

*Research Article*

# Gender Differences in *English for Nusantara VII* Textbook

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## Abstract

This study explores the representation of gender roles in the government-published English for Nusantara VII textbook for seventh-grade students, focusing on the portrayal of male and female characters in imagery and the actions they perform. Gender representation in educational materials is crucial, as it can shape students' perceptions of societal roles. Despite efforts to promote gender equality in education, textbooks often exhibit gender biases, either by underrepresenting females or depicting them in stereotypical roles. This research addresses the gap in existing studies by examining the frequency and types of activities associated with male and female characters in the textbook. A content analysis method was used to quantify and analyze the presence and actions of male and female characters. The findings reveal a significant gender imbalance: male characters appeared more frequently and were often depicted in active, leadership, and outdoor roles, while female characters were more passive, engaging in stereotypically feminine tasks like reading and household chores. The implication of this study is that such gender biases in educational materials may reinforce traditional stereotypes, potentially influencing how students perceive gender roles in society. Addressing this issue is vital for promoting gender equality in education. Future research should explore the impact of these representations on students' learning and development, and seek to create more balanced and inclusive educational resources that challenge traditional gender norms.

## Keywords

Educational materials; gender bias; gender representation; stereotypes in education; textbook analysis.

## Introduction

Gender representation in educational materials, particularly textbooks, plays a critical role in shaping students' perceptions of gender roles and identities (Hu, 2022). As one of the primary resources used in classrooms worldwide, textbooks do more than teach language skills—they also subtly influence how students view society and their place within it. When students engage with these materials, they not only absorb academic content but also internalize the social values, norms, and roles that are reflected within

them. Therefore, textbooks become a powerful tool in either reinforcing or challenging traditional gender norms (Hirakawa & Kandawasvika-Nhundu, 2023).

To be more specific, *Gender Studies* is an interdisciplinary field that examines how gender is constructed and performed in society; and it is certainly related to educational setting. Within the context of educational materials, gender studies focus on the ways in which textbooks either challenge or reinforce traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. Textbooks, as cultural artifacts, can reflect broader societal attitudes about gender roles, power dynamics, and inequality (Saeidzadeh, 2023). In addition, *Social Constructivism* emphasizes that gender is not an inherent biological trait but rather a social construct that is shaped by cultural, educational, and institutional forces. In the context of textbooks, social constructivism suggests that the way gender roles are depicted teaches students about socially accepted behaviors and expectations for men and women. For example, if boys are consistently portrayed as active problem-solvers and girls as caregivers, students may internalize these roles as natural or appropriate (Nandi et al., 2024). Social constructivists argue that educational materials play a pivotal role in constructing and maintaining these gendered expectations, which in turn shape students' behavior and self-concept. By examining how textbooks represent gender, social constructivism highlights the powerful role education plays in either reinforcing or challenging societal gender norms (Soleman, 2020).

In the context of English textbooks, this influence becomes especially pronounced. Language itself is a medium through which social realities are constructed, and the way that men and women are depicted in these texts can shape how students view masculinity and femininity (Barton & Sakwa, 2012). For example, if male characters in textbooks are consistently portrayed as leaders, decision-makers, or adventurers, while female characters are relegated to supportive or passive roles, students may begin to associate these characteristics with gender (Erlina et al., 2022). These depictions may also subtly suggest to young learners that certain behaviors, aspirations, or abilities are inherently tied to their gender, thus limiting their potential to explore a wider range of roles or identities.

Moreover, the representation of gender in textbooks has been shown to perpetuate stereotypes. Studies have demonstrated that male characters in textbooks are often portrayed as more dominant, independent, and capable, while female characters are more frequently depicted as emotional, nurturing, or dependent (Santika, 2023). Such portrayals not only reinforce stereotypical gender roles but also contribute to an unequal distribution of social power. This can have long-lasting impacts on both boys and girls, shaping their self-concept and influencing their career aspirations and interpersonal relationships (Ogundiya & Amzat, 2012).

In many cultures, textbooks serve as an authoritative source of knowledge, meaning students may unconsciously accept the gendered messages embedded within them as truth (Mohajan, 2022). This can perpetuate gender inequality in society by normalizing and legitimizing the unequal treatment of men and women. For example, if textbooks consistently portray women in domestic roles or emphasize their physical appearance over their intellect, students may come to view these as natural or expected attributes of femininity (Mujiburrahman et al., 2024).

