

Students and Teachers Perception About Gender Equality and Human Rights in English Textbook (Pakistan)

Afia Mahmood¹, Amina Shahzadi² and Kiran Anwar³

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Abstract

Although earlier research highlighted the gender representations in ELT textbooks, it did not address how students and teachers view gender equality and the representation of human rights. This study, therefore, is designed to understand English language students' and teachers' perceptions about the inclusion of themes of gender equality and human rights in the English textbook of the 10th grade of the Punjab textbook board. Students' views were probed by means of a survey, and an interview was used to collect data from teachers. The findings revealed that a significant majority of the students believe that topics related to the role of women and the rights and responsibilities of citizens should be included in English textbooks. They also recommended to include topics related to gender equality and human rights in the textbooks. Some of the students agreed that topics related to famous women and male leaders, showing different familial relations of men and women, and both performing outdoor tasks are present in English in the main content, activities, and in the form of images. However, they were either unable to provide any names of the units containing these topics or provided the names of the units from the 9th-grade textbook. Similarly, most of the teachers mentioned that representation of women is limited in the English textbook of 9th grade and the presence of women and their social roles are completely ignored in the 10th-grade textbook. Teachers argued that it is essential to talk about the role of women in the textbook to encourage women's participation, acknowledge their achievements, and promote equality and respect towards women.

Keywords: English Language, Textbooks, Gender Equality, Perception.

Introduction

Textbooks have always been the most important resource material for students and teachers. In most cases, textbooks are the only material that students consult on a particular subject. Georgescu et al. (2007) rightly consider textbooks 'the most visible part of the curriculum' and 'authoritative sources for the transfer of knowledge and social values.'

In the last two decades of the 20th century, the representation of gender in ELT textbooks has been the subject of extensive content and linguistic analysis, which has revealed several sexist elements in both texts and images. However, there are very few studies (for example, Kızılaslan, 2010; Agha & Shaikh, 2023) conducted to explore students' and teachers' perceptions about the representation of genders in ELT textbooks. It is important to explore both students' and teachers' opinions about gender representation and human rights in textbooks to understand their awareness and sensitivity

¹Lecturer in English, University of Education, Bank Road Campus, Lahore. Email: afiamahmood@ue.edu.pk

²Assistant Professor English, University of Education, Multan Campus, Email: amina.shahzadi@ue.edu.pk

³Assistant Professor Education, University of Education, Bank Road Campus, Lahore.
Email: kiran.shahzadi@ue.edu.pk



towards these important issues. This study, therefore, is designed to understand English language students' and teachers' perceptions about the inclusion of themes of gender equality and human rights in English textbooks of the 10th Grade of the Punjab Textbook Board in Pakistan.

The study aims to address the following research questions:

- What are students' and teachers' opinions about the inclusion of themes of gender equality and human rights in English textbooks?
- What are students' and teachers' perceptions about the representation of gender equality and human rights in the current 10th-grade English textbook?
- What are students' and teachers' suggestions about the inclusion of topics related to gender equality and human rights in English textbooks?

Literature Review

Gender representation in textbooks is an important area of research because studies have shown that gender-biased textbooks obstruct gender equality in a number of ways. For many years, scholars have studied the way that gender is portrayed in textbooks in a variety of contexts (e.g. Bachore, 2022). In Pakistan, different studies have explored the issue of gender representation in different texts books (e.g. Ali & Hussain, 2019). Mattu and Hussain (2004), for example, conducted a semiotic analysis of the language and images used in the representation of females and males in secondary school textbooks developed by the Punjab Textbook Board. They found that students in Pakistan are exposed to textbooks which reflect strong gender bias.

In another study, Ram (2008) used content analysis to analyze gender representation in primary school textbooks used in public sector schools in Pakistan. The study concluded that although the current education policy aims to discourage gender inequalities in the education system, primary school textbooks are not free from gender biases and suggest a gap between policy and its implementation on gender issues.

Additionally, Mahmood et al. (2022) examined the English language textbook of grade 10th in Punjab Textbook to analyze the theme of gender equality. The findings highlighted that women have not been adequately represented in the textbook. The study further found that as compared to male characters, female characters in the textbooks are typically observed to be occupied with indoor pursuits like homework, studying, painting, reading aloud, watching television or movies, and so on.

