

## **GENDER SENSITIVITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A REPRESENTATION FROM MACMILLAN SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOKS FOR BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*This study was conducted to describe the representation of gender in lower and middle Basic Schools 1 to 6 Macmillan Social Studies textbooks in Nigeria. The study is descriptive design of survey. An adopted Gendered Representation Inventory (GRI) was the instrument used for the analysis. Frequency count and percentages with a pie chart was used in the study. The results showed that Social Studies textbooks (Macmillan) gender bias with males outnumbering females in terms of picture representation, professional, social status among others. Consequently, it was recommended that the preparation of Nigerian Social Studies Textbooks should be gender-sensitive. Nigerian textbook writers and Social Studies textbook should also portray women and female children's roles and responsibilities beyond domestic activities.*

**Keywords:** Gender; Macmillan Social Studies textbooks; Stereotyped roles, Social role.

### **Introduction**

In many cultural contexts, the differences between girls and boys, and between men and women, are regarded as natural. Children are classified at birth – usually by observing their genitals – into two categories: males and females. Based on the category to which they belong, society considers them qualified to do certain things and expect certain attitudes and behaviour concerning their sexes. Their rights, duties, social, economic and political roles also differed from childhood to adult lives. Societies are organized around this basic social differentiation, which is evident in the life of individuals.

These internalized gendered constraints provide a new understanding of the inequalities which exist between men and women. These inequalities lead to male and female polarization and accompanied by the construction of a hierarchy in all societies. It is a social construct as the unequal relations between men and women – male domination, female subordination – are neither predestined nor immutable. They are the outcome of a society's "gender relations" (Meighan, 1981). These relations are usually unfavorable to women and detrimental in economic, social, legal, health and cultural terms. Consequently, gender-sensitive policies and measures are designed to protect women in all spheres.

There seems to be a consensus that gender equality is a cross-cutting policy goal that applies to all sectors and institutions. The United Nations Millennium Development Project (MDGs) has indicted that gender equality includes three main dimensions viz: (a) capabilities, including education, health and nutrition; (b) access to resources and opportunities, including access to economic assets, such as income and employment, and political opportunities, such as gender representation in political bodies; and (c) security, including reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2015). Together, these dimensions contribute to women's well-being and enable women and girls to make strategic choices and decisions (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2016).

But lately, more consideration has gone into what gender equality in education should involve. Gharbavi, and Mousavi, (2012) was one of the first to present a simple formula for improving gender in education: making girls' education affordable, making education a practical reality, making schools more girl-friendly and improving education quality. One of the aspects of gender equality in schools is to offer quality education in schools. Several studies (Shaukat, Siddiquah, & Pell, 2014) suggest that standard aspects of school quality have a stronger impact on girls' education than boys' education for sustainable development. For instance, a study in Bangladesh found that increases in teacher quality raise girls' enrollment or reduce their drop-out probability. It was also observed in the same study that having separate toilet facilities for boys and girls increased girls' enrollment and improved their grades (Akpakwu, Simon, Bua, & Terhile, 2014).

A new study by the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report shows how secondary school textbooks from the 1950s until 2011 missed or misrepresented key priorities now shown as crucial to achieve sustainable development. With textbooks only revised every 5-10 years, the analysis reveals the need for governments to urgently reassess their textbooks to ensure that they reflect core values for sustainable development, including human rights, gender equality, environmental concern, global citizenship and peace, and conflict resolution. Released around International Day of Human Rights, the analysis looked at secondary school textbooks in history, civics, social studies, and geography. Presented percentage women mentioned and showed in professional skills increased from 15% in the 1946-1969 period to 37% in the 2000-2011 period. Only a sixth of textbooks in Northern Africa and Western Asia mention women's rights at all. While many textbooks, including in Algeria, France, Italy, Spain, Uganda, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Kenya, and Zimbabwe show women in submissive or traditional roles like cleaning and serving men. And other countries like Vietnam, have revised their textbooks to better illustrate gender equality.

According to Education For All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (2008), to improve the quality of learning, there are three sets of provisions that are essential to be considered both in general and for girls in particular. These are: 1) reforming the textbooks; 2) enhancing the number and quality of teachers, and 3) making the teaching-learning process itself girl-friendly. Reforming the textbook is the concern of this paper because instead of the textbook promoting gender equality, it tends to widen the gap more.