Recognizing the impact of gender representation in textbooks is crucial in the broader effort to promote gender equality in education (Inayatillah, 2023). By addressing these issues, educators and policymakers can work to ensure that textbooks portray men and women in more diverse and equitable ways, helping to challenge stereotypes and foster more inclusive attitudes among students.

The portrayal of gender in English textbooks has long been a subject of concern, especially in regions like Aceh, where traditional gender roles and cultural values heavily influence societal norms (Khaira et al., 2023). English textbooks used in schools often mirror these cultural perspectives, which can unintentionally reinforce gender stereotypes and promote biased representations. In Aceh, where



conservative gender roles are deeply ingrained, textbooks may reflect and perpetuate these norms, rather than challenging them or presenting more progressive, egalitarian views (Schröter, 2011). Mostly, education plays a crucial role in shaping young minds, such depictions can reinforce the idea that men are naturally suited to leadership and independence, while women belong in more submissive or secondary roles (Fithriani, 2022).

Moreover, the language used in the textbooks often mostly reflects gender biases, with men portrayed as assertive and women as emotional or dependent. The subtle reinforcement of these stereotypes can shape students' perceptions of their own abilities and potential, limiting their aspirations and reinforcing gender-based expectations. In the context of Aceh, where gender roles are already heavily defined by cultural and religious values, this can further entrench inequality by limiting how boys and girls see their future possibilities (Kiram, 2020). Addressing these concerns requires a critical review of the content used in English textbooks in Aceh, ensuring that they promote more inclusive, diverse, and equitable portrayals of both genders. This would help foster a more progressive and gender-sensitive educational environment for future generations.

The primary aim of this study is to critically examine the representation of gender in English textbooks used in schools in Aceh. Specifically, the study seeks to identify and analyze any existing gender imbalances, biases in content, and differences in language use related to gender. One of the key objectives is to identify whether there is an unequal representation of male and female characters in these textbooks, examining if one gender is more prominently featured while the other is marginalized or underrepresented. In addition, it also investigates whether male characters are more likely to be depicted in active, leadership, or professional roles, while female characters are associated with passive, domestic, or secondary roles, reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes. By analyzing these portrayals, the study seeks to understand how these representations may shape students' perceptions of appropriate gender roles and behaviors. In the context of Aceh, where traditional gender roles are deeply ingrained, it is crucial to explore whether these textbooks reinforce or challenge these norms, potentially influencing students' views of their own roles in society and their future aspirations (Adnan, 2017). Thus, the result is expected to provide recommendations for creating more gender-inclusive and equitable educational materials. By identifying areas where textbooks fall short in promoting balanced gender representation, this research will offer practical suggestions for educators and policymakers to ensure that future materials are more reflective of gender equality, challenging stereotypes, and promoting more diverse role models for students.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to promote gender equality in education and to raise awareness about the biased representations often found in English textbooks. Educational materials play a vital role in shaping young minds, influencing how students perceive themselves and others in terms of gender roles and societal expectations (Suhartono & Kristina, 2018).

By identifying gender imbalances and biases in language use, this study can reveal the subtle ways in which inequality is maintained through educational content. If, for example, male characters are consistently shown in leadership roles, while female characters are depicted as passive or confined to domestic tasks, students may internalize these roles as natural and expected. This can have a lasting impact on their career aspirations, self-esteem, and understanding of their place in society. Addressing these biases is crucial in fostering an educational environment where students of all genders feel equally empowered to explore a wide range of possibilities.

Furthermore, this research contributes to broader efforts toward educational reform by providing evidence-based recommendations for creating more inclusive and equitable textbooks. These findings can guide policymakers, educators, and publishers in designing materials that reflect more diverse and balanced portrayals of gender. By fostering awareness of the importance of gender representation in educational content, the study encourages a shift towards a more progressive and gender-sensitive



approach to teaching, ultimately supporting the development of a more equal and inclusive society. In this way, the study plays a crucial role in both advancing gender equality in education and promoting critical thinking about the materials students engage with (Begum & Kamal, 2024).

