In this support, Spencer et al. (2003) presented that some scholars argue for a nuanced approach, emphasizing empirical observations, philosophical underpinnings, and consensus among scholars. Among many strategies for maintaining quality in research, I applied the techniques proposed by Gary (2021). He suggested methods that include credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I used all these tools to improve the quality standards in my research process.

### **Credibility**

In social science research, credibility is a process of ensuring accuracy and truthfulness in research findings. Creswell (2015) stated that credibility necessitates thoroughly examining and reporting the research design, participants, and context to establish trust in the results. Before taking the interview, I shared my research agenda

with my participants. After sharing the research agenda, I ensured them that their information would not be used elsewhere for this research. While doing so, they also assured me that the information they shared was credible enough. I put the purpose of my research in the center and requested them to share their experiences, highlighting the gender representation in the current textbooks. This technique helped me add quality to my research findings.

### **Transferability**

In the field of social science research, transferability is one of the significant strategies that helps the researcher ensure quality in research. It allowed the collection of relevant findings and conclusions from the study. This research highlighted the gender misrepresentation in English textbooks for grades IX and X in Nepal. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability is maintained by thoroughly describing the research setting, methodology, and findings. The detailed information that I collected helped readers to evaluate the transferability of the findings. This allowed readers to think about whether the results can be meaningful in similar educational or cultural environments. I described the socio-cultural background of my participants, the process of selecting textbooks, and the analysis carried out. I finally enhanced the applicability of my study.

### **Ethical Consideration**

As per my understanding, ethical considerations in research are guiding principles for its approach and practices. It provides researchers with information about what is wrong and right. In this regard, Yadav (2018) stated that researchers should be ethically aware of the actions they take. In undertaking a text analysis of gender representation in the context of Nepal, ethical considerations seem to uphold the integrity and sensitivity of the research. This moral framework serves as a guiding principle, ensuring that the study respects the rights and dignity of all participants while contributing to the broader conversation on gender equity in education. I have tried to use the following qualitative strategies to ensure ethics in my research.

### **Informed Consent**

Obtaining informed consent is a fundamental ethical requirement in research, ensuring that all participants fully understand the study's nature, purpose, and potential implications (Iphofen, 2018). In this text analysis of gender representation, informed consent was taken from all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and education officials. I obtained the permission of my participants before conducting

their interviews, as it reinforces respect for participants' autonomy and fosters trust within the research community.

### **Transparency**

Transparency in research ethics involves openly communicating the research objectives, methodologies, and potential impacts (Saldana, 2015). I adapted the transparency approach by clearly outlining the research goals and how findings may be used, particularly concerning educational materials and policies related to gender representation. By being upfront about the research intentions, the study aims to create an atmosphere of openness, encouraging collaboration and engagement from participants and stakeholders.

### **Reflexivity and Positionality**

Reflexivity and positionality are critical components of ethical research, as they encourage researchers to reflect on their own biases and cultural backgrounds and how these factors may influence their interpretations (Iphofen, 2018). In conducting this analysis, I used and engaged in ongoing self-reflection to recognize personal assumptions and perspectives that may affect the study (Creswell, 2013). This process enhanced the research's authenticity and ensured that the findings were interpreted with cultural sensitivity, acknowledging the complex social dynamics at play in Nepal.

### **Cultural Sensitivity**

In social science research, primarily narrative studies, cultural sensitivity plays a crucial role. Given the socio-cultural context of Nepal, cultural sensitivity is paramount in this research. Understanding and respecting local customs, values, and norms related to gender representation is essential for conducting ethical research. As this approach allowed me to be culturally aware of the cultural norms and values (Creswell, 2013), I interviewed and talked with the participants, being polite and culturally sensitive. By adopting a culturally sensitive approach, I maintain ethical guidelines to respect research ethics.

## **Chapter Summary**

This research methodology chapter has explained and presented the overall methodological components used in this research. I first started the philosophical considerations for this research, including ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Secondly, I presented the paradigmatic route of my research to explain how and why my research issue is guided. Thirdly, I presented the method and data collection tools

for this research. Last but not least, this chapter came up with standards for quality and ethical considerations, which supported me in articulating the overall methodological aspects of this research.

The ethical considerations of the chapter highlighted how this research ensured the moral consideration of the research process. The quality standard of the chapter narrates the ways used for maintaining quality in this research process. This chapter also describes the methods of collecting and analyzing information on the findings of this research. While doing all these, I felt that explaining any research's methodological process is mandatory, as it gives a complete methodological summary of any research.



## CHAPTER IV

### GENDER REPRESENTATION IN THE SECONDARY LEVEL ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS (IX AND X)

This chapter tries to cover the overall gender representations used in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X, along with critical observation from the perspectives of the Gender Schema Theory of Ben (1981). Those representations are textual, graphic, symbolic, and metaphoric and are used by the textbook writers in the prescribed textbooks. I believe that the critical exploration of the textual representation of the prescribed textbooks supports us in dealing with the issues logically. It extends beyond textual content to include visual imagery, illustrations, character roles, and occupational portrayals, which often reinforce traditional gender norms. The chapter also incorporates textbook cutouts as evidence to support the analysis, ensuring a strong connection with relevant literature and theoretical perspectives. This chapter also provides a detailed and nuanced interpretation of how gender roles are depicted in the textbooks and whether they contribute to reinforcing gender biases.

#### **Gender Representation in Textbooks (IX and X): Nature of Domination**

There are layers of gender bias in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. Simply, the discourse of gender equality and equity is a very noticeable area of concern in modern times. Because of constitutional rights, gender inequality and biases cannot be accepted at any cost. The current English textbooks for grades IX and X have a lot of gender misrepresentation, especially in assigning social roles. Male characters are given priority, whereas female characters are not given an equal opportunity in terms of gender-based performance and responsibility. Taking reference from the above background, I have tried to reveal the nature of such gender biases that exist in Nepal's core technology materials. In this regard, Tajeddin and Enayat (2010) highlighted that one of the common forms is gender stereotyping, where traditional gender roles are reinforced, such as portraying males in dominant occupational roles like doctors and scientists, while females are depicted in nurturing roles like nurses and homemakers. The above gender misrepresentations can also be seen in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X.

I have experienced several gender imbalances in the current English textbooks. Male characters have frequently been preferred in exercises, which generally reveal a misrepresentation of the gender. In this regard, Ullah and Skelton (2013) stated that giving much priority to male characters is one of the ways of misrepresenting gender. In a similar discourse, Gabriel and Gygax (2016) also noted that linguistic-level sexism is another issue, where masculine pronouns are used generically, and gender-biased occupational terms are employed. These misrepresentations can lead to the internalization of gender norms by students and reinforce gender discrimination.

In this chapter, I followed the Gender Schema Theory's framework to explore the issue of gender representation in the textbooks more deeply. The notion of gender schema theory helped me analyze the gender stereotypes and roles of males and females in the textbooks. The language functions, illustrations, and exercises used in the textbooks misrepresent gender roles and responsibilities.

This chapter provides a comprehensive and critical analysis of gender representation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. We believe that any academic textbook plays an essential role in teaching and learning, making it the most crucial source for educators. From the perspective of gender schema theory, there is a close relationship between language and culture. The current textbooks are the most popular teaching tools for foreign languages in the context of Nepal. If gender domination is presented through teaching materials, it will not be legal and might negatively affect students. In this support, Greenberg (2018) and Wollheim (1998) stated that if a picture symbolizes something, the visual experience of that picture will develop a negative image and perception.

Gender discrimination in educational materials is a critical issue that influences the development of young minds and shapes societal norms. In Nepal, where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained, the content of school textbooks can either perpetuate or challenge these stereotypes (Acharya, 2017). This discussion focuses on the presence and implications of gender discrimination in the English textbook used in Grade IX. By making an in-depth analysis of the misrepresentations of gender roles, the language used, and the visibility of male and female characters, we aim to uncover biases that may reinforce gender inequality (Shrestha & Luitel, 2019). These issues of bias require immediate action to provide an equitable learning environment that promotes gender sensitivity and equality.

### **Misrepresentation of Job Titles for Gender**

The current English textbooks of grades IX and X have misrepresented job titles based on gender. As a female teacher, I have experienced and noticed that the exercises, stories, and other parts of the textbooks have been biased and have fully divided the job titles. Work-based division along gender lines has long been a defining characteristic of social and economic structures. This type of misrepresentation of gender can shape individuals' roles and opportunities based on their gender. While using the textbook, I have noticed that men have been associated with public and economic spheres, while women have been relegated to domestic and caregiving roles, reinforcing systemic inequalities. Supporting the discourse, Connell (2009) and Jane (2024) have highlighted that dividing males and females on the basis of their social roles and responsibilities cannot contribute to the advocacy of equality and inclusion.

Similarly, one of the very old gender advocates, Acker (1990), also highlighted that such gender-based division seems evident in workplace dynamics and deeply ingrained in cultural narratives, education, and policy-making processes. In spite of our full efforts to maintain gender equality, occupational segregation (job-based social hierarchy) and unequal labor distribution persist, and the misrepresentation of gender roles pushes back females in order to achieve their career aspirations and economic independence (Charles & Grusky, 2004). The current secondary-level English textbooks have demonstrated such gender roles, which directly impact students' learning. Female social roles are misrepresented, which goes against constitutional rights (The Nepal Government, 2021). There are some examples and exercises in the textbooks in which the female social and professional roles have been dominantly presented.

**Figure 3**  
*Profession-based misrepresentation*



*Source: Grade 9, page 7*

Taking reference from the above textbook cut-outs, the hidden dominant practice can be seen as male characters being presented as superior by offering them the superior professions of a doctor and a pilot. Yes, it is clearly represented that the male characters have been presented. On the other hand, female characters have been shown as socially weak professionals in terms of their job responsibilities. This is the one example that can be seen throughout the textbook. In the current English textbooks of grades IX and X, several gender denotative and gender-figurative representations have been directly revealed. This can easily demonstrate the culture of showing inferiority among genders.

According to Fairclough (2013), misrepresentation of gender roles, especially professional roles, from the lens of gender schema theory, gender-based domination through educational materials directly influences the social, emotional, and mental development of students. It means the current English textbooks have issues from a gender perspective because the exercises that are used in the textbooks misrepresent gender roles throughout the textbook. As a female teacher, I am responsible for pointing out the mistakes that have been made. It is said that today's students will be tomorrow's leaders. If our future professionals are trained in such a patriarchal training manual, the slogan of equality will only be heard but not implemented in

reality. I thoroughly reviewed the recent grades IX and X textbooks with this mindset. I traced some of the symbolic representations that directly push the female gender into the corner, where they feel inferior, weak, poor, unprofessional, low-payer, etc. Some noticeable examples of gender bias presented in the image are listed one after another below.

Generally, the perception of male writers varies from that of female writers. I believe male writers might have written these books because the choices of female characters, especially their professional duty, have been demonstrated as weaker than those of males. The analysis of the current textbooks from the perspective of Gender Schema Theory helped me to go deeper into the text and explore the gender-based domination within the text. I also believe that the notion of critical discourse analysis enabled me to reveal and explore how gender is represented in textbooks. Although there are some efforts to balance gender portrayals (Nepal Government, 2021), traditional biases rooted in long-standing gender norms remain evident.

Gender Schema Theory suggests that from a young age, individuals internalize societal beliefs about gender roles, shaping their perceptions of what careers are suitable for men and women (Bem, 1981). This is reflected in the textbooks, where high-status professions like doctors and pilots are predominantly depicted with male characters, reinforcing the notion that men occupy more authoritative roles (Sharma, 2017). At the same time, professions such as teaching and singing are often related to female characters, which highlights a common stereotype that nurturing and creative work is more suited for women.

From a critical perspective, these representations do more than mirror social realities; they actively maintain existing power structures and reinforce gender norms (Fairclough, 2013). This is supported by Sunderland (2004), who found that educational discourse often underlines unequal gender ideologies. Likewise, Skelton (2009) emphasized that textbooks are crucial in legitimizing societal beliefs about gender roles, typically positioning men and women in ways that uphold traditional divisions.

Koirala (2019) argues that such biased portrayals limit the recognition of individuals' capabilities beyond gendered expectations, ultimately hindering efforts toward achieving gender equality. This is particularly concerning for girls, who may internalize these restrictive narratives and see their career aspirations as limited. Adhikari and Shrestha (2020) revealed the necessity of including diverse and

inclusive representations in educational materials to inspire all students, regardless of gender, to pursue their interests freely. The theoretical notion of Fairclough (1970) claimed that it is essential to create a learning environment that encourages students to engage critically with content and challenge prevailing gender norms.