The roles of textbooks are fundamental to the learning of gendered roles. Representations of male and female are legitimized by a high-status medium. Once assimilated by children, the "gender system", that is "the set of norms, beliefs, practices, and knowledge that organizes relations between men and women" (Ahmed, 2006: 2), will have repercussions on female children's academic achievement and choices as well as on their experience as a whole. It is from this angle that the influence of textbooks representation is examined to form a basis for the promotion of gender equality. Narang (2014), found that students spend as much as 80 to 95 percent of classroom time using textbooks and that teachers make a majority of their instructional decisions based on the textbook. Also, a study conducted by Ullah, Johar, and Arab, (2014) Canadian found that more than 75 % of their basic school teachers use textbooks for 70 to 90 percent of classroom time. This finding indicated the level at which textbooks are essential materials in the teaching and learning process and their impact on gender equality.

Little researches have been conducted on analyzing textbooks from gender perspectives. It is important to start analyzing textbooks used in schools and the messages that they are presenting to children. They present important messages to children on how social relations in their society should be organized. It is often important to examine how male and female characters, roles, and occupations are presented in the textbook. But there is a question that

one needs to ask, the question is, how far has the modern-day textbooks with special reference to Social Studies textbooks been able to promote gender equality in Nigeria, considering the vital role of Social Studies in society?

At least Social Studies is a subject that integrates the contents of all other Social Sciences courses and it was introduced into schools to solve societal problems that cannot be solved by single social sciences courses (Jekayinfa, 2006:7-8). There seems to be an important mission in many textbooks. They omit the accomplishments and roles of almost half of the human population that are females. Researches conducted by different scholars have revealed that women are placed in the position of subordination and passivity in many textbooks (Khalid, 2008). Such presentations in textbooks affect children's psychological development.

In a study of a Côte d'Ivoire textbook, researchers noted that the analysis of obstacles to girls' enrolment and academic achievement showed that much of the literature has been devoted to the influence of cultural and socio-economic factors, while little is said about the influence of factors directly associated with the school environment (Weitzman, 2000). The educational performance of students is also said to depend on the extent to which education systems promote the rights of male and female children (Craeynest, 2015). Given the importance of textbooks in teaching and learning, this study examined gender representation in Basic School Social Studies textbooks.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study assesses gender sensitivity in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbooks. Specifically, the study investigated the Gender sensitivity of the:

- (i) pictures presented in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbook.
- (ii) professions and occupations presented in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbook.
- (iii) social status presented in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbook.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study.

- (i) How sensitive to gender are the pictures presented in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbook?
- (ii) How sensitive to gender are the professions and occupations presented in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbook?
- (iii) How sensitive to gender are social status presented in the lower and middle basic school Social Studies textbook?

### **Research Methodology**

This was a descriptive survey. An inventory developed by the International Network for Research into Gender Representation in Textbooks (2010: 12) was adopted for the study. The quantitative statistical method was used to analyse the collected data. The aim was to reveal a textbook's gender system. This design was based on an understanding of how representations of male and female were shown in Macmillan Social Studies Textbooks across all the basic school levels (basic one to basic six). This process rested on the following basic principles:

- (i) Gendered representations were embodied in characters, and it was therefore through these that gender imbalances could be identified.
- (ii) An exhaustive inventory of characters was compiled, based on a questionnaire:
  - (a) Count the characters according to sex and age: (men; women; boys; girls; ungendered such as pupil, child, etc.); unspecified. The count showed where the characters' feature in the textbook (whether in the text, pictures, pupils' activities or exercises).

- (b) Note the features of gender description: character type, educational function; role figure; social, occupational and/or family functions, attributes in terms of physical characteristics or items; character and personality traits; activities and actions;

These various elements contribute to the development of the multi-faceted portraits and portrayal of an imaginary society to be found in textbooks. It was by comparing and contrasting these various indications that the analysis revealed the gender roles and identities conveyed by Social Studies textbooks. Once this analysis of gendered representations has been completed it would be possible, based on comparable quantitative data, to identify the mechanisms by which one gender was discredited or discriminated against.

One Social Studies textbook was purposively sampled for the study out of three different types produced by three different publishers. They are Onibonoje Social Studies basic one to six, Adekunle Aromolaran Social Studies for a basic one to six, and Macmillan Social Studies for Basic one to six. So Macmillan Social Studies textbook was sampled, because it met the basic school curriculum contents. This is in line with Sambo, (2008) who maintained that a researcher could choose a sample for the study if the sample possesses the characteristics of the population. Thus, the Macmillan Social Studies textbook was sampled because it was the textbook recommended by the government for Lower Basic School and also met the curriculum content of Universal Basic Education (UBE). Data collected were presented using descriptive statistics.