Despite a growing body of research on gender representation in educational materials, several significant gaps and limitations remain, justifying the need for further investigation, particularly in the context of Aceh. Much of the existing research on gender bias in textbooks focuses on broader, more global contexts or on regions with different sociocultural backgrounds. Very few studies have examined how gender is represented in educational materials specific to Aceh, a region where cultural and religious norms strongly influence gender roles (Sari, 2016). As a result, there is a lack of localized research that takes into account the unique social dynamics of Aceh, where conservative interpretations of gender may further amplify the impact of biased educational content. Additionally, most studies on gender representation in textbooks tend to focus on older or secondary school levels, leaving a gap in research at the primary and junior high school levels, where foundational ideas about gender roles are often formed. Little attention has been paid to how English textbooks used in these earlier stages might reinforce gender norms, which are critical in shaping long-term perceptions. This gap is particularly important in regions like Aceh, where educational materials have a strong cultural influence on students' understanding of appropriate gender behavior and identity. The textbook being studied in this current research is called *English for Nusantara*—which is a textbook designed for Grade VII students in Indonesian junior high schools (SMP/MTs). Published by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (Kemdikbudristek), this book aligns with the Merdeka Curriculum, emphasizing essential competencies and character development. The textbook adopts a genre-based approach, focusing on various text types to enhance students' English language skills. It integrates cultural elements from Indonesia, promoting national identity and global awareness. The content is structured to develop competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with activities designed to encourage active participation and critical thinking. For teachers, a Teacher's Guide accompanies the student textbook, providing instructional strategies, lesson plans, and assessment tools to facilitate effective teaching and learning processes. Both the student textbook and the Teacher's Guide are available for free download in PDF format through the official Kemdikbudristek website. This initiative aims to ensure equitable access to quality educational resources across Indonesia.

Thence, the rationale above leads to formulation of the following research questions:

1. *How are male and female characters portrayed in English for Nusantara VII textbook in imagery representation?*
2. *How are male and female characters portrayed in English for Nusantara VII textbook in images of their action?*

## Method

This study employs a qualitative research approach, using content analysis to examine the representation of gender in the seventh-grade English textbook, *English for Nusantara VII*, which is published by the Indonesian government. Content analysis is an effective method for systematically analyzing both the textual and visual elements in educational materials to identify patterns of gender representation, biases, and stereotypes. The study adopts a qualitative content analysis approach, which allows for an in-depth examination of both explicit and implicit gender messages conveyed in the textbook. By focusing on one specific textbook, the study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how male and female characters are represented in terms of visibility, roles, and the language used to describe them. This method will reveal potential gender biases in the way the textbook frames gender roles and identities.

The sole sample for this study is the textbook *English for Nusantara VII*, which is used in seventh-grade classrooms and published by the government. This book was chosen because it is part of the core



curriculum and widely used in Indonesian schools, making it an influential source of language learning and gender role reinforcement for young students.

Data were collected by analyzing visual content within the textbook. The data included visual content, such as illustrations, images, and visual depictions of characters. This analysis involved assessing how male and female characters were visually portrayed, the activities they were engaged in, and the prominence of each gender in the visual narratives.

The data were analyzed using a structured content analysis process to ensure a comprehensive examination of gender representation in the textbook. The first step involved developing a coding system that categorized various aspects of gender representation. Key categories for coding included the frequency of male and female characters, which involved counting how often each gender appeared in both the text and illustrations. Another important category was roles and activities, where the study categorized the roles assigned to male and female characters, such as leadership positions, domestic responsibilities, or professional roles, and the activities they were shown engaging in, like problem-solving, caretaking, or participating in outdoor tasks. Additionally, the visual representation of characters in the illustrations was analyzed, focusing on their positioning, the roles they occupied, and how they interacted with other characters.

After the coding phase, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and patterns in the gender representations. This involved assessing whether male characters were more frequently depicted in active, leadership roles, while female characters were often associated with supportive or nurturing tasks. The study also explored any discrepancies in how prominently male and female characters were featured in the visual illustrations.

In term of ethical consideration, this study ensured objectivity and rigor throughout the content analysis process. Since the research involved analyzing publicly available educational materials, no personal or sensitive data were collected, and the study aimed to minimize researcher bias by using systematic coding procedures. Additionally, the researcher remained aware of potential cultural sensitivities regarding gender in the Acehnese context and handled the findings with respect to the local sociocultural environment.

## Results

### Imagery Representation

In the following are provided the results on the imagery representations by male and female characters in the textbook English for Nusantara VII.

