



Authorship of Books and Gender Sensitivity: A Case Study of NCAM Library Collections

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ABSTRACT

Gender imbalances is not just reflected in education from the surface level, but more narrowly, highly established and sensitive in book publishing. This paper examines the level of gender imbalances and sensitivity in book publishing using NCAM library collection as a case study. The researchers used 446 textbooks with 802 authors to establish the difference in the number of male authors in comparison with that of female authors in textbook publishing. Recommendation on how to bridge the gap in gender imbalances relating to book publishing and education as a whole are also given.

Keywords: Gender Sensitivity, Gender bias, Gender Imbalance, Textbook Publishing, Authorship of books.

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I. Introduction

The concepts of 'sex and 'gender' are a face of the nature-culture debate with the presumption that sex is unchangeable. In any given discipline with Agriculture, Sciences and Engineering not an exception, publication is an important way of measuring academic productivity. It is also an important communication process for the academic and scientific community. Moreover, it is also a means to get resources to produce and implement new research.

According to Chambers Encyclopaedia of English Dictionary, gender is seen as the condition of being male or female. A widely accepted definition of gender is that of UNESCO, which defines gender as socially determined characteristics of men and women (Aniche, 1998). On the other hand, Rogets Thesaurus of English words and Phrases classifies and categorise gender into sex, species, type, genre, statues, classes, social class, ranks, castes, quality, etc. This means the condition of maintaining divisions or discrimination among things that are not exactly the same, as in the case of male and female gender imbalance in books publication.

Gender equality on the UN agenda is almost in every field of life. In the educational arena, the concept of gender equality has come to the forefront since the

Jomteim declaration 1990 and latter in the World Education Forum. Gender equality is an integral part of freedom of expression as all gender categories have the right to be heard and seen in the public sphere as full-fledge citizens participating in a democratic society. Gender balance is thus important in book publishing. Equally important is the need to challenge prevailing gender stereotypes. Franconi (2010) have tried to analyse different aspects of gender bias as:

- Gender bias in authorship,
- Gender bias in selection: the chance for success,
- Gender bias in finding of research,
- Gender bias in education,
- Gender bias in textbooks,
- Gender bias in curricula,
- Gender bias in research and many more.

Publishing can be defined as the process of production and dissemination of literature, music, or information – the activity of making information available to the general public (Wikipedia, 2014). Book publishing involves the process of producing books primarily for educational purpose. The importance of textbooks to education and research cannot be overemphasized. Books are critical to the success of the educational process and research development. Dr. Alex Ekwueme the former Vice-President of Nigeria in his opening speech at the first Nigerian National Congress

on Books held in Lagos from 21st to the 25th of March 1983 observed that:

“Education is the backbone of national development, and the book is the principal element in the educational process, Books are vital for both teaching and learning at every levels of education.”

II. Literature Review

Gender sensitivity can be seen as the level of awareness, appreciation of the need to maintain at reasonable levels the gender differentiation between the male and the female. It can also be referred to the quality or inclination to recognise, appreciate or respond appropriately to issues on gender lines. It would mean where one has the ability to discriminate and act in ways that shows sensitivity (knowledge) of the fact of differences between male and female and to defer to the proper attitude while dealing with the male and female. The existence of gender imbalances has been noted by various researchers and group.

The gender imbalance at the heart of the British and American literary establishment has been laid bare by a new study confirming that the leading literary magazines focus their review coverage on books written by men, and commission more men than women to write about them. According to the statistics of an American Organization for Women in Literacy Arts Statistics called VIDA, gender imbalance is found in every one of the publications cited including the London Review of Books, the times literary supplement and the New York Review of Books, that there are many more books written by men than women (VIDA, 2010). The chart below illustrates VIDA’s submission on gender imbalance in literary publication.

