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Gender Representation in Education: Evidence from English National Tests in Indonesia

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Abstract

Gender representation in Indonesian school textbooks has been widely analysed. However, the compulsory national tests have lacked attention although these used to be a main tool to determine students' competencies. This research aims to evaluate gender representation in the Indonesian Education System, especially in the public national tests. Using content analysis, we examined both male and female representation in the Junior High School English public national tests from 1994 to 2004. The findings reveal that the English national tests were content-valid tests. Before 1998, the tests reflected the patriarchal culture which was embraced by Indonesians during the New Order era. For example, female names were associated with feminine traits and the domestic sphere, while male names were associated with masculine traits and the public sphere. Meanwhile, the tests after 1998 indicated how female names were given more opportunities in the public sphere although male names still dominated the discussion on employment. This result is in line with the theoretical and practical implications, in which gender roles are represented based on the culture of the society.

Keywords: *gender, representation, patriarchal society, Indonesia, English national tests*

Introduction

The existing research on gender issues mainly concentrates on economics, security, religious interpretations, and political concerns. Since female participation in economic activities is strongly encouraged, the analysis then focuses on the methods to elevate women's well-being and their supporting group (Agarwal, 2020; Schuster, 2014). Also, regulations are scrutinized to accommodate women in the political realm (Erlina & Normadilla, 2020), aiming to bring more female representation in politics (Gwiazda, 2019). Not to mention that women's roles in religious rituals (Andaya, 2006) and as religious leaders (Nisa & Saenong, 2022) are getting more acknowledgement.

Despite international progress toward gender equality in a multitude of socio-economic arenas, gender representation in education remains far from equal. Some studies around the world show how there is still a gender gap in education. For example, male students are likely to achieve greater scores in American mathematics competitions (Ellison & Swanson, 2010). Another example was found in the 2004 and 2005 Physics National Qualifying exams in Australia which provided more favourable circumstances to male students, resulting in lower female achievers (Wilson et al., 2007).

In this regard, education becomes critical since it is believed to be one of the most effective techniques for reducing gender bias. Gender bias refers to stereotyped ideas about persons based on their sex, particularly in relation to how females and males are treated differently. Analysis on gender bias in education is mostly carried out by examining school textbooks. In Indonesia, school textbooks have been widely studied to see gender representation in the educational system. Most research found unequal gender representation in Indonesian school textbooks. For example, Suwardi et al. (2018) demonstrated how the illustrations in Islamic textbooks for Indonesian children exhibit gender prejudice since favourable male images are more numerous than female images.

However, studies are notably lacking on how gender issues are addressed within the broader Indonesian educational system, particularly in the evaluation system. This research aims to analyse Indonesian public national tests which were solely used to measure students' competencies. It specifically investigates how gender was represented in the standardised English tests. By using content analysis, this research illustrates how gender representation in national tests reflects the gender stereotypes within Indonesian society.

Gender and Education in Indonesia

Patriarchal societies such as Indonesia maintain a tight division of labour between men and women (Mangundjaya, 2017). Men are primarily assigned duties in the public sphere/outside the home, whilst women are given tasks in the domestic sphere/home. In this regard, women are expected to perform daily domestic responsibilities, including cooking, sewing, cleaning and child care. Meanwhile, men must be the breadwinner and perform well in their work. As a result of their distinct roles, men and women absorb opposite psychological characteristics namely expressive feminine and instrumental masculine attitudes, which are enhanced by sex-role stereotyping in society (Eisenstein, 1984).

The promotion of rigid gender roles during the New Order era had a far-reaching impact on Indonesian society. These roles were deeply rooted in tradition, culture, religion and the media, as highlighted by Harijati et al. (2004). It was supported by the pervasive gender ideology which exerted significant influence over legislation throughout the New Order era in which the government actively encouraged men to participate in public life, while women were primarily expected to fulfil domestic responsibilities (Sunindyo, 1998). As an example, Graham (2001) notes that a government program promoted a nuclear family and a maternal philosophy, which identified a woman's five primary roles as a wife, mother, procreator, financial manager, and contributor to society. Such a gender ideology had an undeniable influence on legislation throughout the New Order era, mostly referred to as the Marriage Law 1974 (Katz & Katz, 1975), which enshrined the notion of a patriarchal

family structure, further entrenching gender roles within Indonesian society.

In line with Graham's views, Robinson (2008) argues that the New Order implemented policies that were designed to assert gendered authority, which supported the interests of the ruling elite by reinforcing their masculine power. One way this was evident was through the under-representation of women in positions of power, as male officials outnumbered female authorities. Moreover, Robinson notes that some women's groups promoted traditional gender roles, such as women's home duties. For instance, the PKK was a women's organization whose main objective was to engage women in maternal and child health programs (Robinson, 2008).