Hussain et al. (2023) examined how gender was portrayed in the recently designed English textbooks used in the government schools of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province of Pakistan. Relying on a mixed-method approach, the study examined two textbooks, one from grade 7 and the other from grade 8. Textual analysis was used to gather, examine, and interpret the non-linguistic (invisibility and association of roles with males and females) and linguistic (nouns, noun phrases, pronouns, verbs, verb phrases, adjectives, and adjective phrases linked with male and female constructs) data. The findings supported the androcentric gender representation found in English textbooks, which primarily link females to emotional, friendly, indoor, and dependent behaviors.

In one of the studies, Kızılaslan (2010) analyzed student teachers' perceptions of gendered texts in English language textbooks in Turkey. The analysis of the survey and focus group interviews concluded that the majority of student teachers in this study disregarded the gendered presuppositions in the texts and persisted in being primarily gender-blind, according to a detailed examination of their responses to gender-critical passages in ELT textbooks. The findings suggest significant ramifications for English language teacher education in Turkey. It specifically

highlights the pressing need for teacher educators to make ELT student instructors more sensitive to gender issues.

In Pakistan, Agha and Shaikh (2023) explored the opinions of ten secondary school teachers about how gender is portrayed in textbooks in Sindh province. The findings of the semi-structured interviews of teachers demonstrate that the majority of the teachers followed gender norms. Furthermore, they emphasized the necessity of textbook revisions because they believed that textbooks had a bigger impact on students. With a few notable exceptions, it is asserted that teachers are largely oblivious to the impact they have on students' perspectives. It is advised that the role of textbook utilization in the classroom be emphasized in teacher preparation programs. Despite a lot of research aiming to explore the representation of genders in ELT textbooks, there is still little research conducted to investigate teachers' and students' views of gender portrayal in ELT textbooks, specifically in Pakistan. Therefore, this study aims to investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of the representation of gender equality and human rights in English textbooks in Pakistan.

Methodology

Data was collected from students and teachers to examine their perceptions of gender equality and human rights in the 10th-grade English Textbook in Pakistan.

Student Participants

The questionnaire was used to collect data from students. The questionnaire consisted of Likert scale questions. Likert scale makes the presentation of means fundamental to have a vibe of direction of replies. Three hundred questionnaires were distributed to students of the 10th class in different government schools in Punjab, Pakistan. Two hundred ninety-four questionnaires were returned. Two hundred sixty-three students filled out the questionnaires. It was observed that some of the respondents left a few items blank purposefully to conceal the actuality of their opinion about the inclusion of topics such as religious minorities, transgender, or other communities. In the data set, 18 respondents lying under the outlier category, and 13 respondents were those who had half-filled out the questionnaires. So, the researcher excluded all such cases by following screening criteria. Table 1 presents the details of student participants according to gender. It shows that about 53% of student participants were female, and about 46-8 % were male.

Table 1: Total Number of Students Gender Wise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	123	46.8	46.8	46.8
	Female	140	53.2	53.2	100.0
	Total	263	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 presents the total number of students' participants according to public and private sector schools and highlights that more students' participants belong to private sector schools.

Table 2: Total Number of Students Sector Wise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Public	160	60.8	60.8	60.8
	Private	103	39.2	39.2	100.0
	Total	263	100.0	100.0	

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the questionnaire data. Descriptive statistics like means, and standard deviations of factors give an outline of the information. The normal separation from mean is reflected through standard deviation. Assuming most extreme perceptions are bunched around means, standard deviation will be low, and an exclusive expectation deviation reflects varieties in replies. These qualities let us know the scope of answers given by our respondents

Teacher Participants

The sample consisted of the teachers who taught English to 10th grade students of the recent session. 18 interviews were conducted. 9 female and 9 male teachers were selected from 7 different schools (names of the schools will be kept confidential as the participants agreed to give interviews on the condition of confidentiality). Teachers were briefed about the research and were given interview questions in advance so that they could think about the questions with reference to the English textbook of 10th grade. On the second visit, the teachers were interviewed. The interviews were audio recorded. Some of the teachers also preferred to get their interview recorded via phone call because of lack of free time during the school hours. The teachers and their administrators were presented the research participation incentive as a token of thanks to participate in this research.