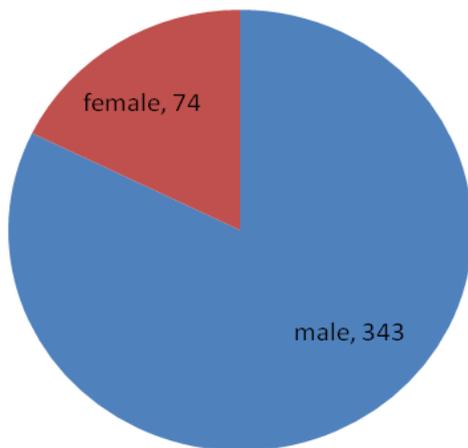


Fig. 1. VIDA’s submission on gender imbalance in literary publication (VIDA, 2010)

Ruth Franklin, who commented on (VIDA, 2010) believes that, in majority of the societies today, books, magazines, articles and book review are written predominantly by men and therefore may privilege male view point. For instance, in 2010, only 37% of the

books published by review of books were written by women. She also argues that the inequality begins at publishing house, looking through 2010 catalogue from publishers. Franklin found the penguin imprint Riverhead came closest to parity with women making up 45% of its authors. Only 21% of Farrar Straus Giroux’s lists were women; the Harvard University Press list was 15% female.

One theory that has generated some of the most pungent commentary is that subjects dominated by male writers are given more weight than those dominated by women. As Meghan O’Rourke quoted in (Cohen, 2011) writes on slate; “it may be that more men than women write what editors consider important books – in part (and this is a speculation) because more men than women write about international affairs and politics she adds. Another silent question is whether what editors consider important is affected by gender. In other words, are men assumed to have more authority from the get go?”

According to Howard (2011), little has changed for female writers since the 19th century. George Elliot used a pen name to get her books published in the 1800s, and two centuries later, novelists such as Booker prize-winning A.S. Byatt and Harry Potter author J. K Rowling chose to use gender neutral pen names. Howard claims women are at disadvantage because men do not want them to succeed, they started writing novels really before men on the whole, they don’t want females to be good at that, she also argues that the literary industry is essentially a man’s world, saying that male critics and editors are more sympathetic to work of men. She also pointed out that a talented male writer would have an easier journey than a talented female writer, who might very well get bad reviews. It depends enormously who reviews the work.

Guardian book editor, Claire Armistead (2011) said, we always try to keep an even balance but many more men offer themselves to review books than women. She later added that in a society in which female authors and females in general are somewhat discouraged from fulfilling their full potentials, it is understandable that they may not have the confidence it takes to be published by such magazines. Nonetheless, she claimed not to blame such a lack of confidence on females, as it is a society and patriarchy that has engrained a sense of inferiority in women and drained their self confidence.

Stothard (2011), editor of TLS publications argued that gender issue was not a small matter for books or its readers. He also stressed that it is pretty serious and he was not appalled by the figure as he would be very surprised if the authorship of published books was 50/50. And while women are heavy readers, we know they are heavy readers of the kind of fiction that is not likely to be reviewed in the pages of the TLS.

Freeman (2011), the editor of Granta magazine, also lamented on his worries about “these gender imbalances a lot” citing the influence of writers such as Virginia Woolf and Margret Atwood on the development of his own literary taste. Banda (2004) contends that

education is generally viewed as an effective way to address gender related issues in the society. It is believed that education empowers women by enhancing their competencies and preparing them to participate actively in social-economic activities.

Skidelsky (2011) argued that it would be ‘unduly rigid’ to attempt to enforce a strict 50/50 division of gender on the observers books pages but added that he does try to ensure each week that there is a decent male-female spread in terms of both the authors they cover and the people they get to review them. Obviously, there is some room for improvement here he added but it could have been a lot worse.

III. Statement of the Problem

a. NCAM Library

The National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization Library is a Research Library that is responsible for providing reference literature and other information services in-line with the mandate and objectives of her parent body. The library acquires information (published and unpublished) in General Agriculture, Mechanization, Engineering, Social Sciences, Management and other related fields. The library has various collections ranging from Textbooks, Journals, Magazines, Manuals and many other print and non-print materials. The collections in NCAM Library are classified using ‘In-House’ classification scheme, which covers areas such as Farm Power and Machinery, Processing and Storage, Land and Water Engineering, General Agriculture, Mechanics, Social Sciences, Post Harvest Engineering, etc.

b. Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this work is based on the following:

- That gender bias in textbook publishing does not matter or exist.
- Gender bias in textbook publication is far more widespread geographically than the remaining gender gap.
- That gender bias in textbook publication involves a common pattern.

c. Objective of the Study

This research is primarily aimed at confirming the existence of gender imbalance in book publishing and to uncover similarities and differences in the characteristics of publications among male and female authors. The research also aims at:

- Identifying areas of gender imbalance in book publishing,
- Identifying the causes of gender imbalance in book publishing,
- Identifying the extent of gender imbalance in book publishing,
- Identifying the nature and scope of gender imbalance in publishing,
- Proffering solutions to bridging the gender imbalance gap.