Within the education system, New Order gender ideology was also prevalent. Bouchier (2015) pointed out the connection between mandatory school textbooks and gender ideology. The New Order government launched textbooks for the *Pendidikan Moral Pancasila* (PMP—Pancasila Moral Education) subject in order to promote state ideology by including some texts related to family and leadership. For example, some texts explicitly stated how a mother had to care for her children. Meanwhile, a father was expected to be the breadwinner who had to make ends meet. Those texts enhance gender ideology and shape gender stereotypes among the readers who are mostly teachers and students in Indonesia.

In 1998, the New Order administration collapsed as its stringent restrictions were disputed. Demonstrations in support of free speech were observed in some locations in Indonesia. Women organised by *Suara Ibu Peduli* (SIP—Concerned Mother's Voice) also participated in the “*demo susu*” (literally translated as milk demonstration) that precipitated the regime's fall (Robinson, 2008). The regime's demise appeared to illuminate the battle for gender equity and equality since that year was a watershed moment for women's empowerment in the public domain.

The fact that is sometimes overlooked is that in 1978, the fundamental Indonesian State Guidelines (known as GBHN during the New Order era) recognised women's dual responsibilities in the household and public spheres (Robinson & Bessell, 2002). While it was a promising guideline, its execution throughout the New Order era was only a hazy memory. Apparently, the same false promise was made about the topic of gender equality during the 1998 *Reformasi* campaign. Lily Zakiyah Munir, a social activist, believes that the New Order's gender ideology "continues to exist beyond 1998" (Budianta, 2006).

Budianta (2006) outlines two primary reasons for the continued influence of the New Order's gender ideology. As centralized authority from the New Order era is replaced by decentralized governance, regional governments can now draft their own laws. This is potentially leading to a resurgence of patriarchal norms, as suggested by practices in regions like Aceh and West Sumatra. Furthermore, Budianta (2006) points out a shift in the dynamics of women's activism which was previously united against a centralized power but then dispersed. Currently, activists are dispersed to tackle local power struggles across more than thirty provinces and four hundred regencies. This dispersion complicates coordination within the women's movement, making the fight for gender equality more challenging and leaving the goal of gender equality unmet.

Given Indonesia's patriarchal structure, it is unavoidable that gender ideology is expressed overtly in education. Previous research was conducted by Azisah and Vale (2008) who analyze religious, (local and national) language, and social studies textbooks. The results show progressive gender representation in books published after 2004. Female characters appeared frequently although some gender stereotypes still persisted such as when a female child was tasked to clean the house. Similar research was conducted in 2009 to examine gender stereotypes prevalent in textbooks used in Indonesian elementary school and high schools. This study discovered that English textbooks showed progressive gender representation; for instance, men could prepare food and a national heroine was a Papuan woman (Utomo

et al., 2009). However, other subjects such as Bahasa Indonesia and social sciences reflect gender bias.

In contrast, Islam and Asadullah (2018) found that English language textbooks in Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh tend to reflect gender bias. For instance, female names were given occupations with lower wages compared to men. Besides, women were mostly illustrated as having activities indoors. This is in line with other research on English textbooks which depicts unequal representation of men and women, marking the under-representation of women in educational tools (Agni et al., 2020; Emaliana & Tusita, 2020; Fani Prastikawati & Yonata, 2022; Fithriani, 2022).

Ariyanto (2018) argues that textbook writers who used the 2013 curriculum were already familiar with the concept of gender equality. However, such a concept was not properly translated in the textbooks as the pictures and texts reflect gender bias. Lestariyana et al. (2020) demonstrated another empirical investigation about the appearance of female characters in two government-mandated English language textbooks used in Indonesian junior high schools. They argue that the textbook writers understand the concept of gender equality; for instance, a mother is given a role as a surgeon in the public sphere. However, male and female stereotypes dominated preconceptions in English language textbooks as feminine traits are strongly attached to female names.

Compared to the research on gender stereotypes in school textbooks, there is little research on school tests. Departing from this fact, Yang and Yan (2020) conducted a study on school examination papers in Hong Kong and found that female names are still associated with feminine traits. Even though women have been portrayed as working in the public sphere, the choice of occupations is fewer and requires a delicate manner such as ballet dancer and nurse. Moreover, female names are still so much associated with domestic affairs in the household. Also, marital status is highly emphasised because female names are distinguished as Miss (single) or Mrs (married). In other words, gender bias is still prevalent in examination papers.