The analysis of the current English textbooks reveals a predominant reinforcement of gender misrepresentation. The textbooks also present that the male characters hold a dominant role. Such dominating roles include doctors, engineers, managers, police officers, and pilots. Similarly, the female characters are confined to socially weaker positions such as housewives, caretakers, and house servants. Despite some attempts to balance representation, the content reflects entrenched biases, particularly in Nepali society, where prestigious roles like doctors and pilots are viewed as inherently male. At the same time, professions like singers and teachers are considered less significant (Koirala, 2020). Through the lens of gender schema theory, the misrepresentation of gender limits their understanding of social equality (Bem, 1981). Research indicates that these stereotypical depictions in educational materials perpetuate traditional norms, hindering progress toward gender equality (Blumberg, 2008). The critical discourse seems necessary to maintain inclusive representations of professions, which is essential for fostering equitable perceptions and empowering students to pursue their aspirations freely, regardless of gender.

#### **Figure 4**

*Gender Bias in the Current Textbooks*

##### **A. Look at the picture and answer these questions.**

- a. What could the people in the picture be talking about?
- b. What do you think when a friend forgets your name?



*English 9*

**61**

The above textbook cutout presents a conversation between three colleagues. In the dialogue, two male and a female character are discussing each other. In this picture, male participants are shown as dominating in comparison to the female character. In this support, Clark (2019) said that such domination demonstrates an awareness of including female characters. In the same regard, Jane (2024) advocated

that male dominance is perceived as having a pronounced gap in female participation. In this support, Smith and Taylor (2018) stated that men are one of the prioritized characters in conversations with women and that women are more likely to respond to inquiries posed by men.

In the above situation, the textbook illustrates an imbalance in the representation of male and female characters, in which female social roles are dominated and given less priority. In many cases

In textbooks males are more likely to initiate conversations, while females are typically in responsive positions. This type of representation reflects a gender bias that aligns with the Gender Schema Theory and can significantly impact the social and mental development of students.

With the theoretical notion of my research in mind, I can see and understand the above-prescribed gender misrepresentation as an illegal practice. In this support, Bem (1981) described how children learn about gender roles from their environment, including societal expectations, media, and educational materials. The guideline of gender schema defines the term gender schema as a cognitive framework that organizes information based on perceived gender-appropriate behaviors. These schemas influence how individuals process information, behave, and interact within society. As mentioned in the textbooks, gender schemas are reinforced through the portrayal of characters, dialogues, and images, shaping students' understanding of gender roles.

In such situations, the dominance of male characters in conversation or dialogue and their more assertive roles in initiating conversations contribute to the reinforcement of traditional gender stereotypes. In this regard, Bem (1981) highlighted that female characters, shown as being reactive or passive, strengthen the societal belief that women should occupy secondary, supportive roles. According to Clark (2019), even though there is an attempt to include female figures, the uneven distribution perpetuates the notion that male dominance is the norm, which is in line with traditional gender schemas. Such portrayals are likely to become part of the student's gender schema, shaping their beliefs about what is acceptable or expected for each gender in social settings.

The reinforcement of gender schemas through educational materials has both immediate and long-term implications for students' social and mental development. Williams and Jones (2020) note that when female participation is visibly less than

male participation, male and female students internalize these roles as usual. This can lead to limited self-esteem and self-efficacy in female students, who may view assertiveness and leadership as male traits while associating passivity with their gender.

From a social perspective, students are likely to emulate the behaviors they see represented. Male students may feel encouraged to dominate conversations, while female students may feel discouraged from expressing opinions. This perpetuates a cycle of unequal gender participation in social settings, where men continue to take on leadership roles, and women assume more passive, secondary roles. Smith and Taylor (2018) emphasize that such representations in textbooks contribute to the formation of social expectations that align with patriarchal norms, limiting the potential for equitable gender relations.

I explored different literature and found Jane (2024) highlighting that the misrepresentation of gender roles in the grade IX English textbook contributes to the reinforcement of traditional gender schemas, which can have far-reaching effects on students' social behavior and psychological development. We need to consider the issue for better students' social and cognitive development. Similarly, Bem (1981) suggested that to promote a more gender-equitable learning environment, it is essential to revise such educational materials to reflect balanced gender roles, ensuring that both male and female characters engage equally in conversations, leadership, and social interaction. From the above discussion, I personally understood that textbooks that provide more equitable representations of gender roles will foster healthier social and cognitive development, encouraging all students to see themselves as capable of leadership and participation, regardless of gender.



**Figure 5**  
*Religious/Cultural aspects of the discussion*



*Source: Grade 9, Page 65*



**Eid**



**Biska Jatra**

*Source: Grade 10, page 17*

The above textbook cutouts have a lot to share about gender misrepresentation. Looking closely at the situation presented in the textbooks, I understood that male characters are shown as stronger than female. The first picture in this heading indicates that males are stronger than females because they can fight with strong bulls. Using such texts in the classroom can affect students' cognition as they develop a kind of understanding that female characters are weaker. In this support, Smith (2010) concluded that representing gender through textbooks has a negative impact on students. As a responsible teacher, I also observed my students developing cognition that girls are biologically weaker characters, so that they are not given or assigned strong jobs by their families and society. The perception negatively orients them toward gender roles and social responsibilities. Not only that, the female students feel dominated and disempowered, not getting equal space in the textbooks and developing a negative cognition of their roles.

Equal representation of gender can be achieved by treating them equally and providing them with constitutional rights, and they can have fair treatment in gender representation. It assesses how men and women are portrayed in images or text (Johnson, 2015). There was an imbalance or uneven representation since one sex predominated and the other was underrepresented in the photographs (Brown & Davis, 2018). The representation of each gender in the textbook should be fair and balanced, but the reality is often lopsided (Miller, 2019). Similarly, the figure reveals that male characters perform all the characters representing different socio-cultural and religious activities and rituals. It shows the real position of females in society.

There are many research findings available in the field. However, some religious institutions have predominantly excluded women from leadership positions. They basically want to limit their authority and influence within religious communities. In this discussion, Anderson (2017) expressed that this gender bias promotes the idea that women are less capable or deserving of positions of spiritual authority, reinforcing gender inequality and denying women the opportunity to participate fully in shaping religious practices and beliefs (Taylor, 2020). The current textbooks of grades IX and X are doing exactly the same, as they indirectly promote gender bias by misrepresenting gender roles and responsibilities by prioritizing male-dominated texts in the textbooks.

Challenging these discriminatory practices of gender misrepresentation within religious institutions seems to be a mandatory action for creating inclusive spaces

where both men and women can contribute their unique perspectives and talents (White, 2021). On a similar note, Lewis (2016) stated that it is essential to recognize that everyone, regardless of gender, should have equal opportunities to participate in religious leadership roles and make meaningful contributions to their faith communities.

**Figure 6**  
*Gender Misrepresentation Through Conversation*

**Conversation III**

Aunt : Would you like another piece of cake?

Uncle : Yes please, that would be nice.

*English 9*



83

*Source: Grade 9, page 83*

**Conversation IV**

Sanjay : Shall I help you with your maths problem?

Ramila : Yes, please. That would be very nice of you.



**Conversation V**

Sister : I'll do the washing, if you like.

Brother : It's OK, I can do it.

*Source: Grade 9, page 85*

Among many, the above-presented textbook cutouts clearly show how the male-dominated perspective of the textbook writers reveals their patriarchal orientation while composing examples and content. The writer exhibits a patriarchal mindset. They have represented females as servers of the family, who are always expected to serve, as mentioned in the example. As highlighted in the conversation, the aunt asks the uncle for food, representing females' social role as subordinates within the family (Jane, 2024). Such context and content directly provoke students to act in similar social roles in their day-to-day lives. Supporting the discourse, Bem

(1981) also highlighted that any social misrepresentation could affect students' schema, that is, their mentality. The situation in the current English textbooks has embraced different layers of social and behavioral misrepresentation of gender. According to the Ministry of Education (2023), no children should be discriminated against in an educational setting. Ignoring the legal statement of the government, the current English textbooks also have gender misrepresentations.

These textbooks present dialogues and narratives that promote traditional gender roles. The textbooks also highlight how societal expectations influence the lives and opportunities of individuals based on their gender. In this support, Koirala (2022) stated that the stories and examples used in the current textbooks encourage students to understand the social structures of males and females are different. The discourse mentioned in the text above has captured the common gender perceptions and values from the perspective of writers.

Here, my concern is, why does such gender representation exist in the current English textbooks for grades IX and X? The constitutional rights of learners to be equal in the educational setting have been ignored and overshadowed in many ways. It directly reveals that the Nepal Government (2023) ensured the constitutional rights of every learner to be treated equally. There should not be any gender or social bias in and around the education setting. However, the current English textbooks do not follow the instructions of the government and misrepresent gender roles in the textbooks.

From the above discussion, it seems clear that the books are illegally representing the current social and behavioral representation of gender. In this support, Gurung (2021) claimed that many textbooks in Nepal are not aware of and written following the guidelines of gender sensitivity. The issues can be analyzed from the perspective of gender, especially the theoretical guideline of the Gender Schema Theory of Sandra Bem (1981). This theory suggests that gender-based discrimination directly influences the mental development of students, which is the schema in the theoretical term. As a teacher, I have also experienced students developing a negative mindset regarding gender roles and responsibility.

**A. Read the following 'thank you' letter and underline the relative clauses.**

Phungling, Taplejung

6 June 2021

Dear Sujita,

Thank you very much for the wonderful birthday gift. The vase you have gifted me is exactly what I wanted. It reminds me of the vase which my little sister broke last week. It has exactly the same patterns. In fact, this is the best china that I have ever seen. My mother, who loves flowers, arranged roses in the vase. Can you guess where I have kept it? Just outside my bedroom. Thank you once again for the lovely gift.

Love,  
Punam

*Source: Grade 9, Page 98*

I have chosen the opposite context because it also suggests some female demonstration. As mentioned in the above textbook cut-outs, both gender-based representations somehow seem equal. Both characters are chosen as females because the content is based on flowers and vases, which are taken as female work. It also highlights that the high number of female characters is misrepresented in several situations in the textbooks. Some of these misrepresentations are based on their caring for others, cooking, cleaning, and nursing. The above discourse of gender representation is directly aligned with Gender Schema theory because Bem (1981) stated the impact of these stereotypical representations in textbooks. Bem argues that gender schemas are mental frameworks that shape how individuals understand and internalize societal norms about gender roles.

It is said that the students' schemas mainly develop early in the social setting in which they grew up. In the case of these textbooks, the repeated representation of women in traditionally domestic roles, such as cooking, cleaning, and nursing, reinforces conventional gender norms and strengthens these schemas in students. Similarly, the unequal distribution of dialogue, where men are shown initiating conversations and women responding, perpetuates the idea that men are assertive and dominant while women are passive and submissive.

As a researcher, I have realized that the above misrepresentations not only influence learners' understanding of gender roles but also narrow their perception and understanding of social roles. In this regard, Blungerg (2008) claimed that consistent exposure to these misrepresentations of gender in an educational setting can

perpetuate the culture of inequalities and hinder progress toward gender equity. We have to revise such content from the existing textbooks to challenge traditional schemas and promote diverse and equitable gender portrayals, which is essential for fostering a more inclusive understanding of gender roles among students.

**Figure 7**

*Physical and Financial Discrimination*



*Source: Grade 9, p 128*

The conversational context speaks louder as the conversation reveals how female characters are socially presented as weak, less capable, and less confident in their abilities. In the same line, the male characters are shown as capable, confident, and able to decide their own lives. It is not only the contexts I am presenting, but also throughout the textbooks, that have been presented. As mentioned in the above picture, the masculine gender has been presented as capable and superior beings among girls. The exercise highlights the representation of male roles as powerful and dominant. It is stereotypically stated that males are the breadwinners. Such breadwinners manage powerful aspects of home management, whilst women are primarily seen as homemakers. Females are mostly shown in the roles of cook, caretaker of the house, etc. Female characters seem to be financially dependent in comparison to the male characters. You can see in the picture presented above that their conversation tells a lot of hidden misrepresentations of gender, which is totally



connected with the patriarchal society. As a researcher, I believe the representation can not be legal in any form. Therefore, it should not be entertained anymore.

Many research studies have explored the issues of gender misrepresentation and its influence on students' perceptions of social roles. I reviewed the problems of gender misrepresentation in the paper by Mirza and Malik (1999). They mainly highlighted that the male gender is generally given priority over the female gender. The gender schema theory does not allow such a portrayal of gender because it has several negative impacts on students' social, mental, and behavioral learning.