d. Methodology

Although there are very many textbooks in the NCAM library collection, the writer based the study on only selected textbooks in the Engineering, General Agriculture, and Sciences. 446 textbooks were selected on random basis from among the areas of specializations mentioned. The selected textbooks formed the basis for the data collection and analysis in this research. The gender of the authors was determined by their names, pictures, Google, profiles or biography. It is expedient to note that none of the authors specified his/her gender by writing either ‘male’ or ‘female’ as the case may be. It is however believed that the criteria used are enough to determine an author’s gender correctly.

IV. Results and Discussion

Table I below shows the year-wise distribution of the textbook publication used for this research. The table shows a total number of 464 selected textbooks, out of which 45.9% (213) of the textbooks were produced between 2001 and 2010, while only 4 textbooks (0.9%) are produced between 1951 and 1960. This shows that majority of the textbooks used for this research are recently published textbooks.

TABLE I
YEAR-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF TEXTBOOK PUBLICATIONS

S/No	Publication Year	Total Textbooks Published	Percentage (%) of 464
1	1951-1960	4	0.9
2	1961-1970	9	1.9
3	1971-1980	36	7.8
4	1981-1990	78	16.8
5	1991-2000	49	10.6
6	2001-2010	213	45.9
7	2011-2014	75	16.2
<i>TOTAL</i>		464	100.0

Table II confirms that a total number of 464 textbooks were analysed. The textbooks covered different research units of NCAM as well as part of the categories of in-house index classification of the NCAM library. The table further shows that General Agriculture textbooks are more (119) in the Library, which is followed by Land and Water Engineering textbooks (87). Textbooks on Chemical Engineering rated lowest with only 5 textbooks. This result agrees with Oyeniyi and Olaifa (2014) who noted that the nature and types of resources (textbooks) accessible in research libraries is largely dependent on the mandate of the research institute. For instance, a research library in a food processing research institute will likely focus more on resources related to food processing and storage research in-line with the mandate of her parent body. The table also shows a minimal collaborative strength with 802 persons authoring 464 textbooks, which gives an average of 1.73 authors per textbook.

TABLE II
ANALYSIS OF THE AREAS COVERED

S/No	Area	No of Textbooks	No of Authors	Average Authors Per Textbook
1	<i>FARM POWER AND MACHINERY</i>	30	60	
2	<i>LAND AND WATER ENGINEERING</i>	87	163	
3	<i>ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING</i>	33	50	
4	<i>CHEMICAL ENGINEERING</i>	5	13	
5	<i>PROCESSING AND STORAGE</i>	45	69	
6	<i>SCIENCES</i>	15	37	
7	<i>MECHANICS</i>	42	62	
8	<i>ACHITECTURE & CIVIL ENGINEERING</i>	44	69	
9	<i>GENERAL AGICULTURE</i>	119	211	
10	<i>WORKSHOP TECHNOLOGY</i>	44	68	
	<i>TOTAL</i>	464	802	1.73

Table III reveals that out of the 464 textbooks analysed, 262 (56.47%) were single authored while 202 (43.53%) were joint authored. It is further observed that there are more single authored textbooks in Electrical Engineering, Processing and Storage, Mechanics, Architecture and Civil Engineering, General Agriculture, and Workshop Technology. While there are more joint

authored textbooks in Farm Power & Machinery, Land & Water Engineering, Chemical Engineering, and Sciences.

TABLE III
ANALYSIS OF THE PATTERN OF AUTHORSHIP

S/No	Area	Single authored Books	Joint authored Books	Total Books published	% of Single Authors	% of Joint authors
1	<i>FARM POWER AND MACHINERY</i>	13	17	30	43.33	56.67
2	<i>LAND AND WATER ENGINEERING</i>	39	48	87	44.83	55.17
3	<i>ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING</i>	20	13	33	60.61	39.39
4	<i>CHEMICAL ENGINEERING</i>	1	4	5	20.00	80.00
5	<i>PROCESSING AND STORAGE</i>	29	16	45	64.44	35.56
6	<i>SCIENCES</i>	4	11	15	26.67	73.33
7	<i>MECHANICS</i>	25	17	42	59.52	40.48
8	<i>ACHITECTURE & CIVIL ENGINEERING</i>	28	16	44	63.64	36.36
9	<i>GENERAL AGICULTURE</i>	74	45	119	62.18	37.82
10	<i>WORKSHOP TECHNOLOGY</i>	29	15	44	65.91	34.09
	<i>TOTAL</i>	262	202	464	56.47	43.53