In Indonesia, Leigh (1994) attempted to analyse the representation of heroes in Indonesian national tests including social science, Indonesian, and English tests. The result showed that the tests barely mention female heroes. If a female hero was mentioned, the description would focus on her feminine traits instead of her strength and independence (Leigh, 1994). In contrast, male heroes frequently appeared and were portrayed as intelligent and strong men who greatly contributed to making the Indonesian state.

Therefore, this research aims to analyse public national tests as an education tool in Indonesia. This research specifically analyses gender representation in English tests. It is crucial to study how gender roles are depicted in Indonesian national tests, as these exams constitute a critical component of the Indonesian educational system. Until 2013, these exams were used to assess whether students were academically competent to graduate from high school. Thus, students spent most of their time studying for national tests by doing exercises from previous years' examination papers.

Materials and Method

Research Design

Eleven national tests consisting of 610 questions are analysed to determine the questions pertaining to gender. Following that, the questions are classified as gender-related questions or neutral questions. Gender-related questions are those that portray male and female names along with their attributes and roles. Some gender-related questions represent Indonesian patriarchal societies because they attach feminine traits to female names and masculine traits to male names. This can be seen from the way men are represented as lead characters, possess power to control money, and work professionally in the public sphere (Alrabaa cited in Blumberg, 2008). Some gender-related questions may also demonstrate equality between men and women, reflecting how both could have equal access to education, economy and social status. Meanwhile, neutral questions are those which do not include any names, such as questions related to natural science. Therefore, this research

analyses the occurrence of male and female names in talks and reading passages. The responsibilities assigned to the names establish gender representation, according to which men and women are assigned distinct roles in public and private spheres.

Materials and Method

The materials for this research are drawn from English national tests, notably those for junior high school from 1994 to 2004. At that time, all Indonesians were required to complete their formal education from primary school until junior high school.¹ The national examination is a standardised test in and of itself. According to Richard-Amato and Snow (2005), standardised exams are “crafted in such a way that their administration, scoring, and interpretation are consistent, or standard, across all contexts”. In Indonesia, the English national test during 1994–2004 was a mandatory test that every junior high school student should pass before they graduate.

National tests have frequently predefined requirements that must be met, as they are used in various locations. As a result, English national tests in all areas of Indonesia were typically the same or comparable, despite Indonesia instituting a decentralised government structure in 1998. Brown (2007) adds that all tests must be practicable, valid and dependable. He defines appropriate as being cost-effective, time-efficient, and simple to administer, to report its score, and to interpret (Brown, 2007). Meanwhile, consistency and reliance may be used to determine reliability of the test result (Brown, 2007). It means that the tests should yield the same findings regardless of when they are conducted.

Next, there are usually three types of validity to refer: which are content validity, face validity and construct validity. This article will solely

¹ In Indonesia, primary school is usually completed in 6 years, while junior high school is 3 years. For junior high school, the students can choose to study at SMP (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama*) which is formal education under the Ministry of Education or MTs (*Madrasah Tsanawiyah*) which are managed by the Ministry of Religion. Both students at SMP and MTs at that time were required to take the same standardised national tests including English.

discuss the content validity hypothesis. According to Brown (2007), a content-valid test should balance the general knowledge tested in the examinations and the knowledge of test-takers. Even though English tests assess language skills, the tests use general knowledge to provide the context. For instance, to assess reading skills, the test-makers can use readings related to general knowledge such as culture and everyday life. Therefore, Indonesian English tests' content is expected to be valid, for the general knowledge in the tests should be relevant to the test-takers' general knowledge. In this regard, the general knowledge should reflect the test-takers' cultural identity.

Related to this, Richard-Amato and Snow provide the notion of content and conceptual bias, which challenges assessments that focus exclusively on mainstream society's knowledge and beliefs. Instead, they propose that evaluations must reflect the test-takers' most acquainted culture (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). To illustrate, a reading test entails the reading of texts and the completion of various questions. According to the principle, optimal reading material should address the test takers' most pressing concerns. Thus, the reading texts should not primarily discuss irrelevant culture, but instead represent the test-takers' knowledge and ideals. This research then examines whether the English national tests reflect gender ideology based on the test-takers' relevant culture.

This article evaluated national tests items from 1994 to 2004, which were based on the 1994 curriculum. This period was chosen to examine how gender roles were portrayed during the New Order era and following its fall in 1998. It will be an added point to see how the image of gender ideology under the same curriculum varies through different reigns using the content validity principle.