*Table 1. Pictures and roles of male and female in English for Nusantara VII textbook*

No	Male frequency	Female frequency	Activities	Page
1	2	1	Walking together	13
2	1	-	Standing up	15
3	4	1	Comic strip (Galang's introduction)	16
4	1	-	Standing up	17
5	1	1	Self-introduction	19
6	8	-	Comic strip (Galang and Andre are introducing themselves)	20
7	10	-	Comic strip (Galang and Andre are introducing themselves)	21
8	1	-	Standing up	22
9	2	-	Shaking hands	23
10	8	6	Comic strip (All students are introducing themselves)	24
11	4	2	Comic strip (All students are introducing themselves)	25
12	4	8	Comic strip (All students are introducing themselves)	26
13	5	2	Comic strip (All students are introducing themselves)	27



14	5	5	Activities in the park (All students are introducing themselves)	28
15	5	2	Worksheet (males are cycling, jogging, scrolling phone, and play badminton; while females are listening to music, reading books, and play badminton)	29
16	2	3	Worksheet (males are cycling, jogging, scrolling phone, and play badminton; while females are listening to music, reading books, and play badminton)	30
17	12	-	Comic strip (Galang and Andre's hobbies)	31
18	2	3	Worksheet (males are cycling, jogging, scrolling phone, and play badminton; while females are listening to music, reading books, and play badminton)	33
19	1	3	Comic strip (Hobbies)	35
20	2	4	Worksheet (males are cycling, jogging, scrolling phone, and play badminton; while females are listening to music, reading books, and play badminton)	36
21	-	2	Explaining learning materials	37
22	2	1	Playing	40
23	3	3	Worksheet (males are cycling, jogging, scrolling phone, and play badminton; while females are listening to music, reading books, and play badminton)	42
24	5	3	Posing together for a picture	43
25	1	-	Playing basketball on a wheelchair	45
26	1	1	Eating	57
27	-	1	Holding plates of food	59
28	4	4	Comic strip (Monita and Galang's favorite meals)	61
29	2	2	Comic strip (Monita and Galang's favorite meals)	62
30	4	6	Dining	64
31	2	6	Talking	66
32	7	-	Talking	71
33	1	1	Worksheet (the female likes the food, while the male does not like the food)	72
34	-	1	Looking at shopping list	76
35	-	1	Looking at shopping list	77
36	1	-	Cooking	83
37	1	-	Cooking	85
38	2	1	Taking photo	101
39	2	1	Standing up	104
40	5	4	Comic strip (Galang shows his house to Andre and Monita)	106
41	5	5	Doing house chores	118
42	5	1	Doing house chores	119
43	3	2	Doing house chores	120
44	1	2	Showing stickers	124
45	2	-	Talking	133
46	5	1	Doing house chores	136
47	2	1	Doing Math homework	153
48	4	2	Talking	157
49	3	3	Talking	159
50	-	1	Standing up	164
51	3	2	Wearing traditional costumes	166
52	-	1	Studying	171
53	2	20	Studying	172
54	3	5	Studying	174
55	-	1	Studying	184
56	1	2	Studying	185
57	-	1	Standing up	186
58	1	-	Standing up	188
59	-	1	Standing up	189
60	1	-	Playing guitar	203
61	6	16	Comic strip (at the canteen)	206
62	4	7	Comic strip (school facilities)	208
63	-	8	Comic strip (where is the teacher's room?)	210
64	4	7	Standing up	212



65	3	4	Standing up	213
66	3	-	Dancing	219
67	6	7	Curricular activities (females are in English club, painting, dancing, and singing; while males are in basketball club, science club, karate, scouts, and singing club)	220
68	-	11	Comic strip (Talking about <i>Pencak Silat</i> )	222
69	2	1	Talking about basketball	229
70	2	2	Relaxing (males are talking to each other, females are reading books)	235
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>175</b>		

In examining the portrayal of male and female characters in the English for Nusantara VII textbook through imagery representation—which is fetched in the first research question, several key trends emerge regarding the frequency and roles of male and female characters. The analysis of imagery representation reveals a significant gender imbalance, with male characters appearing far more frequently than female characters. This disproportionate visibility of male characters in the textbook points to a gender bias that may shape students' perceptions of gender roles.

The first notable observation is the substantial difference in the frequency of male and female characters in the illustrations. In many instances, male characters dominate the pages, while female characters are either entirely absent or appear in significantly lower numbers. For example, on pages 20 and 21, there are eight and ten male characters depicted, respectively, without any female representation. Similarly, page 17 features only one male character, while no females are present. This pattern repeats throughout the textbook, with several pages showing a complete absence of female characters. In contrast, male characters consistently appear in various illustrations, often in larger numbers, indicating a greater prominence of males in the visual narratives.