The sample size of 18 teachers was selected because the data saturation started after 15 interviews. Guest et al. (2006) mention that data collection should continue until there are no new discoveries and it reaches the data saturation point. After the collection of data from the teachers, the interviews were transliterated and then translated in English language. The interviews have been analyzed using thematic analysis. The responses were analyzed via “Coding Process” i.e. the frequently appearing words, and phrases were given certain codes to handle and understand the qualitative data in a systematic way. This process was done with the help of NVivo software. The main themes were pre-decided in the semi-structured interview, however, the sub-themes emerged from the data. NVivo was used to explore data from different dimensions.

The semi-structured interviews consisted of question dealing with three research questions.

Data Analysis

Analysis and Findings of Students Questionnaire

Data Normality

Before proceeding with descriptive and inferential statistics data normality was assessed. By inspecting Shapiro-wilk test ($p > .05$), Histograms, Q-Q plots and box shows that the data set was approximately normally distributed for both the variables Gender and Sectors (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965; Razali & Wah, 2011). For male Shapiro-wilk test ($p = .20^*$), skewness of -0.14 ($SE = 0.13$) and kurtosis of 0.23 ($SE = 0.24$) and for female Shapiro-wilk test ($p = 0.064$), skewness of -0.26 ($SE = 0.17$) and Kurtosis of 0.074 ($SE = 0.31$) indicate normality.

Table 3: Tests of Normality (Gender)

Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Male	.052	123	.091	.982	123	.200*
Female	.076	140	.072	.980	140	.064

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

For Public sector Shapiro-wilk test with ($p = .09$) skewness of -0.142 ($SE = 0.19$) kurtosis of 0.22 ($SE = 0.64$), and for private sector skewness of -0.25 ($SE = 0.16$) kurtosis of 0.07 ($SE = 0.36$) with Shapiro-wilk test ($p = 0.07$) indicates that the data was approximately normally distributed.

Table 4: Tests of Normality (Sector)

Sector	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Public	.065	160	.093	.977	160	.090
Private	.069	103	.200*	.977	103	.070

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Students' Perceptions about Including Role of Women and Human Rights Themes in the Textbook

This section aims at analyzing students' perception about inclusion of themes of gender equality and human rights in textbook. The first two questions asked students opinion about including the role of women rights and also about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens in the textbook. The next three questions asked from students focused on whether the current textbook includes issues related to men, issues related to women, rights of women, rights of children, and rights of common citizens.

Table 5: Students' Perceptions about Including Role of Women and Human Rights Themes in the Textbook

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	S.D
Role of women in our society	54.0	31.1	8.0	4.2	2.7	1.70	0.97
Rights and responsibilities of citizens	40.7	41.8	10.6	4.9	1.9	1.86	0.93

The above table shows students' perception about the inclusion of different themes in English textbook. 85% of the respondents believe that there should be topics which emphasize and acknowledge the true role of women in society with mean = 1.70 and S.D = 0.97. While more than 80% of the respondents agreed that rights and responsibilities of citizens must be included with mean = 1.86 and S.D = 0.93. These findings are clearly illustrated in figure 1 below.