In the context of Nepal, where cultural norms and societal values deeply influence educational content, the examination of gender misrepresentation in the prescribed English textbooks is paramount. Educational materials significantly shape students' perceptions, attitudes, and understanding of societal norms (Archer, 2017; Colgan, 2016). Consequently, it is crucial to scrutinize the portrayal of gender roles, stereotypes, and identities in these materials, as they directly influence the development of the nation's youth.

As it is already mentioned in the problem statement section of this dissertation, this study has tried its best to analyze the misrepresentation of gender in the prescribed textbooks critically. English textbooks used in grades IX and X. With the help of qualitative analysis, I tried my best to explore how lexical and visual materials contribute to gender representation and examined their alignment with evolving societal values in the current English textbooks of the secondary level.

As we have a diverse cultural situation, gender-based discrimination is not a unique thing. This research analyzed the gender representations in the current English textbooks from a gender perspective. The findings are expected to provide actionable insights for teachers, curriculum makers, and textbook writers. It guided the creation of gender-inclusive educational materials that resonate with the national cultural values. It also highlights an equitable and empowering learning experience for learners.

As a female teacher, I have noticed some issues with lexical gender dominance in the current English textbooks. I also noticed that students develop negative perceptions of gender roles in their society if they are taught. Textbooks play a significant role in orienting students' perceptions and understanding of societal roles, with content and imagery significantly contributing to the construction of gender identities and roles (Connell, 2005; Luke, 1997). On a similar note, Paechter

(2006) revealed that exploring and analyzing the representation of males and females in the current textbooks. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis and gender schema theory, it is said that textbooks should be one of the sources of examples to provide equality in their learning. However, it seems to be the opposite in many ways. I believe it may hinder the development of an inclusive and equitable academic environment.

The problem statement aligns with the recognition that gender representation in educational materials has garnered increased attention in recent years (Archer, 2017). The portrayal of gender in textbooks significantly impacts students' self-perception, influencing their sense of value, capacity, and academic confidence. Failure to update the curriculum may result in a substantial gap between classroom learning and real-life experiences, potentially hindering students' critical thinking, empathy, and engagement with societal issues. Addressing these biases in English textbooks is imperative for fostering a more inclusive educational environment and ensuring the overall quality of education.

### **Figure 8**

*Gender Misrepresentation in Sports*



In the picture, the male gender is given priority over the female gender. Here, four out of five pictures are of male characters. The finding, to some extent, is shared with the findings of a previous study by Mirza and Malik (1999), which also observed females represented as weaker creatures who lacked decision-making and ruling powers, being inactive and cowardly. Men, on the other hand, were portrayed as idols of vitality, strength, and decisiveness. Zeenutunnisa (1989) showed that male characters were leading in number in the majority of the textbooks she analyzed and that the males were related to a broader range of activities than the females.





**B. Write the names of the sports shown in the pictures below.**



.....



.....



.....



*Source: Page 164 Grade 10*

The pictures used in the analysis process show that female characters are weaker than male. This is not only the case shown above; there are many other noticeable examples. In the first picture, the girls are shown dancing while the male characters engage in activities like singing, drawing, and playing the drum. This is often perceived as more creative and valuable. Similarly, in the second picture, females are notably underrepresented as athletes in the textbook illustrations. This lack of representation reinforces stereotypes and can discourage girls from pursuing sports. Studies have shown that the underrepresentation of women in active and diverse roles in educational materials perpetuates traditional gender norms and limits

aspirations (Blumberg, 2008; Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Despite the numerous success stories of female athletes, their achievements are often overlooked or given less importance than those of male athletes (Hargreaves, 1994). Addressing this imbalance is vital for promoting gender equality and encouraging all students to participate equally in sports. Including more examples of female athletes in textbooks could inspire girls, offering them role models demonstrating that success in sports is achievable regardless of gender.

From the perspective of Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), the representations of female characters as weaker and underrepresented in active roles, such as sports, in these textbook images illustrate how gender norms are internalized through repeated exposure. Gender schemas guide students' understanding of behaviors and roles for each gender. Here, in this context, the representation of girls' engagement seems to be a valued activity. Mainly, girls are represented as

**Figure 9**

*Gender Misrepresentation in Showcasing Social Support*



entertaining characters, such as dancers. It highlights that women are less suited for physical activities or leadership roles.

This misrepresentation of gender negatively develops their schema on the social roles of what girls can or should do. Gender Schema Theory suggests that such portrayals not only reflect existing cultural norms but also actively shape children's beliefs about gender, constraining their aspirations and reinforcing gender

inequality. Despite the presence of successful women in sports, the lack of female athletes in textbooks further perpetuates these gendered expectations, underscoring the importance of including diverse and empowering representations to challenge these biases and promote gender equality.

The image from the Grade X English textbook highlights the reinforcement of outdated gender stereotypes, which can significantly limit students' perceptions of gender roles. Such representations contribute to inequality and hinder progress toward achieving gender equality. Research indicates that when educational materials present narrow and traditional views of gender, they create an environment where specific

roles are seen as appropriate for one gender over another (Skelton, 2009). This limitation restricts students' aspirations and shapes their understanding of their potential, often leading them to internalize these restrictive norms (Koirala, 2019).

To understand this issue more deeply, we can turn to gender schema theory, which suggests that individuals develop cognitive framework schemes from an early age based on societal beliefs about gender (Bem, 1981). These schemas significantly influence how students perceive and engage with gender roles. There are many examples in the textbooks that predominantly use men in positions of authority. Men are primarily utilized as doctors or pilots. In this study, Levant et al. (2003) concluded that misrepresentation can affect both genders as they might consider their careers and make their future perception accordingly.

Based on the above discourse, it is important to challenge these stereotypes to create a more equitable educational environment. In this support, Adhikari and Shrestha (2020) suggested that balanced and diverse representations of both genders in textbooks and other educational materials can help dismantle these limiting narratives. When students are exposed to a variety of gender portrayals, it not only broadens their aspirations but also encourages them to appreciate the contributions of all individuals, regardless of gender.

I believe that embracing diverse gender representations in educational practices helps foster respect and appreciation for diversity among students. By learning to question and challenge outdated stereotypes, students can develop a more nuanced understanding of gender, which is essential for creating a more inclusive society (Thorne, 1993). We need to address the issue of gender representation in educational materials, which is not just about fairness. For this, it is a necessary step toward reshaping societal norms and promoting gender equality.

From this, we can easily understand that the biases found in textbooks and other educational resources can profoundly influence students' mental and social development. When students encounter narrow depictions of gender roles, they may develop limited views of their potential and capabilities, leading to lower self-esteem and aspirations (Morawski, 2008). These stereotypes can also hinder healthy social interactions, as students may adopt rigid views on gender that negatively affect their relationships with peers (Sutherland, 2011). On the other hand, I believe that offering an equitable representation creates a more supportive learning environment,

developing confidence and encouraging positive social dynamics among all students, regardless of gender.

### Figure 10

#### *Stereotypical Gender Representations*

##### Conversation I

Abhi : My father works in a factory.

Reema : So does mine.

Bikalpa : But mine works in a bakery.



##### A. Work in pairs and practise the conversation below.

Woman : Excuse me sir!

Police Inspector : Yes, how may I help you?

Woman : Someone snatched my handbag.



English 10

245

*Source: Page 230, Grade 10*

As mentioned in the above picture, the father is shown as the earner and main person in the family. This is one of the traditional gender norms that still exist in society. We can see in the conversation that mothers are not generally shown as money generators of any family. I think they should also be included as financial contributors to change the mindsets of students at their school levels. The new way of parents as earners and caregivers helps challenge the outdated notion that only men are breadwinners. My perception is straightforward: females deserve such positions as the times have changed.

Similarly, in the second picture, females are shown as needy persons because a mother is requesting help from the police. It directly represents that men are the ones in power and authority. I understand that female characters are poorly represented in textbooks. These practices directly and indirectly influence gender equality. On this

note, Yadav (2021) claimed that the representation of male characters as if they are in need, less capable, or as capable as females can empower the mentality of young school students. A strong textbook supporting gender equality can help break down traditional gender norms and concepts.

The images provided illustrate how gender identity and roles are represented through the lens of gender schema theory and their impact on students' psychology. (Bem, 1981). He posits that children learn about gender roles and expectations from their culture, shaping their behavior and self-concept. In the above textbook cutouts, the conversations overused and prioritized male roles and responsibilities, such as fathers' occupations and a male police officer in an authoritative role. This focus on traditional male roles reinforces the stereotype that men are the primary breadwinners and authority figures, while women are relegated to secondary roles. Eagly and Wood (2012) assumed that gender misrepresentation can negatively impact students' self-esteem, particularly for girls, by suggesting that their value and potential are limited to traditional gender roles.

The government of Nepal, particularly the Curriculum Development Center, plays a crucial role in shaping the content of educational materials. Allowing textbooks to prioritize male roles and responsibilities as superior can perpetuate gender inequality and limit opportunities for girls. This approach may stem from deeply ingrained cultural norms and societal expectations prioritizing male dominance. However, educational materials need to present a more balanced and empowering narrative highlighting the intellectual capabilities, achievements, and talents. This initiative also makes teaching and learning a more inclusive and supportive environment. Not only that, but the initiative encourages all students to reach their full potential, regardless of gender (UNESCO, 2015). The Constitution of Nepal explicitly provides a broader framework for ensuring gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), emphasizing the principles of equality and non-discrimination, including provisions.

**Figure 11**  
*Stereotypical Representation of Beauty Standards*

- Abdul : Is this Sahara, the girl who plays the piano?
- Swikriti : No, this is Reema, the girl who won the singing competition last year.
- Abdul : I know her. She is the girl who has long brown hair.



- a. How are the girl's eyes?
- b. What shape is her face?
- c. Describe her hair.



The above images clearly illustrate how gender identity and roles are represented through the lens of gender schema theory. Gender schema theory, introduced by Sandra Bem in 1981, posits that children learn about gender roles and expectations from their culture, shaping their behavior and self-concept (Mind, 2023). In the textbook page, the dialogue between characters emphasizes physical attributes over achievements, reinforcing traditional gender roles.

There is an example in the textbooks in which a female character, 'Reema, is recognized not for winning a singing competition but for her long brown hair'. This is also a kind of social, traditional patriarchal thought that females are for beauty, not for intelligence. The example focuses on her physical appearance rather than her intellectual qualities. There are many girls currently performing better than men intellectually. In the school where I teach, several girls also compete with boys academically. The girls are far better than the boys. Now, my concern is that the female characters are not biologically inferior to boys. However, their gender, social, and individual roles are misrepresented in the textbooks.

Describing girls primarily through physical attributes can limit their perceived intellectual abilities and achievements, impacting students' self-esteem and aspirations. Research indicates that such depictions can lead to lower self-esteem and



reinforce the notion that a girl's worth is based on her looks rather than her talents or intelligence (Mind, 2023). This can discourage girls from pursuing academic and extracurricular achievements, as they may internalize the belief that their appearance is more important than their capabilities. Textbooks should present a more balanced and empowering narrative, showing girls as intellectual, capable, and talented in many fields. The help of these educational materials can help us provide an inclusive and supportive environment for students' learning.

We are not only teaching for exams, but the current books should hold a voice for change. Textbooks must demonstrate that girls and females are achieving success in academia, leadership, sports, and other fields, emphasizing their strengths and potential beyond physical appearance. Therefore, female participation in these fields will increase, and quality can be seen.