Although there are some instances where female characters appear in similar numbers to male characters, such as on pages 24 and 28, these occurrences are relatively rare. Pages like 26 and 206, which feature higher frequencies of female characters (eight and sixteen females, respectively), are exceptions rather than the rule. Even in cases where female characters are present, they often remain in the background or are depicted in passive or supportive roles. In contrast, male characters are frequently portrayed in more active roles, engaging in activities such as problem-solving, outdoor tasks, and leadership.

Another important observation relates to the types of activities that male and female characters are engaged in. While the table does not provide explicit descriptions of these activities, the fact that males consistently outnumber females in visual representations suggests that males are likely to be depicted in a wider variety of roles and actions. This is especially evident on pages such as 17, 20, 21, and 31, where only male characters are featured, indicating that males may be more commonly associated with active, independent roles, whereas females, when present, may be portrayed in more passive or stereotypically gendered activities.

On pages where both male and female characters are depicted, there is often still a notable imbalance in their visibility and prominence. For instance, on page 31, there are twelve male characters, but no female characters are present. This stark contrast emphasizes the dominant presence of males in visual depictions and further reinforces gender biases. Even when female characters appear in imagery, as seen on pages 64 and 66, the male-to-female ratio often favors males, suggesting that male characters are still more central to the narrative or action depicted.

It is clearly learned that the imagery representation of male and female characters in English for Nusantara VII reveals a clear gender imbalance. Male characters appear far more frequently and are often depicted in active, leadership roles, while female characters are less visible and, when present, are often confined to more passive or traditional roles. This unequal representation reflects a gender bias



that could influence students' perceptions of gender roles, potentially reinforcing traditional stereotypes about male dominance and female subordination. To promote gender equality and challenge these stereotypes, it is crucial for educational materials like textbooks to present more balanced and diverse representations of both genders.

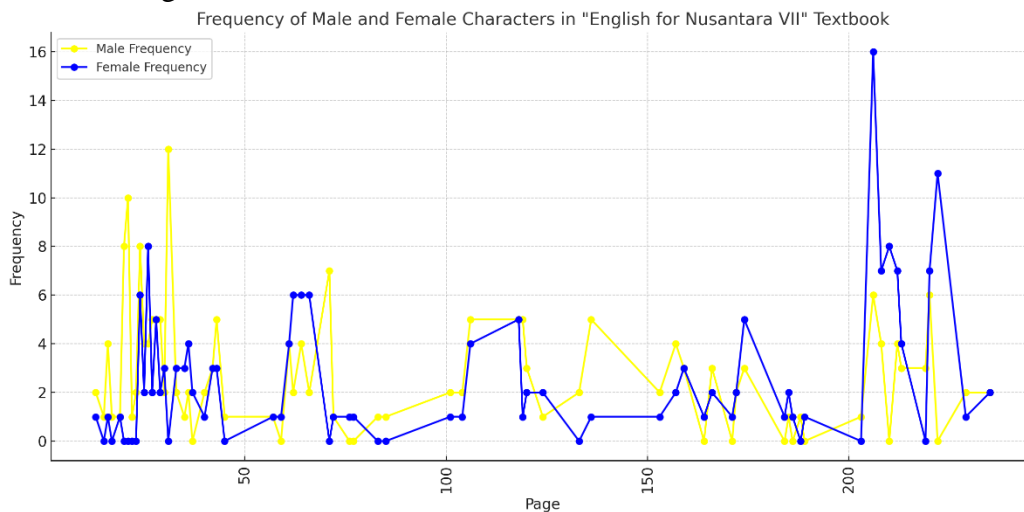


Figure 2. Frequency of male and female characters in English for Nusantara VII Textbook

The overall trend in the data shows a significant imbalance between the frequency of male and female characters in the English for Nusantara VII textbook. Male characters appear far more frequently than female characters throughout the book. There are numerous pages where only male characters are present, while female characters are either absent or represented in much smaller numbers. In a few instances, such as on pages 24, 26, and 206, the number of female characters is equal to or greater than that of male characters, but these occurrences are exceptions. Overall, the trend indicates a male-dominated representation, with males consistently being more prominent in both textual and visual depictions. This pattern suggests that male characters are given more visibility and likely play more central roles in the textbook's narratives and imagery, while female characters are underrepresented or appear in less active roles.