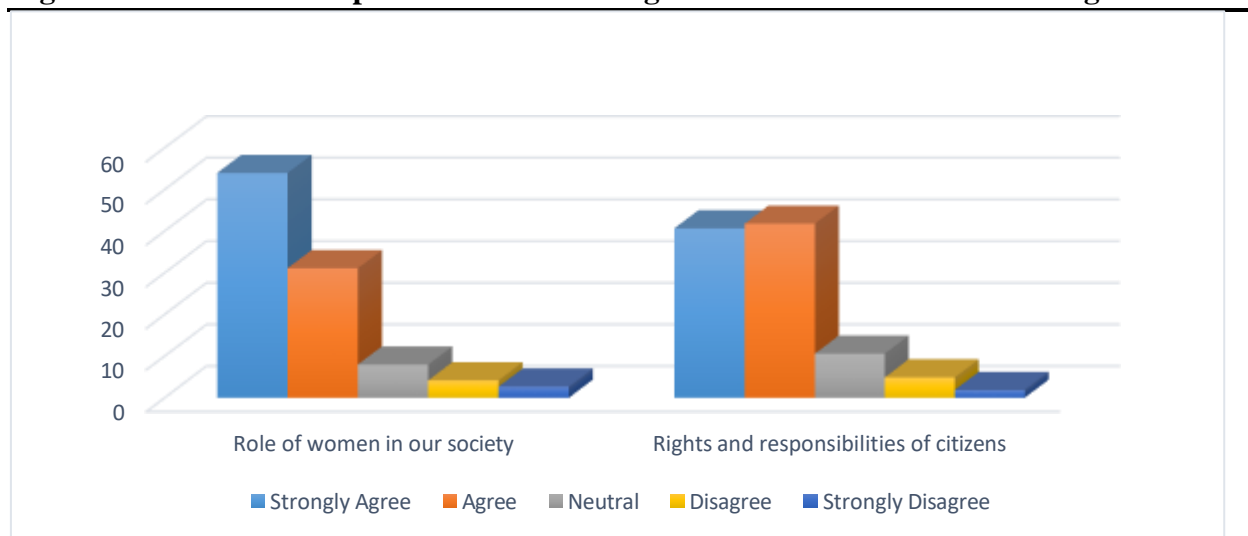
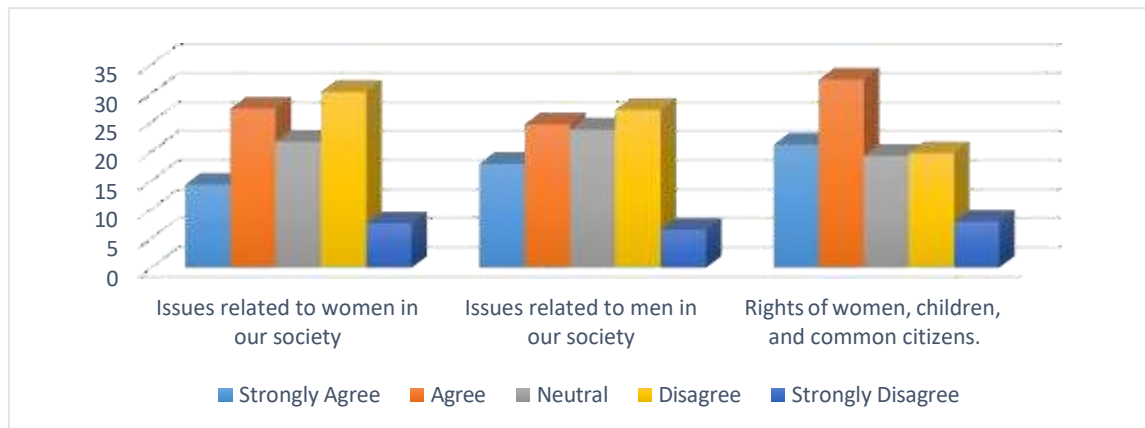
Figure 1: Students' Perceptions about Including Role of Women and Human Rights Themes

Table 6 further reveals students' perception about the presence of different themes such as gender equality and human rights in English textbook.

Table 6: Presence of Gender Equality and Human Rights Themes in the Current Textbook

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	S.D
Issues related to women in our society	14.3	27.4	21.7	30.3	7.6	2.41	1.23
Issues related to men in our society	17.9	24.7	23.8	27.2	6.5	2.76	1.18
Rights of women, children, and common citizens.	21.2	32.4	19.3	19.7	7.9	2.95	1.22

It is found that around 37% of the respondents believe that the topics related to the issues which are directly related to the women in our society are not included in the current textbook of English. While 41.7% students think that the current textbook is reflecting the issues related to women in the textbook. 42.6% of the respondents agreed that there is content which creates awareness about the issues related to men in society. While, 33.7% disagreed with the notion that textbook explores the issues related to men in our society. 53.6% of respondents agreed that content makes the students aware about rights of women, children, and common citizens. These findings are illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2: Presence of Gender Equality and Human Rights Themes in the Current Textbook

Presence of the Themes of Gender Equality and Human Rights in English Textbook

This section aimed at investigating students' perceptions about the presence of the themes of gender equality and Human rights in the units of English textbook. It presented a few statements (related to gender equality and human rights) with five options against each statement. The options were 1) overall idea is there 2) examples are there 3) image is given 4) mentioned in the activities 5) not mentioned at all. If students believed that a particular topic was present in the textbook, they had to choose where it was according to their knowledge of the textbook. In addition to this, students were also asked to mention the name of the unit if they thought a particular topic was present in the textbook. table 7 reveals students' perception about the presence of different themes in English textbook.