## Results

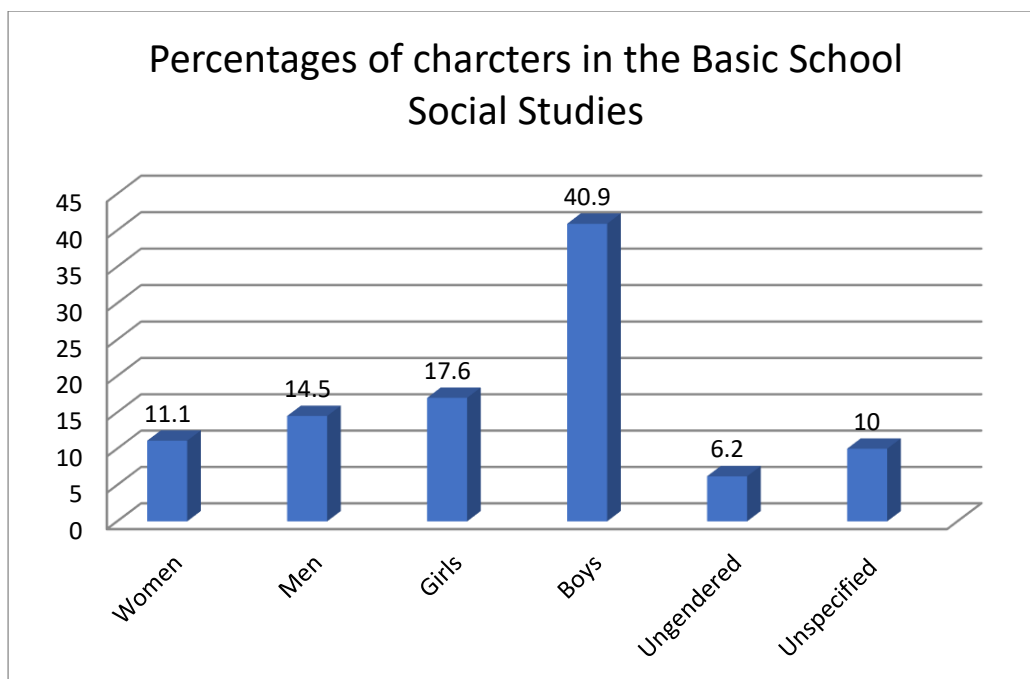
The results of the findings were presented as follows:

**Research question One:** Is there equality in the number of the appearance of both sexes in the lower basic school Social Studies textbook?

**Table 1. Summary of Number of individual characters by sex in texts and illustrations**

Individual Characters	Frequency	Percentage
Women	187	11.1
Men	244	14.5
Girls	296	17.6
Boys	687	40.9
Ungendered sex	104	6.2
Unspecified sex	162	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,680</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table one showed the percentages of the characters of both sexes that appeared in the textbook. As shown in the pie chart 28.7% of the total population of characters in the textbook represented females while 55.4% were males. 6.2 % and 10% of characters were ungendered and unspecified sexes.



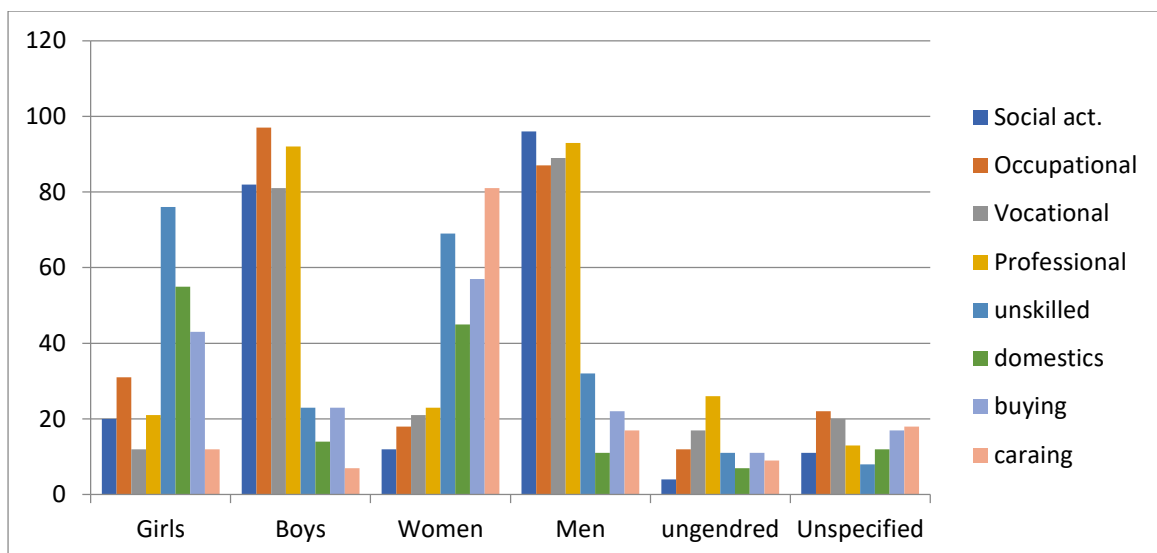
**Fig.1: Bar chart showing percentages of the population of character in the Social Studies textbook**