Results and Analysis

English Examination Analysis Year 1994–1998

From 1994 to 1998, English national tests were based on the 1994 curriculum. The 1994 curriculum was adopted to replace the ten-year-old 1984 curriculum. This curriculum was essentially a rewrite of its

predecessor. This curriculum reflected New Order gender ideology since the dictatorship made a concerted effort to promote masculine hegemony. In other words, women were commonly regarded as having a lower status than men. Men also had the privilege to work in the public sphere, while women had to attend to domestic chores.

In the 1994 tests, there were 18 of 50 gender-related questions. The questions included family, hobbies, national heroes, employment, education and male-female personality. Both female and male names were used in topics related to school and assignments. However, only male characters appeared as national heroes, such as Ki Hadjar Dewantara. The same was reflected in the activities conducted in the public domain, which male names heavily dominated. Meanwhile, female names were given to feminine activities, such as cooking and child care. Below is the example of a passage in the 1994 test which depicted gender representation because female students were expected to deal with cooking activities. Meanwhile, male students should take care of tents, considering they were expected to be physically stronger than the girls.

CAMPING

Camping is a good way of spending a holiday away from home. It is cheap, and it is a lot of fun. You are free to go anywhere you please, and it is a great pleasure to be able to sleep under the stars.

Next week is a holiday. The students of III A plan to go camping in Cibubur. Now they are discussing their plan.

“Where can we get the tents?” Fitri asked.

“Everyone should bring their own bedding, a change of clothing and a set of eating utensils. The bedding should be light and warm and give you enough protection against the damp ground,” Allan explained.

“Besides a change of clothing. I believe you also need a sweater or a jacket. It may be cold at night,” Tuti said.

“How about food?” Fadli asked

“It’s fun to cook our own food. Why don’t you bring the cooking utensils, girls? I think you should try to prepare simple dishes in one pan. Then we will only need to carry a few utensils.”

“All right.” *Tuti said. “We’ll be responsible for the food. Will you take care of the tents, boys?”*

“O.k.,” the boys said. They all look forward to the holiday.
(EBTANAS, 1994)

Forty percent of the questions on the 1995 test are gender-related questions. The reading and discussion materials covered the same topics as the previous year. The dominance of male names was still palpable. For instance, the reading text on national heroes focused on men. Also, male names were portrayed to have excellent personalities, yet no question about personality was asked of women. Below is one of the illustrations.

EBTANAS-SMP-95-24

Syukri is ... boy because he always tells the truth.

- A. an honest
- B. an unkind
- C. a naughty
- D. a stubborn

(EBTANAS, 1995)

Other questions vividly reflected how women were responsible for food. Meanwhile, men were portrayed as being in the public domain, specifically in sport activities.

EBTANAS-SMP-95-47

Complete the following sentence based on the situation.

Mira usually buys some rice at the market. Two days ago ... at the supermarket.

(EBTANAS, 1995)

EBTANAS-SMP-95-48

Rearrange the following sentences into a good paragraph.

- His favourite sport is football.
- Deny is a healthy boy who likes sports very much.
- He usually practises it there on Sundays.
- So he joined a youth football club in Senayan.

(EBTANAS, 1995)

In the 1996 test, 17 out of 50 questions were gender-related questions. In this test, the topic of hobbies was omitted. Men and boys continued to dominate the discussion of employment and schools. Meanwhile, questions about household activities, such as cooking and dishwashing, were assigned to women and girls. While one woman was listed as a national hero, the question only contained one phrase compared to the extended reading that depicted a male hero in the previous year's test. Below are the examples of questions which associated mothers with household chores.

EBTANAS-SMP-96-35

My mother needs a knife ... meat.

- A. to bring
- B. to put
- C. to cook
- D. to cut

(EBTANAS, 1996)

EBTANAS-SMP-96-43

Mrs. Kardi : There are many dirty plates in the kitchen. Mirna ...?

Mirna : Yes, of course. *Please have a rest, Mother. You look very tired.*

Mrs. Kardi : Thank you, dear.

- A. would you throw them away
- B. could you put them in the cupboard

- C. could you wash them, please
 - D. would you bring them here
- (EBTANAS, 1996)

In 1997, the English examination had the lowest gender-related questions, with just 15 out of 50 questions. While the topics were the same as in past years' tests, one question mentioned a lady who worked in a factory. It is an intriguing finding because it corresponds to the dual roles indicated in the 1978 GBHN. In the 1998 test, 44 percent of the questions were gender-related questions. For example, one reading was particularly similar to the previous tests in which female students were portrayed as dealing with cooking activities. Meanwhile, male students were given roles as leaders and set up the tents for the whole group.

Last weekend the girl scouts and the boy scouts had a 'Persami' activity outside their school. They left for the woods at five in the morning. After a long drive they arrived at the woods and found a good camping site.