*Source: Grade 10, Page 51*

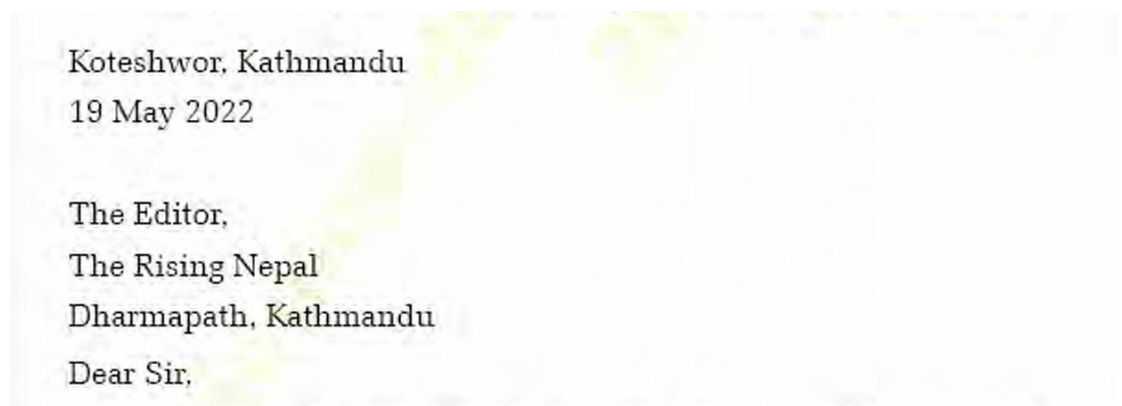
As mentioned in the above image, males work in a field, and females work in a school as teachers. This sounds like good practice. However, this shows that females are weaker or less suited for physically demanding work. I believe that men have historically taken on more labor-intensive jobs, though. Females are still considered weak participants. The above discourse can also be taken for granted from the perspective of the advocates who raise the issues of gender equality. According to Bem (1981), students develop their social and cognitive skills as they are instructed and taught in their classroom. The Gender schema theory also suggests that students should not be trained and taught through texts that have gender issues or any other issues, because they shape their perception of the problem at an early age. As mentioned in the textbooks, males working in an office, whereas females working in a field, can develop a negative perception among youngsters. Their negative perception might make them weak and negatively share their schema about social gender roles.

In this support, Adhikari and Shrestha (2020) also claimed that textbooks and any teaching materials should present gender roles in a balanced manner. They further stated that giving priority to male characters directly creates gender biases. In the same support, Morawski (2008) highlights that addressing such biases in educational content is essential for students' mental and social growth. Gender Schema Theory, as outlined by Bem (1981), explains that repeated exposure to limited gender portrayals influences how children perceive others and how they see themselves.

But also, females who regularly observe and encounter them in restricted or dominated gender roles are shown as weaker, and their bodies are also programmed as weaker than those of males. In this regard, Sutherland (2011) stated that both genders are equally strong and they have some biological differences. Therefore, their gender roles should not be stereotypically misrepresented in the textbooks. It means they are capable enough so that their gender does not matter, and they have the right to be treated and represented equally.

### **Figure 12**

*Gendered Nouns and Pronouns*



*Source: Grade 10, Page 81*

The above textbook cutout clearly reveals that there is a misrepresentation of gender as it uses the phrase “dear sir”. I have observed this phrase of salutation marked as used frequently in the textbook. Using this phrase to greet in writing letters or emails presents and highlights the traditional and male-dominated societal orientation of textbook writers. It has several negative impacts when a man is predominantly presented in textbooks. The patriarchal context of society and writers might guide it.

As a researcher, I analyzed the issues from gender as well as social perspectives. The notion of the Gender Schema Theory (1981) suggests that we



should not address one particular gender, as used in the phrase “dear sir” in the textbook, because it demotivates the opposite gender. I believe how painful the situation is when a female does not find their separate salutation in the textbooks. The Gender schema theory also suggests that students’ schema is developed through the repeated actions they do. If they repeatedly read or practice the exercise in their book while writing ‘Dear Sir’, their negative schema will develop accordingly. They forget their identity. It means the regular use of male-promoted greetings like “Dear Sir” implies that power and authority are primarily male traits.

The concept of critical discourse analysis by Fairclough (1995) also addressed the concept of misrepresentation. It highlights how the male gender gets empowered when they find their gender frequently used in the textbook. Using such gender bias phrases dominates females in their class as well as in their social setting. They learn the same lessons and perform as they learn in the classroom. The Notion of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) describes such misrepresentation and mischoice of language as creating imbalances and developing negative perceptions among male characters. I believe that revealing and changing the current ways of gender representation helps us maintain equality and balance in gender representation.

We can address this issue by using some common representation of gender and gender-neutral salutations such as “Dear Sir/Madam” or “To Whom It May Concern. With the help of this, we somehow address the situation and equally address both genders while writing letters. I suggest that book writers and curriculum designers be serious while developing experiences on such issues because it matters. Promoting such inclusive language practices encourages an environment where all individuals are recognized and valued equally, supporting the development of a society that challenges stereotypes and nurtures equity.

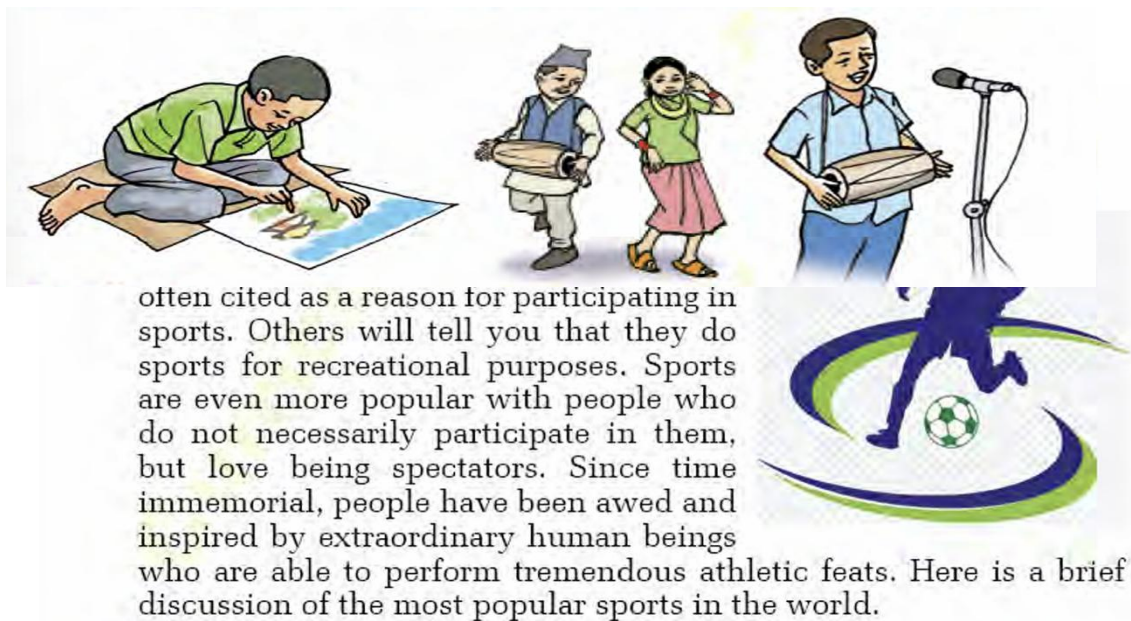
**Figure 13***Females as victims of harassment, bullying and exploitation**Source: Grade 10, Page 102*

The above images show females as victims of harassment, bullying, and exploitation that reinforce the damaging norms of a patriarchal society; including such images in textbooks risks normalizing these harmful ideas, suggesting that girls are inherently targets for mistreatment. Such misrepresentation can be harmful to establishing the concept of gender-based understanding. It can influence how students perceive their roles in their society, especially their social roles. Looking at the issues from the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), such exploration and critical analysis seem significant because they reflect and uphold existing power dynamics (Fairclough, 1995). Until and unless we explore the issues, we will not be able to advocate critically against the issues.

From this perspective, Gender Schema Theory (1981) also provides some meaningful insight into how this representation affects students' mental and social schema development. Supporting the line, Bem (1981) said that making young people frequently encounter such misrepresentations in their textbooks causes students to develop negative schema. As a teacher, I also believe that such misrepresentations

associate girls with victimhood. These representations become ingrained in their understanding of gender roles. This can limit how both girls and boys perceive themselves and each other. Girls may begin to see themselves as less capable, while boys might internalize a skewed view of power dynamics that positions them as dominant.

Going beyond educational resources, we need to present a more balanced view of gender. From the above discussion, it seems clear that textbooks should also represent women's roles as strong, resilient, and active societal participants. With the help of equal representation of gender, both genders can be empowered. The discussion also suggests that the current textbooks should challenge stereotypes of gender representation and encourage students to learn and understand gender roles positively. Such changes are vital for fostering an educational environment that promotes respect and equality, ultimately benefiting all students' mental and social development.



*Source: Grade 10, page 119*

Grade 10, Page 1 Sources: Grade 10, Page 164

**A. Answer the following questions.**

- a. Name any two most popular sports in Nepal.
- b. Which one of the two do you like the most? Why?



Sources: Grade 10, Page 166

**B. Write the names of the sports shown in the pictures below.**



The above three images from grade 10 textbooks occupy more space for boys than girls. This overrepresentation reinforces traditional concepts that favor boys in sports with a male domain. The textbook reveals a significant imbalance in gender representation where boys are more dominantly showcased as athletes. The image showcases a variety of sports activities, which can be analyzed through the lens of gender schema theory. Supporting the discourse, Bem (1981) highlighted that children learn about gender roles from their culture and adjust their behavior to follow the norms set by their society. Similarly, Starr and Zurbriggen (2017) also stated that misrepresenting gender in various sports can reinforce or challenge traditional gender roles. Many examples can be found, such as both genders participating equally in traditionally male-dominated sports like football and baseball. Such practices will create a huge wall between males and females, though we are advocating that both genders be the same.

From the perspective of gender inclusion and equality, such division can be evaluated based on how it represents both genders in sports. Gender schema theory



emphasizes the importance of equal representation and opportunities for all genders in various domains, including sports. In this note, Cherry (2023) stated that it supports the idea that sports are for everyone, regardless of gender, when we give equal opportunity in sports. This can encourage young viewers to pursue their interests in sports without feeling constrained by traditional gender expectations. If the current textbooks give space for both genders from diverse backgrounds, it promotes the idea that sports are inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of their social identities. I believe that giving equal opportunity creates environments where everyone has the opportunity to participate and succeed.



*Source: Grade 10, Page 188*

The use of only male images of condolences suggests a bias that overlooks the contributions and significance of notable women. Such pictures imply that only men are worthy of public mourning and recognition. In the context of Nepal, there have undoubtedly been many notable women whose deaths merit respect and acknowledgment. It is important to include prominent females to address the imbalance. This not only honors their contributions but also promotes gender equality, recognizing the value of women in society.

The textbook writer takes male names, salutation markers, and gender markers as they have used their name and gender in almost every experience in the current English textbooks for grades IX and X. It has a lot of meaning and implications from the perspective of gender schema theory. The theoretical notion highlights that every

child learns about gender roles and expectations from their culture and that students' schemas influence their behavior and perceptions.

The above discussion highlights that when textbooks predominantly use and represent male names, it directly reinforces that males are the default characters to be used in the textbook. In this support, Martin and Halverson (1981) stated that such practice can shape students' understanding of gender roles and limit their perceptions of what is possible for themselves and others. If the same practice continues for a long time, students may even get programmed to think that they are weak characters.

I have experienced that the lack of female representation in educational materials has a direct impact on female students' self-esteem because they feel bad when they do not find their identity in the textbooks. When girls do not see themselves represented in textbooks, they feel undervalued and less capable of achieving success in various fields. In this support, Sadker and Zittleman (2009) also stressed that underrepresentation can promote the practice of gender inequality, as it discourages girls from pursuing interests and careers in areas where they do not see female role models.

Now, it is time to address the issues and promote a culture of an inclusive and balanced educational environment. Using female names, images, and textbook examples can reflect society and promote gender equality. This study believes that the change can help us to break down the culture of dominating the female gender. In this support, Blumberg (2008) highlighted that educational materials need to present diverse and balanced representations of both genders to support the development of well-rounded individuals who respect and value gender equality.

My uncle's family usually comes to stay with us for Dashain, but ..... (by this Dashain/this Dashain) we are going to visit them instead. They live in a village in Kalikot. I can hardly wait. I ..... (will have had/will be having) a fantastic time there. School holidays ..... (are going to start /will start) on Friday, and we are going to leave the following morning. At this time next week, I ..... (will be trekking/ will have trekked) to Rara Lake with my cousin, Sunil. He's an experienced trekker, and I ..... (am going to practise/ will have practised) rock climbing with him every day. .... (By /On) the last day of our visit, Sunil's dad is going to take us to visit Manma, the district headquarters. I hope by then I ..... (will have explored/will be exploring) a lot about the life of people in Karnali. I ..... (will be getting/will have got) a lot of experience of trekking by the time we get back to Kathmandu after Dashain.

*Sources: Grade 10, Page 202*

The standard reference to “*Uncle’s family*” rather than “*aunt’s family*” underscores the deeply ingrained patriarchal norms in our society. These terminologies reflect the lack of a recognized female identity and their roles in society. In the patriarchal system, women often lack a sense of permanent belonging as they move from their father’s home to their husband’s home after marriage. The practice of using the male “Uncle” in the current textbook promotes dominant activities from the perspective of gender equality.