**Research Question Two:** Is there a difference in the types of profession/occupations associated with both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook?

**Table 2: Summary of profession/occupation of characters by sex in texts and illustrations**

	Girls	Boys	Women	Men	Ungendered	Unspecified
Social activity	20	82	12	96	4	11
Occupational activity	31	97	18	87	12	22
Vocational skills	12	81	21	89	17	20
Professional skills	21	92	23	93	26	13
Unskilled activity	76	23	69	32	11	08
Domestic activity	55	14	45	11	7	12
Buying activities	43	23	57	22	11	17
Care or caring activity	12	07	81	17	9	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b> <b>(16.1%)</b>	<b>419</b> <b>(24.7%)</b>	<b>326</b> <b>(19.4%)</b>	<b>447</b> <b>(26.6%)</b>	<b>97</b> <b>(5.8%)</b>	<b>121</b> <b>(7.2%)</b>

Table 2 reveals occupational activities that were predominant to females as low in vocational and professional skills, with unskilled activity, domestic activity among others having a high score on the female graph. However, the male-dominated professional, social skills and vocational skills but with fewer scores in unskilled, domestic, and caring activity among others.



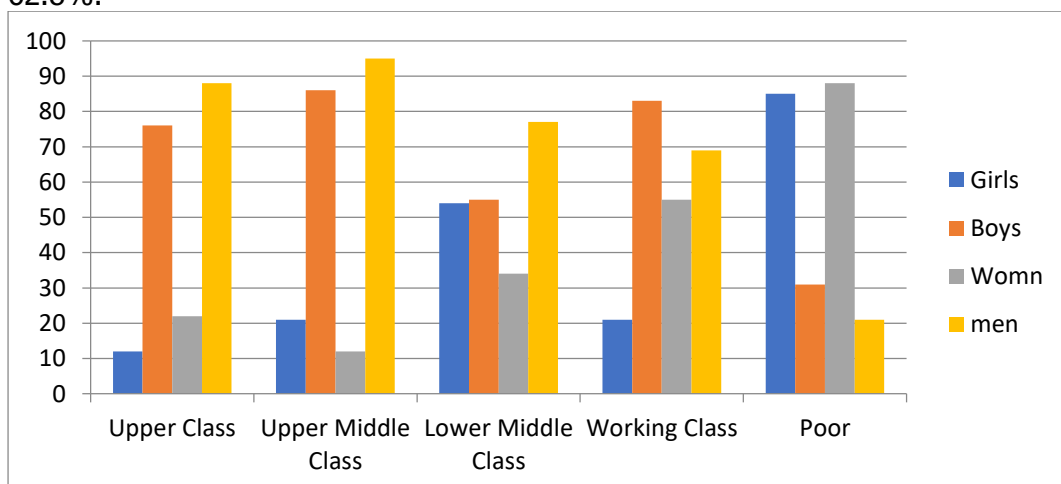
**Fig.2: Percentages of Occupational activities**

**Research Question Three:** Is there a difference in the social status occupied by both sexes in the Lower Basic School Social Studies textbook?

**Table 3: Summary of the social status of characters by sex in texts and illustrations**

	Girls	Boys	Women	Men
Upper class	12	76	22	88
Upper Middle class	21	86	12	95
Lower middle class	54	55	34	77
Working class	21	83	55	69
Poor	85	31	88	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>193(17.7%)</b>	<b>331 (30.5%)</b>	<b>211 (19.4%)</b>	<b>350 (32.3%)</b>

Table 3 shows the percentages of the social class of the sexes in the Macmillan Social Studies textbook (books 1 to 6) in favour of the male. Female representation is 37.1% while males 62.8%.