"Let's set up our tents here," said the leader. Then they started to work. They needed a pole, some rope and nails for each tent. In a short time the tents are ready and they put a small flag on top of each tent.

The girls made a fire and cooked their lunch while the boys were busy working. As soon as the lunch was ready, they immediately started to eat. Of course it was a very simple dish but a very good lunch for them.

After a little rest the leader blew his whistle and all the girl scouts and the boy scouts gathered around to start their 'Persami' program.

(EBTANAS, 1998)

Additionally, the topics expanded and included female personalities and interests. The lengthy reading portion in the 1998 test was devoted to discussing a notable male athlete: Muhammad Ali.

Specific tools, such as agricultural tools, were also portrayed as male items. Meanwhile, some questions discussed the roles of mothers and female interest in fashion and partying. These clearly illustrate the psychological differences between masculine men and feminine women. *Analyses of English Examinations from 1999 to 2004*

After the collapse of the New Order, the 1994 curriculum continued to be implemented until 2004. Thus, from 1999 to 2004, the same curriculum was utilized to develop six national tests which comprised gender-related questions. There were 48 to 56 percent gender-related questions of the 60 questions.

In the 1999 test, female and male names were found in 25 out of 60 questions. These 25 questions covered a variety of themes, including shopping, sports, hobbies, careers, family duties and holidays. On one hand, female names dominated shopping and family care. For instance, in one of the passages, a girl was supposed to look after her sick mother. On the other hand, male names predominated sports and jobs. The 1999 test retained conventional gender roles which reflected societal norms as shown below.

EBTANAS-SMP-99-27

Ary : Why didn't you come with, us to the Safari
Park yesterday?

Mary : My mother was seriously ill and I had to stay,
home to be with her

Ani : ... I hope she will get better soon.

- A. That's great
- B. That's wonderful
- C. Thank' you for that
- D. I am sorry to hear that.

(EBTANAS, 1999)

EBTANAS-SMP-99-35

Chandra is having a talk with Dani under a tree.

Chandra : Don, can you tell me the names of some farming tools?

Doni : Of course, there are some tools we should know for example, a hoe, a plow, a spade, a sickle, etc.

Chandra : How do we use them?

Doni : Well, to dig a hole, to make a canal or to irrigate the plants we can use a hoe and a spade.

Chandra : What are the plow and the sickle for?

Doni : We can use a sickle to cut plants, grass or bushes. If we want to plant paddy, we should till the soil with a plow.

Chandra : What should we do to keep the plants free from pests?

Doni : We should spray them with pesticides. We need a pest sprayer.

(EBTANAS, 1999)

The English test in 2000 had 29 gender-related questions out of 60 questions. The topics were identical to those from the previous year. Jobs and family duties were given greater weight in this evaluation than in other areas. The passages included references to a sailor, a bellboy and a laundry maid. Male names were given to sailors and bellboys. Meanwhile, the laundry girl was given a female name. When it came to family duties, the mother and father roles were critical. According to one passage, the father had to earn money to support the family. Meanwhile, several texts reflected a mother's concern for her children. Additionally, daughters were more likely to appear with their mothers than their fathers.

EBTANAS-SMP-00-08

Joni : Where does Mr. Suryanto go?

Jono : He goes to the harbor. He works in a ship, and often goes abroad for months.

Joni : What does he do?

Jono : He is a ...

- A. doctor
- B. sailor
- C. tailor
- D. policeman

(EBTANAS, 2000)

EBTANAS-SMP-00-35

Tina : Is the rice cooker brand-new?

Mother : Yes. Your father gave it to me as a birthday present. It's Japanese made. What do you think of it?

Tina : ... I like the colour

- A. It's quite nice
- B. It's too heavy
- C. It costs too much
- D. It's hard to use.

(EBTANAS, 2000)

In the 2001 test, 48 percent of questions were gender-related questions. The topics were identical to those covered in the 1999 and 2000 tests. The test mentioned four jobs, three of which were for men: farmer, employee and sailor, and one for a woman: secretary. Although secretary is a position that is frequently associated with female characteristics such as neatness, organisation, and inferiority to the male employer, the line between home and professional spheres is bridged. Therefore, this job allowed women to escape the domestic sphere.

UAS-SMP-01-45

Mr. Alwi : How does the new secretary do her job?

Mr. Iman : She is a good secretary, she always does everything ...