The preference for mentioning the uncle’s family instead of the aunt’s family in the textbook excerpt reflects underlying gender biases that are prevalent in many educational materials. This choice reinforces traditional gender roles and the patriarchal structure of society, where male figures are often given prominence over female figures. Gender schema theory posits that individuals internalize cultural definitions of gender, which then influence their perceptions and actions (Bem, 1981). In the excerpt, male characters such as the uncle and cousin Sunil are prominently featured, while female characters are either absent or not prominently mentioned. According to Blumberg (2008), this discussion is similar to various studies where the male characters often dominate educational materials. The debate also captured and stated that the excessive use of male characters in textbooks is associated with adventure and exploration, traditionally male-dominated domains.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

Based on the theoretical discussion, I have experienced that the lack of female representation in educational materials has a direct impact on female students’ self-esteem because they feel bad when they do not find their identity in the textbooks. When girls do not see themselves represented in textbooks, they feel undervalued and less capable of achieving success in various fields. In this support, Sadker and Zittleman (2009) also stressed that underrepresentation can promote the practice of gender inequality, as it discourages girls from pursuing interests and careers in areas where they do not see female role models.

The misrepresentation exercises the traditional gender roles, which also orients students that such activities are more suitable for males, while females are less visible in these contexts. According to gender schema theory, these male-dominated narratives directly influence students’ social and mental development, shaping their understanding of gender-appropriate behaviors and roles. From the above discussion, I understood that the representation of gender bias in textbooks can have long-term

effects on students because it directly influences students' career choices and personal aspirations. Therefore, we have to take immediate action to address the issues on time. For this, we need to be aware of ourselves while composing such controversial textbooks and educational materials. Apart from this, we also have to maintain gender equality in textbooks, and educators can help dismantle harmful stereotypes and encourage all students to pursue a wide range of interests and careers.

I believe such a mindset might hinder gender equality, especially in the field of education. The experience shared by the participant above shows that both male and female characters are in diverse and non-traditional roles. It should be equal for everyone. It maintains educational reforms that support the empowerment of all students and promote a more equitable society.

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I comprehensively analyzed gender misrepresentation in the current English textbooks for grades IX and X. This chapter mainly answered how gender-related discrimination is practiced in the current English textbooks and what its possible solutions are. In this chapter, I tried to cover the textual, graphic, symbolic, and metaphoric elements of gender misrepresentation. The chapter presented the textbook cutouts and discussed them with theoretical notions.

As this study aimed to explore and analyze gender misrepresentations in the prescribed textbooks, the fourth chapter of the research critically analyzed, illustrated, and presented the specific misrepresentations of gender bias used in the current textbooks. With the help of relevant literature in the field and theoretical discussion, this chapter analyzed the issues of gender representation in the current textbooks. With the nature of the issue in my mind, I followed the theoretical notion of Gender Schema Theory to analyze the critical orientation of gender misrepresentation in the current textbooks.

The theoretical guideline of CDA helped me to understand how students perceive gender roles and develop their cognitive frameworks. This theoretical perspective also guided me to advocate the issues of gender representation and its possible impacts on students' social and cultural development. While doing the critical analysis, I began the chapter by presenting the theoretical and empirical discussion along with the textual presentation of the issues. While there, I highlighted how gender representation influenced the mental, social, and behavioral understanding of gender roles. With the help of the above discussion, the chapter



highlighted the misrepresentation of gender in the textual, picture-based, metaphoric, and social levels.

Through this analysis, the chapter identified several key findings that reveal the nature of gender representation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. In the textbooks, male characters are highly prioritized, whereas female characters are not. This chapter also highlighted that gender representation bias fully presents the social roles and job responsibilities in the textbooks. Textual representations often used and prioritized male characters in dominant roles while relegating female characters to supportive or leading roles in the exercises. Graphical representations frequently depicted women in passive roles. This culture articulates that male characters are given priority over female characters. The misrepresentation of gender roles is not only seen in the textual form but also in the symbolic and metaphoric forms throughout the textbooks. Taking the issues into account, the theoretical discussion and analysis of critical discourse analysis and gender schema theory.

The empirical findings were interpreted in light of the study's objectives, which aimed to reveal the ways in which educational materials can perpetuate gender inequalities. The chapter also discusses the implications of these findings for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers, emphasizing the need for more equitable and inclusive representations of both genders in educational resources.

At the end of this section, the chapter reported the critical importance of addressing gender representation in textbooks to ensure the constitutional rights to equality in terms of gender. With the help of exploring how gender bias and discrimination can be revealed and eliminated. Not only this, but gender equality can also be exercised so that we can provide constitutional rights for every student.

## CHAPTER V

### STAKEHOLDERS' EXPERIENCES ON GENDER PORTRAYAL IN TEXTBOOKS

Gender misrepresentation, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is considered one of the major concerns at present. This chapter explores the issue of gender misrepresentation in the current textbooks of grades IX and X from the perspective of different stakeholders. The purpose of capturing stakeholders' experiences and perceptions on the issue of gender misrepresentation in the current textbooks of grades IX and X. The stakeholders, including English teachers, Textbook writers, and curriculum designers, were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions on the misrepresentation of gender in the textbooks. The chapter also explored their strategies in order to address the issues.

In the context of Nepal, the misrepresentation of gender is one of the burning issues as it directly connects with a male-dominated society. The current textbooks of grades IX and X are taken as a fundamental component of the education system because they help to run the classroom. If gender representation starts disseminating, we can imagine how students perceive gender roles. This has become one of the major concerns in recent times. The current textbooks have been criticized for gender biases. This representation not only reinforces traditional gender stereotypes but also influences the cases of gender equality in Nepali society. As a result, diverse stakeholders, including teachers, curriculum designers, and gender rights activists, have initiated efforts to revise and reform educational content. In this support, Shrestha (2020) stated that analyzing gender-sensitive language, multi-meaning phrases, and diverse roles seems mandatory to be explored and addressed for better learning. With these mindsets, this chapter tried to explore the perspectives and approaches of these stakeholders in addressing the portrayal of gender in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X in Nepal.

#### **Nature of Gender Representation in Nepali Textbooks**

The nature of gender representation in the current English textbooks seems to be a serious subject to explore. Until and unless we explore the nature of the misrepresentation of gender, it will be challenging to reveal persistent gender stereotypes and biases. Many studies have shown that these textbooks often depict

men and women in traditional roles. Men are frequently presented as leaders and professionals, whereas women are represented in domestic and caregiving roles (Paneru, 2023). This pattern reflects broader societal norms and influences students' perceptions of gender roles from an early age. Efforts to revise these textbooks have been made to present a more balanced and equitable portrayal of genders (UNESCO, 2020). However, significant work remains to ensure educational materials promote gender equality and challenge existing stereotypes (Heslop, 2016). Supporting the line, Hooks (1981) stated the importance of critically examining educational content to dismantle patriarchal structures and promote a culture of equality and inclusion.

Gender-related biases in the current English textbooks in Nepal often manifest in several areas, including the depiction of gender roles, professions, names, and physical and mental strength. In many cases, traditional gender roles are reinforced, where men are shown as active decision-makers, leaders, and professionals, while women are portrayed in passive, nurturing, or secondary roles (Sharma & Gurung, 2021). Supporting the discourse, Karki (2020) has highlighted that male characters are more frequently assigned prestigious professions, such as doctors, engineers, or business leaders. Meanwhile, female characters are often shown in stereotypically feminine roles, such as teachers, nurses, or homemakers. From this, we can easily understand how gender and its roles are being represented by the government of Nepal, especially the Ministry of Education, through textbooks.

As a teacher, I have also noticed that the choice of names in these textbooks also reflects a gender bias, with male names being more prevalent, further reinforcing the dominance of men in the narrative. In this line, Limbu and Shrestha (2019) also stated that Nepali textbooks prefer male names to female ones while giving examples. This means that the current textbooks tend to depict men as physically strong and mentally resilient. In contrast, women are often portrayed as emotionally sensitive or dependent on male support for decision-making and action. These biases shape students' perceptions of gender from a young age, contributing to the reinforcement of unequal social structures within society.

From the same line, I have tried to explore the experiences of my informants on gender representation and its major nature in the current English textbook of grades IX and X. My participants have highlighted a similar type of gender biases, as per their experiences as a teacher, a policymaker, and a textbook writer. Based on the

sharing of my participants, I have discussed their views on the basis of different themes. All the presented themes are constructed from the participants' sharing.

### **Females are Shown as a Weaker Character**

The nature of gender representation is a matter of concern for this research because it poses a significant problem for question number one of this research. With this mindset, I asked some of my participants to highlight the nature and types of gender discrimination and biases in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. In this support, the first participant of mine (Ms. Pradhan) shared;

*Umm, I have noticed a concerning trend in the current English textbooks for grades 9 and 10. Females are often depicted as having a lower level of social responsibility than their male counterparts. For instance, while male characters are frequently shown taking on leadership roles, making important decisions, and contributing significantly to their communities, female characters are often relegated to passive or supportive roles. This not only undermines the potential of female students but also perpetuates outdated stereotypes about gender roles. I used to expect that our textbooks should reflect gender roles equally. However, I could not find a more balanced and equitable view of both genders. The constitution of Nepal has also ensured that rights are equal and that there should not be any gender bias. However, in the current textbooks, women are not represented as equally capable of taking on significant social responsibilities. Therefore, we have to change the trend of dominating female characters through textbooks. I believe this change brings an inclusive and empowering learning environment for all students.*

As mentioned in the above narration, the misrepresentations of females with lower social responsibility in textbooks reveal the traditional gender roles. It is also mentioned in the story that the current misrepresentation can significantly influence students' perceptions of gender roles. In this support, Jane (2024) stated that individuals internalize societal expectations about gender from a young age, shaping their self-internalization and behavior on gender and social roles. Similarly, the theoretical orientation of Gender schema theory highlights that learners develop their understanding of gender and social roles at an early age (Bem, 1981). The theoretical discussion of critical discourse analysis and gender schema suggests that if textbooks consistently prioritize males as leaders and decision-makers and dominate females in

the name of being passive or weak characters, this directly promotes inherently male traits.

Yes, I also agreed with the above discussion because it directly impacts the thinking level of students. I have experienced students struggling for equal treatment in the classroom from their teachers. In this situation, they might be emotionally broken if they do not ensure that they are treated equally in the textbooks. In this support, Starr and Zurbriggen (2017) also stated that gender misrepresentation in textbooks not only limits the aspirations of female students but also reinforces the stereotype that women are less capable of taking on significant responsibilities.

In this support, Ms Shrestha also shared:

*I am a teacher of grades IX and X. I teach English subjects. While teaching, I have observed that the representations of female characters are constantly used as weak in their traditional roles as housewives. In each and every chapter of the textbooks, female characters are presented as less competent, dependent, and serving social roles. On the other side, the male characters dominate in leadership, intellect, and initiative. This biased representation not only perpetuates gender inequality but also shapes children's perceptions, decreases their confidence, and weakens their self-esteem, so that young girls can be revised to provide a more balanced, empowering view of both genders and foster an inclusive educational environment.*

As mentioned in the story above, Ms. Shrestha is a secondary-level English teacher who shared her experiences of noticing misrepresentations of gender in the current textbooks. Taking references from her sharing above, it seems clear that female characters are misrepresented in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. While sharing, she narrated that the current textbooks have much room for improvement as they misrepresent female characters in every exercise of the books. Female characters are shown as less competent. Supporting the above discourse, Martin and Halverson (1981) highlighted that the misrepresentation of gender in textbooks promotes inequality between genders. It directly influences the social understanding of students regarding gender roles.

Listening to the experiences of Ms. Shrestha and analyzing them through the lens of Gender Schema Theory and the critical paradigm, I noted that her observations highlight how the portrayal of gender in educational texts contributes to the development of gender schemas in students. In this regard, Bem (1981) highlights that

children form their beliefs about gender roles based on the examples they observe around them, including those found in textbooks. This idea is reflected in Ms. Shrestha's experience with teaching materials, where female characters are consistently portrayed as less capable or restricted to traditional roles.

Supporting the above discourse of female social roles in the current English textbooks, many researchers have directly and indirectly highlighted the issues. In the same regard, Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) emphasized that any critical discourse can only be possible with critical questioning. This means we have to ask questions about the misrepresentation of gender in textbooks. The above sharing of Ms. Shrestha can be one of the critical quests because she calls for changes that challenge current practices. In this note, Freire (1970) also highlighted the importance of rethinking the contents of the textbooks from the perspective of gender and other social aspects. In this light, her advocacy for balanced gender representation in textbooks aims to create an education system that fosters equity and encourages all students to aspire to leadership and intellectual achievement.