Table 7: Presence of the themes of gender equality and human rights in the units of English Textbook

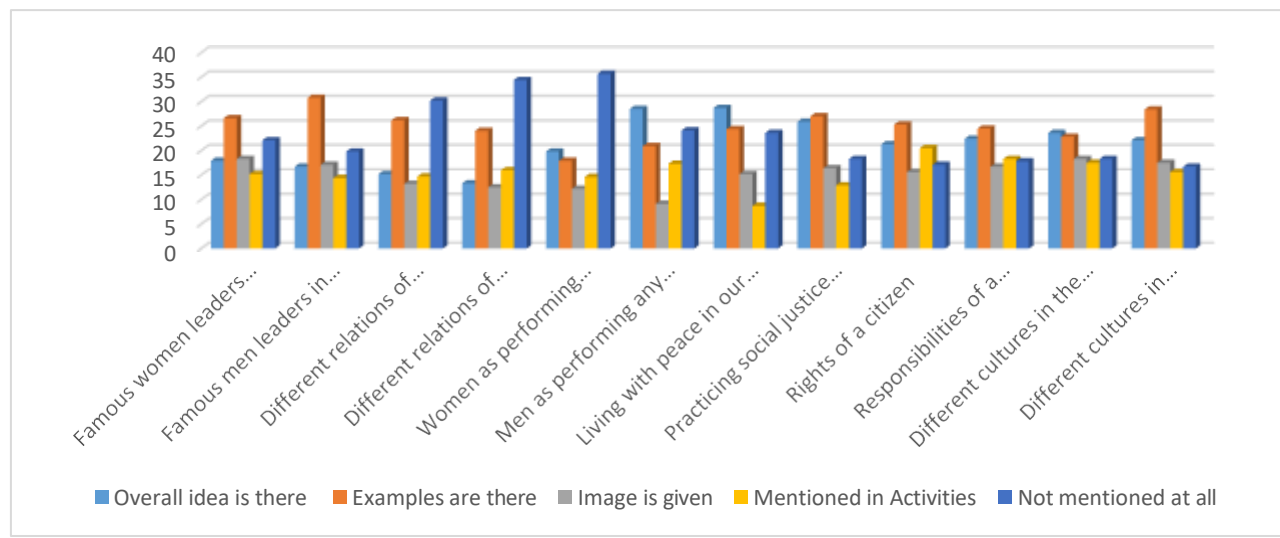
	Overall idea is there %	Examples are there %	Image is Given %	Mentioned in activities %	Not mentioned at all %	Mean	S.D
Famous women leaders in our society	17.9	15.2	18.3	22.12	26.2	2.97	1.42
Famous men leaders in our society	16.7	30.8	17.1	14.4	19.8	2.88	1.39
Different relations of women in our society	15.2	26.2	13.2	14.7	30.2	3.17	1.42
Different relations of men in our society	13.3	24.0	12.5	16.0	34.4	3.34	1.48
Women as performing any outdoor tasks	19.8	17.9	12.2	14.6	35.7	3.29	1.52
Men as performing any outdoor tasks	28.5	20.9	9.12	17.3	24.1	2.75	1.53
Living with peace in	28.7	24.4	15.2	8.7	23.6	2.71	1.44

our society								
Practicing social justice in our society	25.9	27.0	16.4	12.9	18.3	2.87	1.40	
Rights of a citizen	21.3	25.3	15.6	20.5	17.1	2.84	1.42	
Responsibilities of a citizen	22.4	24.5	16.7	18.3	17.8	2.81	1.43	
Different cultures in the world	23.6	22.8	18.3	17.5	18.3	2.75	1.39	
Different cultures in Pakistan	22.1	28.4	17.5	15.6	16.7	2.85	1.53	

Table 7 indicates that 26.6 % of respondents believe that examples about famous women leaders of our society are not mentioned at all the in textbook, while others believe that representation of women leaders is there in the activities (22.1), in the images (18.3), in the examples (15.8), or the overall concept is there (17.9). Most of the students mentioned the unit of “Hazrat Asma (RA) in the slot where they had to give unit name if according to them, a topic was present in the textbook while some also left this slot blank saying that they do not remember the unit name. 30.8 % were of the view that examples are there about famous men leaders in English textbook while 19.8% believe that there is no content that mentions famous men leaders in the textbook. Those who agreed that the examples are there mentioned the unit name “Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) an Embodiment of Justice”, “Faithfulness”, and “Try Again” (poem). 30.2% and 34. 4% claim that there is no content which creates awareness about different relations of women and men respectively. 35.7% believe that there is no content that shows women performing any outdoor activities.