- A. slowly
- B. strongly
- C. fat
- D. well

(EBTANAS, 2001)

Mira's mother wants to make a dress for Mira.
She needs Mira's help.
Mira : What will you do, Mom?
Mother : I want to make a dress for you.
Mira : It's wonderful.
Mother : So help me, please.
Mira : What can I do for you, Mom?
Mother : Get me the scissors over there, a needle,
green thread and a tape measure.
Mira : Do you need a zipper and pins, too?
Mother : Oh, yes, I forget to buy the zipper.
There are still some pins in the drawer of the
sewing machine.
Will you buy a zipper for me?
Mira : I will, Mom?

(EBTANAS, 2001)

The percentage of gender-related questions in the 2002 test was higher than in prior years. Thirty four of the 60 questions were gender-related questions. While the general themes remained the same as in past years, a scientific knowledge section was included. Both male and female names were included in scientific knowledge questions such as those about the environment. Additionally, question 37 depicted a father inquiring about his daughter's future career as a news anchor. Those questions reflected more opportunities for women in the public sphere, as women were shown as individuals who possessed broad knowledge and could work outside the home. It implied how the rigid boundary of male and female segregation had started to be crossed. However, many issues remained moulded by New Order gender ideology, particularly those concerning the mother's role.

EBTANAS-SMP-02-37

- Father : What do you want to be when you grow up, dear?
- Daughter : Well, dad, I want to be a news presenter in a radio broadcast .
My voice is not too bad, is it?
- Father : No, dear. But as a presenter you must have ... a good voice ... Good English.
- Daughter : I will improve my English
- A. neither - nor
B. either - or
C. not only - but also
D. but also - not only

(EBTANAS, 2002)

In the 2003 test, there were 29 gender-related questions. Additionally, themes such as shopping, hobbies, family duties, and family activities appeared. For all family activities, the emphasis was given to the critical role of the mother in caring for her children. For instance, the dialogue below described how a son told his father about his sore throat. However, instead of immediately taking his son to a doctor, the father asked the mother to do so.

- Son : Father, I have a sore throat. I cannot swallow the food.
- Father : Have you taken medicine?
- Son : Yes, but it doesn't get better.
- Father : Now you should go to a doctor.
- Son : No, I am afraid of a doctor.
- Father: But why?
- Son : I don't want to be injected.
- Father : But you have to.
- Now ask Mother to take you to a doctor.

(UAN, 2003)

In the 2004 test, 50 percent of the questions were gender-related questions. The themes were the same as the previous year, emphasising the role of mothers in the house. Meanwhile, men were portrayed as working in the public sphere as shown below.

Read the following text to answer questions 4 to 6!

Black Beauty

Farmer Gray was the kindest master in the world. He was proud of me, and called me Black Beauty. I had a white spot on my forehead and one white foot. He trained me to pull a carriage. Then I learn to wear a saddle and carry a rider on my back.

One day, Farmer Gray said, "A good horse like you do not live on a *farm*. So you will be going to live with Squire Gordon and his family.¹" I was very sad to leave my mother and my home.

However, when I saw my masters I knew I would be happy with them. They lived in a big mansion and welcomed me warmly. Mrs. Gordon was pale and ill, but she smiled when she saw me.

The groom who looked after the stables was John Manly. He loved horses. He introduced me to Merry legs, the children's pony, Ginger, and old mare. She was not a bad horse, but had been ill-treated in the past.

Taken from: Bulletin Intensive

(UAN, 2004)

Discussion

Comparing English Tests Prior to and Following 1998

The first finding of this study is the difference in the proportion of gender-related questions between the 1994–1998 national tests (hereafter referred to as “before 1998”) and the 1999–2004 national tests (hereafter referred to as “after 1998”). It is impacted by the variety of questions and their overall number. Before 1998, there were five English tests each of which consisted of 50 questions with 45 *multiple choice* questions and 5 non-multiple-choice questions, such as *writing* and *fill in the blank*. Only 40–44 percent of the questions were gender-related questions. This proportion was relatively low compared to tests administered after 1998. There were six tests with 60 multiple-choice questions of which 48–56 percent were gender-related questions. It is quite acceptable, given multiple-choice questions were usually gender-related questions. Additionally, national tests administered after 1998 had more questions than tests administered prior to 1998. Thus, the

likelihood of gender-related questions being included in post-1998 tests was fairly high.