Similarly, Ms. Neupane shared:

*In the current English textbooks for grades IX and X, the female characters are often represented as weaker and more restricted than their male counterparts. I have seen many exercises in the books repeated in almost every chapter and exercise. Page 51 of the Grade X textbook clearly presents the dependent roles of women as housewives. Such misrepresentation of gender promotes the culture of gender biases. I believe it's essential to revise the current textbooks to present equality for learning. This change is needed to provide equality and also to encourage students to develop positive and inclusive perceptions.*

The above sharing of Ms. Neupane highlighted that the current textbooks of grades IX and X have a lot of gender misrepresentation. She mostly stressed that female characters are predominantly used in textbooks. The issue she stressed can be aligned with the perception of Gender Schema Theory. In this theory, Bem (1981) claims that the misrepresentation of gender roles in teaching material like textbooks affects learners' understanding of gender roles. Not only that, but it also influences how students internalize their perceptions of gender performance in their society. In this support, Martin and Halverson (1981) also stated that the repeated misrepresentation of gender roles can be a truth from the students' understanding.

The notion of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough (1989) was used to explore the sharing of participants in detail from the perspective of gender. The sharing of Ms. Neupane can be taken critically as an observation of the power dynamics exercised in the language in the current English textbooks. The critical sound of Ms Neupane highlights the experiences that she experienced in her teaching career. The essential notion of discourse analysis helped me to analyze the issue closely. Her suggestions also helped to highlight the rationale of this research.

As a researcher, I understood that the existing situation of textbooks can have a long-term effect on students' social, mental, and emotional development. In this support, Morgenroth and Ryan (2018) claimed that research indicates that exposure to typical gender representation can also influence students' academic interests and professional choices. Therefore, I powerfully do not present such misrepresentation in the textbooks.

### **Male Names are Given Priority**

In a patriarchal society, male-dominated behavior is not as strange as we think. Male names are highly preferred in the current English textbooks while giving examples. I have noticed that male names dominate different types of textual representation in books. Male names are mainly used while providing examples of letters, dialogues, speeches, and job descriptions. The practices of giving a higher level of priority to male names and their characters in the textbooks reflect a gender bias and gender inequality. It directly promotes traditional gender norms. Much research has been conducted on this issue, which highlights that the overuse of male names in textbooks can create a negative image among students. In this support, Sharma and Gurung (2021) claimed that learners' perceptions of gender roles are negatively affected by the dominant gender representation. In a similar regard, Limbu and Shrestha (2019) argued that the overrepresentation of male names in textbooks directly reveals the patriarchal mindset of a textbook writer.

Supporting the discourse, my participants have also shared their experiences of encountering such issues while using the current textbooks. The first participant, Ms. Pradhan, shared:

*Um, yes, in several texts and exercises, I have noticed that male titles are predominantly used in examples and exercises of the current English textbooks, grades IX and X. I basically noticed such misrepresentation in presenting the example of letters and dialogues. I think it has issues with*

*students' learning. It not only promotes the inequality practices in the textbooks but also weakens female students' confidence and competes with their strengths. I believe this imbalance needs to be addressed on time because it has a negative impact on students' social and mental development.*

The above narrative of Ms. Pradhan reveals unheard misrepresentations of gender in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. This seems to be a serious issue from the perspective of Gender Schema theory. According to Bem (1981), learners develop schemas, mental development, and thinking frameworks at an early age. The theory also highlights that students' schema can support them and give a proper shape to their behavior in many ways.

It also made me think that the respectful use of male and female characters in textbooks can change the mindset of fresh learners. Several mispractices are being exercised in the current textbooks, grades IX and X, especially in English textbooks. There, I saw some exercises giving much priority to male names in examples such as letters, dialogues, and job descriptions. When we exercise, such activities can empower male learners in many ways. In this support, Sharam and Gurung (2021) stressed that this misrepresentation of gender roles accelerates the traditional gender norms, which easily influence students' perceptions.

As students internalize these gender schemas, boys may feel more empowered to take on leadership roles or assert themselves in professional settings. At the same time, girls may unconsciously adopt more passive roles or limit their aspirations. This can lead to gender disparities in academic participation and future career choices, as girls may perceive fewer opportunities for themselves in fields dominated by male representation (Limbu & Shrestha, 2019). In the long run, such biased representations may hinder efforts to create gender equality in education and society.

While sharing the nature of gender representation, the second participant, Ms. Shrestha, shared;

*Umm, while teaching, I have noticed that male characters are always shown in stronger, more prestigious roles in the textbooks. They are generally shown job titles like engineers and doctors, while female characters are consistently assigned weaker or more traditional jobs, such as housewives, sweepers, or cooks. This representation mostly orients students to the clear message that men can handle essential and powerful roles while women are confined to*



*domestic or less influential positions. I believe this nature totally affects how young learners perceive their gender identity.*

The above narrative of Ms. Shrestha highlights a comprehensive and clear image of how gender is misrepresented in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X in the name of their jobs. As she mentioned, she had noticed that male characters prioritized excessive use. Male names are frequently used in the textbook when sharing examples. Looking at the issue from the perspective of Gender Schema Theory, the misrepresentation of gender is not legal as well as human. The theory suggests that learners form cognitive schemas based on cultural messages about what is considered appropriate for each gender.

The impact of misrepresentation can be changed, as suggested by Limbu and Shrestha (2019). They indicated that textbook writers need to be conscious while composing the examples and exercises in the textbooks. On this note, Bem (1981) claimed that this could also influence classroom participation, where boys may feel more confident in subjects like science, maths and biology. However, girls may feel shy and will not show their inner motivation to learn such subjects.

Similarly, the third participant, Ms. Neupane, narrated her experience of identifying different natures of gender representation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X in the following ways;

*Umm, I have experienced gender-related issues in the current textbooks. I have also realized that it should not be ignored. Among many examples, the example is on page 130 of Grade IX. It directly misrepresents female characters as dependent on the male characters. The females' roles are preplanned, and they are determined to be less capable of performing their work. It is not only that but also presents females as needy characters. As a female teacher, I also found it frustrating because it is not a legal practice in Nepal. I suggest that book writers not misrepresent controversial content in textbooks. It always has a negative meaning to the students.*

The above narrative of teachers clearly reveals the misrepresentation of gender roles and their negative impacts on students' understanding of gender roles. In this situation, the notion of gender schema theory suggests that the narratives of Ms Neupane need to be addressed on time because it is a critical issue. Her story basically

highlighted the misrepresentation of gender on page 130 in the grade X textbook. She stressed that the current English textbooks predominantly confined female roles by showing them as dependent characters. She also raised a question about the textbook writing that emphasized the overuse of males in comparison to females. I believe that her concern is genuine and ethical. In this support, Bem (1981) also added voices to her narrative to make her argument louder. With the help of the theoretical notion of gender schema theory, Bem (1981) claimed that the ignorance of gender roles is not legal on any platform. She further stated that we educationalists need to be conscious of gender roles and responsibilities while representing them.

There are several researchers, including Limbu and Shrestha (2019) and Sharma and Gurung (2021), who have directly and indirectly captured the issue of gender in Nepal. They mostly highlighted the impact of gender-biased representation and preconfigured gender-based cultural norms that have a negative influence on learners. Therefore, such text-based misrepresentation needs to be addressed as soon as possible to create an inclusive learning platform or a gender-friendly learning space.

### **Gender Discrimination Based on Professional Choices**

There are many aspects where gender discrimination can be exercised. Among many, gender misrepresentations can also be possible on the basis of job and profession selection. Profession-based gender discrimination refers to the ways in which one gender is predominantly given a low-valued or a low-paid or a less respected profession to dominate them socially. In this regard, Hooks (1981) stated that flames are predominantly dominated by the name of the profession in which they work.

In the current English textbooks, there are several exercises in which females are represented in low and weak professional assignments. I have also noticed that males are predominantly used in prestigious and respected professions such as doctors, engineers, and bankers. At the same time, females are often relegated to domestic roles, primarily portrayed as housewives. This type of disparity not only misrepresents the capabilities and potential of women but also reinforces outdated gender norms (Hooks, 1981). From a gender equality perspective, such misrepresentations are unethical as they limit the motivation and identity of young girls and perpetuate a biased view of gender roles in society (Bem, 1981). This type of misrepresentation needs to be addressed in a timely manner.

Listening to the advocacy of Sadker and Zittleman (2009), I realized that the government has to take action to resolve the issues in our education systems immediately. On this concern, I asked my participants about their experience of encountering profession-based gender issues in the current English textbooks. The first participant, Ms. Pradhan, shared;

*In the current textbooks, I have noticed the pattern and the ways in which females are given low-respect work. Females are molded and assigned jobs like homemakers, caregivers, sweepers, and servers. In many places, males are predominantly used in prestigious and respected professions such as doctors, engineers, and bankers. We can take an example from Chapter 3. In this chapter, the male protagonist is a successful engineer who solves complex problems and is admired by his peers. Similarly, in Chapter 7, a male character is presented as a dedicated doctor who saves lives and is highly respected in the community. A similar kind of misrepresentation can be traced in chapters 5 and 9.*

According to Ms. Pradhan, there are several gender misrepresentations in many chapters of the book. Her narrative also advocates for a critical discussion of the issues. The current English textbooks have gender issues that need to be addressed as soon as possible in this note. Bem(1981) stated that the misrepresentation of gender roles in the current textbooks significantly impacts the students' learning. Similarly, Fairclough (2010) suggests that children learn about gender roles and expectations from their cultural environment, which they then internalize into their cognitive schemas. It shows that students' social and mental development are equally important. These schemas influence how they perceive themselves and others, shaping their behavior in the process.

Her sharing also presented that the dominating markers in the name of providing high respect to the male characters demotivated the female learners in the school. I have also experienced many of my students showing their interest in the misrepresentation of gender roles in textbooks. The female characters have mainly been represented as low-paid maids, home-based servants, caregivers, and homemakers. I have a big concern about why such discrimination exists in society. Why do the textbook authors misuse female roles in the textbooks? I think these are the socially constructed and predominant gender discrimination, which have also been represented in the books. This biased representation promotes traditional gender roles,

which might change the perception level of people in general and learners in particular. According to Bem (1981), the discriminating practices above show that learners can have a negative perception of gender roles. The possible consequences of this bias increase the level of bad perception and push them back from their constitutional rights. The right to be equal cannot be achieved with the current gender representation. It is a matter of self-esteem among female students and the maintenance of their careers. Female students basically form their perception regarding their social roles and perform accordingly. Therefore, we need to address the issue on time to maintain gender equality.

In this line, Ms. Neupane also shared her experiences;

*In the current textbooks, there are several gender dominations based on their profession selection. In each chapter, males are shown in prestigious professions, including engineers, doctors, and bankers. In Chapter Four, males are shown as international travelers. However, females are primarily shown in domestic roles, including homemakers and domestic workers.*

The story of Ms. Neupane also revealed the dominating misrepresentation of gender in the name of their profession. I believe that children learn about gender roles from their cultural surroundings. Therefore, they should not be dominated by gender and profession. In this support, Bem (1981) also stated that the misrepresentation of gender is not legal, social, or ethical. This type of practice not only creates a struggle for females to explore a good life. Eccles (1994) shows that females should not be restricted to working in a good position. Official documents like books started restricting females from getting prestigious jobs, and it really changed the mindset of learners.

Continuing the discourse of sharing, the third participant, Ms. Shrestha, has shared her experiences of noticing profession-related inequality;

*I have noticed several examples in the textbooks in different forms, including pictures, dialogues, conversations, stories, and exercises, which directly misrepresent gender in the name of the profession. I have also noticed that males are shown to be in a respected profession and to be highly paid. At the same time, females are often shown as low-paid workers. There is a typical example shown below:*

***Look at the conversation between two friends and compose a similar discussion on any occasion:***

*Shyam: What does your father do?*

*Radha: My father is a doctor, and he works in a hospital.*

*Shyam: What does your mother do?*

*Radha: My mother is a housewife, and she works at our home.*

As mentioned in the examples and story above, it seems clear that females are generally shown as low-paid workers. At the same time, males are shown as well-paid workers in the textbooks. Not only this, but her sharing also revealed that female characters are physically weak, so they are not shown in a profession where physical strength is needed. The particular thinking of the society might have influenced the mindset of writers.