Furthermore, 23.6% believe that content which promotes living with peace in the society is not present in the book. The students mentioned the unit name of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), Faithfulness, and the poem Peace, while most of the students believed that it is present in the examples within the content as well as in the activities. Similarly, most of the students (more than 80%) believe that practices related to social justice are emphasized in textbook, while only 18.1% think that practices related social justice are not present in the textbook. Most of the students believe that the textbook informs them about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens either in the form of examples, activities, or through images. Only 17% students believe that rights and responsibilities of the students are not present in the current textbook. Most of the students also believe that book contains content related to national as well as international culture.

These findings are clearly illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3: Presence of the Themes of Gender Equality and Human Rights in English Textbook

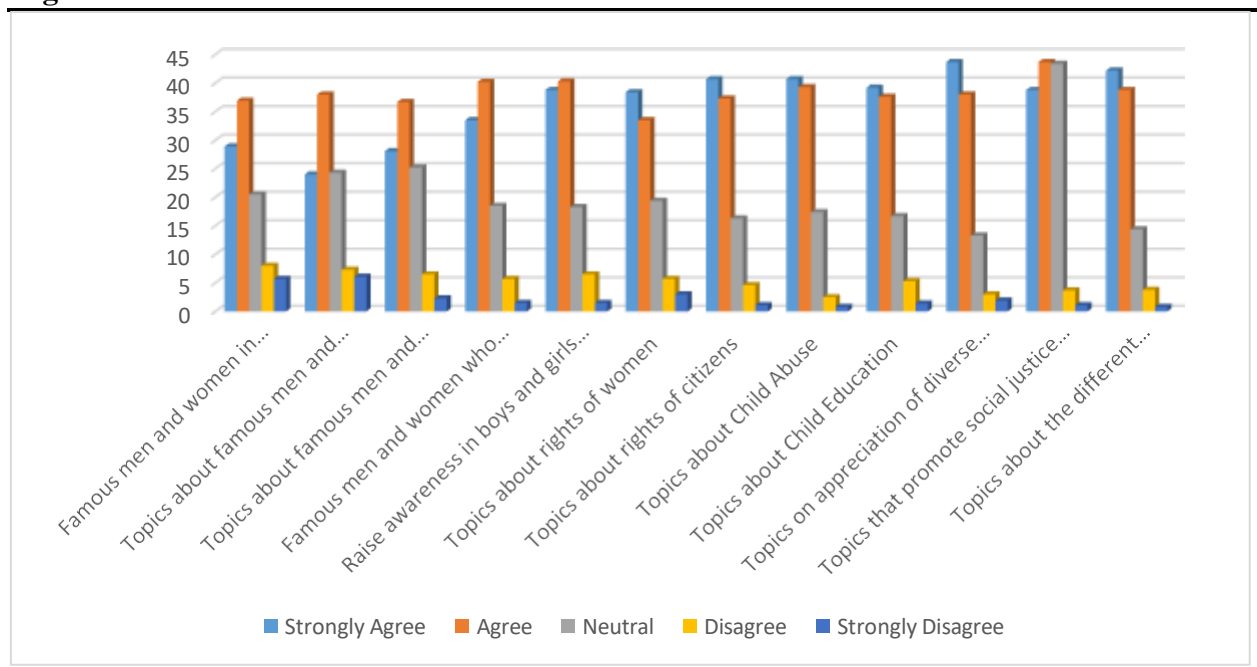
Following section aims to take students' suggestions about the inclusion of topics related to theme of gender equality and human rights. Students were asked to rate the topic which they want to be included in the textbook of 10th grade. Table 8 presents data on students' suggestions about the inclusion of different topics related to the themes of gender equality and human rights.