### Images of action

In the following are provided the results on the actions done by male and female characters in the textbook English for Nusantara VII. Regarding the second research question—asking about the roles portrayed for each gender, male and female characters are portrayed through a variety of actions and roles, with a noticeable pattern in how their activities differ based on gender. The analysis of imagery representation in the textbook reveals a clear division between the types of activities associated with male and female characters, which often align with traditional gender roles.

Male characters are frequently depicted engaging in more active and physically demanding activities. For instance, males are commonly involved in sports and outdoor actions, such as cycling, jogging, playing basketball, and participating in activities like karate, scouts, and science clubs. Examples from the textbook show male characters engaging in these activities with greater frequency and visibility, particularly in comic strips and worksheets. For instance, on pages where sports and outdoor actions are depicted, such as when males are cycling, jogging, or playing basketball, female characters are either absent or engaged in more passive actions. This trend is evident on pages that show males as more dominant in active or outdoor scenes.

In contrast, female characters are often depicted in less physically active roles and more traditionally feminine tasks. They are more likely to be shown listening to music, reading books, holding plates of food, or involved in domestic activities like cooking and doing house chores. These activities reinforce stereotypical roles, portraying females as more passive or nurturing in comparison to their male





counterparts. For example, while males are shown playing basketball or doing more physically engaging tasks, females are seen listening to music, reading, or standing passively in the background. These portrayals reflect traditional gender expectations, with men being more associated with physical prowess and independence, while women are tied to domesticity and caregiving.

However, there are a few exceptions to these patterns. On some pages, female characters are portrayed in more active roles, such as participating in extracurricular activities like English club, painting, dancing, and singing. These depictions offer a more balanced view of female involvement, especially in creative and academic contexts. Yet, even in these cases, males are shown participating in more diverse extracurricular activities, including physical and intellectual pursuits such as basketball, science club, and karate, which continue to emphasize traditional gender distinctions.

A notable trend in the imagery of this textbook is the way male characters dominate the overall action and presence in many scenes, particularly in comic strips. For example, in the early pages of the book, where characters like Galang and Andre are introduced, males are the primary focus, while females appear less frequently or in the background. In some scenes, such as when students are introducing themselves or discussing their hobbies, males are portrayed more actively, leading discussions or engaging in prominent activities, while females are portrayed more passively, often contributing less or being depicted in supportive roles.

The analysis of imagery also shows that while females are present in various scenes, they tend to be associated with indoor or sedentary activities, such as studying, standing, or holding objects like shopping lists or plates of food. These roles further suggest a limited representation of female action in comparison to their male counterparts, who are shown engaging in a wider range of activities, both academic and extracurricular. For more concise depiction, please see the chart below.

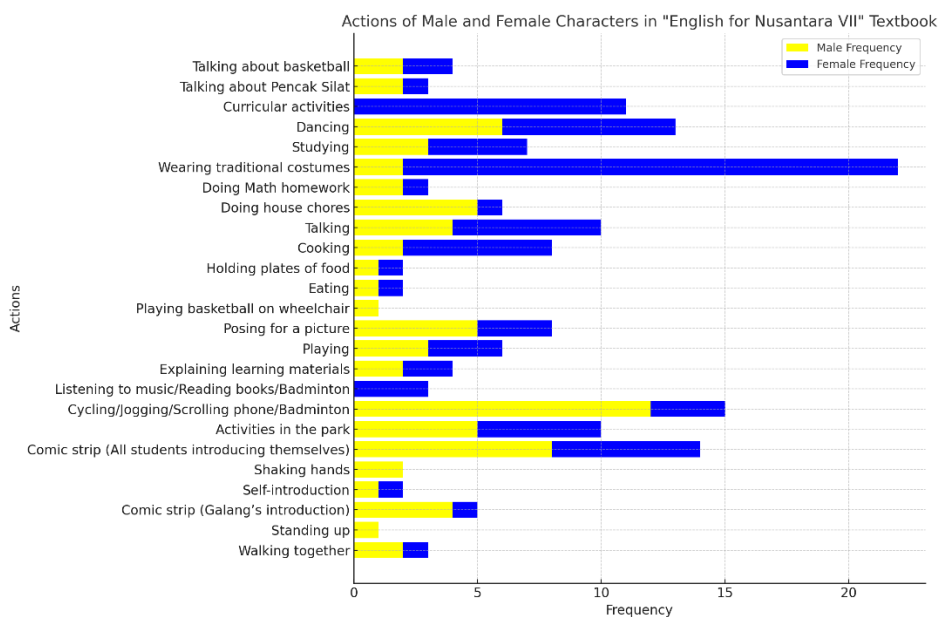


Figure 2. Action of male and female characters in English for Nusantara VII Textbook