Taking reference from the above dialogues, the father is shown as a doctor and the mother as a housewife. This means that the gender profession is dominated by society. In this regard, Bem (1981) argues that such representations contribute to the development of gender schemas in students. It directly leads them to certain professions with specific genders.

While reviewing the literature, I found that research conducted by Punam Yadav on social transformation in post-conflict Nepal. I understood the unintended positive impacts of conflict on women's roles. Expressing detailed insights from Yadav (2016), I came to know that most Nepali societies have already fixed the profession for females. It also influences the writing styles of writers. I believe that the analysis from the perspective of gender can contribute directly to dealing with the situation. We can address the dominating activities of society in general and from the text in particular. The Ministry of Education should take immediate action against the textbook writers to promote gender equality. The textbook writers should be instructed to represent gender inclusively.

After listening to the experiences of teachers on general representations in the textbooks, I also asked the same questions to a textbook writer and a curriculum designer in order to explore their views on the misrepresentation of gender. Mr. Karki (a textbook author) shared:

*Um, the concern you have raised is really a genuine and much-needed area of exploration. The current textbooks might have issues from a gender perspective. But, I would like to make one thing clear: we have not*

*intentionally misrepresented the issue. I can see that there are various words, exercises, and images in the texts that misrepresent gender roles. We were not aware of such misimpressions. We have to rethink the content that represents gender mistakenly.*

While listening to Mr. Karki's response, I came to understand that textbook writers are not aware of the contents of the textbooks. As he shared, the textbook might have some content that misrepresents gender roles, but they are unaware of it. According to Gender Schema Theory (1981), gender misrepresentation cannot be acceptable. The theory also argued that when textbooks repeatedly misrepresent females in weak roles, they make these gender schemas of low character. He claimed that the portrayal was unintentional. The textbook writer also stressed that we need to revise the problematic content to make the books gender friendly. In this support, Martin and Halverson (1981) claimed that a timely revision of the textbook could challenge existing misrepresentations of gender in the textbooks. This effort is crucial to a balanced and inclusive view of gender roles.

I also asked the same question to Mr. Dahal (a past curriculum designer), and he shared;

*Yes, I have also realized that there is some gender misrepresentation. The current curriculum has no space for gender bias. Whereas female characters are represented as weaker than males, it should not even be in the textbook. I don't know how gender misrepresentation exists in the current textbooks of grades IX and X. As you noted, female roles are often shown in biased ways through images, exercises, and stories. This is not a legal task. Therefore, we need to collaborate with textbook authors, which is crucial to align educational content with the inclusive values outlined in the curriculum.*

I also listened to Mr. Dahal, who is a past curriculum designer. I listened to his sharing and found that misrepresentation of gender roles in textbooks is not legal. He stated that the current curriculum has no such issues. I thought of analyzing it through the lens of Gender Schema Theory. The analysis concluded that awareness of how educational content can respect gender roles is lacking.

This theory suggests that learners form their perception of gender at an early age in their classroom because school is considered a second home for students (Bem, 1981). The current textbooks predominantly use male names and show females as

weaker. This practice should not be promoted and needs to be controlled as soon as possible.

In this issue, the notion of critical discourse analysis also suggested guidelines to deal with the issues critically. In this regard, Fairclough (1995) stressed that dominating content should not be used in the educational setting. The discussion suggested collaborating with the textbook writers and instructed them to change the context.

### **Revision is Required for the Current Textbooks**

After listening to the responses of my participants and reviewing the current literature, I concluded that some modifications need to be made to make it gender-friendly. The theoretical orientations and the previous studies also suggested addressing the issues of gender misrepresentation to ensure a gender-friendly teaching-learning space.

In this support, Ms. Pradhan shared:

*I have noticed the misrepresentation of gender in the textbook. The current English textbooks have some issues from a gender perspective. I think it should be revised and made gender friendly. I believe gender needs to be treated equally.*

The above story of Ms. Pradhan presents the advocacy for the revision of the textbooks because there are gender issues. The current English textbooks for grades IX and X do not represent gender roles equally. For this, we have to make some changes to the content to promote gender equity. His story also highlighted biased representations of gender in the current textbooks. In this support, Hoks (1998) stated that an equal representation of gender should be there of gender in the textbooks so that students do not feel any discrimination, develop a positive mindset, and learn better.

His call for integrating gender-sensitive language and diverse role models aligns with the findings of Shrestha (2020), who emphasizes the importance of addressing gender stereotypes in the school curriculum to foster an inclusive learning environment. This means that Ms. Pradhan's insights reflect broader concerns noted by scholars and activists regarding the perpetuation of traditional gender roles through educational content.

Rai (2019) presented that gender-biased textbooks can dictate the learning spirit of female students and also impose societal norms that females are not born for

equality. I believe such a mindset might hinder gender equality, especially in the field of education. The experience shared by the participant above shows that both male and female characters are in diverse and non-traditional roles. It should be equal for everyone. It maintains educational reforms that support the empowerment of all students and promote a more equitable society.

Supporting the discourse, Ms. Shrestha, an experienced English language teacher, shared her view.

*The current English textbooks have issues of gender. We can follow several strategies to solve the problems. We need to accept gender-sensitive language and represent diverse roles. Revising the textbook to reflect gender equality is a crucial step in empowering all students, promoting fairness, and fostering a more inclusive and just society. Our educators are responsible for providing materials that inspire every student to reach their full potential, free from the constraints of gender discrimination.*

Likely due to the above responses, Ms. Shrestha also provided that there is a need to revise the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. As she has highlighted in the sharing, her observations closely indicate that textbooks should be fair and free from any gender and social bias. According to Malla (2021), textbooks that reveal traditional gender stereotypes contribute to the promotion of societal norms that disadvantage women. Therefore, the predominantly written textbooks need to be revisited on time.

Going a little deeper, I realized that Ms. Shrestha is directly in favor of modifying such controversial textbooks. She also shows that gender-sensitive language and diverse role models in textbooks need to be established. In this support, Shrestha (2020) points out that representing male and female characters in various roles can help to promote gender equality. With his mindset, Rai (2019) also argues that fair and unbiased representation of gender roles seems essential for motivating all students and establishing a good learning environment. With this, we can together be louder and argue for achieving gender equity and gender-friendly teaching and learning resources.

Similarly, Ms. Neupane shared her experiences revising the textbooks. While narrating the gender inequalities, she narrated:

*There are many gender issues in the current English textbook. While teaching, I have noticed gender bias in the Grade X English textbook. I have observed*



*that male characters are mostly used as the superior. This type of exercise can be seen on page 164. I believe this type of gender misrepresentation may promote predominant gender roles. This might have several negative impacts on students. I think these textbooks need to be revised for better teaching and learning from a gender perspective.*

The above sharing of Ms. Neupane presents that the current textbooks are problematic and have several biases because they misrepresent gender roles. She also highlighted that the misrepresentation of females as weaker and low-paid directly influences the mentality of students. In this support, Sharma (2021) stated that representation can have implications for developing students' perceptions. The gender schema theory of Bem (1981) also claimed that there should be balanced representations of gender for better learning. Students build their schema at an early age, which influences them to understand the world. Therefore, we need to improve the language style, language tone, and cultural practices of the textbooks as soon as possible.

Many researchers have highlighted the issue of gender. Among many, Bhattarai (2020) and Heslop (2016) have recommended improving the textbooks' language for gender sensitivity to promote equality and inclusivity in the learning process. Supporting the discourse, the last participant of mine, Ms. Poudel, also shared her intention to improve the existing textbooks. She shared;

*The current textbooks have a lot of gender sensitivity issues. We need to update the exercises, texts, and figurative language used in the textbooks. If we can revise and represent gender equality, it will be good practice, and it can also maintain the constitutional rights of the learners.*

The above view of Ms. Poudel highlights the need for improvement. Because of the several gender misrepresentations in the textbooks, she calls for the timely revision of the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. She mostly stressed that the overuse and giving priority to men bring a kind of demarcation in the learning process. Therefore, it needs to be addressed on time. In this support, Fairclough (1985) argues that the misrepresentation of gender can limit students' overall development. Therefore, textbooks must be gender sensitive.

### **Theoretical Discussion**

The issue of gender misrepresentation seems serious as it directly influences the schema of students. As a female teacher, I have noticed my students feeling biased

in their classroom. It is because they hardly find themselves represented equally in the textbooks. The notion of gender schema theory of Bem (1981) believes that children generally develop their understanding of gender roles at an early age. Learners, therefore, should equally be represented. The sharing of my participants also depicts that the gender roles and responsibilities are misrepresented in the current textbooks of grades IX and X, which have a negative impact on students. They also discussed the reasons for such misrepresentation by highlighting the nature of patriarchal norms of society.

In this textbook, there are exercises where gender roles and responsibilities are predominantly used, which directly reveal the culture of a male-dominated society. Generally, males are shown and represented as prestigious professionals such as doctors, engineers, etc. At the same time, females are depicted as housewives. This means that gender-based professions are dominated by society. In this context, Bem (1981) argues that such representations contribute to the development of gender schemas in students. It directly leads them to certain professions with specific genders.

While reviewing the literature, I found research conducted by Punam Yadav on social transformation in post-conflict Nepal. I understood the unintended positive impacts of conflict on women's roles. Expressing detailed insights from Yadav (2016), I came to know that many Nepali societies traditionally assign specific professions to females. It also influences the writing styles of writers. I believe that the analysis from the perspective of gender can contribute directly to dealing with the situation. We can address the dominant activities of society in general and of the text in particular. The Ministry of Education should take immediate action against the textbook writers to promote gender equality. We should instruct the textbook writers to represent gender inclusively.

Many researchers agree that the misrepresentation of gender has several impacts on the development of students' schema. Studies have shown that consistent exposure to gender-misrepresenting content can shape children's beliefs about their identity. Supporting the discourse, Bigler and Liben (2007) found that learners can develop their schema from their surroundings. Based on the discussion, I understand that by addressing the above issues, the education system will be equally accessible to all gender groups in the current textbooks. For this, teachers, textbook writers, and

policymakers can work together to create balanced and inclusive representations in textbooks for a better learning space.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has summarized the overall perception and understanding of participants on gender misrepresentation in the current textbooks of grades IX and X. This chapter also tried its best to capture the overall views of teachers, a textbook writer and a curricular designer' experiences and opinions regarding the misrepresentation of gender in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. Based on their sharing, it highlights that these textbooks predominantly highlights women in traditional roles, such as caregivers. At the same time, men are often portrayed as leaders and professionals. This misrepresentation promotes the harmful predominance of gender roles. This can also limit students' perceptions of gender capabilities.

The chapter discusses the implications of these representations on students' understanding of gender equality, noting that biased language and visuals marginalize female and non-binary identities. Tiwari emphasizes the need for curriculum developers to create more balanced and inclusive educational materials that promote gender equality. Finally, the chapter calls for action from educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers to recognize the impact of gender representation in education. It advocates for developing gender-sensitive textbooks that challenge stereotypes and foster an equitable learning environment, thereby contributing to broader social change.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The discourse of gender misrepresentation cannot remain undiscussed. With this mindset, the sixth chapter of this thesis presents the overall discussion of the issue of gender misrepresentation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. The chapter also articulates the theoretical intervention of the issue of misrepresented gender roles and social identity. The major concern is to capture and share the discussion and findings of this thesis.

From the two different theoretical lenses, the issue of the misrepresentation of gender in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. This chapter also churned the major highlights of data, literature, and theoretical analysis of the issue. While discussing my participants' experiences, I tried to connect with the notions of the Gender Schema Theory. This chapter also presents the key insights and recommendations for the findings. The finding of this chapter suggests that teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers need to be conscious while composing the examples and exercises of the books from the perspective of gender inclusion.

#### **Gender Stereotypes in Textbooks**

Based on the sharing of my participants, this research has a lot to discuss regarding the representation of gender stereotypes in the current English textbooks in Nepal. The participants highlighted that the current textbooks are noticeable tools for promoting male character in different aspects, including profession, and the maximum use of male pictures in the exercises. According to Bem (1981), a clear pattern of gender representation continues to be reinforced. As mentioned in the theory, individuals form gender schemas based on societal norms, shaping how they understand and process gender roles. Female characters in the textbook are commonly shown in nurturing or supportive roles, such as caregivers or homemakers. Similarly, the male characters are also shown as superior leaders, professionals, and decision-makers. This divide reinforces traditional gender roles and narrows students' understanding of what men and women can achieve.