Table 8: Students' suggestions about the Inclusion of Topics Related to Themes of Gender

	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %	Mean	S.D
Famous men and women in Olympics/sports	28.9	36.9	20.5	8.0	5.7	2.25	1.12
Topics about famous men and women Scientists	24.0	38.0	24.3	7.3	6.1	2.34	1.10
Topics about famous men and women artists	28.1	36.7	25.2	6.5	2.3	2.16	1.13
Famous men and women who contributed for society	33.5	40.2	18.5	5.7	1.5	2.02	.951
Raise awareness in boys and girls about harassment	38.8	40.3	18.3	6.5	1.5	1.91	0.943
Topics about rights of women	38.4	33.5	19.4	5.7	3.0	2.02	1.04
Topics about rights of citizens	40.7	37.3	16.3	4.6	1.1	1.88	0.912
Topics about Child Abuse	40.7	39.3	17.4	2.5	0.8	1.86	0.85
Topics about Child Education	39.2	37.6	16.7	5.3	1.4	1.83	0.84
Topics on appreciation of diverse cultures in Pakistan and in the world	43.7	38.0	13.3	3.0	1.9	1.92	0.73
Topics that promote social justice through real examples from Pakistan	38.8	43.7	43.4	3.7	1.1	1.81	0.32
Topics about the different communities	42.2	38.8	14.4	3.8	0.8	1.85	0.84

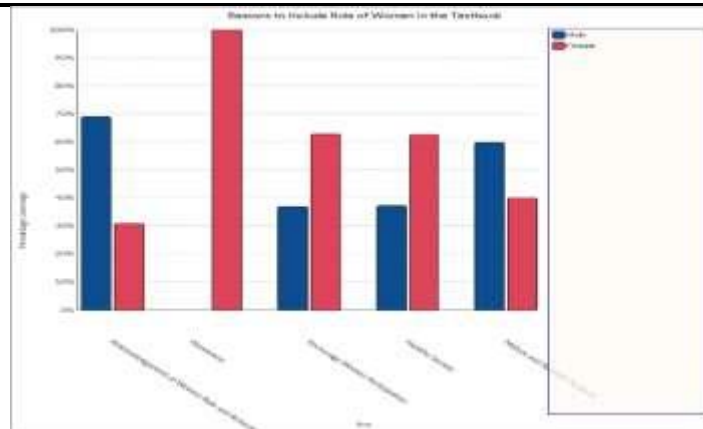
A large number of students recommended topics related to human rights to be included in the textbook. However, the number of students who recommended to include topics related to gender equality is slightly low. For example, 28.9% of the respondents strongly agreed and 36.9% agreed to include the stories of famous men and women sports from Pakistan and other countries to acknowledge their efforts. 38% agreed and 24% strongly agreed to include content about different scientists. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed to include the topics related to human rights. More than 70% students recommended to include the topics about right of women, child abuse, and child education. More than 80% students recommended to include topics that can promote appreciation of cultural diversity, social justice, and details about different marginalized communities. Figure 4 further illustrates these findings.

Figure 4: Students' Suggestions about the Inclusion of Topics of Gender Equality-Human Rights



Students Perspectives

Students' response to the questionnaire showed that a significant majority (more than 80%) of the students believe that the topics related to role of women and rights and responsibilities of citizens should be included in the textbook of English. They also highly recommended to include topics related to gender equality and human rights in the textbooks. The section two aimed at taking students' perceptions about the current textbook of English with reference to the sub-themes of gender equality and human rights. This section showed varied results. Some of the students agreed that topics related to famous women and men leaders, showing different familial relations of men and women, and men and women performing outdoor tasks are present in the textbook of English in the main content, activities, and in the form of the images, however, they either were unable to provide any names of the units containing these topics or provided the names of the unit from the textbook of 9th grade. More than 30% of the students disagreed and said that these topics were not at all mentioned in the textbook neither in the content, activities, nor in the form of images. This showed that the students had not completely gone through the book. As because of COVID-19

Figure 6: Reasons to Include Role of Women in the Textbook (chart via QSR NVivo)

Reasons to Include Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens in the Textbook

The teachers were also asked to reflect their views that how important it is to talk about the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the textbook. Most of the teachers mentioned that to make the citizens responsible it is essential to talk about the rights and responsibilities of the citizens. One of the respondents mentioned

it is important to talk about the rights and the responsibilities of the citizens, because being a citizen we are lagging far behind. We are neglecting our responsibilities and we do not know what our responsibilities are as a citizen. So, there should be some topic about the responsibilities of the citizens in our text book (R 9).