It is understood that, the portrayal of male and female characters in the English for Nusantara VII textbook reveals a clear distinction between the actions assigned to each gender. Male characters are frequently depicted in more active, outdoor, and leadership roles, while female characters are often shown in more passive or domestic settings. This representation reflects traditional gender stereotypes, which may influence students' perceptions of gender roles and reinforce existing societal expectations. Despite some instances of female characters being shown in active roles, the overall trend leans towards a male-dominated portrayal in terms of action and presence.



## Discussion

There are several key points that can be raised as the discussion. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the portrayal of male and female characters in the "English for Nusantara VII" textbook, focusing on both their visibility and the roles they occupy in the imagery. By conducting a detailed content analysis of the characters' actions and their visual representation, the study aims to uncover whether gender imbalances and stereotypes are present in the textbook, potentially shaping students' perceptions of gender roles. This research contributes to the broader discussion on gender equality in educational materials by identifying how gender roles are represented in widely used textbooks, offering insights into how these representations may reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms. In doing so, the study sheds light on the importance of developing gender-sensitive educational content to promote balanced representations of both male and female characters.

The methodology used for this study was qualitative content analysis, focusing on the textbook's imagery and actions of male and female characters. Data were collected from various pages of the textbook, analyzing the frequency of male and female character appearances and their respective actions. The analysis covered a total of 70 pages, focusing on how characters were represented in terms of their roles, activities, and overall prominence. Male and female character actions were categorized and quantified to identify patterns and trends in their portrayal. Special attention was given to comic strips, worksheets, and other visual components of the textbook to understand the underlying gender dynamics reflected in the illustrations. The study's procedure involved careful coding of actions and appearances, followed by a thematic analysis of the roles assigned to each gender.

The results reveal a significant gender imbalance in the representation of male and female characters throughout the textbook. Male characters were depicted far more frequently than female characters, with a total of 194 male appearances compared to 175 female appearances. This numerical difference is coupled with a qualitative disparity in the roles and activities assigned to each gender.

Male characters were often portrayed in active, leadership, or physically demanding roles. They were frequently depicted engaging in outdoor activities such as cycling, jogging, and playing sports like basketball. Additionally, males were shown participating in extracurricular activities like karate, scouts, and science clubs, emphasizing their engagement in a broader range of both physical and intellectual pursuits. In contrast, female characters were more likely to be portrayed in passive or domestic roles. They were commonly shown listening to music, reading books, holding plates of food, or performing domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning. Even when females were involved in extracurricular activities, they were generally associated with more creative and artistic tasks such as painting, dancing, and singing. This is in line with the findings researched by Munira et al. (2018) that gender stereotype is still ingrained in most Indonesian cultures.

Although there were a few instances where female characters appeared in more active roles, these were exceptions rather than the norm. For instance, on pages 24, 26, and 206, the number of female characters was equal to or greater than that of male characters. However, even in these cases, the activities performed by female characters were generally less physically or intellectually demanding compared to those of male characters.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on gender representation in educational materials, which frequently highlights the presence of gender imbalances and stereotypical portrayals of males and females as presented by Purba et al. (2024), Huang & Liu (2024), and Fithriani (2022). Studies conducted on gender in textbooks have often found that male characters are more visible and occupy more dominant roles, while female characters are less prominent and often depicted in traditional, supportive roles. In this context, the "English for Nusantara VII" textbook mirrors these broader trends,



where male characters are depicted as more active, adventurous, and capable, while female characters are often confined to passive or domestic settings (Suhartono & Kristina, 2018).

Literature on gender in education also emphasizes the potential impact of such portrayals on students' perceptions of gender roles. Repeated exposure to stereotypical gender representations can reinforce societal expectations of male dominance and female subordination, limiting both boys' and girls' perceptions of their own potential as supported by Padavic et al. (2020) and Rasyidah et al. (2016). This aligns with the findings of this study, where male characters are consistently portrayed as central figures in action-oriented and leadership roles, reinforcing traditional notions of masculinity, while female characters are depicted as passive or supportive, reflecting stereotypical views of femininity.