Table IV represents the gender analysis of the authors. The table revealed that only 27 (3.37%) females' authors were identified out of 802 authors. While 329 (41.02%) were identified male authors. This very poor Female figure further buttressed the fact that there is a huge imbalance and gap in gender as related to book publishing. It also suggests that men are more active in academics than women, most especially in Agricultural Engineering field. It is also important to note that 446 (55.6%), which accounts for the largest percentage of the

number of authors, did not identify their gender status, and could not be correctly identified on the internet/Google. This further aligns with Oyeniyi et.al (2010), who recommended that gender status, should be specified in publications for better analysis. According to their research, out of 1315 authors that contributed in NIAE proceedings for a decade, only 2 males and 3 females identified their gender status. This however, is unconnected with any publishing rule or ethics.

TABLE IV
ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER OF AUTHORSHIP

S/No	Area	MALE AUTHORS	FEMALE AUTHORS	UNSPECIFIED	Total TEXTBOOK PUBLISHED	% OF MALE AUTHORS	% OF FEMALE AUTHORS	% OF UNSPECIFIED
1	<i>FARM POWER & MACHINERY</i>	36	0	24	60	60.00	0.00	40.0
2	<i>LAND & WATER ENGINEERING</i>	52	5	106	163	31.90	3.07	65.0
3	<i>ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING</i>	27	3	20	50	54.00	6.00	40.0
4	<i>CHEMICAL ENGINEERING</i>	2	0	11	13	15.38	0.00	84.6
5	<i>PROCESSING & STORAGE</i>	34	7	28	69	49.28	10.14	40.6
6	<i>SCIENCES</i>	14	6	17	37	37.84	16.22	45.9
7	<i>MECHANICS</i>	21	0	41	62	33.87	0.00	66.1
8	<i>ACHITECTURE & CIVIL ENGINEERING</i>	34	0	35	69	49.28	0.00	50.7
9	<i>GENERAL AGICULTURE</i>	87	5	119	211	41.23	2.37	56.4
10	<i>WORKSHOP TECHNOLOGY</i>	22	1	45	68	32.35	1.47	66.2
	<i>TOTAL</i>	329	27	446	802	41.02%	3.37%	55.6%

V. Conclusion and Recommendation

Gender sensitivity is without doubt an important aspect of book publishing. Gender sensitivity is the act of being aware of the ways people think about gender, so that individuals rely less on assumptions about traditional and outdated views on the roles of men and women. This research has established a clear gender imbalance, as reflected in the number of female authors in comparison to the male authors. The big questions that may arise from this situation are: is there an equal representation of male and female in education? Do educated females engage in research like the males? Are there more male population than females or vice visa in the world population?

According to a report by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), over 15 million young girls out of school are never expected to enrol for classes (UNESCO, 2014). Irina Bakova, Director General of UNESCO, opined that gender imbalance in education will affect all sustainable efforts for development to the international community. She further noted that the gender disparity in education is “unacceptable” and that “if recent trends in the region continue, the richest boy will gain universal primary completion in 2021, while the poorest girl will not be able to catch up until 2086”.

Research has further linked such slow pace in developing educational equality to two major factors,

which are ‘war’ and ‘poverty’. About half of the world’s out-of-school population lives in conflict-affected countries, which are usually low and lower middle-income countries that lack early childhood care as well as access to education, especially for the female child (UNESCO, 2014).

It is however assumed, in-line with this research that gender imbalance in book publishing originated from the imbalance in education of a male and female child. In order to bridge the imbalance in gender regarding book publishing, there is therefore an urgent need to correct some fundamental imbalances in the right and privileges of a male and female child especially relating to education and research in the society. The following are also recommended:

Both male and female child should be given equal opportunity and right to education.

Authors should endeavour to indicate their gender status in publications. It was observed that 55.6% of the authors in this research did not indicate their gender status. Authors can indicate their gender status by picture, biography, or even direct indication.

Female authors are encouraged to publish more in order to measure up with their male counterpart in research.

The government should also help by ensuring the implementation of girl-child education especially in the war and poverty prone regions.

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