**Fig.3: Percentages of the social status of the character in the Social Studies textbook**

## Discussion

Macmillan Social Studies for Nigerian Lower Basic Schools textbook from 1- 6 has a total population of 1,680 pictures (i.e appearances) of a human being. 931 (55.4%) of these pictures were male while 481 (28.1%) represent female sex. Also in terms of occupation, Macmillan Social Studies text showed that prestigious, professional and skillful jobs in the society are commonly attributed to males rather than females. The male lead and occupies the most vital occupation in society. While the female is second. Macmillan basic two textbooks pages 34 and 35, as well as basic 4 textbooks, pages 24 and 104 elucidated this argument by showing the male sex as Engineers and Doctors, while the female sex as typist and Nurse.

As shown in the textbook, women are much more restricted or found to be occupying domestic roles, they are always found in the home. The text shows a girl child washing plates, bathing baby, mother cooking food for the family, washing clothes, taking care of the house and the children. While men are always found outside engaging in one activity or the other in society. Positions such as that of the head of a village or community such as Oba, Emir, Chief, Governors, President, Nationalist leaders, name of governors and their states as shown in the Macmillan Social Studies textbook were represented by the male sex.

Social Studies textbooks which are mostly being used in Nigerian Lower Basic Schools (Macmillan) tend to promote the gender inequalities that are prevalent in both society and culture. The teaching materials such as Macmillan textbook for effective teaching and learning Social Studies portray images of males and females in a gender insensitive manner which in a variety of ways develop in pupil's values, attitudes, and perceptions which are not towards gender relationship. This goes against the major human rights instruments in which Nigeria is a signatory, especially a girl child in a disadvantaged position as far as her education is concerned as revealed in the analysis. Young children absorb whatever they are taught by their teachers and do not often question what they read. Even as they are growing up, they are less likely to challenge the biases that do not immediately threaten them unless they are actively encouraged to do so.

Corroborated Ullah, Johar, and Arab, (2014). Gender Representation in Children's Books: A Critical Review of Empirical Studies findings which revealed that textbooks still carry gender stereotypes and (2) Gender bias in textbooks does matter as textbooks knowledge is essential medium of power that shapes the ways in which children think about themselves and society. Also, the findings of the study by Lisa, Ikhsanudin, and Sutapa, (2019) revealed that the theme of male dominance exists and is prevalent throughout the contents of the selected English textbooks. On the other hand, the study of Mustapha, (2019) revealed that findings indicate discrimination against both males and female; however, females are largely discriminated against in forms of underrepresentation, invisibility, domination, subordination and perpetration of gender stereotypes that are inimical to their empowerment for national development and the achievement of the goals of gender equality

This feeling tends to curtail their aspirations and contribute to national development. This is because of the way they are portrayed in textbooks as inferior and second class citizens as compared to their male counterparts. This sends a serious message to the pupils on where they belong in society due to their sex and the level at which they can contribute and sustain national development. This finding is in agreement with that of Weitzman (2000) in a study conducted with 18 pre-school picture books chosen as the best of their kind for that year in America, which shows that picture book characters reinforce the traditional sex-role assumptions about men and women. Females were grossly under-represented with 261 pictures of males compared to 23 pictures of females, among other findings.



Thus, pupils as young as they are, need to develop positive attitudes and values which foster development, gender equality, and equity. This is because the images, pictures, text, contents, illustrations, words, and pronouns in the textbook are considered as sending hidden messages to the children, (hidden curriculum) which may influence their life, learning habits, and interest as well as motivation for learning and contribute to the development of their society.

### **Conclusion**

Social Studies textbooks – which are still of paramount importance today as the education system's basic framework of learning and as symbolic reflections of the societies – tend unwittingly and unintentionally to embody a substratum of patriarchal cultures that are discriminatory against girls and women despite all the efforts made by the government through their policies and programme. However, no one disputes the need to ensure that socialization aids are consistent with universal human rights principles to meet a collective ideal of sustainable development and peace.

Social Studies textbooks, taken as a whole, are therefore practical and powerful tools for introducing a process of social enlightenment which can help the individual find fulfillment according to his or her potentials and his or her desires rather than according to the attributes of his or her sex and its associated gender consideration.

### **Recommendations**

Thus, based on this, the researchers recommend the following:

- (i) Nigerian textbooks especially Social Studies textbooks should be gender-sensitive.
- (ii) Nigerian textbook writers and Social Studies textbook authors should portray the roles and responsibilities of women and female children beyond the domestic area.
- (iii) The Nigerian textbooks in other subjects such as Mathematics and English Language should address gender issues.

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