The gender imbalance and the stereotypical portrayal of characters in the "English for Nusantara VII" textbook can be explained by the persistence of traditional gender norms in educational materials. In many cultures, textbooks serve as both educational tools and cultural artifacts, reflecting the values and expectations of the society that produces them (Ogundiya & Amzat, 2012). In the case of this textbook, the overrepresentation of male characters in active roles and the underrepresentation of females in those same roles may be a reflection of the broader societal expectations regarding gender in Indonesia, where traditional views of masculinity and femininity still hold significant influence. Moreover, the disparity in activities assigned to males and females suggests an adherence to gender norms that align males with physical prowess and leadership, while females are associated with caregiving, domesticity, and passive behavior (Begum & Kamal, 2024). The fact that males are frequently depicted engaging in physically demanding or intellectually challenging activities, such as sports and science clubs, reinforces the stereotype that men are naturally suited to leadership and problem-solving roles. Meanwhile, the portrayal of females in domestic tasks or more sedentary activities, such as reading or holding plates of food, reflects the traditional view that women's roles are confined to the home or less active spaces.

While the findings of this study align with previous research on gender representation in textbooks, there are some notable differences. For instance, in a few instances, female characters were shown participating in extracurricular activities such as painting and singing, which, although more creative than physically demanding, still represents a step toward portraying females in more active and visible roles. However, even in these cases, the activities assigned to females often remained less varied and less physically demanding than those assigned to males.

The findings from the analysis of the "English for Nusantara VII" textbook have significant implications for gender socialization, educational equity, and broader societal perceptions of gender roles. The study reveals a clear gender imbalance, with male characters appearing more frequently and depicted in active, leadership roles, while female characters are often shown in passive or domestic tasks. This portrayal reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, which may influence how students perceive appropriate roles for men and women in society. For boys, the frequent representation of male characters in leadership and physically demanding roles may instill the belief that these traits are inherent to masculinity. Meanwhile, girls may internalize the notion that their roles are more supportive or nurturing, limiting their aspirations in fields such as leadership, science, or sports. These imbalances in representation could contribute to unequal educational outcomes, as boys and girls are exposed to different role models and expectations. The textbook's content could also shape classroom dynamics, where teachers and students may unconsciously reinforce these gender roles. Additionally, the perpetuation of traditional gender roles in educational materials may hinder broader efforts to promote gender equality, both in education and society at large (Inayatillah, 2023). To address these issues, there is a pressing need for curriculum and textbook reform. Educational materials should offer more balanced, diverse portrayals of both genders, promoting inclusivity and equality. Teachers also need to be equipped to recognize and challenge gender biases in the classroom. By ensuring that textbooks reflect contemporary values of gender equality, teachers can help foster a generation of students who are empowered to challenge stereotypes and embrace a wider range of possibilities for both boys and girls.



## Conclusion

It can be concluded that the findings revealed several key points. First, male characters appeared far more frequently than female characters, and they were often depicted in more active, leadership roles. In contrast, female characters were portrayed in more passive or domestic roles, such as reading, listening to music, or doing house chores. Although there were some instances where female characters were more visible, these were exceptions to the overall trend. The imbalance between male and female representations reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, potentially limiting students' understanding of the full range of possibilities available to both genders.

The implications of these findings are significant for educational practices. The gender imbalance in the textbook could influence students' self-perceptions and reinforce societal stereotypes about appropriate roles for men and women. Addressing these biases in educational materials is crucial to fostering a more gender-inclusive learning environment. While this study addressed a gap in the literature by examining gender representation in an Acehese context, it is limited by its focus on a single textbook. Future research should analyze a broader range of educational materials across different grade levels to provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender representation in the curriculum. Additionally, developing textbooks that offer a more balanced portrayal of both genders is essential to promoting gender equality in education. Recommendations include conducting further studies on teacher attitudes and how these materials are used in classrooms to perpetuate or challenge gender stereotypes.

## Author Contribution and Competing Interest

The first author led the research by conceptualizing the study, formulating the research questions, designing the content analysis framework, collecting and analyzing the data, and drafting the manuscript. The second author assisted in data collection and coding, particularly verifying imagery and actions in the textbook, and contributed to refining the methodology and interpreting the findings in relation to the literature. The third author focused on revising and editing the manuscript, contributed to creating visual aids, and helped review the study's implications and recommendations for future research. The authors declare that there is no competing interest.

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