Teachers believed that such content can help the students in their practical, professional and personal lives.

It is important to talk about rights and responsibilities of citizens in 10th grade English textbook because students will be entering in their practical life after the tenth standard and when they will know about their rights and responsibilities they will work honestly in their field and home (R 17).

Another respondent highlighted that the rights and responsibilities of the citizens should be taught from the beginning. “The earlier the students learn about their rights and responsibilities, the better the students will understand this important aspect. It should start from 6th grade instead of 10th grade” (R 7).

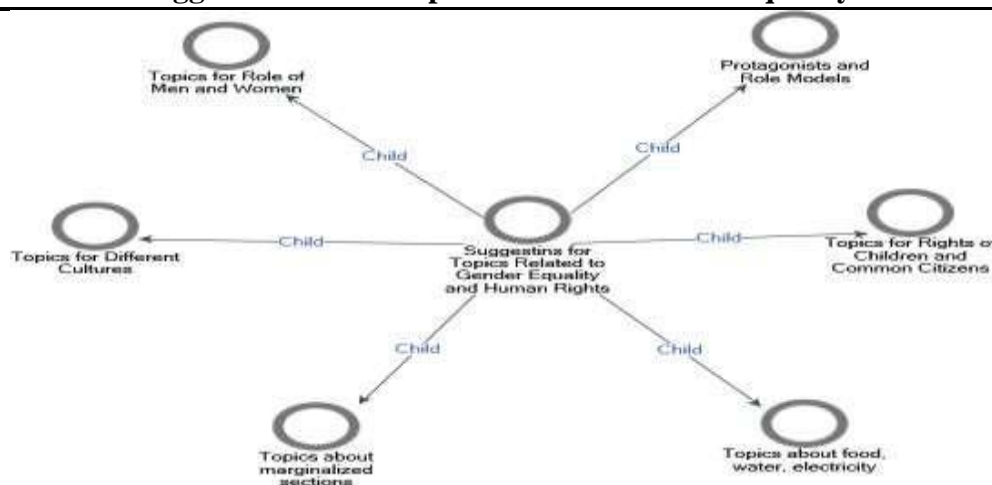
Figure 7 below gives an overview of the most frequently used words to highlight the importance of including citizens’ rights and responsibilities, such content can help the students become more civilized, honest, and respectful towards the fellow citizens, and help in establishing a healthy society.

mentioned that the content related to fair treatment, peace, and justice is present in the textbook and that is sufficient enough to make an impact on the children.

Suggestions of Teachers

Teachers were also asked to share their suggestions for the topics or content related to gender equality and human rights. Figure 8 presents an overview of all the suggestions received from the teachers under these six sub-topics.

Figure 8: Teachers Suggestions for the topics related to Gender Equality and Human Rights



Source: NVivo Project Map

Teachers' suggestions were received regarding six sub-topics pertaining to sub-themes. Two topics, "role of men and women" and "male and female protagonists or role models," were related to gender equality. While four topics related to human rights. Human rights is a broad term which covers a wide range of topics. For this research, topics related to "the rights and responsibilities of children and citizens, cultural diversity, food, water, electricity, and topics related to marginalized sections of society were included.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The majority of the students perceive that topics related to famous women and men leaders, showing different familial relations of men and women, and both performing outdoor tasks are not present in the English textbook. They believe that topics related to the role of women and the rights and responsibilities of citizens should be included in English textbooks. They also recommended to include topics related to gender equality and human rights in the textbooks. Similarly, most of the teachers mentioned that representation of women is limited in the English textbook of 9th Grade and the presence of women and their social roles are completely ignored in the 10th-grade textbook. Teachers argued that it is essential to talk about the role of women in the textbook to encourage women's participation, acknowledge their achievements, and promote equality and respect towards women.

On the basis of the findings of the study, there should be equal representation of men and women in the content and activities of the textbook. The social and familial role of women in sports, politics, science, and other domains of life should be represented equally. Examples of contemporary famous men and women leaders should also be included. Gender-fair language

should be used not only in the technique of neutralization but also in the technique of feminization. Moreover, topics related to human rights (especially related to child abuse, harassment, and safety) should be incorporated. The stories from Islamic history should be related to real life through different activities and exercises.

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