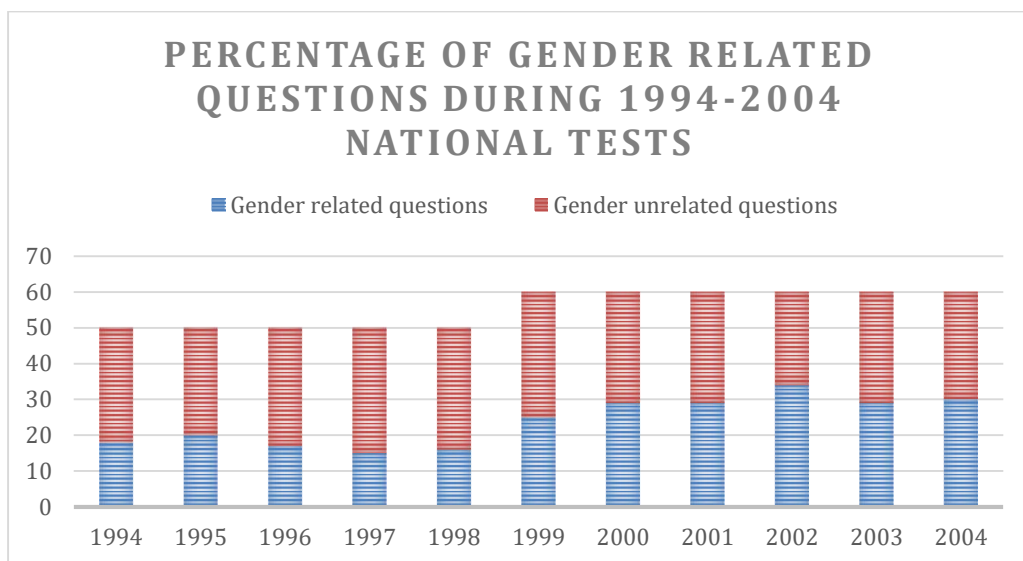


Figure 1. Percentage of Gender-related Questions

As seen by the figure above, almost half of the questions were gender-related questions. According to Brown (2007), national assessments are often the same or very similar across areas, ensuring that students across the country receive the same sort of national examinations which have gender-related questions. Most readings and questions with male names portrayed masculine traits such as being capable of working in the farm, fixing tents, and playing outdoor sports. Meanwhile, female names were represented with feminine traits specifically to handle household chores and take care of their children/family. These masculine and feminine traits persisted in all 11 national tests; for instance, men were never associated with cooking. This finding demonstrates that patriarchal society is represented in education.

The second finding is related to the topics included in national examinations before and following 1998. The themes covered in the tests before and after 1998 were typically the same, except for male national heroes and male personalities. It was important to note that certain

themes related to male domination were omitted from tests after 1998. This finding supports Robinson's argument that the New Order era encouraged masculine hegemony. As a result, the concept of masculine hegemony was bolstered by male national heroes and wonderful male personalities in the tests before 1998. However, after 1998, the discourse of male domination started to decline.

The third finding is the significant difference in the frequency of female names appearing on national tests before and after 1998. Before 1998, female characters were uncommon in reading passages. Most names in the reading materials were male dominated. Except in 1996, Table 1 illustrates how female names were less frequent than male names before 1998. It reflects the practices within Indonesian society in which men dominated the discourse during the New Order era. In comparison, female names appeared more often in English tests conducted after 1998. The increased inclusion of female characters might be seen to elevate women in the dialogue.

Table 1. *Frequency of Female and Male Names*

| Year of National Test | Frequency of female names | Frequency of male names |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Before 1998 | | |
| 1994 | 18 | 27 |
| 1995 | 8 | 15 |
| 1996 | 11 | 10 |
| 1997 | 8 | 23 |
| 1998 | 12 | 12 |
| Before 1998 Total | 57 | 87 |
| After 1998 | | |
| 1999 | 18 | 16 |
| 2000 | 13 | 19 |
| 2001 | 20 | 33 |
| 2002 | 27 | 24 |
| 2003 | 29 | 24 |
| 2004 | 20 | 27 |
| After 1998 Total | 127 | 143 |
| Total | 184 | 230 |

The fourth finding is the shift in gender representation after 1998. In post-1998 examinations, female names were given more opportunities to work in the public sphere. For example, only one woman worked as an athlete and secretary before 1998. Meanwhile, five women worked as secretaries and athletes after 1998. Both before and after 1998, male names were assigned a wide range of professions such as farmer, fishermen, dentist, doctor and teacher, which allowed them to enter the public sphere and engage with others socially. While female jobs were not as diverse and as significant as male jobs, those female jobs demonstrated a shift in gender representation which used to be dominated by men. Instead of focusing on domestic activities, women started to be given a role in public life.