From a gender perspective, these portrayals reflect and contribute to the socialization of students into fixed gender roles. Studies have shown that educational materials often perpetuate these stereotypes, shaping how students see themselves and

their futures (Hook, 2010). In a similar line, the repeated portrayal of men in influential decision-making positions, while women are limited to domestic or supportive roles, normalizes male dominance and reinforces the belief that leadership and professional success are inherently male traits. This limits students' ambitions and upholds the societal expectation that men should lead while women support them.

These findings are consistent with broader research on the impact of textbooks in reinforcing societal norms and stereotypes (Blumberg, 2008). By embedding these biases in educational content, textbooks influence how students see gender roles, often reinforcing limiting beliefs about what men and women can or should do. It is crucial to develop more inclusive and balanced materials that challenge these traditional gender schemas, offering diverse and empowering representations of both women and men.

### **Language and Representation**

The use of gender-sensitive language in textbooks can be examined through the lens of Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), which posits that children develop cognitive frameworks, or schemas, based on cultural definitions of gender roles. These schemas influence how individuals perceive themselves and others within a gendered context. The frequent use of male pronouns in textbooks reinforces traditional gender schemas by positioning men as the default or normative standard. This marginalizes female and non-binary students, subtly conveying that their identities are less important or secondary. As students absorb these biases, they may internalize limiting beliefs about their own potential and social roles. This linguistic bias not only shapes classroom dynamics but also contributes to the formation of students' self-concepts and aspirations, often restricting them to traditional gender expectations. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of adopting more inclusive language in educational materials to disrupt these ingrained gender schemas and promote a more equitable and validating environment for all genders.

### **Visual Representation**

Almost every participant of mine agreed that the current English textbooks for grades IX and X have visible gender issues that directly dominantly represent gender stereotyping. Visual elements in the textbooks also reflect a gender imbalance. Male figures are often shown in positions of authority or action, while female figures are relegated to passive roles. This visual representation reinforces stereotypes and can limit students' understanding of gender roles in society. By depicting women

primarily in domestic settings, textbooks fail to provide a balanced view that includes women's achievements and contributions across various fields.

### **Implications for Education**

The implications of these findings are significant for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. The presence of gender bias in textbooks not only affects students' learning experiences but also contributes to the broader societal issue of gender inequality. Developing gender-sensitive educational materials that promote equitable representations of all genders is essential to address these biases. This includes revising existing textbooks to include diverse role models and narratives that challenge traditional stereotypes.

### **Stakeholder Perspectives**

The dissertation mainly explored the perceptions of stakeholders, including teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum developers, on the misrepresentation of gender roles in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. Every participant realized the need for updating the textbooks, as there are gender-related issues in the textbooks. The research also highlights the perspectives of various stakeholders involved in education, including teachers, students, and curriculum designers. Many stakeholders may not be fully aware of the impact that gender representation in textbooks has on students' learning experiences and aspirations. Therefore, it is crucial to engage these stakeholders in discussions about gender equality in education and to provide training on recognizing and addressing gender biases within educational materials.

### **Key Insights**

Gender misrepresentation was one of the significant issues of my concern because I had frequently encountered the current English textbooks of grades IX and X misrepresenting gender. As a female teacher, based on the experiences shared by my participants, this dissertation has come up with several key findings regarding gender representation.

### **Predominant Gender Roles**

The theoretical discussion and critical analysis of this research showcase that female characters are predominantly used and represented in traditional roles in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X. It shows how female characters are predominantly disrespected on the basis of their roles. I noticed that females are generally depicted in stereotypical gender roles, while male characters are often

shown as leaders, managers, and doctors with prestigious posts. This type of misrepresentation of female characters comes under the nature of the domination of females in social roles.

### **Language Biases**

The use of male pronouns as defaults marginalizes female and non-binary individuals, suggesting that men are the normative standard. This linguistic bias contributes to an environment where gender inequality is perpetuated through language. Visual elements in the textbooks also reflect gender biases, with male figures often shown in positions of authority and female figures depicted in supportive roles. This imbalance further entrenches societal stereotypes about gender roles.

### **Impact on Schema Development**

Through the theoretical discussion on the interaction of participants, I came to understand that the misrepresentation of gender roles in textbooks has a direct influence on students' schema development. The portrayal of women characters in domestic or nurturing roles reveals and shows females' professional status in their society. Such a misrepresentation directly perpetuates the belief that some careers are unsuitable for them. This can have long-term implications on their self-esteem and career choices.

The domination of female characters and their social roles can be another noticeable result of gender misrepresentation in textbooks. The frequent use of male titles as defaults and the underrepresentation of female achievements can marginalize girls and non-binary students. This marginalization can create a sense of exclusion, leading to lower self-esteem as these students may feel that their contributions and identities are undervalued or invisible within the educational context. The textbooks frequently omit or underrepresent the historical contributions of women, which diminishes their visibility and impact in various fields. This lack of representation can lead to a skewed perception of women's capabilities and achievements. Conversations and examples within the textbooks often reinforce traditional gender norms, such as depicting women as needing help or support from men. This portrayal can influence students' understanding of gender capabilities and reinforce existing stereotypes.

### **Need for Gender-Sensitive Materials**

Listening to the experiences of my participants, a clear sound was there to change and revise the textbooks and make them gender sensitive. Based on the theoretical discussion and constitutional rights of being equal in terms of gender

representation, the findings of this study also showcase the necessity for curriculum developers to create more balanced and inclusive educational materials that promote gender equality. This study also advocates for gender equality by revising textbooks. The current English textbooks have a lot of biases that directly impact students' schema development. Therefore, these biases need to be revised in the textbooks to ensure constitutional rights. Taking reference to the research findings, the significant role that educational materials play in shaping students' perceptions of gender underscores the need for reforms to foster a more equitable learning environment.

### **Conclusion**

Gender misrepresentation in the current English textbooks of grades IX and X was the major concern of this dissertation. Based on the theoretical discussion, the dissertation has highlighted and captured the significant misrepresentation of gender roles and responsibilities in the current prescribed English textbooks. The theoretical discussion of this dissertation concluded that the female characters have been misrepresented on the basis of job preferences, work performance, income generation, game preferences, strong ability, and priority level. The female characters are mainly presented as weak characters, low-paid employees, low-work performers, and less participatory in social activities like games and extracurricular activities.

Apart from this, the finding of this dissertation also suggested that the existing practices of gender bias at the linguistic level, social level, visual representation, and metaphoric misrepresentation of textual exercises of the current texts are not ethical and legal from a gender perspective as well as the perspective of the present constitution of Nepal. The findings of this dissertation also claimed that the biases represented in the textbooks have direct effects on students' social, personal, and academic understanding of issues. I believe that addressing these issues might bring a kind of harmonious relationship between both genders because it also provides an inclusive learning environment that helps teachers promote gender equality. The critical discussion of gender misrepresentation helps us to challenge the existing stereotypical representation of gender with a logical as well as empirical argumentation. With the help of this initiative, we can bring a positive change in students' thinking levels and help them understand gender roles. The study implies the role of teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers to promote and advocate for equal representation of gender in textbooks.



### **Implications of the study**

The dissertation entitled ‘Gender Stereotyping in the current Secondary level English textbook(s) in Nepal: A critical Analysis’ would undoubtedly help readers know how gender misrepresentation is portrayed in the current English textbooks of grade IX and X, and what its possible impacts are among students to develop their schema. This study also helps teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers to develop gender friendly textbooks. As this study explored the perceptions and experiences of different stakeholders to be aware of while using the textbooks from a gender perspective, it would carry great relevance and significance in the school education of Nepal. Furthermore, my study concentrated on exploring the stakeholders' perceptions of gender friendly teaching materials.

While undertaking this study, I sensed that there were related avenues in which further exploration could be conducted. Other studies, along with mine, would enrich the body of knowledge in the language education policy, teacher education, teacher training, curriculum design and material production. The limitation has encouraged me to realize the need for more studies. The research opens the path for further studies to be undertaken by other researchers, and they may contribute and continue the discussion of gender biases and misrepresentation in other teaching and learning resources.

This research shows how stakeholders perceive and respond to the current portrayal of gender stereotypes in the textbook, which gives a clear picture of how they react to such misrepresentation and raise their voices against it. Similarly, the study implies the need for further studies on how gender misrepresentation can be solved to ensure gender equality in educational settings. Apart from this, the study suggests the role of teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers to promote and advocate for equal representation of gender in textbooks.

The issue of gender misrepresentation might have several seen and unseen impacts on students' schema development, as mentioned in Bem's theoretical discussion (1981). Based on the theoretical debate, gender misrepresentation can reinforce stereotypes of the domination of gender in society. As students encounter male characters at the top, they may develop a similar schema regarding gender roles and responsibilities, and also show their behaviour accordingly. Gender bias in textbooks often perpetuates traditional stereotypes, portraying women primarily in nurturing roles and men as leaders or decision-makers. Such representations can lead

female students to internalize these stereotypes, resulting in diminished self-esteem and a belief that their capabilities are limited to specific roles. When students see themselves reflected in textbooks as capable individuals, they are more likely to develop a positive self-image; conversely, stereotypical portrayals can foster feelings of inadequacy and inferiority among marginalized genders.

### **My Reflection**

As a female English teacher, I was thinking of raising my voice against gender misrepresentation in textbooks. It was 2022 when I started my journey of MPhil in English Language Education. As I remember, it might have been the third class when we were asked to share our research agenda. I was quite confused about the selection issue. Later, the professor suggested that we choose the areas that are striking. I immediately realized gender misrepresentation and its impact on students' perceptions of gender roles. I recalled the reactions of my students. The textbooks that depict specific careers or roles as predominantly male send a message to female students that certain professions are unattainable for them. I believe that such perception can significantly impact their aspirations, leading them to pursue less ambitious goals that align with the limited roles they see represented in their educational materials.

With this orientation in mind, I selected the topic. At the beginning of my research journey, I was not competent enough in the research process. After getting involved and taking classes, I developed a clear image of the research process. Constantly giving two years, I have created a good understanding of the ontological orientation of the issues I raised for this research. I learned the perception-making process of managing the other perceptions and interpretations. In social science research, I realized that every individual has their own perception, which might be unique, and therefore, their perception needs to be respected for a better understanding.

The theoretical notion of gender schema theory guided me to explore gender bias in the current English textbooks and how such misrepresentation shapes classroom dynamics, student engagement, and their perception. When textbooks predominantly feature male characters in active leadership roles, teachers might unconsciously favor male students, giving them more opportunities to participate and lead discussions. This bias can result in girls being less encouraged to engage actively or take on leadership roles in group activities, which can hinder their academic performance and

engagement levels. Such disparities not only affect individual students but also perpetuate a cycle of gender inequality within the educational environment.

### **Chapter Summary**

After a long discussion with the literature, participants' views, and theoretical notions, the chapter captured the significant discussion and conclusion parts of the dissertation. While discussing the issue from the theoretical guideline, the chapter also presented a suggestive recommendation captured from the narratives of participants and the theoretical discussion of the chapter. In this chapter, I also showcased the stereotypical parts of the textbooks. Based on the showcase, the stakeholders might take decisive action. I internalize the significant gender misrepresentation. I believe that female characters might feel bad as they are frequently misrepresented and dominated in textbooks. These are the essential findings of this research as well.

This imbalance not only reinforces societal stereotypes but also restricts students' aspirations and understanding of gender equality. The chapter underscores the negative impact of such representations on students' perceptions and the broader implications for gender equality in education. Based on the findings of this research, I expressed urgent action from teachers, curriculum developers, and textbook writers to address these misrepresentations of gender in the current English textbooks.

There are many recommendations, including revising current textbooks to ensure equitable gender representation, providing professional development, and revising the contexts of each chapter so that teachers can focus on gender-sensitive teaching methods. These recommendations also encourage collaboration among stakeholders to create inclusive educational resources. The chapter suggested that gender representation in textbooks needs to be improved and rewritten to build an equitable learning environment and promote social change. By challenging traditional gender predomination and the prespecified gender representation through educational materials, the current textbooks will contribute to inclusive learning spaces where individuals can learn with proper gender respect and equality.

This study also showcases that the lack of equal representation in textbooks causes a negative impact on students' understanding of social roles. This can discourage students from pursuing subjects or careers that they do not see represented, impacting their academic choices and performance. A classroom environment that mirrors these biases can contribute to a culture of inequality, where students feel less safe or supported based on their gender identity. This lack of inclusivity can lead to

decreased motivation and focus among students, adversely affecting their overall academic outcomes.

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