Table 2. Female and Male Roles Before 1998

| Female roles | Frequency | Male roles | Frequency |
|------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| Domestic Sphere | | | |
| Housewife | 1 | Son | 3 |
| Mother | 5 | Father | 1 |
| Daughter | 2 | | |
| Public Sphere | | | |
| Student | 6 | Student | 9 |
| Athlete | 1 | Athlete | 3 |
| MC | 1 | MC | 2 |
| Nurse | 1 | Teacher | 2 |
| Secretary | 1 | Hero | 2 |
| Factory Worker | 1 | Actors | 2 |
| | | Farmer | 1 |
| | | Dentist | 1 |
| | | Physicist | 1 |
| | | Pilot | 1 |
| | | Entrepreneur | 1 |
| | | Driver | 1 |
| | | Pianist | 2 |
| | | Electrician | 1 |
| | | Room boy | 1 |
| | | Programmer | 3 |

Table 3. Female and Male Roles After 1998

| Female roles | Frequency | Male roles | Frequency |
|------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| Domestic Sphere | | | |
| Daughter | 10 | Son | 6 |
| Mother | 11 | Father | 4 |
| | | Uncle | 3 |
| Public Sphere | | | |
| Student | 4 | Student | 7 |
| Athlete | 5 | Athlete | 5 |
| Secretary | 2 | Actors | 4 |
| Teacher | 1 | Teacher | 2 |
| | | Farmer | 1 |
| | | Driver | 1 |
| | | Doctor | 1 |
| | | Tour guide | 2 |
| | | News anchor | 1 |
| | | Fishermen | 3 |
| | | Singer | 1 |
| | | Boss | 4 |
| | | Factory worker | 2 |
| | | Seller | 1 |

Despite female inclusion in the public sphere, female names were still strongly associated with maternal and domestic duties. For instance, a mother was the sole parent shown to be responsible for the children's food, clothing, health and possessions. Additionally, daughters were more likely to appear with their mothers than their fathers. It reinforced the feminine stereotype of Indonesian women because fathers were always absent from home and childcare. However, after 1998, the presence of "father" within the family became more frequent. A father was portrayed to have more conversations with their children although he was not tasked to take care of them. It is certainly a progress within the household affairs.

According to content validity theory, English national tests in Indonesia are valid in terms of gender depiction. The tests did not show content and conceptual bias, for they depicted gender knowledge and social values when the tests were made. To give a picture, English tests

before 1998 demonstrated male hegemony which was strongly shown in the real discourse during the New Order era. Meanwhile, the English tests after 1998 showed some shifts towards better gender representation which were also seen in actual daily life. Thus, it can be stated that within the same curriculum but different regimes, gender representation has begun to shift.

Conclusion

We would like to remark that Indonesian national tests during 1994–2004 are content-valid because they reflect gender ideology in Indonesia when the tests were made. Between 1994 and 2004, there were noteworthy changes in the way gender was represented in Indonesian English national tests. Gender equality on national tests illustrated progress since women assumed public posts and fathers started to be present in the house. While national exams from 1999 to 2004 continued to convey a message of gender ideology in which women were dominant in the domestic sphere, it cannot be argued that New Order ideology lasted beyond 1998. National tests administered after 1998 did not accurately represent New Order gender ideology since gender representation has started to shift progressively.

The findings of this study indicate that Indonesian society is not uniformly hostile to gender equality. The shifts in women's roles demonstrate that the concept of gender equality has taken hold in Indonesia. Numerous facets of gender equality philosophy, which originated in Western civilisation, must, however, be altered to meet Indonesian culture. As a result, it may take some time for men to be accepted and accustomed to the domestic sphere in Indonesian society.

As the authors, we were aware that this is not a flawless work. Several aspects of this work need further analysis. For instance, future studies should incorporate the analysis from assessments administered after 2004. Moreover, as the national tests are no longer the main requirement to pass high school, further study can analyse other primary education tools which will be significant in Indonesian education. The

decentralisation system must also be taken into account because it gives more power for local authorities in the education system.

Following 2004, gender representation in national examinations may show progress or even regress. According to Utomo et al (2009: 2), “formal education system ... provides an excellent opportunity to promote gender equality and rights among the rising generations”. The current education system can better enhance the concept of gender equality because it is expected to be free from the New Order’s control. Therefore, the current education system would be a potential medium to instil the concept of gender equality which can be practised by the students in real life.

To conclude, the novelty of our research lies in its focus on a largely unexplored area: the representation of gender in Indonesian national tests. Previous studies have seldom scrutinized this area, making our analysis a pioneering effort. Moreover, our study is useful as it aims to raise awareness among test makers about the subtle biases that can infiltrate test content. This awareness is crucial for developing more equitable assessments. Lastly, our research highlights the slow progress in gender representation from 1994–2004, underlining a critical area for both academic study and practical reform in test development.

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